



EU-LAC Foundation
Fundación EU-LAC



EU-LAC WIN
WOMEN'S INTERNATIONAL NETWORK
RED INTERNACIONAL DE MUJERES

CALL

Leadership School for Women in Local Politics 2026

2nd Edition

Information for applicants

1. Background

The partnership between the countries of the European Union (EU), Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC) has its roots in various historical, political, economic, social and cultural ties, and is based on shared interests, values and aspirations among their societies, such as the pursuit of sustainable and inclusive development. Over the years, the two regions have progressively built a relationship that promotes mutual respect and open dialogue. In 1999, the bi-regional strategic partnership was established, providing a consensual and evolving framework for political dialogue and cooperation in specific areas of mutual interest.

On this basis, the European Union–Latin America and the Caribbean International Foundation (EU-LAC Foundation) was created in 2010 by decision of the Heads of State and Government. Since 2011, it has been operating in Hamburg, Germany, as an instrument to promote this bi-regional partnership. Through the EU-LAC Women's International Network (EU-LAC WIN), the EU-LAC Foundation supports its members' commitments "to combat the multiple and interrelated forms of gender-based discrimination and violence, to promote (...) gender equality [and] the full and equal representation and participation of all women and girls in decision-making processes" (Declaration of the 2023 EU-CELAC Summit, paragraph 9). The Network is a multidisciplinary, pluralistic and informal space that connects women from EU and LAC countries who are committed to and working in three, often interrelated, areas of action: climate action, comprehensive care systems and women's political leadership. More specifically, its objectives are as follows:

- To connect women, organisations and institutions from Latin American and Caribbean countries and the European Union to strengthen their work and collectively promote women's empowerment and rights.
- To facilitate multi-level, diverse and intergenerational dialogue, the exchange of experiences and spaces for collective learning among women from the EU and LAC who seek to promote women's leadership and more equal and inclusive societies.
- To promote the voices and demands of women and feminist movements from both regions in bi-regional and multilateral forums, placing women at the centre of decision-making.

2. Context

The Bi-regional School of Local Political Leadership for Women is an initiative of the EU-LAC Women's International Network (WIN), under the auspices of the EU-LAC Foundation. The School was established as a strategic space for training, exchange and political coordination among local women leaders from Latin America, the Caribbean and the European Union, with a feminist, intersectional and human rights-based approach.

○ Results of the 1st Edition (Germany, 2025)

The first edition of the School took place in November 2025 in Berlin and attracted considerable bi-regional interest: over 300 applications were received from Latin America, the Caribbean and Europe. Following a rigorous selection process, 15 participants were chosen, representing a diversity of backgrounds, regions and profiles, including young women leaders, indigenous women, women of African descent, women with political experience, community activists, and representatives of civil society and local governments. It is worth noting that among the participants were the Director of the *Comunicación e Información de la Mujer A.C. (CIMAC)*; the Head of the Gender Equality Directorate of the Metepec Municipal Public Administration; the Coordinator of the Coordinating Body of Indigenous Women's Organisations (COMAM) in Guatemala; provincial legislators; and the Mayor of the Municipality of Alvarado in Costa Rica, amongst others.

The 2025 edition was held with the institutional support of the SWP Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik – German Institute for International and Security Affairs and the Regional Office for Latin America and the Caribbean of the United Nations Development Programme.

Key outcomes of the 2025 edition include:

- The creation of a bi-regional network of local women leaders, with intergenerational mentoring links.
- The strengthening of practical skills in political leadership, negotiation, communication and local advocacy.
- Raising awareness of the common challenges faced by women in local politics, particularly in relation to political violence, care work and access to resources.
- The generation of concrete proposals for the sustainability of women's leadership at the local level.

The collective evaluation of the experience highlighted the importance of establishing the School as a regular process and expanding it both thematically and geographically.

3. 2026 Edition

The second edition of the School is scheduled to take place in October 2026, in Panama.

3.1. General and specific objectives

General Objectives:

- To strengthen the political leadership capacities of women at the local level (municipal and community) in Latin America, the Caribbean and Europe, through an intergenerational, bi-regional, intercultural and multi-level training space that promotes transformative political participation from the local level, the building of networks among community women leaders, access to practical local management tools, and the sustainability of women's leadership in local governments and decision-making spaces.
- To highlight the importance of cooperation between Latin America, the Caribbean and the European Union as a key pillar for advancing gender equality and democratic strengthening at the local level.

Specific Objectives:

- **Young women:** To strengthen their practical skills in local political leadership, strategic communication, negotiation, fundraising and local advocacy, through a hybrid, accessible and

sustainable training model adapted to rural and urban contexts. To promote their participation in municipal and community governance through the support of intergenerational mentoring networks that foster their integration, learning and resilience in the face of structural challenges such as political violence, gaps in access to resources and the burden of care.

- **Senior women:** To empower their role as role models and mentors within a bi-regional network of exchange and political solidarity that connects diverse leaderships (young, rural, urban, indigenous, academic, community-based). To promote intergenerational exchange, territorial roots and sustained mutual support over time, drawing on their accumulated experience to support training processes, contribute to reducing structural inequalities and strengthen community and municipal governance

3.2. Rationale

In a bi-regional context marked by profound gender inequalities in access to and the exercise of political power, the local, municipal and community spheres remain among the areas lagging furthest behind in terms of women's political participation and leadership. Although local governments are key institutions for transforming everyday life, women face multiple structural barriers to exercising leadership at the community and municipal levels, ranging from political violence to a lack of funding and support networks.

The School is part of the strategic priorities currently being promoted by both the European Union and Latin America and the Caribbean in the areas of gender equality and women's political participation. At the European level, the [European Union's Gender Equality Strategy 2026–2030](#) reaffirms the commitment of European institutions to progress towards a more representative and inclusive democracy, promoting the balanced participation of women and men at all levels of decision-making and strengthening the fight against various forms of gender-based violence, including political violence.

In Latin America and the Caribbean, the School aligns itself with the Regional Gender Agenda, developed over more than four decades within the framework of [the Regional Conferences on Women in Latin America and the Caribbean](#) organised by ECLAC. This agenda constitutes the region's main intergovernmental political commitment to gender equality and women's autonomy, and identifies parity in democracy and the full participation of women in spaces of power and decision-making as fundamental pillars of sustainable development. In this context, various regional bodies have highlighted the need to strengthen women's political participation, particularly at the local level, where significant gaps in representation and access to power persist.

The convergence of these regional priorities offers a unique opportunity to strengthen bi-regional dialogue between Europe and Latin America and the Caribbean, promoting the exchange of experiences, good practices and innovative tools to advance towards more inclusive political representation. The School aims precisely to contribute to this objective, strengthening local women leaders with the capacity to influence decision-making both in their own territories and in national and international decision-making forums.

Although there are local and regional initiatives—such as the leadership schools promoted by the [Association for Women's Rights in Development \(AWID\)](#), Electa, [Fundación Carolina](#), [Friedrich Ebert Foundation \(FES\)](#), as well as the [Global Women Leaders \(GWL\)](#) Voices Dialogue, dedicated to improving conditions for humanity through active participation in multilateral forums and its HerTurn programme, which enables young women to participate in its forum as rapporteurs—a gap persists at the bi-regional level. This gap highlights the need to create a space that places the experiences, challenges and lessons learned by women territorial leaders at the centre, enabling them to exchange practices, build capacity and learn from one another within their specific contexts.

The lack of coordination, exchanges and bonds of solidarity among women exercising leadership at the local level, in both urban and rural areas, limits their ability to develop collective, sustainable strategies with structural impact. This need is also reflected in specific statistics.

According to the report “[Women in Politics: 2025](#)” by the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) and UN Women, women hold only 27.2% of parliamentary seats in lower houses globally. Nevertheless, at sub-national and local levels, women's representation is even more unequal and uneven, particularly in small municipalities, rural and indigenous areas, where access to political power is shaped by intersectional factors such as racism, poverty and territorial violence. At this rate, achieving parity in local decision-making spaces could take even longer than at the national level. On the European side, the figures also present significant challenges. According to the report “[Gender Balance in Politics](#)” by the European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE), women remain under-represented in political decision-making bodies across the European Union.

In November 2024, women accounted for 38.8% of Members of the European Parliament, compared with 61.2% men. In the national parliaments of Member States (unicameral or lower houses), the proportion stood at 33.1% women compared with 66.9% men.

At sub-national level, the situation is no more encouraging. In November 2024, women accounted for 36.3% of members of regional assemblies in the EU and 34.8% of members of local or municipal councils.

According to the ECLAC report “[Women's Participation in Decision-Making in Latin America and the Caribbean](#)” (2023), produced by the Observatory on Gender Equality in Latin America and the Caribbean, “the persistence of structural patriarchal barriers in the political systems of these countries continues to limit progress towards gender-balanced democracy.” (p.7)

The figures clearly reflect the scale of the challenge: women hold 28.7% of ministerial posts, 32.7% of council seats, 34% of parliamentary seats and just 15.4% of mayoral posts in the region.

These figures highlight the need to continue supporting initiatives that strengthen women's leadership, representation and political influence, particularly at the local level.

Against this backdrop, this school is proposed as a strategic, transformative response rooted in communities: not only as a space for technical training, but as a place for the exchange of local experiences, peer-to-peer political support, the promotion of community leadership, and the strengthening of bi-regional networks that connect the local with the global. The bi-regional and multi-level dimension enables the identification of common challenges, the sharing of practical tools and the enrichment of local strategies with international insights, promoting a bottom-up approach.

Furthermore, the structural challenges faced by women in local politics—such as political violence in municipalities, exclusionary digitalisation, the crisis in community care, and the lack of basic services in the face of climate change—demand intersectional, situated and human rights-based training responses. This school seeks precisely to respond to these realities from a transformative, practical and sustainable perspective.

The School addresses this gap as a transformative space that combines technical training, the exchange of local experiences and the building of feminist political networks, connecting the local with the global through a bottom-up approach. The scale of this need was clearly reflected in the School's first edition, which received over 300 applications. This high demand demonstrates not only the existing interest but also the urgency of generating greater visibility, recognition and opportunities for women's local leadership.

The 2026 edition is set against a particularly relevant international backdrop, marked by the renewal of feminist cooperation and foreign policy. Of particular note in this regard is the Spanish Government's approval of the Spanish Cooperation Feminist Cooperation Strategy, which reinforces the commitment to gender equality as a cross-cutting priority in external action.

Furthermore, the electoral calendar in countries across both regions presents a window of opportunity to strengthen women's political leadership. It should not be forgotten that many national-level candidacies have their roots in careers built at the local level, where leadership with strong local ties is forged.

Added to this is a potentially historic moment in the multilateral arena, given the possibility that a Latin American woman may become Secretary-General of the United Nations. This scenario reinforces the importance of consolidating spaces that promote women's leadership from the local to the global level.

3.3. Programme and Methodology: "From Local to Bi-regional"

The programme of the EU-LAC WIN Bi-regional School will be delivered through a hybrid format (online + in-person), designed to strengthen feminist political leadership at the local level, connecting regions across Europe, Latin America and the Caribbean within a community of learning and action. It will begin with three online modules that situate participants within the bi-regional institutional framework, reinforce legal tools for the defence of political rights in diverse contexts, and broaden perspectives on Feminist Foreign Policy as a pathway for international advocacy from the municipal level.

The in-person phase delves into key skills for sustaining and expanding leadership: self-assessment of personal and collective power, identification of structural barriers (care work, territorial inequality and political violence), and practical training in advocacy, feminist negotiation and strategic communication (including storytelling, team management, digital security and fundraising). The approach incorporates care-based methodologies and emotional monitoring ("Leadership Traffic

Light”), realistic simulation exercises and collaborative work to transform learning into tools applicable in the local context.

The programme’s conclusion focuses on outreach and sustainability: building feminist alliances, strengthening intergenerational networks, drafting a Bi-regional Political Declaration with concrete recommendations, and designing individual and collective roadmaps to activate advocacy following the School. The entire process is underpinned by the commitment of the EU–LAC WIN Network as a space for long-term support, offering mentorship, community and continuity, so that women leaders not only gain access to positions of power, but also transform their structures from the local to the global level.

Format: Hybrid

The programme will combine pre-event online sessions with an intensive in-person session, promoting both accessibility and depth in the exchange between participants.

Leadership School Format:

The programme will combine pre-event virtual sessions with an intensive in-person gathering in Panama, fostering both accessibility and depth in the exchange between participants.

Dates and proposed schedule:

Preliminary virtual sessions (online format):

- Three virtual sessions of 1.5 hours each, scheduled for dates to be announced in advance during the first half of October.

Participants will be required to read materials and/or prepare inputs for these modules. Attendance and preparation of inputs for the virtual modules will be compulsory.

Topics to be covered: Introductory and thematic modules; building connections prior to the face-to-face meeting.

In-person sessions:

The in-person activities will take place from 17 October 2026, on specific dates to be confirmed at a later stage. The expected duration of the stay will be between 5 and 7 days; this information will be communicated to successful candidates upon notification of the results.

Provisional schedule:

- **Day 1:** Arrival of participants and informal welcome.
- **Day 2:** Opening session, presentation of the programme. Modules and thematic workshops.
- **Day 3:** Modules in the morning; in the afternoon, coordination with local women’s organisations and participation in public activities.
- **Day 4:** Closing session (collective evaluation, sustainability strategies and networking).

- **Day 5:** Return trips

Online modules:

The programme offers a training course that invites participants to rethink political leadership from a human rights perspective, recognising everyday, community and local experiences as legitimate spaces for advocacy and transformation. Through a process of personal and collective reflection, participants will explore their own leadership journeys, identifying the spaces from which they exert influence in their communities and the rights that underpin their participation in public life. This approach seeks to redefine leadership from a feminist and situated perspective, valuing the knowledge and experiences built up in local communities.

Building on this foundation, the programme delves deeper into an understanding of women's political rights and the various legal frameworks that shape their exercise in different contexts. The challenges and opportunities presented by diverse regional realities will be analysed, strengthening participants' capacity to understand, defend and assert their rights at the local level. Furthermore, a practical approach to the use of legal tools as mechanisms for protection and advocacy will be promoted, highlighting the role of women in building more gender-equal democracies and in the formulation of inclusive public policies.

Finally, the programme will address the structural barriers women face in exercising local and municipal leadership. It will examine inequalities related to care responsibilities, different forms of violence, and territorial disparities that particularly affect those living in rural areas or urban peripheries. Through the exchange of experiences, testimonies and proposals, participants will identify strategies to address these challenges and strengthen their political participation, recognising the value of support networks and collective action as fundamental tools for transforming the conditions that limit women's leadership in their communities.

Face-to-face leadership school:

The in-person phase of the school provides a space for meeting, exchanging ideas and building practical skills for women to exercise political leadership at the local level. Over the course of the sessions, participants will revisit the reflections developed during the virtual phase to delve deeper into concrete tools for advocacy, communication and power-building from the grassroots. The process will seek to strengthen women leaders' ability to identify opportunities for political action in their municipalities, communicate their proposals effectively and participate in decision-making processes from a feminist and human rights perspective.

Participants will explore political communication strategies adapted to community and municipal contexts, developing skills in public speaking, facilitating collective processes, managing work teams and generating content that strengthens their visibility and advocacy. The programme will also address mechanisms for entering representative and decision-making spaces, as well as tools not only for accessing local office but also for remaining in such roles sustainably, addressing the challenges that often affect women's continuity in political life. Work will also focus on building capacity for resource mobilisation and the funding of political and community initiatives.

A cross-cutting theme of the training will be dedicated to self-care and the sustainability of leadership. A holistic understanding of mental health, emotional well-being and the building of support networks will be promoted as fundamental elements for sustaining long-term political careers. From an intersectional perspective, reflection will be given to identity, self-esteem, bodily experience and the various ways in which inequalities intersect with women's experiences in positions of power. Self-care will also be addressed in relation to public communication, negotiation processes, exposure in digital environments and the prevention of political violence.

The school will also offer a dedicated space for learning feminist negotiation tools, understood as a political practice that seeks to transform power relations through collaborative, ethical and inclusive approaches. Participants will learn strategies for preparing for and taking part in negotiations within local government settings, defining objectives and priorities, managing disagreements, incorporating care into dialogue processes, and strengthening their advocacy capacity without compromising their political principles.

Another key component will focus on identifying and preventing political violence against women. Based on an analysis of local experiences and contexts, the course will examine the various manifestations of symbolic, physical, psychological and digital violence that affect women's political participation. Tools will be shared to recognise these situations, document them, report them and activate mechanisms for protection and the defence of rights, including community resources, support networks and available legal avenues to guarantee the full exercise of the right to participate in political life and decision-making.

Finally, the school will foster the building of alliances and networks among women leaders from different regions, promoting a strategic vision of feminist leadership that combines community action, political advocacy and regional collaboration. Through the exchange of experiences and collective reflection on different leadership trajectories, participants will identify opportunities to build sustainable alliances, strengthen bonds of mutual support and expand their capacity for joint action. The process will culminate in the development of personal and collective roadmaps that will enable participants to apply the lessons learnt to the future, consolidate commitments, strengthen mentoring networks and define strategies to sustain political leadership over time.

The final structure of the modules may be adjusted to include adapted content depending on the final duration of the face-to-face sessions. Any updates will be communicated in due course to the selected participants.

Sustainability of the initiative:

With the following follow-up steps, we aim to ensure the sustainability of the leadership school:

In the short term (first 6 months):

- Mentoring: Establish support links between participants from different regions or generations to sustain mutual learning.
- Mapping of partnerships with other feminist institutions and networks that can facilitate spaces for political participation, public visibility, and the scaling up of proposals.

Medium term (between 6 months and 1 year):

- Collective follow-up meetings: Virtual meetings every 3 months to share progress, challenges, advocacy opportunities and co-learning.
- Provide graduates with the opportunity to creatively share their experiences of the programme, the lessons they have learnt, and the ways in which they have put them into practice (through videos, collages, etc.).
- Share participants' testimonials and/or achievements. Create an interactive map highlighting the participants' political work, their projects and their impact within the first year.
- Virtual meeting with participants from the 1st Edition of the School to exchange experiences.

Applicant profile and eligibility criteria

Young women: Proof of membership of a network, programme, organisation or institution, and submission of a letter of support endorsing their application. A commitment to participate in the preparatory modules, the in-person meeting in Panama and follow-up activities is expected. Demonstrated interest in local political leadership will be valued, whether in formal settings such as councils or local governments, or in informal settings such as feminist collectives, community organisations or neighbourhood networks. Initial training or interest in bi-regional relations with a focus on gender, local development or citizen participation will also be considered. Furthermore, they must demonstrate a willingness to share contextualised experiences, learn from other local realities, strengthen their emerging leadership alongside other women leaders, and have an interest in actively joining the EU-LAC WIN Network from a perspective of municipal or community political leadership, or already be part of this network.

Senior women leaders: A proven track record in political or community processes, with a demonstrable ability to influence their communities, municipalities or localities. Proof of membership of a network, programme, organisation or institution is required, along with a letter of support attesting to their experience. These participants must have a background in local political leadership, whether through municipal governments, councils or community boards, or through high-impact social and community initiatives. They are expected to demonstrate an active commitment to the preparatory modules, the in-person meeting in Panama and the follow-up activities, as well as a willingness to share lessons learned from their experience to enrich collective processes with women leaders from Latin America, the Caribbean and Europe. Their participation will be characterised by an active connection with the EU-LAC WIN Network or an interest in joining this network, and by a commitment to continue promoting gender equality and the transformation of their contexts from a feminist, intersectional and human rights perspective.

Required application documents:

The documentation to be submitted for consideration under this call must be written in Spanish or English and consist of:

- Signed application form
- Proof of membership of a network, programme, organisation or institution
- Letter of support for this application from an individual or a network/organisation/institution

Documents must be submitted in PDF or MS Word format.

Applications submitted after the deadline, those received incomplete, and, in general, those that do not meet the conditions set out in these terms of reference will not be accepted. Applications received after the deadline will not receive an acknowledgement of receipt or any other form of communication.

Deadline for submission of applications:

The deadline for submitting proposals is **Friday, 24 July 2026 (23:59 – CEST – German time)**.

Proposals should be sent for the attention of Dr Anna Barrera (EU-LAC Foundation).

Email: eulacwin@eulacfoundation.org

Subject: EU-LAC Women's Political Leadership School 2026 + Applicant's name

Proposals received by this deadline and meeting the requirements will be considered for evaluation in accordance with the rules of this Call for Proposals.

Notification of results:

The EU-LAC Foundation anticipates a response time of approximately 3 (three) weeks for an internal selection committee to organise and evaluate the applications received under this call for applications. Please do not contact the EU-LAC Foundation regarding your application during this period. The EU-LAC Foundation will contact all applicants for this call for applications exclusively via email.

Signing of the letter of commitment:

Upon receiving notification that their application has been successful, those selected for this call will sign a letter of commitment with the EU-LAC Foundation, in which they undertake to participate actively in:

- the online preparatory modules (October 2026)
- the face-to-face modules in Panama (October 2026)
- the agreed follow-up activities (until October 2027)

and thus contribute to the expected outcomes of this local women's political leadership school.

Scholarships:

Selected candidates who indicated on their application form that they are unable to cover their travel, accommodation, food and local transport costs through third-party funding, the EU-LAC Foundation will cover these costs by directly purchasing their travel ticket, booking a hotel and providing a stipend for food and local transport during the days when the in-person part of the leadership school takes place in Panama.

Data protection:

The EU-LAC Foundation undertakes to keep all personal data strictly confidential and to comply with European Union regulations governing the protection of citizens' personal data (GDPR).

Miscellaneous clarifications:



The call for applications may be declared void. The decision of the EU-LAC Foundation's selection committee shall be final and non-appealable. Any matters not covered in these terms and conditions shall be resolved by the organising institution.