



EU-LAC Foundation  
Fundación EU-LAC

## Workshop to articulate the efforts of actors promoting the ‘Joint Initiative on Research and Innovation’ and the ‘EU-CELAC Common Space for Higher Education’

### - Concept and Tentative Programme -

**Organisation:** EU-LAC Foundation  
**Date:** 8-9 April 2024  
**Location:** Cervantes Institute in Hamburg  
**Format:** In-person event

### Introduction

The **EU-LAC Foundation** is an intergovernmental international organisation established in 2010 by the States of Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC) and the European Union (EU), as well as the EU through its institutions. Its mandate is to work closely with its 61 members to promote bi-regional partnership and dialogue, including through the participation of civil society, to generate relevant contributions for political dialogue and intergovernmental cooperation. An essential part of this mission is to build bridges to increase mutual understanding and promote dialogue and collaboration on issues that are prominent on the agenda of the strategic partnership between the two regions, such as sustainable social, economic, and environmental development; science, technology, and innovation; and higher education.

For several years, the Foundation has played an articulating role among networks, associations, and institutions involved in cooperation initiatives at the regional, bi-regional, and international levels in higher education. Here we refer to institutions such as ANUIES, ASCUN, AUGM, CSUCA, ENLACES, EUA, FAP, ALC-UE, OBREAL Global, OEI, SEGIB, Universities Caribbean, LERU, UDUAL. Regularly, the Foundation has convened these associations to meetings to promote the exchange of perspectives, progress, and challenges on topics ranging from access to quality education, internationalization of learning and teaching, accreditation systems, academic qualification frameworks, joint degrees and programs, schemes and scholarships promoting mobility as well as university research and innovation to contribute to the Sustainable Development Goals. One of the outcomes of this cooperation has been the joint construction of the [“Matrix of Objectives and Strategic Lines for the Construction of the EU-CELAC Common Area of Higher Education”](#) – an interactive database to visualize the efforts and programs generated by various actors in both regions.

Collaboration also took place with the institutions and networks mentioned above, as well as with others such as the Coimbra Group, the LAC NPC Network, and EURAXESS, to implement webinars, workshops, and bi-regional and inter-regional seminars, to deepen reflections and offer capacity-building for university researchers and managers on specific topics such as open science, patent policies and technology transfer, or the dissemination of research results.



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At the same time, the EU-LAC Foundation has closely followed cooperation between the two regions in its **‘Joint Initiative on Research and Innovation’** (JIRI) and the steps taken to implement the [2021-2023 Strategic Roadmap](#) following the Brussels Declaration and the EU-CELAC Action Plan on Science, Technology and Innovation. The Foundation attended meetings of high authorities that have sustained the relationship on this level, helped actors to engage with this process, promoted the opportunities that have opened up through the Horizon Europe programme, and contributed with workshops and presentations in different bi-regional spaces to make visible the progress in this line of bi-regional cooperation.

### **Contributions from the educational and scientific sectors to the bi-regional agenda in the year of the EU-CELAC Summit 2023**

The EU-CELAC Summit on 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> July 2023 in Brussels provided the opportunity to generate a high-level strategic dialogue on the challenges and opportunities of bi-regional cooperation around education (higher education) and science, technology, and innovation in Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC) and the countries of the European Union (EU). Consequently, the EU-LAC Foundation, together with the Uruguayan Agency for International Cooperation (AUCI) and the Spanish Agency for International Development Cooperation (AECID), organised the [EU-LAC Knowledge Forum in Montevideo, Uruguay on 24<sup>th</sup> and 25<sup>th</sup> April 2023](#), with the purpose of generating inputs that feed into the agenda of discussions of the high authorities of the European Union and Latin America and the Caribbean related to the Summit in the fields of knowledge access, higher education, and science, technology, and innovation.

The 105 participants – representatives of students, academic, and scientific communities, experts from international organizations specializing in the subject matter - agreed that the context of the bi-regional partnership has changed considerably since the last EU-CELAC Summit and considered it necessary to adjust the mechanisms of scientific and academic cooperation on more equitable terms between the regions and countries. It was suggested that the EU and LAC states recognize the right to science as a constitutional right of all citizens. From this right, it was suggested to derive policies, international cooperation programs, and investments in the higher education and R&D sectors. Good practices and initiatives were shared at the bi-regional, regional, sub-regional, and national levels, many of which deserve to be reinforced or even reactivated.

Regarding the ‘Joint Initiative on Research and Innovation’ (JIRI), it was suggested to strengthen the three pillars researcher mobility, global challenges, and innovation with an action plan and provide them with funding, taking as an example the working group on the research infrastructure pillar. Likewise, it was proposed to create a technical secretariat to monitor the commitments made at the meetings of high authorities (JIRI-SOM) and strengthen coordination between the four pillars, for example through webinars and regular dialogues.

The Forum also articulated the need for policymakers in both regions to establish an institutional framework for the EU-CELAC Common Higher Education Area, based on principles such as information exchange, mutual trust, allocation of financial resources, construction and convergence on existing ones, gradualness, and quality, and it was recommended to proceed systematically at three levels.

- Strategic level – placing the construction of the Common Higher Education Area in the bi-regional EU-CELAC partnership, established at the 1<sup>st</sup> LAC-EU Summit in Rio de Janeiro in 1999, to jointly address common challenges and build a sustainable future for the societies of the two regions;
- Political level – deepening political dialogue and cooperation programmes in higher education in priority areas, integrating agreements and progress achieved in various fields (e.g. UNESCO, European Higher Education Area, Ibero-American Knowledge Space, sub-regional integration processes, among others), supporting existing inter-university agreements as well as the actors, associations, and networks that have actively worked towards shaping and concretizing the Common Higher Education Area;
- Operational level – taking into account the accumulated experience from historical and current cooperation programs, achieving governmental consensus on concrete, gradual, or progressive steps in the core dimensions of the common space (accreditation and recognition of degrees, including diploma supplements; quality assurance system; mobility schemes, etc.), defining the responsibilities of the competent authorities (ministries or agencies of higher education, accreditation agencies, etc.), and allocating financial resources to ensure the implementation of agreed actions.

Considering the limited public resources for scientific cooperation, it was suggested to engage in multisectoral dialogues, enhance public-private partnerships involving diverse actors (e.g. business chambers, development banks, foundations, think tanks...), and promote scientific diplomacy on key issues of the 2030 Agenda. There was an articulated interest in jointly developing policies to promote open science, based on 'FAIR' principles, to strengthen and generate a greater impact from the efforts generated in both regions. Given the multitude of instances, forums, and spaces for academic cooperation and R&D, concrete ideas were formulated on processes and coordination mechanisms to generate greater synergies and avoid duplication of efforts. Finally, participants proposed fostering joint reflections on the transformation of higher education, promoting equity policies in HEIs, capacity building and lifelong learning processes, talent retention, and multilingualism in science.

Similarly, in view of the EU-CELAC Summit, other actors with whom the EU-LAC Foundation regularly cooperates have developed relevant initiatives and proposals for higher-level political dialogue.

For example, on **4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> May 2023**, the Ibero-American General Secretariat (SEGIB), together with various partners, held the [\*\*II Academic and Knowledge Summit of the European Union, Latin America and the Caribbean \(UE-CELAC\) in Santiago de Compostela, Spain\*\*](#), to contribute to the construction of the Euro-Latin American and Caribbean Common Space for Higher Education, Science, Technology, and Innovation through the generation and management of knowledge, integration, and bi-regional strategic cooperation between the EU and CELAC. In the Declaration of this event, it was recommended, among other things, to deepen academic mobility programmes; promote strategic action on the digital transformation of higher education; encourage bilateral, regional, and bi-regional agreements for the recognition of studies, degrees, and diplomas, within

the framework of university autonomy; encourage the creation of a collaboration framework between national and regional systems for evaluation, quality assurance, and accreditation of higher education in CELAC and the EU; promote cooperation between scientific research systems, technology, and innovation, particularly in doctoral and postdoctoral training and researcher mobility, shared use of infrastructures and scientific capacities, innovation promotion, and the participation of scientists from both regions in joint strategic research and innovation projects; and work on improving the coordination of actions promoted by JIRI with initiatives promoted through other multilateral mechanisms that promote international cooperation in Science, Technology, and Innovation. Heads of State and Government were requested, within the framework of the 3<sup>rd</sup> EU-CELAC Summit, to consider the proposals contained in the Declaration and to agree on concrete measures, including financial ones, to give new impetus to the construction of the Common Higher Education and Knowledge Space, from a comprehensive vision of higher education, science, technology, and innovation.

In the framework of this event, the Government of Spain convened an [Informal Meeting of Ministers and High Authorities of Higher Education](#) from both regions. In the declaration of this meeting, representatives of 25 countries gathered in Santiago de Compostela called on the EU-CELAC Summit to consider the contents reflected in the declaration, and to contribute to progress in the establishment of the Common Higher Education Area, for which a series of areas of work were identified:

- cooperation between education systems, as a way of bringing societies from both regions closer together and promoting scientific and academic exchange;
- the definition of a working plan to promote cooperation between the quality assurance and recognition agencies of the countries in both regions;
- the promotion of academic mobility between regions through the reinforcement of existing programmes and the relaunching of cooperation with new bi-regional programmes and initiatives that also include more innovative ways to promote a more inclusive internationalisation;
- the vertical and horizontal development of networks for the promotion of bi-regional dialogue and academic cooperation between higher education institutions in both regions;
- a greater presence of the Latin American and Caribbean region in the EU funding instruments in the field of higher education such as Horizon Europe or Erasmus+.

Similarly, the Permanent Academic Forum Latin America and the Caribbean – European union (FAP ALC-UE) organized, from 6<sup>th</sup> to 8<sup>th</sup> July 2023, the [V. LAC-EU Academic Summit in Alcalá de Henares, Spain](#). After analysing the fundamental components of the strategic relationships between the European Union and Latin America and the Caribbean in the field of Higher Education, Science, Technology, and Innovation (including, for example, the challenges for both regions regarding democracy, economic, and climate; gender equality; youth perspective; SGDs and the role of higher education), the rectors, deans, directors, professors, researchers, and students gathered at the University of Alcalá de Henares agreed to reaffirm their commitment to work in their respective countries and regions for the creation of the Euro-Latin American and Caribbean Common Space for Education, Science, Technology, and Innovation. In their Declaration, they also articulated the urgency of advancing towards the realization of this objective, urging the political authorities of both regions to create the political and institutional conditions for an Academic Integration

Agreement between both regions. In response to the agreements of this Forum, the Executive Secretariat of FAP ALC-UE transmitted a proposal of a text approved by the Bi-Regional Academic Council on ALC-UE regarding an Agreement on Academic Integration to the Heads of State and Government of both regions.

Likewise, in a [Joint Declaration drafted by the EUA and ENLACES, supported by OBREAL Global](#), which was published a few days before the EU-CELAC Summit, it was expressed the expectation that governments give due consideration to the contribution that higher education, research, and innovation make to the EU-CELAC agenda. It was emphasized that the political and health crises of recent years have highlighted the importance of transnational and transregional exchanges and collaboration in a world of global interdependencies, as well as the risks and harms that even relatively brief disturbances entail for our societies and economies. Whether it is long-term transition processes or a response to sudden crises, all of this requires knowledge-based solutions and competencies, to which the university sector contributes decisively. Therefore, political authorities of the EU and CELAC were recommended to consider measures such as, for example:

- A more structured dialogue between the EU and ALC on higher education and research policies, with systematic involvement of interested organizations. Lessons learned from existing regional and bi-regional exchanges (European Research Area, Bologna Process, ASEM Education Process) and ongoing projects and pilot projects in the sector should be considered.
- Development of the EU-CELAC higher education and research area, as well as links and synergies between them.
- Regular EU-CELAC conferences on higher education, research and innovation policies and practices, taking stock of progress made, highlighting successful policies, projects, and practices, and fostering synergies and collaboration.
- Support for transnational and transregional working groups on key issues and priorities, such as the development of legislation on digitalization.
- Increased funding, considering that the current demand within Erasmus+, Horizon Europe, and national funding programmes far exceeds supply. More scholarships, structured exchanges, and collaborative research opportunities could bring substantial benefits not only to individual beneficiaries but also to their institutions and organizations, as well as their societies and economies.

Despite these and other substantial contributions and proposals generated by various networks and institutions, the Declaration of the EU-CELAC Summit of Heads of State and Government has not explicitly addressed cooperation between the two regions in higher education. What was agreed to be reflected in the text was an expression of satisfaction with the work of the Joint EU-CELAC Initiative on Research and Innovation and the desire of Heads of Government to continue it<sup>1</sup>.

Thus, on **28<sup>th</sup> and 29<sup>th</sup> November 2023**, the **Senior Officials Meeting (JIRI-SOM)** was held in Brussels, attended by 13 representatives from EU Member States (Germany, Belgium, Spain, Estonia, Finland, France, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Malta, Netherlands, Portugal and Czech Republic) and 19

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<sup>1</sup> See item 29 of the EU-CELAC Declaration 2023:

<https://eulacfoundation.org/sites/default/files/attachments/2023-07/st12000.en23.pdf>

representatives from CELAC countries (Barbados, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Cuba, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama, Paraguay, Dominican Republic, Suriname, Trinidad and Tobago, Uruguay, and Venezuela). At the meeting, co-chaired by Maria Cristina Russo (Director of International Cooperation, DG Research and Innovation, European Commission) and Inga Creese (Representative of the CELAC Pro Tempore Presidency, Research Officer in Science and Technology of the Government of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines), a review of the progress made regarding the ‘Strategic Roadmap for Research and Innovation’ was conducted, while deliberating on a new and more ambitious Roadmap for the coming years.

Some of the most notable advancements in each pillar of the JIRI-SOM can be summarised as follows:

- In the **pillar of researcher mobility**, the ALC region has participated in the European Union’s Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions (MSCA) and currently also benefits from the support of two EURAXESS offices in Brazil and Colombia, and 35 MSCA National Contact Points (NCPs). Additionally, the Marie Curie Alumni Association has established a new chapter for the Andean and Caribbean Region.
- The **pillar of research infrastructures** has progressed significantly following six virtual meetings and one in-person meeting of the EU-CELAC Working Group on Research Infrastructures. Furthermore, five thematic cooperation workshops and two online seminars on bi-regional collaboration in research infrastructures have been organized. For 2024, a new round of study visits from the EU and CELAC is planned. The ResInfra EU-ALC project concluded in early 2023, to be followed by the ResInfra Plus project in early 2024.
- Considerable progress has been made in the **pillar of global challenges** in the following areas: Cooperation in sustainable urbanization is now supported by the EU-ALC dialogue on nature-based solutions. In the field of marine research, the Atlantic Alliance Declaration for Ocean Research and Innovation (AAORIA) was signed in July 2022, with the participation of Argentina, Brazil, and the EU, and an EU-Caribbean workshop on marine scientific cooperation was organized in Barbados. In the realm of digital cooperation, the EU-LAC Digital Alliance was launched in March 2023; the second phase of BELLA was agreed upon in 2022; a new cyber training centre for ALC was launched in the Dominican Republic. In the area of health, the EULAC-PerMed project involved Brazil, Panama, and Chile in joint transnational calls and the establishment of Clinical Trials Helpdesk. Active themes of bi-regional cooperation in health research continue to be chronic and infectious diseases, antimicrobial resistance, chronic diseases, and transnational and collaborative cancer research.
- The **innovation pillar** was created later than the other pillars and faced difficulties in taking off due to the pandemic. It received support from the Horizon 2020 European Network of Research and Innovation Centers and Hubs in Latin America and the Caribbean (ENRICH in LAC) project.
- The **cross-cutting priority of open access** was addressed through an bi-regional in-depth study published by the European Commission in March 2023 and a bi-regional conference in June 2023.

The JIRI-SOM concluded with agreements on next steps, including the drafting of a new JIRI Roadmap 2024-2025 and the establishment of more working groups, following the positive experience with the working group on research infrastructures. There was also an expressed

intention to advocate for a Meeting of Ministers of Science, Technology, and Innovation EU-CELAC before the next CELAC-EU Summit, scheduled to take place in Colombia in 2025.

Finally, with the study [“Opportunities and advances in the construction of the EU-CELAC Higher Education Area”](#) written by Francisco Sánchez and Sara Martín Bardera from the University of Salamanca, the EU-LAC Foundation has made a relevant contribution to the dialogue among governmental actors, specialized entities, academic communities, and research networks regarding the challenges of an institutional framework and existing policies, but also regarding the dimensions in which the bi-regional Higher Education Area has materialized as a socially constructed space through interactions, alliances, specific agreements, and qualifications. As the authors write:

*“Although there is a clear asymmetry in the relationship between the EU and CELAC partners who want to build the bi-regional Higher Education Area, some windows of opportunity have been found to develop collaboration areas, despite the inequality of capacities evident from the fact that the European equivalent has a consolidated institutional configuration, with its own budget and capacity to design and execute public policies, as well as to make mandatory decisions about its members, while the trajectory of CELAC is still emerging (...) In sum, the analysis of the advances shows that the construction of the EU-CELAC HEA offers more positive than negative externalities, so it is necessary to continue promoting it simultaneously and at different levels. At the macro level, in the convergence of university systems in Latin America and the Caribbean; at the micro level, in the collaboration between laboratories, courses of studies, departments, colleges or universities from both regions. An advance at this lower level will lay the foundations for the reduction of mutual mistrust and uncertainties while showing the benefits of networking in the context of cooperation. This spirit is already present in the logic with which the Erasmus student exchange programme works, where the operational part of the system is mainly executed at the level of the university degrees from which the students come and is also in its origin, prior to the Bologna process”<sup>2</sup>.*

## Objectives of the Workshop

Taking this background into consideration, and to follow up on the agreements of the last JIRI SOM, the Foundation proposes to organize a Workshop with the representatives from public institutions, associations, and scientific networks that have been involved in the activities and meetings of the JIRI, on one hand, and have worked towards the establishment of the EU-CELAC Common Higher Education Area, on the other hand, with the purpose of:

- Making visible the role of higher education and the university sector in generating competencies and knowledge required to provide solutions to the multiple crises of our times and the processes of social, economic, and environmental transition – that is, to the central themes of the bi-regional agenda;

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<sup>2</sup> Sánchez and Martín Bardera (2024): Opportunities and advances in the construction of the EU-CELAC Higher Education Area. EU-LAC Foundation, Hamburg: p. XIV and XVI;  
<https://eulacfoundation.org/en/opportunities-and-advances-construction-eu-celac-higher-education-area>

- Facilitating an area for dialogue among stakeholders promoting cooperation between Latin America and the Caribbean and the European Union in the field of Higher Education, Science, Technology, and Innovation to identify shared priorities, address ‘blind spots’ and gaps that should be overcome to link ongoing processes and initiatives, explore possibilities for cooperation, and create synergies that enhance the impact of efforts generated; and
- Gathering proposals from institutions and networks and producing a publication that offers recommendations and helps guide cooperation between both regions in the field of Higher Education, Science, Technology, and Innovation.

### **Institutions and invited participants**

The EU-LAC Foundation extends invitations for this Workshop to representatives of institutions, networks, and associations that have participated in the working group on “Objectives and Strategic Lines for the Construction of the EU-CELAC Common Higher Education Area” (ANUIES, ASCUN, AUGM, CSUCA, ENLACES, EUA, EU-CELAC University Council, FAP ALC-UE, OBREAL Global, OEI, SEGIB, Universities Caribbean, LERU, UDUAL). Similarly, representatives of institutions and Member States who coordinate and actively participate in the processes and working groups of the JIRI will be invited to this Workshop.

It is expected that all participants of the workshop will send, several days in advance of the Workshop, a text of 3-5 pages (in Spanish or English) in which they develop their perspectives, ideas, and proposals on one or several of the topics to be addressed in the Workshop, selecting the topic(s) to which their institution can most contribute to. In order to steer both the elaboration of the written statements and the dialogue during the workshop, several guiding questions have been formulated for each theme to be addressed (see programme). Thus, the papers written before the workshop will not only serve for each participant’s preparation for the Workshop, but they will be also used as inputs for the publication that the EU-LAC Foundation will compile as a deliverable of the workshop. The publication shall be subsequently disseminated among the policymakers of both regions.

### **Languages**

In this workshop, attendees may use one of the two working languages of the EU-LAC Foundation in which they feel most comfortable speaking – English or Spanish.

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**Workshop to articulate the efforts of actors promoting the 'Joint Initiative on Research and Innovation' and the 'EU-CELAC Common Space for Higher Education'**

**- Tentative Programme -**

**Location:** Cervantes Institute in Hamburg  
Fischertwiete 1 (Chilehaus, Entrance B, 1st floor, auditorium)  
20095 Hamburg, Germany

**Monday, 8<sup>th</sup> April 2024**  
**11:00-18:00 (CEST)**

**11:00 – 11:10**      **Welcome remarks and brief introduction**  
**Dr. Adrián Bonilla** – Executive Director, EU-LAC Foundation

**11:10 – 13:30**      **Session 1: Higher Education and mobility promoting research in the European, Latin American, and Caribbean area**

Moderator: TBA  
Rapporteur: TBA

Prepared interventions by participants

Guiding questions for dialogue:

- Which experiences has your institution/ organisation/ network made with mobility schemes with partners from the other region?
- What would be the lessons learnt and the biggest challenges in this respect, and how could they be overcome?
- How could mobility schemes promoted by different actors be linked and thus enhance exchanges and work between research communities in both regions?

**13:30 – 14:30**      **Lunch break**

**14:30 – 16:00**      **Session 2: Universities in Europe, Latin America, and the Caribbean and their cooperation in research infrastructures**

Moderator: TBA  
Rapporteur: TBA

Interventions prepared by participants

Guiding questions for dialogue:

- Which experiences has your institution/ organisation/ network made regarding cooperation related to research infrastructures with partners from the other region?

- What are the most significant developments and gaps, and how could these be overcome?
- How could bi-regional research infrastructure cooperation initiatives be enhanced and create more impact?

**16:00 – 16:30**    **Coffee break**

**16:30 – 18:00**    **Session 3: Research agendas and networks focusing on global challenges (Green Transition, Health, Digitalization) in European, Latin American, and Caribbean Universities**

Moderator: TBA  
Rapporteur: TBA

Prepared interventions by participants

Guiding questions for Dialogue:

- What experiences has your institution/ organisation/ network made with research on global challenges with partners from the other region?
- What shared interests and lessons learnt exist between research centres in both regions whose work focuses on global challenges?
- How could existing bi-regional networks and consortia be better articulated to create greater synergies and thus increase the impact of research for sustainable development?

**Tuesday, 9th April 2024**  
**09:30-13:00 (CEST)**

**09:30 – 11:00**    **Session 4: Innovation hubs in European, Latin American, and Caribbean universities and their links with productive actors and the community**

Moderator: TBA  
Rapporteur: TBA

Prepared interventions by participants

Guiding questions for Dialogue

- What have been good practices or experiences regarding hubs and innovation initiatives among universities in Latin America, the Caribbean and Europe?
- What needs and 'blind spots' exist in this respect and deserve more attention in bi-regional programmes and initiatives that foster innovation and research?
- How could capacity building and scientific knowledge exchange between research centres and innovation-driven initiatives in both regions be enhanced?

**11:00 – 11:30**    **Coffee break**

**11:30 – 13:00**     **Session 5: Opportunities and Challenges in Articulating Actors and Initiatives Promoting Cooperation between Latin America, the Caribbean, and the European Union in Higher Education, Science, Technology, and Innovation**

Moderator: TBA

Rapporteur: TBA

Participant Interventions

Guiding questions for Dialogue:

- *How could university cooperation between both regions be strengthened through greater utilization of open-access platforms and databases?*
- *How could bi-regional research networks, consortia, and initiatives benefit more from existing programmes, such as Horizon Europe?*
- *What new opportunities does the Global Gateway Investment Agenda offer to enhance bi-regional research networks, consortia, and initiatives in areas such as digital infrastructure, green transition, or health?*
- *How could actors working towards the bi-regional Higher Education Area and those more closely involved in the Common Research Area better articulate to provide scientific solutions to the central challenges of the EU-CELAC bi-regional agenda?*

**13:00 – 13:30**     **Closing remarks**

Rapporteurs of Sessions 1, 2, 3, 4, 5

**Dr. Adrián Bonilla**, Executive Director, EU-LAC Foundation