



EU-LAC Foundation
Fundación EU-LAC

EU-LAC Dialogue Sessions

“Initiatives for the financing and equitable distribution of vaccines against Covid-19 in middle-income countries of Latin America and the Caribbean”

March 23, 2021 – Opening & Dialogue Session I (15:00-17:30 CET // 08:00-10:30 CDMX)

March 24th, 2021 – Dialogue Session II & Closing (15:00-17:30 CET // 08:00-10:30 CDMX)

Virtual Event

- Concept Note -

Introduction

The High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy of the European Union, Josep Borrell, emphasised a few weeks ago the **need to strengthen relations between the European Union and Latin America and the Caribbean in a global context that reinforces the interdependence of our regions in the face of the magnitude of the COVID-19 crisis** with an increase in inequality and global human insecurity on both sides of the Atlantic. The commitment of both regions in the defense of multilateralism and the 2030 Agenda is the starting point to strengthen our alliance, intensifying a cooperation agenda with a balanced approach according to different realities, but with a common goal: to join forces to overcome this global crisis through a solid, inclusive and sustainable response.

The **'herd immunity'** that interrupts the transmission and prevents new uncontrolled outbreaks and the appearance of new variants, is the first challenge to overcome the crisis, accompanied by a strengthening of comprehensive social protection systems and economic recovery. The global commitment to the connection between health and science, supported by political will, has mobilised all available capacities and resources to achieve the production of various available vaccines in a very short time. But to cope with the pandemic, **an equal and fast access to safe and vaccines** is necessary across the globe.

Last year, the government of **Mexico**, which holds the pro tempore presidency of the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC), was supported by more than 160 countries at the United Nations in its **initiative to guarantee equal access to medicines, vaccines and medical equipment to deal with Covid-19**. However, in a virtual meeting of the United Nations Security Council on February 17, 2021, the Mexican Foreign Minister, Marcelo Ebrard, had to confirm that, according to recent data from the World Health Organization (WHO), a group of 10 countries that account for 60% of the global GDP have applied three quarters of the first doses of vaccines administered, while more than 100 countries have not received even one dose, or else administered some “symbolic” doses. The Minister of Foreign Affairs thus urged countries “to avoid hoarding vaccines and to accelerate the first stages of Covax deliveries”.

The **COVAX initiative** was created to meet this triple objective to immunise a minimum of 20% of the population in 2021 and deter the acute phase of the pandemic. To this end, it relies on the **Advance Market Commitment (AMC)** mechanism, in order to make vaccines accessible to 92 low-income and middle-income countries, financed through **Official Development Assistance (ODA)**



and private actors. The rest of the adhering countries, the so-called “*self-financed*”, assume the purchase or purchase option through COVAX, financed with their own resources. In addition to the financial challenge (funding of around 5 billion dollars is required), these countries and their health systems have to take on logistical challenges related to the distribution and storage.

Latin America and the Caribbean is a case in point for the complex situation of many middle-income countries. The impact of COVID-19 is aggravating their vulnerability and inequalities, and in several countries the instruments designed do not offer an adequate response. Countries in the region that are eligible for the AMC are Bolivia, Dominica, El Salvador, Grenada, Guyana, Haiti, Honduras, Nicaragua, Saint Lucia, and Saint Vincent and the Grenadines. The other states can only opt for one of the two COVAX modalities for self-financed countries, - under the same conditions as the states with greater resources. As recognised by the Pan American Health Organisation (PAHO), this mechanism constitutes the most viable option for most of the countries in the region to access the vaccine as soon as possible. In this global context, **vaccines have become an essential element of geopolitics**, where the great powers seek to consolidate new leadership through bilateral vaccine supply agreements for middle-income countries that complement the action of the COVAX platform.

For its part, the **European Union, the driving force behind the COVAX initiative**, has the opportunity to implement a global health strategy, within the framework of a new vision of cooperation capable of making global public goods such as vaccines available and guaranteeing global human security. This initiative not only has the potential to contribute to a sustainable response to this global crisis, but also to deepen relations between the European Union and Latin America and the Caribbean, for the benefit of their respective citizens.

The **EU-LAC Foundation** aims to strengthen the bi-regional strategic partnership. We are a privileged space for dialogue and connection between actors from both regions, for the multidisciplinary exchange of experiences and knowledge on sustainable development, and in 2021 we have set ourselves the objective of delving into relevant aspects related to the impact of COVID-19 from a comprehensive perspective on public health and its global implications. In this context, we propose a specific reflection on current vaccination challenges for middle-income countries in Latin America and the Caribbean and the role States, regional organisations, multilateral and public-private initiatives play in this regard.

Objectives

Against this background, the EU-LAC Foundation organises the Dialogue Sessions addressing "Initiatives for the financing and equitable distribution of vaccines against COVID-19 in middle-income countries of Latin America and the Caribbean" with the aim to:

- **foster dialogue on the technical, financial and logistical challenges** involved in the procurement and the distribution of Covid-19 vaccines in Latin American and Caribbean countries - particularly in middle-income countries;
- create **greater awareness and knowledge about public and public-private initiatives** that have been developed at national, regional and international levels to finance and manage the equitable, safe and rapid provision of vaccines;
- stimulate the **articulation of proposals on how to streamline and improve the initiatives and instruments already developed**, in order to generate a more effective and comprehensive vaccination strategy and, in so doing, to strengthen the relationship between Latin America and the Caribbean and the European Union.



Format

The event will be organised throughout two days:

- **Opening & Dialogue Session I**
March 23rd, 2021 - 15:00-17:30 CET // 08:00-10:30 CDMX
- **Dialogue Session II & Closing**
March 24th, 2021 - 15:00-17:30 CET // 08:00-10:30 CDMX

In the **first EU-LAC Dialogue Session**, we will start from the fact that various middle-income countries in Latin America and the Caribbean are not eligible for the AMC and depend entirely on their own resources to finance the acquisition of doses through COVAX under the same conditions as higher income countries. Many States had demonstrated a high level of indebtedness before the pandemic, and this situation has been intensifying with the economic crisis generated by COVID-19. These financial challenges are compounded by other issues related to the eligibility of certain mechanisms to access vaccines. In addition, States are facing considerable challenges in organising the logistics of vaccine distribution. The experts invited to participate in this session will present and exchange their views on these challenges and offer possible solutions to adequately address those challenges.

The dimension of the COVID-19 pandemic highlights the fact that vaccines constitute a global public good whose development, production and distribution among all citizens of the planet can be ensured only through strengthened multilateral efforts, innovative international cooperation instruments and public-private partnerships for global health. Therefore, in the **second EU-LAC Dialogue Session** it is planned to present public and public-private initiatives that have been developed at global, bi-regional, regional and sub-regional levels to ensure an equitable and rapid provision of vaccines by States. At the same time, the experts invited to this session will be invited to analyse what steps would be necessary to make ongoing initiatives more effective, and what aspects, from their points of view, have been neglected so far.

In each of these two sessions, the speakers will be invited to share their ideas about the role which the States as well as regional, multilateral and public-private organisations and initiatives play to accelerate and make the strategy to address the global crisis effective, and, in so doing, also taking a greater advantage of the potential of the strategic partnership between Europe and Latin America and the Caribbean. In this sense, emphasis should be made on the link between the EU's commitment to the COVAX initiative and its leadership in the design of the global health strategy with a broad and consensual approach to cooperation for sustainable development. In addition to reflecting on the limitations of donating surpluses as Official Development Assistance, we suggest evaluating the possibility of adapting bi-regional cooperation mechanisms to the specific needs of middle-income countries.

In the **opening and closing sessions**, the President and the Executive Director of the EU-LAC Foundation will be accompanied by high-level representatives of the EU-CELAC bi-regional association, in order to link the dialogue and the proposals generated during these EU-LAC Dialogue Sessions with consultation and decision-making authorities in both regions.



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Due to the health situation that continues to be critical, **the format of the event will be virtual**. The event will be open for participation - **subject to pre-registration in digital platforms** - to representatives of all EU-LAC International Foundation members as well as to the general interested public.

Invited speakers will deliver their speeches and interventions in **English** or **Spanish**. A **simultaneous interpretation** service will be provided.

The sessions will be moderated by experienced facilitators, and guests will receive some guiding questions in advance to prepare their respective presentations that will last no more than 10 minutes, in order to leave sufficient space for a dialogue between the speakers and for attending questions from the registered public.

All **sessions of the event will be recorded**, and the EU-LAC Foundation will publish videos and a **report** summarising the discussions held on its **website** (<https://eulacfoundation.org/en>).