



EU-LAC Foundation  
Fundación EU-LAC

Consejo Latinoamericano  
de Ciencias Sociales



Conselho Latino-americano  
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**9th Latin American and Caribbean Conference of Social Sciences (CLACSO)  
"Inequalities in Latin America and the Caribbean: Knowledge, Struggles and Transformations"**

**Workshop:**

**"Good practices to reduce inequalities in education and strengthen links between universities and society: Contributions of Universities in Latin America and the Caribbean and Europe to the achievement of the SDGs"**

**Concept Note**

**Date:** 10 June 2022

**Venue:** National Autonomous University of Mexico (UNAM), Mexico City

**Organisation:** EU-LAC Foundation, CLACSO

**Background**

In September 2015, UN member states agreed on 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and 169 targets (Agenda 2030), committing to an ambitious and challenging path to provide the world's population with fundamental and interrelated public goods, based on the principle of leaving no one behind. Together with a wide range of actors (governments, local, regional, and national governments, multilateral agencies, intergovernmental organisations, NGOs, civil society organisations, private sector, and philanthropic organisations), universities have taken on the responsibility to actively contribute to the achievement of these goals and have developed innovative measures which deserve to be visualised, shared and upscaled. At the same time, it is worth discussing the existing challenges and constraints and others that arose with the Covid-19 pandemic, as well as addressing lessons learned and the possibility of replicating innovative practices in other contexts.

In this regard, many universities have sought to ensure that their governance, institutional strategies, and policies are in line with sustainable principles. In line with the different SDGs, Higher Education institutions have adopted environmentally sustainable models and practices (green campuses, clean water, emissions, renewable energy, recycling, among others); labour as well as training regulations aligned with equity commitments and principles, including those aimed at improving the representation of women in academic and university management positions; as well as policies to facilitate access to education and knowledge and to promote poverty reduction, for example by increasing the provision of scholarships and financial support programmes for students in need.

In terms of teaching and learning, many universities have chosen to include sustainable development in curricula and methodologies, to strengthen the capacities of their teachers and to provide students with the knowledge, skills, and motivation to understand and address the SDGs, providing solid academic training so that they can apply the knowledge in their professional careers and become actors of change. Similarly, research projects have been promoted on challenges and issues that address the SDGs and whose results can inform public debates and policy decisions by providing data and evidence, analysis, proposals, and innovative solutions. In addition, universities have the relevant capacities and tools to monitor and evaluate the progress and setbacks of the policies and programmes adopted to achieve sustainable development goals.



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Not least, it is important to highlight the importance of developing strategies and a culture that openly supports the development, maintenance and improvement of alliances with other entities that, in turn, contribute positively to the transfer of knowledge and activities that link universities with their environment and have an impact on the local, regional and national environments of the universities (science with and for society; collaboration with entrepreneurs and companies; activities that have a positive impact on ecosystems and biodiversity, etc.). In this area, university outreach, Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) and/or "Sustainable Campuses" programmes, among others, have been established or strengthened.

However, the Covid-19 pandemic has had a considerable impact on these important university efforts, with implications for education, research, ongoing programmes, and partnerships, as well as the financial resources required to make progress on the issue. In terms of achieving SDG 4 (quality education), for example, according to UNESCO, two out of three countries delayed or postponed the collection of data on progress on SDG 4 targets because of the pandemic. At the same time, UNESCO estimates that approximately 200 billion dollars would need to be invested annually to achieve SDG 4 in low- and lower-middle-income countries. In this context, the EU-LAC Foundation and CLACSO believe that it is an opportune moment to give new impulses to the dialogue on the opportunities, but also the challenges that universities in Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC) and the European Union (EU) have experienced to contribute to the implementation of the SDGs.

## EU-LAC Foundation Background

The EU-LAC Foundation was established by the Heads of State and Government of the European Union (EU) and the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC) in 2010. Its members are the EU and CELAC countries and the EU itself. The Foundation is a tool of the EU-CELAC partnership and its activities feed into the intergovernmental dialogue, in line with the bi-regional Action Plan. The Foundation's mission is to strengthen and promote the bi-regional strategic partnership, enhancing its visibility and encouraging the active participation of the respective civil societies.

In the EU-CELAC Action Plan adopted in 2015, the Heads of State and governments of both regions set out, in chapter 9, the goal of building a bi-regional Common Higher Education Area to strengthen the bi-regional partnership between the two regions - a goal that was affirmed in meetings in 2016 and 2018 by senior officials from the Ministries of Foreign Affairs of both regions.

In order to support inclusive and result-oriented dialogue between the various academic actors in both regions, the EU-LAC Foundation promoted the construction of an instrument called "Matrix of Objectives and Strategic Lines for the Construction of the Common Higher Education Area of the European Union and Latin America and the Caribbean" which defines objectives, strategies and actions needed to advance in the construction of the "EU-LAC Common Higher Education Area", and which incorporates current initiatives underway, considered relevant to bi-regional academic cooperation.

Following a series of meetings between several bi-regional, regional, and sub-regional academic and university networks and institutions from the EU and LAC, and gathering additional inputs from other institutions, the first version of a "Matrix" was elaborated in a two-year process (2018-2019). Subsequently, this document was socialised and disseminated among the membership of



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the EU-LAC Foundation and the university associations that participated in the process, as well as the stakeholders of the EU-CELAC bi-regional strategic partnership.

During a digital follow-up meeting, convened by the EU-LAC Foundation on 18 June 2021, the associations and organisations jointly updated the activities developed by the participating institutions in the "Matrix" document. Likewise, perspectives were exchanged on priority areas of action contained in the Matrix that could be implemented in the short and medium-term, eventually among various stakeholders, to create greater synergies and strengthen the work of each of the entities that have contributed to the construction of the EU-LAC Common Higher Education Area. One of these priorities focuses on the need to link reflections on scientific cooperation policies and programmes developed towards the communities and ecosystems in which universities are located, with a view to producing relevant contributions to the 2030 Agenda.

### CLACSO Background

The Latin American Council of Social Sciences (CLACSO) is an international non-governmental institution with associative status at UNESCO, created in 1967. It is currently constituted by 836 research and postgraduate centres in the field of social sciences and humanities in 55 countries in Latin America and other continents. Among the work groups devoted to the study of the university as an object of research, the one called "Politicised Social Science" stands out, which deals with the changes present in universities as institutions with a historical, political and prospective perspective. It focuses on the analysis of the abrupt changes that in the last 30 years have mutated a medieval institution from being a space for the elites to its intended universalisation. The group seeks to influence decision-making on the university policies of governments and of the institutions themselves, based on their autonomy. To this end, it combines interest in its role as a producer of knowledge, in its teaching function and in the third mission based on the link with society.

'Politicised social science' starts from contextualised, historically determined problematisation and seeks to use the capacity of praxis to revise agendas, methods, themes, and priorities. As its work cannot be limited to the contemplative, it also aims to be proactive from a new angle. Far from conscientization, enlightenment or a civilising and normative spirit, politicised social science should tend towards dialogue as a starting point, towards the equivalence of the Other and the construction of bridges of understanding with the social, without ceasing to assume conflict and dispute as driving forces of emancipatory and democratic change.

### Workshop Objectives

Based on the understanding that one of the fundamental functions of universities has been to address global, regional and local challenges and the co-production and/or transfer of viable solutions to society, the economy and the environment, the EU-LAC Foundation and CLACSO have agreed to take advantage of the space of the 9th Latin American and Caribbean Conference on Social Sciences to jointly convene this Workshop, with the aim of generating an exchange of good practices, programmes, tools and methodologies developed by Higher Education Institutions in the European Union and in Latin America and the Caribbean to promote the creation of knowledge and practices that derive positive impacts in the framework of the SDGs.



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The workshop aims to promote a fraternal dialogue and exchange of experiences among participants representing European and Latin American and Caribbean Higher Education organisations and associations motivated by the challenge of institutionalising governance structures, curricula and practices that aim at sustainable development. Through open questions to the speakers, inter-subjective and inter-institutional exchange will be fostered to recognise relevant experiences, discuss challenges in implementation and the potential transferability of these experiences, as well as to share lessons learned.

### Participants invited to the workshop

Representatives of bi-regional, regional, and sub-regional academic and university organisations and networks of the European Union and Latin America and the Caribbean that have been working on the "Matrix of Objectives and Strategic Lines for the Construction of the EU-CELAC Common Area of Higher Education" are invited to actively participate in the Workshop which is coordinated and moderated by members of the EU-LAC Foundation and the CLACSO Working Group on Politicised Social Science:

- National Association of Universities and Higher Education Institutions (ANUIES)
- Colombian Association of Universities (ASCUN)
- Association of Universities of the Montevideo Group (AUGM)
- Central American Higher University Council (CSUCA)
- EU-CELAC University Council
- Latin American and Caribbean Higher Education Area (ENLACES)
- European University Association (EUA)
- Permanent Academic Forum for Latin America and the Caribbean and the European Union (FAP-ALCUE)
- League of European Research Universities (LERU)
- OBREAL Global
- Organisation of Ibero-American States (OEI)
- Ibero-American General Secretariat (SEGIB)
- Universities Caribbean (UC)
- Union of Latin American Universities (UDUAL)

### Languages

In the Workshop, each participant will be able to intervene and articulate their ideas in the language of their choice, preferably in English or Spanish.

### References and platforms of interest

Catalan Association of Public Universities (ACUP): Universities Platform Sustainable Development Goals: <https://ods.cat/>

Global University Network for Innovation (GUNI) (2019): Implementing the 2030 Agenda at Higher Education Institutions: Challenges and Responses. Barcelona. Available online:



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[https://www.guninetwork.org/files/guni\\_publication\\_-\\_implementing\\_the\\_2030\\_agenda\\_at\\_higher\\_education\\_institutions\\_challenges\\_and\\_responses.pdf](https://www.guninetwork.org/files/guni_publication_-_implementing_the_2030_agenda_at_higher_education_institutions_challenges_and_responses.pdf)

International Association of Universities (IAU): Higher Education and Research for Sustainable Development (HESD) Portal: <https://iau-hesd.net/>

Naidorf, Judith (2015): The politicized and mobile social science of a new priority-driven Latin American agenda. *Revista De La Educación Superior*, 44(174), 19-46. ANUIES. Available online: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.resu.2015.05.001>

Sustainable Development Solutions Network (SDSN Australia/Pacific) (2017): Getting started with the SDGs in universities. A guide for universities, higher education institutions and the academic sector. Available online: <https://reds-sdsn.es/wp-content/uploads/2017/02/Guia-ODS-Universidades-1800301-WEB.pdf>

United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (2022): SGD Good Practices: A compilation of success stories and lessons learned in SDG implementation. Second Edition. Available online: [https://iau-hesd.net/sites/default/files/documents/sdgs\\_good\\_practices\\_-\\_second\\_edition\\_-\\_final\\_feb092022\\_o.pdf](https://iau-hesd.net/sites/default/files/documents/sdgs_good_practices_-_second_edition_-_final_feb092022_o.pdf)