EU-LAC Foundation
Fundación EU-LAC

Terms of Reference
For the preparation of a discussion paper on the untapped potential of the EU-LAC Global Gateway Investment Agenda in the framework of the EU-CELAC partnership and the strategic opportunities of the bi-regional trade and association agreements

Background

The **IV Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC) – European Union (EU) Heads of State and Government Summit** that took place in Colombia in November 2025 provided a strategic opportunity for high authorities from both regions to discuss a wide range of topics and renew their commitment to work jointly *inter alia* on the promotion of trade and investment, the defence of multilateralism, the fostering of social cohesion and digital transformation, cooperation on citizen security and justice and the fight against transnational organised crime[1].

Concerning trade and investment, the EU-LAC Global Gateway Investment Agenda (GGIA) and the extensive network of trade and association agreements were highlighted as significant tools for strengthening the bi-regional partnership. In the case of GGIA, the Summit Declaration §29 establishes: *"We [the Heads of State and Government] welcome the development and collaborative potential of the EU-LAC Global Gateway Investment Agenda as an instrument for the implementation of mutually beneficial partnerships, within the framework of development in its three dimensions based on real co-ownership and high standards aimed at the wellbeing of our peoples, while taking into account the shared priorities of both regions, in those States participating in the initiative".*

Regarding its follow-up, a document commissioned and published by the EU-LAC Foundation in the run-up to the Summit called ***"Maximizing Opportunities for Sustainable Investments"***, provides valuable recommendations to ensure GGIA is further bolstered in both regions as an *efficient, credible and effective instrument for large-scale investments with high social impacts*[2], thus avoiding alienating partner countries – their views, opinions and knowledge – and maximise its potential.

For instance, addressing structural issues and shaping GGIA to establish mutually beneficial and more inclusive partnerships would allow for the two regions to cooperate effectively and efficiently on several strategic sectors such as critical and strategic raw materials, green transition, sustainability and digitalisation. Other areas include health, research & innovation, and education.

The document argues that, if correctly implemented, the Global Gateway Investment Agenda could also become a point of access for both EU and LAC companies in both regions. The recent inauguration of the **Global Gateway Investment Hub** is an example of opening opportunities for the private sector through advantageous EU-backed fundings for initiatives operated in partner countries[3].

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[1] Community of Latin American and Caribbean States & European Union. (2025). Joint declaration of the CELAC-EU Summit 2025. Santa Marta, Colombia. https://eulacfoundation.org/sites/default/files/attachments/2025-11/joint_statement_celac_eu.pdf

[2] Ruano, L.; Polin, M. (2025). Maximizing opportunities for sustainable investments. *EU–LAC Foundation.*

[3] For more details on the Investment Hub workings, look at the official website pages of the European Commission. Investment Hub: https://international-partnerships.ec.europa.eu/investment-hub_en. Launch of the Global Gateway Investment Hub: https://global-gateway-forum.ec.europa.eu/news/launch-global-gateway-investment-hub-empowering-eu-private-sector-engagement-worldwide-2025-10-08_en?utm_source=copilot.com.

Concerning **energy transition**, since first adopted, this has ranked high in EU-LAC GGIA's priorities, engaging all the 33 LAC countries with its initiatives[4]. However, energy transition is heavily reliant on raw materials – minerals and REEs –, and their supply and value chains is one of the most contested topics nowadays, as well as being a source of deep market competition between other actors (namely China that holds the almost-monopoly over the sector). Thus, the supply/demand of raw materials is one of the main challenges countries have to face nowadays, and where great cooperations efforts – through investments and partnerships – could present the most potential.

Latin America is home to many **critical and strategic raw materials** needed in numerous sectors e.g., lithium, copper, natural graphite, borate and niobium amongst others[5]. However, the raw materials sector in the LAC region has been limited to upstream operations, leaving the value-added-generating part of the supply chain (the processing phase) to other countries – mainly China[6]. With EU's Critical Raw Materials Act in force since 2024 and steps being made towards a Critical Raw Materials Club, this sector could serve as a strategic opportunity for enhanced mutually advantageous collaboration between both regions[7].

Topics such **as research and innovation (R&I) and education** are also included under the umbrella of energy transition. Clear example of this are the research projects funded in the Caribbean region on how to efficiently transform and employ environmental "liabilities" into opportunities. This refers particularly to *sargassum*, an algae that, thanks to these R&I initiatives, has been converted into biofuel, used for water purification processes and employed in the agricultural sector[8]. One of the goals is to increase the linkages of cooperation between research centres, experts and the private sector, which could also entail strategic opportunities for bi-regional cooperation.

Besides energy transition and bioeconomy development, EU-LAC GGIA was also highlighted during the CELAC-EU Summit 2025 when discussing initiatives around **digitalisation** since it has been supporting the EU-LAC Digital Alliance since its entry into force in 2023 for "*an inclusive and human-centric digital transformation*"[9]. Examples of initiatives included the extension of the BELLA cable programme to Central America and the Caribbean, organising policy dialogues on cybersecurity

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[4] EU Commission. (n.d.). EU-LAC Global Gateway Investment Agenda. https://international-partnerships.ec.europa.eu/policies/global-gateway/eu-lac-global-gateway-investment-agenda_en#a-fair-green-transition. EU Commission. (2023). EU-LAC Global Gateway Investment Agenda. Infographics. https://international-partnerships.ec.europa.eu/publications-library/eu-lac-global-gateway-investment-agenda-infographics_en

[5] Geological Survey of Sweden. (2024). Critical and Strategic Raw Materials. https://www.sgu.se/en/mineral-resources/critical-raw-materials/

[6] For example, according to the International Energy Agency (IEA), China controls 98% of the processing/production phase of Lithium-Ion Batteries (the main components of EVs), one of the sectors forecasted to grow the most in the 2040, 2050 transition scenarios.
IEA. (2025). Global Critical Minerals Outlook 2025. https://www.iea.org/reports/global-critical-minerals-outlook-2025

[7] Findeisen, F. (2023). The Club Approach Towards Successful EU Critical Raw Materials Diplomacy. *Hertie School Jacques Delors Centre.* https://www.delorscentre.eu/fileadmin/2_Research/1_About_our_research/2_Research_centres/6_Jacques_Delors_Centre/Publications/20231031_Findeisen_CriticalRawMaterials.pdf

[8] For more information it is suggested to visit the page of the European Commission, particularly the infographics of Caribbean countries, e.g. Dominican Republic and Haiti. Example project: "*Turning the tide - Sustainable practices and economic opportunities for sargassum value chain development in the Caribbean Basin*", available at: https://international-partnerships.ec.europa.eu/policies/global-gateway/turning-tide-sustainable-practices-and-economic-opportunities-sargassum-value-chain-development_en

[9] European Commission. (n.d.). EU-LAC Digital Alliance. https://international-partnerships.ec.europa.eu/policies/global-gateway/eu-latin-america-and-caribbean-digital-alliance_en

and connectivity, the establishment of COPERNICUS centres and the Digital Accelerator programme to foster cooperation amongst the private sectors.

More generally, during the Summit in Colombia, the EU-LAC Global Gateway Investment Agenda was welcomed as an instrument for the implementation of mutually beneficial partnerships under the trade and investment chapter due to its alignment with the United Nation's threefold sustainable development framework, namely economic, social and environmental dimensions.

Concerning trade and investment, the extensive network of trade and association agreements were highlighted as significant tools for strengthening the bi-regional partnership. The Heads of State and Government §27 of the Final Declaration "*acknowledged the strategic importance of agreements fostering closer economic and trade ties and enhancing economic security and prosperity*. High authorities welcomed "*the recent entry into force of the agreements between the* ***European Union and Central America, EU-Chile,*** *and* ***EU-Colombia, Ecuador and Peru****"*. The post-Summit announcement of the long-awaited **EU-Mercosur** agreement signature joined the already extensive bi-regional network that also includes the **EU-CARICOM** and the **EU-Mexico** agreements.

Building upon the importance of these agreements, especially in the current international context, the Summit Declaration includes references to existing trade barriers, obstacles and limitations to effective bi-regional relations; in fact, the Heads of State and Government §28 "*highlight the importance of advancing jointly in the reduction of trade tensions, in facilitating international trade, in improving market access, and in ensuring food security. We underscore the need to maintain channels of dialogue that allow for addressing the implications of trade barriers and to promote the economic and social wellbeing of the communities involved in international supply chains*".

On the ground, these priorities are reflected on and lay the foundation of the recently signed EU-Mercosur Partnership Agreement, whose goals are to increase bilateral trade and investment, and lower tariff and non-tariff trade barriers - notably for small and medium-sized enterprises; to create more stable and predictable rules for trade and investment through better and stronger rules, food safety standards, competition and good regulatory practices, and; to promote shared values and sustainable development, including by strengthening worker's rights, fighting climate change, ensuring environmental protection, and encouraging responsible business conduct[10].

The EU-LAC trade and association partnerships represent therefore the foundations and, currently, one of the main priorities within the bi-regional cooperation, as evidenced by the recent signature of the aforementioned partnership. In light of the conclusion of this extensive network at the bi-regional level, it is necessary to provide policy makers, business associations, entrepreneurs and other relevant stakeholders with valuable opportunities, recommendations, good practices and lessons learned to maximise the potential of both these trade and association agreements as well as of the EU-LAC Global Gateway Investment Agenda.

Objectives

This discussion paper will:

- Identify and analyse how European and Latin American and Caribbean enterprises can take advantage of the investment opportunities recently opened by GGIA, the European Union

[10] EU Commission. (n.d.) EU-Mercosur Agreement: https://policy.trade.ec.europa.eu/eu-trade-relationships-country-and-region/countries-and-regions/mercosur/eu-mercosur-agreement_en

– Mercosur Partnership Agreement (EMPA) and the Interim Trade Agreement (iTA) in key sectors, including by pooling their capacities and comparative advantages in a "team" approach,
- Explore in-depth specific cases to outline what is currently working under the umbrella of ongoing GGIA agreements and what needs to be improved in order to lead the opportunities for partner countries to their greatest potential, and;
- Provide policy makers, business associations and entrepreneurs and other relevant stakeholders with a set of recommendations and good practices.

Expected results and deliverables

The consultant it is expected to deliver:

- An executive summary of max. 1.500 words, reflecting and synthesising the results of the analysis and including recommendations for policy makers and relevant stakeholders.
- A discussion paper of 5.000 - 7,000 words (excluding the executive summary and references) that delves into how EU and LAC companies can partner to take advantage of the investment opportunities opened by GGIA, EMPA and iTA in key sectors; sheds light into good practices and challenges encountered by entrepreneurial actors in both regions so as to exploit opportunities offered under the GGIA and trade agreements; and offers , proposals of concrete action and how those commitments towards mutually beneficial partnerships could be advanced and strengthened.
- The discussion paper shall include the following sections: table of contents; the executive summary with recommendations (max. 1,500 words); introduction; thematic sections; conclusions; bibliographical references;
- The discussion paper can include tables and graphs, and, if relevant, more detailed explanations in footnotes;
- The discussion paper shall be written either in English or Spanish;
- The discussion paper shall be delivered in Word format.

Target audiences of the Discussion Paper

- Decision makers responsible for the formulation and implementation of public policies and cooperation programmes in LAC and the EU;
- Development and investment banks;
- Business associations, companies and entrepreneurs;
- Multilateral organisations;
- Scientists, researchers and analysts;
- Multipliers (e.g., journalists);
- The general public interested in the topic.

Experience and profile of the consultant

Previous experience in the subject matter, proven through:

- Academic training: A Master's degree or equivalent postgraduate qualification in international relations, economics, sustainable development and at least 5 years of

relevant professional or research experience in the field; or a Doctoral degree (PhD) and at least 3 years of relevant professional or research experience in the field.
- Record of previous publications and analysis on the subject matter of the paper;
- Previous experience in the coordination of studies and/or consultancies for third parties;
- Practical experience and/or knowledge of the bi-regional strategic partnership and in the implementation of projects that link actors from both the EU and LAC;
- Excellent written and oral language skills in English or Spanish.

Evaluation criteria

The proposals will be evaluated according to the following criteria:

- **Quality of the proposal (30%)**
  - This criteria evaluates how the submitted proposal aligns to and elaborates the objectives of the paper (each objective has a value of 10% of the total points).
  - Each objective is detailed in the above section "*objectives*" of the Terms of Reference

- **Relevance of the Proposal (20%)**
  - This criteria evaluates the consistency and alignment of the submitted proposal in relation to the two general theme of the discussion paper
  - Theme 1: "*Untapped opportunities of the GGIA in the framework of the EU-CELAC Partnership*" (10%)
  - Theme 2: "*strategic opportunities of the bi-regional trade and association agreements*" (10%)

- **Qualification of the applicant (30%)**
  - For the specific criteria on the applicants' qualifications, please refer to the section above "Experience and profile of the consultant"
  - Each box filled in the CV Form in the sections 4 and 5 will earn a 5% point value (6 boxes for a total of 30% points)

- **Bi-regional and diversified composition of applicant teams (20%)**
  - Great importance is given to balancing the authors of the paper.
  - In the case of a team applying, the bi-regional diversified composition will be considered an advantage
  - In the case of a team applying, the diversity among team members will be valued (gender, age, etc.)

The winning proposal will be selected based on the highest number of points received.

Contracting modality

The EU-LAC Foundation will remunerate the contracted consultant the total amount of **EUR 6.000**, subject to the following disbursement schedule:

- **30% (thirty per cent; EUR 1.800**) as an advance payment, after the signature of the contract.
- **70% (seventy per cent; EUR 4.200)**, once the final document has been delivered and reviewed according to the agreed terms and upon acceptance by the EU-LAC Foundation.

The document will be considered completed only when it meets the quality, format and content requirements specified in the Terms of Reference. In addition to the fee for the consultant, the EU-LAC Foundation will assume the costs for the translation (English-Spanish), layout and publication.

Work Plan

Stages of document elaboration	Dates (2026)
Publication of the ToR	17 February
Submission of proposals	18 February – 15 March
Evaluation and selection	16 – 22 March
Notification of selection Contract signing and drafting of the document	23 March
Drafting of the document	24 March – 24 May
Delivery of first draft	25 May
Review and feedback of draft	26 May – 05 June
Date of delivery of final version	21 June
Translation (ES-EN) and layout	Second half of June
Publication and dissemination	First half of July

Submission of proposals

Proposals and enquiries must be sent to Diego Durán Cruz to the following address and subject call@eulacfoundation.org **EU-LAC Discussion paper: Untapped potential GGIA and trade and association agreements.**

The results will be announced on 23 March on the website of the EU-LAC Foundation. For more information on the dates, please see the work plan in the Terms of Reference.

Data Protection

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

For their part, the author(s) will undertake, through a declaration of honour, to guarantee the originality of the text.