

FAP ALC-UE'S MODEL OF COOPERATION BETWEEN THE EUROPEAN UNION AND LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN IN THE FIELD OF HIGHER EDUCATION, SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY AND INNOVATION

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Abstract

If we think about the starting point of the cooperation between Latin America and the Caribbean and the European Union, we may have various alternatives in mind, but the frameworks that have been set up in 1999 by the First LAC-EU Summit of Heads of State and Government and in 2013 by the First CELAC-EU Summit of Heads of State and Government, we encounter a biregional partnerships between peers, based on common grounds established by the two parts. As a continuation, the cooperation extended to education, which is one of the domains outlined as important from the very beginning and which produces effects upon other features. Therefore, it is interesting to analyse the formation of the Permanent Academic Forum (FAP ALC-UE), its methodology for the process of bioregional partnership and the process of Academic Summits organised by its members.

Keywords

FAP ALC-UE, Academic Summit, biregional cooperation, higher education, science, technology, innovation

1. THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE FAP ALC-UE AND THE EUROLATINAMERICAN AND CARIBBEAN SPACE FOR HIGHER EDUCATION, SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY AND INNOVATION

The connections between the European space and the Latin-American one have experienced ups and downs along time, especially when they have been asymmetrical in terms of power relations. Nevertheless, a new phase of the interactions between the actors of the two regions has begun in 1999, when the First European Union - Latin America and the Caribbean Summit of Heads of State and Government took place in Rio de Janeiro. The change I was referring to is due to the establishment of this new type of partnership that had parity bases, which allowed the restart of the relations and made it possible for the two regions to come together in action as peers in fields such as environmental protection or cooperation in science and technology. From the beginning, education was one of the components of cooperation of the two regions, taking into account its inclusion in the final Declaration of the Rio Summit, like for example the highlighting of the necessity of strengthening of the “strategic biregional partnership in its political, economic, social, environmental, educational, cultural, technical and scientific dimensions” (Rio Declaration of the First ALC-UE Summit of Heads of State and Government 1999, 3).

In the preparation of the 2013 Summit, it became obvious that this moment was to mark another important shift in the biregional relations, because the Summit took part between the European Union (EU) and the new created Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC), meaning that the dialogue was now not only among states (the latinamerican part) and a supranational organization (the EU), but between two institutionalised actors, the CELAC and the EU. This is important especially since there is already a debate open around the lack of an institutionalised framework for harmonised regulations in higher education in Latin America and the Caribbean, although as it is demonstrated by Jocelyne Gacel in her analysis (Gacel Avila 2015, 54), that there are no unbreakable obstacles in this sense.

This is why a restart was given also to the counting of these political biregional Summits, pointing out the new stage the two where in since the creation of CELAC and the reframing of the dialogue in this paradigm, making the 2013 Summit the First EU-CELAC Summit of Heads of State and Government. This was the point where the perspectives were indicating that more actions could be developed, so academics saw the opportunity to extend the cooperation to their domain and planned to organised themselves in order to celebrate an Academic Summit that would open the door to the possibility of cooperation in their field, mainly since “both regions, to a different degree, face similar problems in this area, so a common approach, within the framework of the bi-regional strategic partnership, is clearly necessary” (Casanueva 2012, 1).

So, in 2011, a group of academics from both Latin-American and European countries started a bottom-up movement called the Permanent Academic Forum Latin America and the Caribbean – European Union (FAP ALC-UE). It would involve higher education and research at the institutional level, but also at the individual one, in order for as many to have the possibility to involve themselves and not depend on the affiliation to a certain institutions or another, envisioning what later would be defined by the members of the community as the “academic people”.

2.EVALUATION OF HALF A DECADE OF FAP ALC-UE’S WORK TOWARDS THE EUROLATINAMERICAN AND CARIBBEAN SPACE FOR HIGHER EDUCATION, SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY AND INNOVATION

The FAP ALC-UE has completed 5 years of continuous work in order to achieve the accomplishment of its objectives towards the construction of a Common Biregional Space for Higher Education, Science, Technology and Innovation, so an evaluation of its process and its results can be relevant in order for envisioning the future phases.

On the 7th of June of 2012 took place the First Preparatory Seminar of the First Latin America and the Caribbean – European Union Academic Summit (that would be held in 2013). The Seminar was organised in Paris, France, by the Institut des Ameriques, an important academic pole and partner of the academic actors in the Latin American and Caribbean space. During these works, around 80 participants decided the formation of the Latin America and the Caribbean – European Union Permanent Academic Forum (FAP ALC-UE) and its Biregional Academic Council (CAB), that was composed by 30 members, representing equally the two regions (15 were from Latin America and the Caribbean and 15 from the European Union). The name chosen comprised Latin America and the Caribbean (ALC) and not the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC), especially because this was a reflection of the profile of the members and the nature of the construction of this organization: a bottom-up public policy making, from the academic level to the political one and not a top-down one, from the political level to the academic one.

Some months later, during the 8th and 9th of October 2012, the College for Engineers in Lima, Peru, organised the Second Preparatory Seminar of the First Latin America and the Caribbean – European Union Academic Summit, with 110 participants. The main results of the academic event were the first formulation of the medium and long term objectives of the FAP ALC-UE, like for example (Report of the Second Preparatory Seminar of the First Latin America and the Caribbean – European Union Academic Summit 2012, 2):

- To advance towards a State of the Art of the process of academic and research integration, through a mapping of actors and instruments of university and research cooperation between the two regions
- To create a common accreditation procedure for higher education formation programmes that would consist of parameters and indicators for research, formation and internationalization in accordance with the academic criteria of the evaluation agencies from the EU, Latin America and the Caribbean.
- To establish a system of homologation in Latin America and the Caribbean for recognition of qualifications
- To create co-qualifications for MA and PhD study programmes
- To create a biregional programme for professional formation

- To enhance the professional and academic exchanges between the two regions
- To consolidate the transdisciplinary aspects of the biregional programmes in science and innovation

The First Latin America and the Caribbean – European Union Academic Summit was organised on the 22nd and 23rd of January 2013 by the Central University of Chile in Santiago de Chile. Around 600 participants gathered in order to make the Proposal for the Eurolatinamerican and Caribbean Space for Higher Education, Science, Technology and Innovation, in order to form the academic Pillar of the Strategic LAC-EU Partnership. Therefore, the conclusions of the Academic Summit were presented to the Heads of State and Government of the states of the two regions during their political Summit, establishing 4 main directions of action (Declaration of the First Latin America and the Caribbean – European Union Academic Summit 2013):

- To develop the Euro-Latin American space for Higher Education, science, Technology and Innovation throughout opportunities of bi-regional funding for cooperation in higher education, science, technology and innovation, developing synergies and coordinated calls
- To strengthen the integration of higher education systems throughout training, mobility and exchanges of students, educational and professional staff as well as educational, scientific and technological cooperation; A common system of accreditation in higher education; The coordination of the recognition of studies; A certification "LAC-EU Academic Common Space; The creation of a bi-regional program dedicated to vocational training
- To promote the integration of scientific research and innovation systems throughout Bi-regional transdisciplinary programs in research and innovation; The participation of Latin American and Caribbean universities, study and research centres and academics, together with their counterparts from the European Union under the Framework Program for Research and Innovation Horizon 2020, and the Joint Initiative for Research and Innovation JIRI
- To enhance collaboration between institutions of higher education and their relations with the society and the industry throughout interdisciplinary meetings, consortia and networks involving governments, higher education

institutions, social organizations and the business community; Dialogue strengthening and interaction between academia and governments in order to create suitable conditions to improve public policies in the context of fair and sustainable development; The link between universities and companies, at a local scale in both regions; Collaborative initiatives for education, innovation and internationalization based on new information technologies and communication. The First Preparatory Seminar of the Second Latin America and the Caribbean – European Union Academic Summit took place on the 26th and 27th of May 2014 in Bucharest, Romania, and was organised by the National University of Political Studies and Public Administration (SNSPA) through the Institute of Latin American Studies. The 150 participants had the responsibility of elaborating the proposal for mapping the academic networks of the Eurolatinamerican and Caribbean space, which became afterwards also an occasion for enhancing cooperation in forming biregional consortiums for applying to Horizon 2020 calls, given that the SNSPA and other higher education and research institutions formulated together a project in this sense.

The Second Preparatory Seminar of the Second Latin America and the Caribbean – European Union Academic Summit was held on the 25th and 26th of November in Guadalajara, Mexico. The University of Guadalajara organised the event for the 190 participants that got to the conclusion that it was necessary to create 4 Permanent Reflection Groups, namely GRP 1 Higher Education, GRP 2 Science, Technology and Innovation, GRP 3 Connections between Universities and Society and the Productive Sector and GRP 4 Connections between Universities and Public Policies.

The Second Latin America and the Caribbean – European Union Academic Summit took place between the 8th and the 9th of June 2015 in Brussels, Belgium. Organised by the Interuniversity Institute for Relations between the European Union and Latin America and the Caribbean, the event benefitted from the participation of 500 persons and proposed directly to the Heads of State and Government of the states of the two regions during their political Summit the following (Declaration of the Second Latin America and the Caribbean – European Union Academic Summit 2015):

- To recommend to the EU institutions and kindly ask the Ministers of Education, Science, Research and Technology of both regions the opening of a permanent space for dialogue with the Permanent Academic Forum of CELAC-EU Summit
- To create the normative and financial conditions in order to develop the Euro-Latin American and Caribbean space for Higher Education, Science, Technology and Innovation on the basis of access and equity and to guarantee the democratization of knowledge, the access to information and the transfer of technology
- To enhance legally and financially the higher education systems of both regions, incorporating the mechanisms and actions that lead to bi-regional agencies of evaluation, accreditation and financing
- To promote the cooperation of the research, technology and innovation systems, through interregional programs that define the priority areas for social and productive development and defence of biodiversity of the CELAC-EU space and enhance the relation between the Academic Summit and the Joint Initiative for Research and Innovation (JIRI)
- To favour the relation between the academic community and the public policies and the sustainable development, especially those related to the internationalization, with consideration to the strategic objectives of the bi-regional association
- To boost the collaboration of the higher education institutions with the society and the productive sector, especially the SMEs and the social economy based on solidarity.

The FAP ALC-UE's progresses towards the design of the EuroLatinamerican and Caribbean space for Higher Education, Science, Technology and Innovation were visible during the First Preparatory Seminar of the Third Latin America and the Caribbean - European Union Academic Summit, held on the 21st and 22nd of June 2016 in Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic, where the main results of the 250 participants were related to strengthening Mechanisms of the training conducting joint investigations, promoting technical education and academic linkages with manufacturing sectors, persuading bi-regional systems today, such

as ECTS accreditation, and in European and Latin American and Caribbean, pursuing qualification recognition for academic mobility and developing of multidisciplinary graduate programs (Report of the First Preparatory Seminar of the Third Latin America and the Caribbean 2016, 2-5). Moreover, the support manifested by the governmental authorities of the Dominican Republic was another sign that the FAP ALC-UE's activities are in accordance with the states' expectancy regarding this process.

The FAP ALC-UE's efforts towards the construction of the Eurolatinamerican and Caribbean space for Higher Education, Science, Technology and Innovation continued during the Second Preparatory Seminar of the Third Latin America and the Caribbean - European Union Academic Summit. It was organised by the European Institute for International Studies in Stockholm, Sweden, during the 6th and 7th of October 2016 and had a participation of approximately 150 academics and representatives of higher education and research institutions. The added value of this seminar consists not only in extending the participation and membership to researchers and academic institutions of the Nordic Countries, but also in the key points debated upon, like for example: the learning and certification of foreign languages and personal and transversal competences to promote bi-regional academic and professional mobility, ensuring the quality of higher education in EU and LAC: the need and importance of teaching in E-Learning mode, the role of higher education institutions and other social actors to address social challenges or the timeline for the creation of a Biregional Common Space (Report of the Second Preparatory Seminar of the Third Latin America and the Caribbean 2016, 2-9).

3.PERSPECTIVES OF THE FAP ALC-UE AND THE EUROLATINAMERICAN AND CARIBBEAN SPACE FOR HIGHER EDUCATION, SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY AND INNOVATION

The FAP ALC-UE is now preparing its Third Academic Summit to be held in October 2017 and which is focused on presenting the proposal for the Bases of the Establishment of the Eurolatinamerican and Caribbean Space for Higher Education, Science, Technology and Innovation.

Thus, the Permanent Reflection Groups have brought their proposals to the reunion of the Biregional Academic Council, held at the University of Salamanca on the 5th and 6th of May 2017, in order for them to be debated upon and validated by its members.

Hence, regarding higher education, the accent is put on regional and biregional accreditation systems for the quality of higher education; systems of validation of studies and recognition of qualifications, in both regions; academic mobility in each region and between regions; multidisciplinary programs; E-Learning programmes; education and interculturality; elimination of restrictions on international exchanges of educational services and higher technical education and vocational technical training.

The key elements regarding science, technology and innovation refer to national and bi-regional systems; multi-disciplinary biregional programs; policies and financing; research and innovation for sustainable development; academic and research mobility as well as research infrastructure.

The priorities that are outlined for the relations between the universities and the society cover the links of universities to the productive sector in order to build that “double track circuit” (Pinot 2013, 314) that Florence Pinot was describing, bonds to innovation, connections with the society and the upsurge of a network of networks (such as networks of alumni or networks of young professionals with training / experience in the other continent).

The conclusions of the GRP working on the relations between the universities and the public policies identify the possibilities of building the Biregional

Common Space in accordance with the 2030 Development Goals, focusing on the ties between the space and policies for sustainable development, gender policies, housing policies and health policies, especially given the fact that the universities' role is also to "contribute to the elaboration of public policies that are consistent with areas of priority development and the modernization requirements of the State" (Rosell 2013, 25)

4.SPECIFIC REMARKS ON FAP ALC-UE'S MODEL IN BUILDING THE EUROLATINAMERICAN AND CARIBBEAN SPACE FOR HIGHER EDUCATION, SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY AND INNOVATION

As shown in previous sections, the activities of the FAP ALC-UE have been vital for shaping the Eurolatinamerican and Caribbean Space for Higher Education, Science, Technology and Innovation. Moreover, The FAP ALC-UE has set up and perfected its own model of biregional cooperation, by bringing together the two regions through a bottom-up approach of its smaller-scale components (such as local, regional or national higher education and research institutions) or even individuals.

The FAP ALC-UE's working sessions during its Preparatory Seminars or Academic Summits have highlighted the importance of some elements of university education, but also professional training one, especially since "we cannot neglect technical education of high qualification" (Barcena 2016, 64), as Alicia Barcena, Secretary General of the CEPAL, put it in an intervention at the Second Academic Summit in 2015. Moreover, the workshops for science, technology and innovation have taken into account the existing bonds identified by the JIRI SOMs. Likewise, the workshops regarding the links with the society have led to connections with the Chambers of Commerce of Belgium or institutions of Property Rights. Furthermore, the working sessions related to the links between universities and public policies take into consideration the need

for the policies in higher education and research to be in accordance with the 2030 Development Goals and outlines the use of the bottom-up policy making approach, considering that the universities and research centres can formulate and implement norms at the local level, making it possible to come to common grounds in certain points with other peers, leading to the harmonization of regulations that will result in the transfer of this common framework at higher institutional levels, until reaching the top of the decision making at national, regional or biregional level.

These activities of the FAP ALC-UE have been organised by the members and also financed by them, starting with the resources for the participation to seminars or summits and finishing with the ones for the organization of these events, which are responsibility of the Local Organizing Committee. These facts highlight the commitment of the members given fact that the costs can be quite high for the participants, especially since the events are held on their continent or on the one across the ocean. Also, the institutions that host the events put all their logistics at service of the FAP ALC-UE in order for all conditions to be fulfilled for a good development of the works.

Hence, the need for institutionalization was felt by the FAP ALC-UE's members, which took action in this sense at the Biregional Academic Council celebrated on the 1st of February 2016 in Lisbon, Portugal, where various official documents of the FAP ALC-UE were adopted, some meant to advance on the content (such as the 2015-2017 Action Plan), some meant to formalize the procedures of the FAP ALC-UE (like for example the Guide for Preparatory Seminars, the Guide for Academic Summits or the Guidelines of the Permanent Reflection Groups), and others meant to create the institutional framework of this organization (like for example the Statutes, the validation through elections of the President, the Advisory Commission, the Executive Secretariat, the Biregional Academic Council and the Permanent Reflexion Groups).

Consequently, the FAP ALC-UE is constant to its pledge in its Statutes, according to which the Permanent Academic Forum Latin America and Caribbean - European Union is an "independent, pluralist and inclusive association of universities, institutions, associations, scholars, professors, researchers, technical personnel specialised and graduates of Higher Education and Study and

Research Centres from the countries members of the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC) and of the European Union, to undertake joint efforts that will contribute to the construction of a Common Space for Higher Education, Science, Technology and Innovation, as part of the bi-regional strategic partnership LAC-EU" (Biregional Academic Council, Statutes of the organization 2016, 1).

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