



LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN

The EU's relations with Latin America and the Caribbean are multifaceted and conducted at different levels. The EU interacts with the entire region through summits of the heads of state and government, while agreements and political dialogue bind the EU and the Caribbean, Central America, the Andean Community, Mercosur and individual countries.

LEGAL BASIS

- Title V (EU external action) of the Treaty on European Union;
- Titles I-III and V (common commercial policy; development cooperation and humanitarian aid; international agreements) of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union.

REGION-TO-REGION RELATIONS

A. The summits

The first summit between the EU, Latin America and the Caribbean was held in Rio de Janeiro in June 1999 and established a 'Bi-regional Strategic Partnership'. The most recent biennial summit, held in June 2015 in Brussels, was the second between the EU and the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (Comunidad de Estados Latinoamericanos y Caribeños, CELAC). The summits strengthen links between the two regions at the highest level and address issues on the bi-regional and the international agenda. Debates have focused on topics such as democracy and human rights; fighting poverty; promoting social cohesion, innovation and technology; and the environment and climate change. The Brussels summit adopted a short political declaration, a longer declaration on the different aspects of the partnership and an EU-CELAC 'Action Plan', based on the priorities established by the recent summits. The plan sets out ten priority areas for bi-regional cooperation:

- Science, research, innovation and technology;
- Sustainable development and the environment, climate change, biodiversity and energy;
- Regional integration and interconnectivity to promote social inclusion and cohesion;
- Migration;
- Education and employment to promote social inclusion and cohesion;
- The global drug problem;
- Gender;
- Investments and entrepreneurship for sustainable development;
- Higher education;
- Citizens' security.

The EU-CELAC summit originally scheduled to take place in El Salvador in October 2017 has been postponed. The foreign ministers from the two regions met in Brussels on 16 and 17 July 2018. They adopted a declaration focusing on strengthening bi-regional cooperation in global forums.

B. The parliamentary dimension

Regular contact between members of the European Parliament and Latin American members of parliament started in 1974 with the first of 17 interparliamentary conferences. This was the first — and for many years the only — forum for institutionalised political dialogue between Europe and Latin America. In 2006, the joint Euro-Latin American Parliamentary Assembly (‘EuroLat’), the parliamentary institution of the Bi-regional Strategic Partnership, replaced the interparliamentary conferences. EuroLat serves as a forum to debate, monitor and review all questions relating to the partnership. It has 150 members: 75 from the European Parliament and 75 from Latin American sub-regional parliaments, including the Parlatino (Latin American Parliament), the Parlandino (Andean Parliament), the Parlacen (Central American Parliament), the Parlasur (Mercosur Parliament) and the Congresses of Chile and Mexico. Since 2006, EuroLat has held 11 ordinary plenary sessions, most recently in September 2018.

RELATIONS WITH SUB-REGIONS

A. Central America (Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua and Panama)

Relations with Central American countries have developed on the basis of the ‘San José Dialogue’. Initiated in 1984, the dialogue has since broadened to issues including economic and social development, migration and security. Following the first two cooperation agreements concluded in 1985 and 1993, a Political Dialogue and Cooperation Agreement was signed in 2003, introducing various new areas of cooperation. An Association Agreement, the first region-to-region agreement of this type concluded by the EU, was signed in June 2012 and ratified by the European Parliament in December 2012. It establishes the goal of developing a privileged political partnership based on values, principles and common objectives, reinforcing human rights, reducing poverty, fighting inequality, preventing conflict, and encouraging good governance, security, regional integration and sustainable development. The Association Agreement also liberalises trade in industrial products and fisheries and eliminates most tariffs on agricultural trade. The agreement’s trade chapter provisionally entered into force during 2013 (on different dates for different countries). An Association Parliamentary Committee, composed of MEPs and members of the Parlacen and of Costa Rica’s and Panama’s national parliaments, will monitor the implementation of the agreement.

B. Andean Community (Bolivia, Colombia, Ecuador and Peru)

The EU has maintained regular contact with the Andean countries since the 1969 founding of the Andean Group (later called the Andean Community). The first Cooperation Agreement was signed in 1983, followed by a broader Framework Cooperation Agreement in 1993. In December 2003, the two regions concluded a Political Dialogue and Cooperation Agreement, which further broadened the scope of the cooperation but has not yet entered into force. Negotiations on an Association Agreement started in June 2007 and finally led to a multi-party trade agreement with Peru and Colombia in March 2010. The trade agreement, signed in June 2012 and ratified by the European Parliament in December 2012, entered into force with Peru on 1 March 2013 and with Colombia on 1 August 2013. The agreement provides for the total liberalisation of trade in industrial products and fisheries over 10 years (with most tariffs eliminated upon its entry into force) and increases market access for agricultural products. The

agreement covers public procurement, investment, human rights and labour and environmental standards. Ecuador joined the trade agreement on 1 January 2017.

C. Mercosur (Argentina, Brazil, Paraguay and Uruguay)

The EU and the Southern Common Market (Mercado Común del Sur, Mercosur), founded in 1991, have maintained institutional relations since 1992. In 1995, they signed an Interregional Framework Agreement, establishing regular political dialogue and setting out objectives and arrangements for trade and economic cooperation, including in the areas of investment promotion, transport, the environment, and science and technology.

Negotiations on an Association Agreement, including political dialogue, cooperation and free trade, started in 1999. After being suspended in 2004, negotiations resumed in 2010, focusing on the political and cooperation chapters and the ‘normative’ part of the trade chapter (rules of origin, etc.), but stalled again in 2012. However, after the parties reaffirmed their commitment to reach an agreement, they exchanged offers on market access for goods, services and government procurement in May 2016 and the negotiations started again. Despite the two parties’ commitment, their goal to reach a deal on an Association Agreement by late 2017 was not met and the negotiations continue in 2018. On various occasions, the European Parliament has expressed its support for an ambitious and balanced agreement that takes account of the sensitivities of both regions’ economic sectors.

D. The Caribbean

The EU has historically maintained strong relations with the Caribbean. This stems in large part from the colonial presence of European countries in the region; many are still present through Overseas Countries and Territories (OCTs). EU-Caribbean relations are shaped by various overlapping institutional frameworks. The most important are the Cotonou Agreement, signed in 2000 with 79 African, Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) countries, and the EU-Cariforum Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA), signed in 2008. The key partner for the bi-regional dialogue with the EU is Cariforum. Of the organisation’s 16 members, 14 — Antigua and Barbuda, the Bahamas, Barbados, Belize, Dominica, Grenada, Guyana, Haiti, Jamaica, St Kitts and Nevis, St Lucia, St Vincent and the Grenadines, Suriname, Trinidad and Tobago — are members of the Caribbean Community (Caricom). The Dominican Republic (a signatory to the Cotonou Agreement and the EPA) and Cuba, which holds a special status, are also members.

Since November 2012, EU-Caribbean relations have been governed by the Joint EU-Caribbean Partnership Strategy (JECS), which provides a structured framework for broader and deeper dialogue and cooperation. The strategy sets out five priority areas: regional cooperation and integration; the reconstruction of Haiti; climate change and natural disasters; crime and security; and joint action in bi-regional and multilateral forums and on global issues.

Interparliamentary relations are an important part of EU-Caribbean ties. In addition to dedicated regional meetings and the broader ACP-EU Joint Inter-parliamentary Assembly, the 2008 EPA established a Cariforum-EU Joint Parliamentary Committee to monitor the implementation of the agreement. The Committee has met three times, most recently from 31 October to 1 November 2017 in Trinidad and Tobago.

RELATIONS WITH INDIVIDUAL COUNTRIES

A. Mexico

Mexico and the EU have maintained diplomatic relations since 1960. Following a 1975 Cooperation Agreement and a broader 1991 Framework Cooperation Agreement, the EU and Mexico concluded the EU’s first partnership agreement with a Latin American country in 1997.

The Economic Partnership, Political Coordination and Cooperation Agreement (known as the ‘Global Agreement’) institutionalised political dialogue and broadened cooperation to different areas, including democracy and human rights. It also created an EU-Mexico free-trade area. Negotiations with Mexico to modernise the ‘Global Agreement’, which began in May 2016, led on 21 April 2018 to an ‘agreement in principle’ on the trade chapters of an updated agreement.

The Strategic Partnership established in 2009 further reinforced links with Mexico — the only country with which the EU has both an Association Agreement and a Strategic Partnership. The partnership, an expression of the EU’s recognition of Mexico’s increasing global political and economic importance, has a double goal: enhancing EU-Mexico cooperation and coordination at multilateral level on global issues, and adding political impetus to bilateral relations and initiatives. Three EU-Mexico summits have taken place under the Strategic Partnership, the latest in June 2015. There are regular high-level dialogues between the EU and Mexico on many issues, including human rights, security and law enforcement, economic issues, and the environment and climate change. The EU-Mexico Joint Parliamentary Committee has monitored the implementation of the Global Agreement since 2005.

B. Chile

The first Framework Cooperation Agreement with Chile was signed in 1990 after the country restored democracy. A regular political dialogue was established in 1995. After signing a more comprehensive Framework Cooperation Agreement in 1996, the EU concluded an Association Agreement with Chile in 2002. The agreement comprises three strands: a chapter on political dialogue, including the participation of civil society, the European Parliament and Chile’s Congress; a cooperation chapter setting out a variety of areas for cooperation to foster sustainable economic, social and environmental development; and the creation of a free-trade area in goods and services. Negotiations to update the Association Agreement began in November 2017.

The EU-Chile Joint Parliamentary Committee has monitored the implementation of the Association Agreement since 2003.

C. Brazil

In 1960, Brazil became the first South American state to recognise the European Economic Community (EEC) and establish a permanent representation in Brussels. Various cooperation agreements were signed in the following years. With the consolidation of democracy in Brazil, bilateral relations took a leap forward, leading to the broader Framework Cooperation Agreement signed in 1992. Relations with Brazil have continued to strengthen since, reflecting Brazil’s increasing global economic and political weight. In 2007, the EU and Brazil established a Strategic Partnership. Since 2007, there have been seven EU-Brazil summits, the latest in February 2014. A Joint Action Plan for 2012-2014 set out a programme of activities to enhance the partnership in five areas: peace and security; the economic, social and environmental partnership to promote sustainable development; regional cooperation; science, technology and innovation; and people-to-people exchanges. The EU-Brazil Strategic Partnership also includes a regular dialogue between Brazil’s National Congress and the European Parliament.

D. Cuba

Cuba was until recently the only country in the region not to have signed a Cooperation or Association Agreement with the EU. However, negotiations with a view to concluding a Political Dialogue and Cooperation Agreement (PDCA) began in April 2014 and were successfully concluded on 11 March 2016. The agreement was signed on 12 December 2016 and was ratified by the European Parliament on 5 July 2017. It can enter fully into force once it

has been ratified by all EU Member States. The PDCA includes three main chapters: on political dialogue, on cooperation and sector policy dialogue, and on trade. EU-Cuba relations have also been strengthened on other fronts, for instance through various high-level visits and the re-launch of a formal political dialogue.

Jesper Tvevad
10/2018