

**European Union and the Community of Latin  
American and Caribbean States**

**6th Senior Official Meeting on Science and  
Technology**

**(EU- CELAC SOM)**

**Brussels, 14 & 15 March, 2017**

**Concept Note**

**Document prepared by the ALCUE NET project as SOM Technical Secretariat in  
collaboration with related bi-regional projects and initiatives**

## Rationale

European Union and Latin American and Caribbean officials have expressed a strong commitment towards the establishment of relations with CELAC as a key region for collaboration and emphasized that the already existing instruments will allow moving towards a Common Research Area (CRA) between the two regions.

This document summarizes the efforts undertaken and main recommendations from relevant bi-regional initiatives such as ALCUE NET<sup>1</sup> and other EU-funded projects as well as the work under each Working Group to further promote the process towards the Common Research Area by scaling future bi-regional cooperation along the three pillars identified by the CRA and presents concrete suggestions to the delegates of the EU-CELAC SOM to enhance this process.

## Towards a EU-CELAC Common Research Area

During the EU-CELAC summit held in Brussels on June 2015, leaders highlighted the value of bi-regional cooperation in the field of science, technology and innovation and called for a strengthened cooperation and moving towards an EU-CELAC Common Research Area (CRA).

The Fifth Senior Officials Meeting of the EU-CELAC Joint Initiative for Research and Innovation<sup>2</sup> (JIRI) held in Brussels in 2016, has been instrumental in reviewing the EU-CELAC cooperation and agree on priorities for action under each of the key pillars of the Common Research Area, namely: increased mobility of researchers, access to research infrastructures and jointly addressing common challenges. It has also contributed to discussing thematic cooperation under Horizon 2020 and re-focusing common priorities.

Based on this context, the current Governance of the Joint Initiative for Research and Innovation need to be reviewed in line with the three strategic pillars; more exactly, there is a need to identify concrete steps that have to be taken to implement it. On this regards, the development of the EU-CELAC Common Research Area need to be supported by scaling and scoping future R&I bi-regional cooperation along the three pillars defined by this.

## Structure of the Common Research Area

The European Commission seeks to strengthen EU-CELAC research and innovation cooperation with a focus on three pillars:

- Increased mobility of researchers between the two regions, through greater alignment of between European instruments (such as, Horizon 2020 Marie Skłodowska Curie Actions and European Research Council grant schemes) and Latin American, national and/or IberoAmerican schemes to promote mobility.

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<sup>1</sup> ALCUE NET: "Latin America, Caribbean and European Union Network on Research and Innovation": A four and a half year project funded by the 7<sup>th</sup> Framework Programme of the European Union.

<sup>2</sup> The JIRI main objective is to develop the "EU-CELAC Knowledge Area" through: i) improving cooperation in research and innovation; ii) strengthening scientific and technological capacities, and infrastructures; iii) enabling sustainable research, innovation and knowledge sharing taking into account the contribution of ancestral and traditional knowledge; iv) boosting the use of new and existing technologies and technology development and transfer underpinning sustainable socio-economic development and v) fostering cooperation between both regions as regards the digital-economy and the reduction of the digital divide for improving competitiveness while making social inclusion a cross-cutting issue.

- Promotion of access to research infrastructures of global interest to improve sharing of data and scientific excellence, through the exchange of good practice in mapping of existing research and innovation, road mapping, process and methodology (such as BELLA Project).
- Focus cooperation on jointly defined grand challenges to create critical mass, through participation in multilateral initiatives (such as GACD and the Belmont Forum) and in flagship areas (such as, Health, Environmental and Climate Change, Sustainable urbanization).

## Overall governance and bi-regional decision-making process

Given the experiences of the Senior Officials Meeting and the JIRI Working Groups (JIRI WGs) in defining and specifying the course of bi-regional EU-CELAC research and innovation collaboration it is recommended to preserve these spaces of bi-regional dialogue since they provide agreed recommendations upon process and procedures for discussing, elaborating and deciding upon priorities for EU-CELAC research collaboration. However, in order to align with the Common Research Area, there is a need to review in order to accommodate the participation of Ministries and Institutions not directly related to research, but to academic mobility, innovation, and private sector development.

## Bi-regional Cooperation Framework on S&T

Over the past period (7<sup>th</sup> Framework Programme, Horizon 2020) numerous initiatives have been taken place that already contribute to the emergence of the Common Research Area. A variety of appropriate forums, thematic working groups and knowledge and information units and platforms and stakeholder networks have been set up and are functioning effectively. Several stakeholders', funders' and project mappings have produced inventories and assessments that can be used as inputs. And for various grand challenges, evidence-based inputs are available for EU-CELAC dialogue and priority setting. In all they form a solid basis for the Common Research Area to start from.

However bi-regional research and policy agendas are constructed through a long process of dialogues with many stakeholders and these agendas are only relevant if they are updated and reconfirmed periodically. This is currently being conducted as part of relevant initiatives but many of them are close to finalize. For this reason, mixed stakeholder networks formed that generate important contacts in both regions regarding research and investments need to be upkeep; data bases constructed on bi-regional Science and Technology cooperation, technically, scientifically, politically, organizationally and institutionally that have been an important source for new S&T activities need to be also updated and diffused; the valuable experiences transformed in "Best Practices" need to be value-added, etc...

On this regards, ALCUE NET project, besides serving as the technical secretariat to the SOM and JIRI WGs, has established and maintained a dynamic platform for European Commission promotion initiatives in the CELAC region, being a driver and a facilitator for identifying, exchanging and using knowledge and information relevant to joining the bi-regional common research effort; complementing and connecting with the bilateral efforts of Bilats project, Liaison Offices, thematic network projects and INCO-nets.

Following this effort, ERANet-LAC project has been established as an information and communication platform that supports funding agencies to jointly address grand challenges and access to infrastructures, offering joint working spaces to develop joint Research and Innovation funding and networking initiatives

and integrate new stakeholders from all countries interested in bi-regional cooperation, implementing jointed funding activities.

## **The next Service Facility initiative to support the development of international cooperation**

The objective is to provide services that support the policy development, priority setting, follow-up and implementation of the strategy for international cooperation in research and innovation.

The project will include awareness raising and training activities to enhance international cooperation activities in Horizon 2020, support to National Contact Points and other multipliers, organisation of meetings and events, and analysis and monitoring activities. It is expected to be implemented in 2017.

More important is that the Service Facility will be able to maintain and build on networks that have been created by past and on-going BILAT and INCO-NET projects and that are worth maintaining.

## **Future perspectives of the bi-regional cooperation**

Future bi-regional cooperation will take place under a context characterized by a large number of growing global economic, societal, social and environmental challenges, including the unprecedented acceleration in the production of knowledge. Underpinned by these, bi-regional cooperation strives to develop a collective intelligence capacity under new forms of organizations and processes, different than those of the past<sup>3</sup>.

The main vision of the EU- CELAC bi-regional cooperation should move to take place on equal grounds and overcome weaknesses at the national and inter-regional levels that include the heterogeneous policy and strategic approaches to STI.

Bi-regional cooperation moves into innovation-led. However, the mission of the bi-regional cooperation requires the solution of challenges being faced by local communities.

The new challenges require the transformation of SOM into a bi-regional cooperation “think tank”, opening bi-regional policy dialogues that enable developing or strengthening joint Strategic Research Agendas that will respond to the great challenges and adopting new instruments.

## **The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development**

This Agenda is a plan of action for people, planet and prosperity. It also seeks to strengthen universal peace in larger freedom. It recognizes that eradicating poverty in all its forms and dimensions, including extreme poverty, is the greatest global challenge and an indispensable requirement for sustainable development. All countries and all stakeholders, acting in collaborative partnership, should implement this plan.

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<sup>3</sup> Based on the Foresight exercise conducted by ALCUE NET “Exploration of the future bi-regional cooperation”

The 17 Sustainable Development Goals and 169 targets demonstrate the scale and ambition of this new universal Agenda. They are integrated and indivisible and balance the three dimensions of sustainable development: the economic, social and environmental.

The Goals and targets will stimulate action over the next fifteen years in areas of critical importance for humanity and the planet.

Specific Goal number 9 focuses on build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialization and foster innovation. This goal includes:

- Develop quality, reliable, sustainable and resilient infrastructure, including regional and transborder infrastructure, to support economic development and human well-being, with a focus on affordable and equitable access for all.
- Promote inclusive and sustainable industrialization and, by 2030, significantly raise industry's share of employment and gross domestic product, in line with national circumstances, and double its share in least developed countries
- Increase the access of small-scale industrial and other enterprises, in particular in developing countries, to financial services, including affordable credit, and their integration into value chains and markets
- By 2030, upgrade infrastructure and retrofit industries to make them sustainable, with increased resource-use efficiency and greater adoption of clean and environmentally sound technologies and industrial processes, with all countries taking action in accordance with their respective capabilities
- Enhance scientific research, upgrade the technological capabilities of industrial sectors in all countries, in particular developing countries, including, by 2030, encouraging innovation and substantially increasing the number of research and development workers per 1 million people and public and private research and development spending
- Facilitate sustainable and resilient infrastructure development in developing countries through enhanced financial, technological and technical support to African countries, least developed countries, landlocked developing countries and small island developing States
- Support domestic technology development, research and innovation in developing countries, including by ensuring a conducive policy environment for, inter alia, industrial diversification and value addition to commodities
- Significantly increase access to information and communications technology and strive to provide universal and affordable access to the Internet in least developed countries by 2020

## EU-CELAC SOM Meetings to support the Policy Dialogue

As it was mentioned, the EU-CELAC SOM meetings as well as the process of the EU-CELAC Joint Initiative for Research and Innovation were supported by ALCUE NET project acting not only as supporting project by implementing activities following bi-regional research agendas, but also acting as technical secretariat by producing documents and ensuring proper bi-regional participation in each SOM meeting. The experiences gained during all years displayed a high interest of Senior Officials.

Since ALCUE NET ends next 31<sup>st</sup> May 2017, become relevance to maintain the spirit of a compromised participation of all countries from both regions, CELAC and EU, especially for smaller countries and new comers, to maintain this dialogue at all levels of work and decisions.

## The EU-CELAC Interest Group for bi-regional Science, Technology and Innovation cooperation

The EU-CELAC interest group is planned as a successor of the 7<sup>o</sup> Framework Programme project ERANet-LAC, which will end in spring 2017. It will ensure the full participation of all countries of both CELAC and EU. ERANet-LAC is presently laying the ground for a long-term commitment of bi-regional stakeholders through the implementation of the EU-CELAC Platform for Science, Technology and Innovation. Based on this Platform, the concept of a **European-CELAC Interest Group for STI bi-regional cooperation** suggests a structure, which allows the coordination of joint funding activities such as joint calls, based on common interest - beyond the life time of ERANet-LAC.

### Consolidation of a CELAC National Contact Point Network

On the framework of ALCUE NET, a CELAC NCP Network was established. The general objective of the Network is to promote and increase the participation of academia, companies and institutions in the Horizon 2020 Program as well as other funding instruments, bringing it closer to them, in order to democratize access opportunities among the different countries of the region.

The aim was to create an effective, dynamic, proactive and sustainable network to stimulate closer cooperation between all the National Contact Points in Europe, Latin America and the Caribbean.

On this regards, the work under ALCUE NET was to strength the designation and motivation of the NCP in the Latin American and Caribbean region as well as to elaborate and disseminate related information and organize NCP annual meetings.

Among others, the network will i) organize transnational workshops and training sessions for the research community and trains stakeholders to provide information and advice on the H2020 Program (face to face and virtual), ii) provide up-to-date information on international / national events and information days, iii) provide guidance in the identification of relevant issues, pre-selection of proposals, filing process and administrative procedures and legal issues, iv) assist on partners' search through European NCP networks, partnership events and other available tools, v) generate synergies between the NCP, vi) organize training on demand, vii) promote, assist and monitor the nominations of National Contact Points, viii) organize the

annual meetings of the CELAC NCP Network, ix) provide support to countries in the region to build their internal NCP networks

## General recommendations and conclusions for SOM discussions

- Need of high-level representation from all EU and CELAC Member States during the upcoming SOM meetings.
- Explore future sustainability of the bi-regional cooperation on Research and Innovation after the lifetime of supporting projects i.e. the EU-CELAC Interest Group; future Governance of the JIRI Working Groups; New Initiatives of common interest like the “Policy Support” and the Service Facility for International Cooperation; Euraxess Portal; Research Infrastructures; Sustainable Urbanizations; among others.
- Build upon established processes and experience of existing forms of collaboration: Use of the inputs to priority setting, the road maps, assessments and databases already produced by several existing platform/network and working group initiatives.
  - Insist on continuity of the bi-regional initiatives supported so far, as well as the transformations required for them to suit the Common Research Area – i.e. extend the networking and the membership of working groups to other relevant (private, innovation) actors; capitalizing upon instruments and databases already produced; mobilizing non-EC and CELAC and EU national sources for funding, etc.
- Bi-regional thematic experts platforms (community of key stakeholders)
  - Maintain the key stakeholders on board and active
  - Keep the dialogue with the EC Thematic Directorates and European Networks and Flagship New Initiatives.
  - Continue and maintain synergies with related initiatives (JPI’s, Thematic projects, Programmes, ERANet, Bilats, INCONETs, JRC, etc) open to international cooperation with CELAC countries.
  - Generate joint initiatives.
- Elaboration of specific calls for the EU-CELAC bi-regional cooperation more focused on topics and issues related to the application of Science, Technology and Innovation to inclusive development that serve as examples of experiences that can be transferred among countries in both regions.
- Identification, mapping and exploration of EU-CELAC elements relevant to the implementation of the Common Research Area such as the identification of i) key stakeholders and existing schemes and instruments for mobility to explore synergies and optimization; ii) research infrastructures in CELAC that correspond to the trans-border nature of common interests; iii) possible synergies with the European Strategy Forum on Research Infrastructures (ESFRI)
- Take into account that a main challenge for the region is the division between Latin America and the Caribbean. It is suggested DG RTD works with DG DEVCO to develop a more differentiated

European approach to engage with countries in accordance with the level of development of their national research and innovation systems and policy priorities.

- Jointly identify, review and update common challenges and joint priorities for bi-regional collaboration in accordance with national and regional Research and Innovation agendas; consider the financial, human, knowledge and networking costs of disinvesting in current themes. Consider including common challenges that span across national boundaries within the regions and sub-regions. Ensure mutual commitment to joint efforts.
- Align available funding sources with bi-regional common challenges and Research and Innovation priorities set; preferably, before joint programming starts.
- Aligning funding instruments with the emerging common agenda. Establishment of a permanent technical body at bi-regional level. The experience under ALCUE NET Technical Secretariat should be taken into account and partnership structure would be kept active in order to guarantee:
  - The commitment of the participation of Senior Officials.
  - The involvement of more Caribbean countries into the bi-regional process.
  - The definition of common priorities by supporting the work under the JIRI Working Groups and Future Birregional Initiatives.
- Support the CELAC Initiatives developed by the JIRI WGS
  - Expansion and update the CELAC National Contact Point Network. Organization of Info Days & Brokerage events in priority thematic areas to update EU-CELAC experts about open calls for joint consortia building. Training Sessions on MSCA and capacity building workshops (Virtually, by RED CLARA support)
  - Establish and reinforce Liaison Offices on CELAC Countries or equivalent EU Policy Cooperation Units at CELAC Ministries.
  - Increase CELAC countries' participation in Horizon 2020 upcoming H2020 calls 2018-2020.
  - Raise awareness of the opportunities for the participation of CELAC main stakeholders and visibility of CELAC capacities on R&I.
  - Keep generating and improving project management capacities in CELAC institutions.
  - Continuation of the ALCUE NET webpage beyond de projects lifetime.
- Support the launching of the first CELAC National Contact Point Network and the implementation of the Action Plan agreed by the NCP to also give support to the Common Research Area.
- According to the interest of the CELAC countries, we recommend to the European Commission to explore the possibility to launch a future 2018/2019 Coordination and Support Action call for CELAC 2018/2019 to support the implementation of the CELAC NCP network and visibility of H2020 increasing participation, especially for those countries with less experience.

Each Thematic Working Group has submitted a Final Report of Activities to support discussions during next 6<sup>th</sup> SOM Meeting in Brussels, 14<sup>th</sup> March.