

Executive Summary

EU-CELAC Working Group on Research Infrastructures (2017–2024)

1. Background

Since 2016, countries from Europe (EU) and Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC) have made cooperation on research infrastructures (RIs) one of the three pillars of their Common Research Area initiative, with innovation added as a pillar in 2020. To reinforce this cooperation, the EU-CELAC Working Group on Research Infrastructures (EU-CELAC WG RI) was created to identify FAIR RIs (findable, accessible, interoperable, and reusable), make them visible, and promote their sharing between both regions. Additionally, policies, programs, and initiatives related to RIs are exchanged, good practices are shared, and networking activities are organized.

The group, which meets biannually, includes delegates from EU Member States and CELAC countries, designated by their governing institutions in science, technology, and innovation (STI).

Since its creation, 15 EU-CELAC meetings have been held, adapting to virtual formats during the COVID-19 pandemic. Additionally, 14 Intra-CELAC meetings have been organized prior to the biregional ones, serving as spaces for exchange and formation of a regional stance. These meetings are essential due to the high turnover of delegates in LAC. Beyond changes caused by government transitions, there are many other reasons for modifications, which demands a dynamic role from the Technical Secretariat.

Delegates, along with infrastructure representatives, researchers, and public policy makers, participate in various workshops on relevant topics, identifying and promoting different lines of work and exchange.

2. Specific Objectives of the CELAC Working Group

1. Compile regional experiences in registering scientific-technological equipment, its usage, accessibility, and availability for regional and international use.
2. Analyze regional lessons learned in the development of inventories and national systems for the use of major research infrastructures.
3. Generate inputs to design a regional strategy that promotes the development of research networks around prioritized infrastructures.
4. Coordinate with the European counterpart on technical exchanges to incorporate developed methodologies and lessons learned.
5. Define a regional roadmap to strengthen capacities for the utilization and access of available research infrastructures.
6. Promote long-term cooperation through the creation of agreements or MoUs.
7. Disseminate lessons learned from the EU and success stories from CELAC countries.
8. Coordinate the submission of joint proposals with European partners to the Horizon Europe program.

3. *Working Methodology*

The group is co-chaired by the Head of Unit for International Cooperation – Europe and the Americas at DG Research and Innovation, currently Carole Marcel-Blanchard, and by Lelio Fellows, General Coordinator for International Cooperation at the National Council for Scientific and Technological Development. For eight years, the LAC co-chair was Dr. Fernando Amestoy, former Executive Director of the Pando Science and Technology Park in Uruguay. He was nominated by the CELAC Presidency and approved by consensus of all representatives in 2018.

To strengthen LAC's role, Claudia Romano serves as the Technical Secretary of the CELAC Research Infrastructures Working Group, due to her experience working with networks in the region within the EU's Framework Programs for science and technology cooperation since 2014. In the 12th EU-CELAC meeting (Tenerife, September 2023), the Technical Secretariat led by Claudia Romano was formally established by unanimous agreement, recognizing her work.

The Technical Secretariat is responsible for managing the formal designation of country representatives (including transitions), convening delegates, finalizing technical details, preparing materials for Intra-LAC meetings, and supporting the organization of CELAC-EU Working Group meetings. It also develops and disseminates relevant documents and data, including a historical document of the group, a delegate database, and follow-up on agreements. This work is supported by the Global Service Facility.

Currently, 23 CELAC countries have nominated delegates: Argentina, Chile, Brazil, Barbados, Uruguay, Peru, Bolivia, Paraguay, Venezuela, Colombia, Ecuador, Costa Rica, Panama, Cuba, Guatemala, Nicaragua, Honduras, El Salvador, Dominican Republic, Mexico, Trinidad and Tobago, Aruba, and Saint Lucia.

To organize the working methodology, the following regional subgroups have been formed, each led by a country:

Regional Working Subgroups			
Brazil	Costa Rica	Chile	Mexico
Argentina	Barbados	Bolivia	Colombia
Paraguay	El Salvador	Ecuador	Cuba
Uruguay	Guatemala	Peru	Dominican Republic
	Honduras		Venezuela
	Nicaragua		Trinidad and Tobago
	Panama		Aruba
			Saint Lucia

Table 1

The delegates and the Technical Secretariat aim to participate and align efforts in various international forums such as CILAC, TICAL, ICRI, and the United Nations Science Summit, where the group's actions are presented.

Synergies are also promoted with international organizations, including the EU-LAC Foundation (regarding ministerial meetings and summits), OEI, and SEGIB, with a special focus on the CYTED program, which is particularly relevant for Latin America and the Caribbean.

Efforts are also made to make the group's work visible to regional blocs such as MERCOSUR, the CAN, SICA, and others, in order to coordinate efforts, initiatives, and work lines for greater synergy among all actors.

In terms of project collaboration, the closest work is with EU Framework Program projects, especially EU-LAC ResInfra and the ongoing EU-LAC ResInfra Plus, as they were designed to support policy dialogue, specifically this group's efforts.

For network collaboration, the highlight is on NCP networks, particularly the Research Infrastructure NCPs (RICH).

➤ ***Role of CELAC Delegates***

Delegates maintain active dialogue with the STI governing institutions of their countries, representing their national positions and reporting the group's discussions to their authorities for decision-making. They are expected to attend the four annual EU-CELAC and Intra-LAC meetings.

➤ ***Designation of CELAC delegates***

The STI authority of each LAC country appoints one principal and one alternate delegate to attend both virtual and in-person meetings.

The designation must be made through a formal letter from the STI authority addressed to the CELAC Working Group co-chair, Fernando Amestoy (famestoy@gmail.com), with a copy to the Technical Secretary, Claudia Romano (claudia.romano@mec.gub.uy). Any changes in designation must also be communicated via the same means.

4. Activities

During the 6th Senior Officials Meeting (SOM) on Science and Technology, held in Brussels in March 2017, the EU-CELAC Working Group on Research Infrastructures was consolidated, and Dr. Fernando Amestoy, former Director of the Pando Technology Park in Uruguay, was appointed as the Latin America and Caribbean co-chair to the European Union.

➤ ***1st Intra-CELAC Meeting – Montevideo, September 2017¹***

Shared experiences on RI management and other projects from LAC and the EU. Based on a survey from the EU-LAC Focus project, it was agreed to update LAC RIs using a common format, culminating in the publication of the document “Analysis on the CELAC Landscape of Research Infrastructures

➤ ***1st EU-LAC WG RI Meeting – Brussels, March 2018***

Exchanged information on bi-regional activities, identified bi-regional RIs of interest and key priority themes for cooperation: health, food, energy, and climate change.

¹ This meeting is considered the first, although the group was formally established by the authorities in 2018.

Interest was expressed in holding policy workshops on data management and standards, RI governance and management, planning, and access policies. In Uruguay, the Technical Secretariat began operating.

➤ ***2nd EU-LAC WG RI Meeting – Vienna, September 2018***

Encouraged synergies between the EU and CELAC in RI mapping, promoting exchange of experiences, lessons learned, and data. Coordinated preparation of collaboration proposals for the upcoming H2020 RI calls.

Selected 8 countries for study visits in 2019.

Study Visits 2019	
EU RIs	LAC RIs
LifeWatch Eric - Spain	LNLS – Brazil
Institute for Health/ Center for Systems Biomedicine/ Integrated Biobank – Luxembourg	CeNAT – Costa Rica
Beyond Nano – IOM – Italy	Estación Patagonia UC – Chile
CIEMAT – Spain	INPe – Brazil
EMBRC – Portugal	CCT Conicet Bahía Blanca – Argentina
Table 2	

➤ ***2nd Intra-CELAC WG Meeting – Panama, March 2019***

Exchanged ideas to create a roadmap and develop policies for access to regional RIs, encouraging their shared use. Defined the methodology for surveying open and available RIs.

➤ ***3rd EU-LAC WG RI Meeting – Brasília, May 2019***

Proposed the creation of a mapping group composed of Costa Rica, Chile, and Uruguay to chart LAC RIs. Agreed to identify common priority areas and sub-areas for collaboration.

Defined a communication strategy, enhancing contact with embassies, scientific and cooperation forums.

Agreed to compile information on instruments available in each country to facilitate mobility.

➤ ***4th Intra-CELAC WG Meeting – Costa Rica, November 2019***

Established criteria to create a list of large-scale RIs open to international cooperation to consolidate RI networks and promote regional cooperation. Presented the website created by Uruguay – MEC, which includes the main LAC RIs on an interactive map.

Following a presentation on ESFRI, LAC expressed interest in learning more about this model. Presented agreements between EU and LAC RIs.

➤ ***4th EU-LAC WG RI Meeting – Costa Rica, November 2019***

Discussed ways to improve bi-regional cooperation on RIs. Emphasized governance and internationalization models, legal frameworks, and standardization of concepts.

Adopted the "strategic document" outlining the WG's achievements. Presented complementary EU-CELAC RI initiatives such as the EU-LAC ResInfra and ERANet-LAC projects.

➤ ***5th Intra-CELAC WG Meeting – online, May/June 2020***

Part 1: May, 2020

Agreed to draft a document summarizing the in situ visit experiences in Argentina, Chile, and Costa Rica², which were highly beneficial for participants and their institutions.

Part 2: June, 2020

Cooperation workshops should be more interactive, including RIs that already have agreements with Europe or that are open, unique, large-scale, and interested in international cooperation.

➤ ***5th EU-LAC WG RI Meeting – online, June 2020***

Defined topics, target audience, and dates for the upcoming cooperation workshops and webinars.

Consolidated priority thematic areas for joint work: biodiversity and climate change, emerging technologies, energy, health, and food security.

Presented the EU-LAC ResInfra project (funded by H2020), analyzing how its pilot projects (RICAP, INSTRUCT-ERIC, LIFEWATCH-ERIC, E-RIHS) could contribute to these thematic areas.

Created EU-CELAC “tandems” to identify and connect RIs best suited for bi-regional cooperation.

➤ ***6th EU-LAC WG RI Meeting – online, November 2020***

Improved articulation with other international cooperation initiatives in STI: CTS Forum, Ibero-American Knowledge Space (SEGIB), OEI, EU-LAC Foundation.

Delegates helped define the 2021–2023 Strategic Roadmap to implement the Brussels Declaration and the EU-CELAC STI Action Plan.

Held five cooperation workshops (Oct–Nov 2020):

- Health (Oct 27)
- Energy (Oct 28)
- Biodiversity and Climate Change (Oct 29)
- Food Security (Nov 3)
- Emerging Technologies (Nov 4)

➤ ***7th EU-LAC WG RI Meeting – online, March 2021***

Delegates highlighted the Global Service Facility’s key role in the group and its continuity.

Presented achievements from the 4 ResInfra pilot projects and acknowledged the project's vital role in driving RI cooperation and the WG's progress.

² See Table 2

Key points included:

- Asymmetries in types and contexts of RIs.
- Need for greater EU delegate participation.
- Proposal to form an external scientific advisory community.
- Delegates should be experienced, able to make national decisions, and link political and scientific RI communities.
- Inclusion of private sector in discussions.

➤ ***8th EU-LAC WG RI Meeting – online, November 2021***

Updates on the ESFRI roadmap.

Presented updates from the EU-CELAC ResInfra project: 167 LAC RIs identified, aligned with previously established priority areas.

Introduced the *Global Gateway*, the EU's international cooperation strategy for research and innovation. Thematic priorities will be defined around ecological, digital, health, and innovation challenges.

➤ ***9th EU-LAC WG RI Meeting – online, April 2022***

Introduced the upcoming ICRI 2022 and its main themes: social and economic benefits and impacts of Ris; multiscale RI ecosystem; global-scale sharing of scientific data; transnational access to Ris.

Preview of a future Horizon Europe call (2023–2024) specifically for LAC on RIs.

Established the EU-CELAC Interest Group: 4th Joint EU-CELAC Call on STI topics – RIs.

Agreed to explore new themes (energy, biodiversity, circular economy, open science and data, sustainability, knowledge valorisation, organizational models, etc.) and revisit existing topics in greater depth (e.g., remote access, data access, etc.).

➤ ***10th EU-LAC WG RI Meeting – online, October 2022***

Open access identified as a cross-cutting priority to be included in all thematic discussions.

Additional support from the new Global Service Facility of the European Commission.

➤ ***10th Intra-CELAC WG Meeting – online, April 2023***

Emphasized the threat posed by sargassum to tourism, production systems, and ecosystems. Called for transforming the problem into an opportunity, particularly in the case of sargassum.

Proposed addressing issues through the lens of three themes: health, climate change, and biodiversity.

Work on bio-regions proposed as a way to tackle shared topics.

➤ ***11th EU-LAC WG RI Meeting – online, April 2023***

Participants agreed on the importance of increasing funding for cooperation programs and using new Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) to improve communication between regions and RIs.

Promoted the signing of Memorandums of Understanding to deepen cooperation.

➤ ***11th Intra-CELAC WG Meeting – online, July 2023***

Introduced a new survey to map RIs, to be completed by LAC delegates.

Highlighted the importance of forming regional and thematic hubs based on the survey results.

➤ ***12th EU-LAC WG RI Meeting – Tenerife, September 2023***

Selected host institutions for the 2024 study visits to RIs in Europe and LAC.

Study Visits 2024	
EU RIs	LAC RIs
Bio-Hub – EMBL, Germany	CIGB – Cuba
PLOCAN y BEA, Spain	Institut Pasteur Montevideo – Uruguay
Beyond Nano – IOM – Italy	INPA, ATTO Tower – Brazil

Table 3

Delegates discussed RI hubs and network creation, and open science to improve cooperation in areas such as climate change, biodiversity, and health.

ESFRI was discussed as a model for LAC to deepen international RI cooperation and access.

Emphasis placed on the commitment from political actors.

➤ ***12th Intra-CELAC WG Meeting – online, April 2024***

Stressed the importance of designing a regional agenda with general guidelines for international RI cooperation. This agenda would include 5 working groups based on the proposed thematic hubs, addressing related challenges (access, logistics, etc.).

Proposed identifying specific topics within the thematic hubs as a starting point.

Political support is considered essential for developing these actions.

➤ ***13th EU-LAC WG RI Meeting – Lima, Peru, May 2024***

Focused on the country's concrete experience with RIs in the context of food security.

Strategic first steps toward creating the *Latin American and Caribbean Forum of Research Infrastructures (LACFRI)* and strengthening cooperation between RIs/hubs in LAC and the EU.

Presented LACFRI's objective and structure. Proposed forming an Advisory Board with 5 current or former ESFRI members³ to share expertise on instrument design, procedures, and thematic group structures.

➤ **13th Intra-CELAC WG Meeting – online, May 2024**

Roles within the thematic hubs were distributed based on the political will of the delegates. Discussions were held on the formation of LACFRI and thematic priorities.

It was agreed that each coordinating and co-coordinating country would promote shared RIs, formalize agreements, and coordinate with the EU-LAC ResInfra Plus Project.

Role Allocation			
Thematic Hub	Coordinator	Co-coordinator	Participating Countries
Biodiversity and Climate Change	Costa Rica	Peru	Dominican Republic, Panama, Brazil, Paraguay, Honduras, Ecuador, Colombia, Nicaragua
Health	Cuba	Panama	Brazil, Costa Rica, Paraguay, Honduras, Dominican Republic, El Salvador
Emerging Technologies	Guatemala	Ecuador	Chile
Food Security	Peru	Uruguay	Paraguay, Dominican Republic, Honduras, Nicaragua,
Energy	Brazil	Argentina	Paraguay, Honduras, Dominican Republic

Table 4

➤ **14th Intra-CELAC WG Meeting – online, November 2024**

Presented key findings from the EU-LAC ResInfra Plus project roundtables.

Reported on the 1st Advisory Board meeting of LACFRI. Delegates acknowledged the need to draw from the Advisory Board's ESFRI experience in integration and collaboration mechanisms to develop a tailored path for the region.

Highlighted the role of the *Ibero-American Programme for Science and Technology for Development (CYTED)* for its experience promoting mobility and interaction among partners.

Primary report on study visits conducted to date⁴.

➤ **14th EU-LAC WG RI Meeting – online, November 2024**

The cross-cutting theme was energy transition, featuring presentations from the EnergyTran project, Brazil's National Electricity Agency, the Colombian Petroleum Institute, and SEGIB's role in the energy transition.

Presented revisions to the preliminary LACFRI proposal, incorporating Advisory Board recommendations. This consolidated the initiative and launched hub activities.

Regarding the EU-LAC ResInfra Plus project, upcoming 2025 activities (its final year) were announced. Emphasized the need to continue close collaboration due to the project's contributions to LACFRI's thematic agenda design and bi-regional RI cooperation mapping.

³ Inmaculada Figueroa, ESFRI Delegate, Ministry of Science, Innovation and Universities, Spain; Jeannette Ridder-Numan, former Chair of the ESFRI Implementation Group and former member of the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science, the Netherlands; Giorgio Rossi, former Chair of ESFRI, University of Milan, Italy; Viorel Vultureescu, ESFRI Delegate, Ministry of Research and Innovation, Romania; Daniel Weselka, ESFRI Delegate, Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Research, Austria.

⁴ See Table 3

Finally, Dileine Cunha, alternate delegate from Brazil, previewed the key points of her ICRI 2024 presentation.

➤ *15th Intra-CELAC WG Meeting – Online, June 2025*

The delegates presented the work plans developed by each of the thematic hubs they have been working on, in preparation for the 15th EU-CELAC WG Meeting and to receive feedback from their peers.

➤ *15th EU-CELAC WG Meeting – Vienna, Austria, June 2025*

The work plans of the five thematic hubs (health, energy, food security, emerging technologies, and biodiversity & climate change) were presented within the framework of LACFRI, receiving valuable feedback from the Advisory Board members in attendance.

Additionally, Fernando Amestoy, who served as co-chair for eight years, formally announced his decision to step down, expressing gratitude for the years of joint work. The CELAC delegates unanimously approved the appointment of Lelio Fellows, General Coordinator for International Cooperation at the National Council for Scientific and Technological Development and lead delegate for Brazil, to assume the role for a two-year term. The delegate from Mexico, Andrés Triana, expressed his country's interest in being considered for the position in future instances.