EU-CELAC relations

The European Union and Latin America and the Caribbean enjoy privileged relations and are natural partners, linked by strong historical, cultural and economic ties. They share a strategic bi-regional partnership, which was launched in 1999 and stepped up significantly in the recent years. The two regions co-operate closely at international level across a broad range of issues and maintain an intensive political dialogue at all levels.

The Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC) was launched in 2011 and represents a regional political coordination mechanism, which gathers all 33 Latin American and Caribbean countries in the region. CELAC is the EU's official counterpart for the region-to-region Summit process and strategic partnership.

The European Union's engagement with CELAC is part of a flexible approach to its relations with Latin America and the Caribbean, combining different levels of relations – regional, sub-regional and bilateral – which are complementary and mutually reinforcing. The engagement with CELAC is complemented by strong bilateral relations with individual countries, while deepening cooperation with other sub-regional or regional groups such as Mercosur, CARICOM/CARIFORUM, Pacific Alliance, SICA and UNASUR.

Political Framework

The last Summit took place in Brussels in June 2015, bringing together 62 EU and Latin American and Caribbean leaders, including more than 40 Heads of State or Government. At this summit, the leaders of both regions adopted two declarations and a revised EU-CELAC Action Plan. They have identified ten priority areas for bi-regional cooperation ranging from science and research, over sustainable development or energy to investment and entrepreneurship.

Leaders furthermore mandated the Foreign Ministers to hold meetings in the years between Summits, in order to enhance the political dialogue. In this spirit, the first stand-alone EU-CELAC Foreign Ministers Meeting took place on 25th-26th October 2016 in Santo Domingo. The MFA meeting will now be held in Brussels, on the 16th and 17th July 2018. The meetings are co-chaired by the High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy/Vice-President of the European Commission
Human Rights and Democracy

Democratic values and the promotion and protection of all human rights and fundamental freedoms of all persons, as laid down in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, lie at the core of the EU-CELAC strategic partnership.

Important themes of dialogue and cooperation are freedom of expression and of association; gender equality and girls' and women's empowerment, non-discrimination including as regards minorities and indigenous peoples; economic, social and cultural rights including land, water and sanitation and housing rights; the impartiality of the judiciary and the effectiveness of justice systems; and abolition of the death penalty and torture.

EU and LAC have a longstanding cooperation in international forums, including the Human Rights Council and UN General Assembly Third Committee where the two groups jointly present a resolution on the rights of the child.

The EU supports civil society organisations and human rights defenders, especially those experiencing diminished opportunities for free, active and meaningful participation in decision-making.

The EU is also engaged with electoral observation and experts' missions as well as follow up recommendations aimed at strengthening our partners' electoral systems.

Trade and Investment

Overall, the EU has concluded free trade agreements with 26 Latin America and Caribbean countries out of 33.

Negotiations with a view to an Association Agreement with Mercosur were resumed in 2016 and are now entering the final stages. With Mexico, negotiations on a modernised agreement, replacing the previous one, are close to completion. Both sides are committed to quick concluding the remaining technical trade issues and outstanding final and institutional provisions. In the case of Chile, progress has been made on negotiating the updated Association Agreement.

In the last ten years the EU’s total share of LAC trade remained stable overall (14.4%). Total trade in goods between the EU and LAC more than doubled over the last decade, reaching €221.6 billion (bln) in 2017 and the EU is the third trade partner of LAC. The EU is first investor in the LAC region. EU FDI stocks in LAC were €825.7 bln in 2016, representing more than EU FDI stocks in China, India and Russia combined. EU investments are high quality, diversified (covering the primary, secondary and tertiary sectors), and conducive to sustainable development with technology transfer and innovation. LAC FDI stocks in the EU also increased substantially from €128.5 bln in 2009 to €250.3 bln in 2016, with Brazil remaining the biggest investor.
Research, innovation and education

The Joint Initiative for Research and Innovation (JIRI) was established in 2010 with the aim of enhancing EU-CELAC cooperation on Science and Research. It facilitates bi-regional dialogue on common priorities, encouraging mutual policy learning and ensuring cooperation through biannual Action Plans. Thematic areas of cooperation are: bio-economy including food security, renewable energies, biodiversity and climate change, ICT and health.

Since the EU-CELAC Summit in 2015, efforts have been stepped up to develop an EU-CELAC Common Research Area, focusing on three strategic pillars: mobility of researchers, access to research infrastructures and jointly addressing common global challenges.

Horizon 2020, the world's biggest research and innovation programme with a budget of €80 billion, as well as Erasmus+ are both accessible to research institutions and individual researchers and scientists from Latin America and the Caribbean.

In the last decade, EU framework programmes on research and innovation have mobilised around EUR 190 million for cooperation with LAC through roughly 1,500 participations in European projects. Brazil, Mexico and Argentina rank within the top 15 international cooperation partners in EU research programmes, while the LAC region has the highest success rate in participation in Horizon 2020 in comparison to the other developing and emerging economy regions.

Among the LAC students who decide to go abroad to study, more than one third come to the EU every year. Through Erasmus+ the EU funds more than 1,400 individual mobilities between the EU and LAC countries.

EU cooperation with Latin America and the Caribbean

The EU remains the most important provider of Official Development Assistance (ODA) in Latin America and the Caribbean with grants amounting to €3.6 billion for the period 2014-2020. The Development Cooperation Instrument's regional programme for Latin America and the European Development Fund's allocation for the Caribbean, are key instruments in this context. As the development of the region has advanced over the last decade, the European Union's policy has also increasingly shifted towards a partnership approach. The Partnership Instrument allows the EU to cooperate with partners around the world to advance the Union’s strategic interests and tackle global challenges.

Cooperation with LAC is broadly focusing on the following:

**Prosperity** Agenda: Support to stronger and inclusive growth, more diversified production structures, increased productivity and competitiveness, deeper regional integration, consolidated trade relations with the EU, overcoming the digital gap and technological upgrading.

**People’s** Agenda: Advancing shared prosperity, social cohesion and reducing inequality by improving the welfare of the poorer populations via domestic resource mobilisation and fiscal and social policies remain priorities.

**Peace and Institutions** Agenda: fight against organised crime and improving citizens' security, reinforcement of the capabilities of institutions, and further consolidation of state
legitimacy, accountability and trustworthiness, are indispensable to deliver inclusive and sustainable growth.

**Planet Agenda**: Latin America and especially the Caribbean are vulnerable to and have already experienced the negative effects of **climate change**. The region’s participation in developing **resilience**, tackling climate change, mitigating its effects and coping with natural disasters are therefore priorities.

**Partnership Agenda**: LAC countries play an increasingly active role as international and regional actors able to shape the Global Public Goods and Challenges agenda. Commitment to multilateralism and affinity of policy objectives pursued by EU and LAC internationally present an opportunity for strong alliances capable of influencing and encouraging more effective global action. In this context the **EU Partnership Instrument** for cooperation is playing an increasingly important role in LAC.

## Climate change

The EU is the world's biggest climate finance donor. In 2016, the EU together with its Member States increased its overall contribution by more than 15% to reach €20.2 billion, without counting the private funds leveraged by this contribution, and is a significant contributor to financing adaptation for vulnerable states.

Climate change is one of the main areas of cooperation with the CELAC countries with both dedicated programmes and crosscutting actions. For example, the EU is a key partner supporting resilience-building in Caribbean Small Island Developing States (SIDS) and low-lying coastal territories which are highly vulnerable to the effects of climate change, in addition to other exogenous shocks, including man-made. Additionally, the EU and CELAC countries have a regular dialogue in the multilateral forums on climate change.

**The EUROCLIMA+** is a good example of partnership and tailor-made regional cooperation between the EU and Latin America. EUROCLIMA+ promotes **environmentally sustainable and more climate-resilient development** in 18 Latin American countries, in particular for the benefit of most vulnerable populations. EUROCLIMA+ provides **technical and financial support** to the development and implementation of climate change adaptation and mitigation policies and facilitates regional policy dialogue and climate action. EUROCLIMA+ will also support the strategies which Latin American countries have committed themselves to in the context of the **2015 Paris Climate Agreement and their Nationally Determined Contributions**. It was launched in 2010, entered a new phase in 2017 and is foreseen to continue until 2022 (with a budget of € 88 million).

**See also**

- Press Release: EU support to the Community of Latin America and Caribbean States
- EU - CELAC ministerial meeting
- EU-LAC Foundation: constitutive agreement signed

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