

CAMINO A FIESA 2020



Building Higher Education in Latin America together

RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE 'ROAD TO FIESA' CONFERENCE

The people and institutions (1) gathered in the City of Mar del Plata during the 'ROAD TO FIESA 2020' conference (www.caminoafiesa2020.com), consider that, as a result of the discussions held during the event(2), a series of conclusions should be presented to the public and to the EU, with suggestions on how to better articulate cooperation policies in science, technology and higher education between the European Union and Latin America.

I

1) On the one hand, the Regional Conferences on Higher Education in Latin America and the Caribbean (CRES 2008 and 2018) have defined a series of priorities for higher education in Latin America, which can be considered as the foundation for bi-regional cooperation and integration (European Union/ Latin America) in matters related to higher education, research and innovation. The priorities of the CRES cover the following areas:

- **Improvement of information:** a) Improvement of statistical systems for measuring aggregate data on mobility, its results and impact; b) Centralisation and homologation of the relevant information for recognition management.
- **Improvement of university management** through promoting continuous training of university staff in Latin America and the Caribbean.
- **Quality assurance (QA):** a) Development and strengthening of national approaches in Latin American countries that do not yet have agencies; b) Promotion of regional mechanisms for regulation and evaluation of accreditation/QA agencies, with the purpose of ensuring the application international criteria; and c) streamlining mechanisms for automatic recognition of short periods of study abroad and diploma recognition/ recognition of qualifications.
- **Academic integration and mobility:** a) Development of systemic level strategies for regional academic integration (COIL, collaborative programs, virtual modality, among others), and b) Implementation of existing mechanisms to facilitate academic mobility (credits, diploma supplement, etc).
- **Internationalisation:** a) Expansion of access to international opportunities; b) Articulation of national financing schemes with existing international funds.
- **Linking with the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs**, through commitments to communities in their territories.
- **Development of multilingual strategies** and linguistic policies.
- **Strengthening research networks** at regional and bi-regional level.

1. 196 participants, representing 120 institutions from 17 countries in Latin America and the Caribbean and Europe (10 Latin American countries and 7 European countries). Participation also included representatives of 24 Erasmus + projects, 2 H2020 projects, as well as projects and programmes of the DAAD, Campus France and British Council.

2. The conference has validated the research work (<http://eulac-focus.net/>) carried out by the Horizon 2020 EULAC Focus project, which for the first time has carried out a comprehensive review of the current ERASMUS + and H2020 projects and the most recent past. This exam allows the "Clustering" strategy to be empirically based: to articulate projects and initiatives to favor their structural impact at the level of higher education systems and their institutional impact.

2) On the other hand, the European Union is currently reexamining its internal policies as well as its cooperation policy. This is taking place within the framework of the new European Parliament and of the European Commission (2019 - 2024) and of the new Multiannual Financial Framework 2021-27.

It is considered that, in this double perspective (LAC and EU), it is possible to strengthen the LAC-EU bi-regional relations in the field of higher education, research, science and innovation (3) at multiple levels, and generate a greater impact for the public investments made in higher education and research cooperation between the European Union and Latin America and the Caribbean.

II

The debates of the participants in the **Conference 'ROAD TO FIESA 2020'**, the outcomes of the Horizon 2020 project 'EULAC Focus' (4) that are also reinforced by **OBREAL-GLOBAL OBSERVATORY**(5), in addition to the collaborative work of the Secretary of University Policy of the Ministry of Education of the Argentine Republic, the Secretary of State for Science, Technology and Productive Innovation in the Ministry of Education of the Argentine Republic, the National Interuniversity Council of the Argentine Republic (CIN), the National University of Mar del Plata, the National Agency for Quality Evaluation and Accreditation of Spain (ANECA), the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD), the Association of Universities Montevideo Group (AUGM) and the Colombian Association of Universities (ASCUN) yield the following suggestions for strengthening and articulating EU cooperation programmes for Latin America and the Caribbean:

1) Coordination **between the bi-regional political dialogue process and the design and implementation of EU programmes** that have an international projection (the new Erasmus+ 2021-27 and the new Horizon Europe 2021-2027 programmes) should be strengthened. For this, it would be appropriate that political dialogue not be limited to declarations and “action plans” of different types of summits, but should rather be extended to the design, formulation and, eventually, reformulation of regional, sub-regional and national programmes as well as to the monitoring of their impact.

- **On the LAC side**, it should be ensured that all authorities involved in this process are aligned around the mentioned priorities. For this, the creation of “focal points for cooperation with the EU in Higher Education” within each government, that work in an articulated way with the National and Thematic National Contact Points designated for H2020, could generate links between EU policies, CELAC and national policies, as well as between national and regional programmes in the field of HE and research. The dialogue between focal points and national offices would not only help to articulate the execution of programmes and projects but could also generate discussion on national and regional thematic priorities. In addition, the focal points in LAC could form a network among themselves, supporting dialogue between the countries in LAC and promoting common projects.

3. The results of EU CELAC Summits in matters related to scientific cooperation are considered (EU-CELAC joint initiative on research and innovation -JIRI- <https://ec.europa.eu/research/index.cfm?pg=events&eventcode=433D3C69-B16B-0D1B-FD389B0243AD3D6C>

4. <http://eulac-focus.net>: The main objective of EU-LAC FOCUS is that of “giving focus” to the Cultural, Scientific and Social dimension of EU-CELAC relations, with a view to determining synergies and cross-fertilization, as well as identifying asymmetries in bi-lateral and bi-regional relations.

5. www.obglob.org

- **On the EU side**, it would also be appropriate for EU programmes to be better articulated with those developed by national cooperation agencies like DAAD, Campus France, NUFFIC, SEPIE-AECID, etc. This would help to avoid overlapping actions, ensure better use of European public resources and foster synergies between Member States with comparable internationalisation strategies for LAC. Focal points can also be used to achieve this, monitoring cooperation in their countries and the aforementioned national cooperation agencies (6).

2) **The organisation of inclusive bi-regional political dialogue** that goes beyond the statements of Summits and articulates interests in matters of higher education policy and research should be underpinned by concrete initiatives and instruments. In other regions of the globe, the EU has already invested in such instruments, which have had important structural impact. **For example, an Initiative launched for EU neighborhood countries integrated in the former TEMPUS Programme** (eg. Higher Education Reform Experts Network: www.supportthere.org) or, for Africa, initiatives for quality assurance harmonisation within the framework of 'Africa-EU Strategic Partnership' (7), could easily be adapted for Latin America implemented in coordination with (or in support of) specific projects awarded by the Erasmus and H2020 programmes.

Ultimately, it has been confirmed that the experience of the **'ROAD TO FIESA 2020' Conference**, which united actors and project coordinators from both sides of the Atlantic, was useful for the **"clustering" of projects co-financed by the EU** and assessing the commonalities, shared goals and potential to generate impact. This can be said both from the perspective of bi-regional relations and from the perspective of the EU and LAC states themselves, as they implement their respective higher education policy. Creating synergies between projects helps to prevent them from running in parallel without knowing each other; The potential for structural impact is substantially increased as the tendency for projects to operate in isolation decreases. **This strategy also fosters greater sustainability for the different projects since it encourages that the products and results ("outputs" and "outcomes") of each project** are shared more widely and, ideally, generate subsequent projects which build on results.

6. The precedent for National Focal Points lies in the previous ALBAN programme of the European Union. A comparable example from the present are the National Erasmus+ Offices in EU neighborhood countries.

7. Of note, the initiatives « Harmonization of African Quality Assurance and Accreditation » and « Tuning Africa » <https://haqaa.aau.org> and <https://tuningafrica.org/en/>

'ROAD TO FIESA 2020' WAS SUPPORTED BY:

