



Consultation with civil society organisations and local authorities

Follow-up to the EU's Multiannual Regional Indicative Programme for the Americas and the Caribbean (2021-2027) and its connection to the CELAC-EU bi-regional roadmap 2022-2023

Online meeting held on 15 December 2022

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Within the framework of the Continuing Dialogue on European Union (EU) programming for the period 2021-2027, the Policy Forum on Development (PDF) held on 15 December 2022 a second online collective reflection meeting on the EU's Multiannual Regional Indicative Programme (RMIP) for the Americas and the Caribbean (LAC) 2021-2027. The event brought together EU staff and EU and LAC representatives from civil society organisations (CSOs) and local authorities (LAs). The objectives were: (1) to discuss the implementation of the RMIP and its alignment with the Global Gateway Strategy and the EU-LAC agenda; (2) to provide information on the bi-regional roadmap (2022-2023) between the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC) and the EU; and (3) to gather input from different stakeholders.

I. Background

On 28 May 2021, the PFD conducted a [first consultation on the EU RMIP for LAC \(2021-2027\)](#). The RMIP was adopted by the European Commission (EC) on 13 December 2021 (reference C (2021) 9356) and is currently being implemented. This programme has identified five priority areas for action for the region: (1) green transition; (2) digital transformation and innovation; (3) sustainable and inclusive economy; (4) democratic governance, security and migration; and (5) social cohesion and addressing inequalities. In addition, three specific EU-Caribbean alliances have been proposed: (1) for a Green Deal; (2) for economic resilience and trade; and (3) for governance, security and human development.

Meanwhile, the EC has presented the [Global Gateway Strategy](#), which will impact the EU-LAC bi-regional agenda. The Global Gateway Strategy (JOIN (2021) 30 final) aims to boost large investments in a sustainable, smart, clean and secure manner in digitalisation, climate and energy, transport, health, education and research, while promoting democratic values and quality standards, good governance, transparency and equal partnership.

In addition, the EU is committed to relaunching the partnership with the LAC region. Several political events have taken place, including an EU-LAC ministerial meeting in Berlin on 14 December 2020; a Leaders' Meeting on 7 December 2021; and the CELAC-EU ministerial meeting in Buenos Aires on 27 October 2022. In the Caribbean, a ministerial meeting was held on 12 October 2022 to launch the three EU-Caribbean alliances.

The Buenos Aires meeting in 2022 adopted an ambitious [CELAC-EU bi-regional roadmap 2022-2023](#) with the aim of working towards a third EU-CELAC Summit of Heads of State and Government in the second half of 2023. This Summit will be preceded by key events involving youth and women's organisations, the private sector and other representatives of civil society, among other actors.

II. Methodology of the consultation

The three-hour event was divided into three sections. After a plenary session on the current state of play of the implementation of the RMIP for the Americas and the Caribbean and its links to the CELAC-EU bi-regional road map for 2022-2023, a question and answer session followed. Discussions were then held in working groups on: (1) inclusive societies: human development, social cohesion and addressing inequalities and (2) just transitions in a context of green and digital transformation. A rapporteur from each group presented back to plenary and the European Commission provided the closing remarks.

Participants received in advance the following guidance questions for the working group of their preference. In addition, they had the opportunity to share further written inputs until 22 December.

Inclusive societies: Human development, social cohesion and addressing inequalities

1. What, in your opinion, are the biggest challenges in promoting inclusive societies and addressing inequalities in LAC? Where do you see the 3 main opportunities?
2. Within the framework offered by RMIP-LAC, what kind of EU initiatives could have the greatest impact on the most vulnerable in the areas related to human development, democratic governance, social inclusion and the fight against inequalities (including the gender perspective and the situation of displaced persons)?
3. What contribution and partnerships could be expected from CSOs, including youth and women's organisations, and from local authorities in the framework of this regional initiative?

Fair transitions in a context of green and digital transformation

1. In the framework offered by the actions of the EU-LAC Digital Alliance and the EU Green Deal, where do you see the 3 main opportunities for the EU to contribute to more sustainable and inclusive green and digital transitions at regional level?
2. What seems to be working best in LAC to support fair transformations (ecological and digital)?
3. How can we better engage local authorities and CSOs, including youth and women's organisations, and coordinate our efforts regarding the green and digital transitions?

III. Presentation of the RMIP and the EU-CELAC roadmap

Ms. Marlène Holzner, Head of Unit for Local Authorities, Civil society Organisations and Foundations of the Directorate-General for International Associations (DG INTPA), welcomed participants pointing out the numerous consultations of the PFD in 2022, and the importance of reporting on how the recommendations of LAs and CSOs have been adopted in EU programming.

Mr. Félix Fernandez-Shaw, Director for LAC at DG INTPA, thanked the participants for their presence and contributions ahead of the EU-CELAC Summit in 2023, as well as possible recommendations. He stressed that the EU-LAC agenda will mainly focus on fair green and digital transitions. He fostered the importance of taking a positive approach and avoiding a possible Eurocentric attitude when there is much to learn from the LAC region, for example, in the use of renewable energy.

Ms. Claudia Gintersdorfer, Head of the Americas Division of the European External Action Service (EEAS), presented the main milestones of the EU-CELAC Roadmap 2022-2023. She highlighted the upcoming EU-CELAC Summit in 2023, as well as other events involving CSOs, mainly youth and civil society or the bi-regional women's network meeting. She emphasised that the EU-CELAC Summit is an opportunity to strengthen strategic alliances, as a new Agenda for EU relations with LAC will be defined. She reiterated the importance of the LAC region as an ally in upholding shared values and the multilateral order in the face of common challenges. In addition to the programmes in the five priority areas, she mentioned that there is great interest at the highest level in the European Commission to maintain a political dialogue in these areas, as well as to strengthen peace in the region, democracy and human rights, and in addressing the migration challenges. These are all horizontal priorities related to diplomacy and the multilateral agenda.

Mr. Denis Thieulin, Deputy Head of Unit B.2 for Mexico, Central America, the Caribbean and the Regional Operations of DG INTPA, presented the status of the RMIP approved in December 2021. The RMIP included inputs suggested by CSOs and LAs during the May 2021 consultation, focusing on collaboration with LAs, strengthening civil society, addressing inequalities while recognising the importance of health and education, and building the green and digital transitions together. Mr. Thieulin reported on the available budget for the region (EUR 3.395 billion, including EUR 800 million for the Caribbean) as well as for the RMIP (EUR 1.280 billion, including EUR 208 million for the Caribbean and EUR 50 million for Central America) and listed the following regional priorities:

A. Pan American Window:

1. Green transition
2. Digital transformation and innovation
3. Sustainable and inclusive economy
4. Democratic governance, security and migration
5. Social cohesion and addressing inequalities

B. Central American sub-window:

1. Green and blue recovery
2. Digital connectivity and transformation
3. Sustainable economic integration
4. Inclusive and peaceful development

C. Caribbean Window:

1. Partnership for a Green Deal
2. Partnership for a Resilient Economy and Trade
3. Partnership for governance, security and human development

Mr. Thieulin outlined the participation of CSOs and LAs in all priority areas and in Team Europe Initiatives, including: awareness-raising actions for the green transition and digital transformation; dialogue platforms on trade and economic recovery; defence of security and migrant rights; and surveillance of fiscal policies. He also noted regional support measures to facilitate participation in regional and subregional platforms, dialogues and integration processes, and the necessary complementarity with thematic and country-level programming.

Then, he shared the progress and next steps by thematic area of the RMIP.

On the **green transition**, he highlighted three actions: the extension of the Euroclima programme (EUR 70 million) to address biodiversity, in addition to climate action, and the inclusion of national windows in countries where there is no bilateral cooperation (such as Brazil, Chile or Uruguay); the Amazon Basin initiative (EUR 35 million); the programme on the five major forests of Mesoamerica (EUR 25.5 million). The next steps, common to all areas, are to finalise the recruitment and implementation of the programmes and to consolidate the Regional Europe Team, as well as to maintain dialogue with the countries of the LAC region.

Regarding **digital transformation**, he noted: the design and approval of the Digital Alliance (EUR 50 million) expected to be launched in March 2023; the new programmes include the establishment of the Copernicus data centres in Panama and Chile; the expansion of the BELLA programme (*Building the Europe Link to Latin America*); the Digital Accelerator; and regulatory and policy cooperation, in collaboration with the private sector.

In the area of **sustainable and inclusive recovery**, he highlighted: the design of a new Sustainable and Inclusive Economy Programme to facilitate market access, sustainable value chains and inclusive economic growth; the Responsible Business Conduct Project in LAC, which will begin in January 2023; and support for sustainable finance and improvement of fiscal space in LAC. Among the next steps he mentioned the possible Business Summit in 2023 and the macroeconomic dialogues with the LAC countries members of the G20 (Brazil, Mexico and Argentina).

In the area of **democratic governance, security and migration**, the main step forward was the Programme for Assistance against Transnational Organised Crime (PAcTO 2.0) with EUR 58 million.

Ms. Diana MONTERO MELIS, Deputy Head of Unit B.2 for South America and Regional Operations of DG INTPA, welcomed the paradigm shift from the logic of donors and beneficiaries towards a partnership perspective, more consistent with the 2030 Agenda. She the pointed out next steps in the priority area of **social cohesion and addressing inequalities**, where she highlighted the design of the new program to foster sustainable human development and inclusive societies. She also highlighted the work on inclusive economic growth (ongoing) to

promote the access of sustainable value chains to markets, with an emphasis on human rights. She also underlined the intensive work with EU Delegations to advance the use of the European Guarantee Fund, a mechanism to mobilise financial institutions, as well as to encourage the use of green bonds (exploratory phase). She mentioned that these are catalytic and complementary instruments to budget support, which has been working for a long time.

A question-and-answer space was then opened in plenary. Several participants asked for more details about the expected participation of CSOs and LAs in the above instruments and initiatives, beyond specific calls, as well as at the upcoming EU-CELAC Summit. The question was also raised about the participation of youth and the consultation of indigenous peoples, whose collective territories are key to the green transition, and who do not necessarily have the same dynamics as CSO participation. Some participants asked for more information on the Amazon program, the Responsible Business Conduct Program, the Team Europe Initiative on Inclusive Societies and human development in general in LAC and the expected role of CSOs in them. Other questions related to their role in the instruments presented, such as digital financial inclusion, human rights in the digital transition, transparency and anti-corruption, or the rights of children, adolescents, and youth.

The representative of the **EU-LAC Foundation** reported on the activities foreseen by the EU-LAC Foundation in the framework of the roadmap towards the EU-CELAC Summit, such as meetings between government and civil society representatives, and the follow up after the Summit. He highlighted three activities: 1) the meeting of the international women's network of LAC and the EU; 2) an event on fair transitions with policy makers and civil society entities to reflect on the interconnection between green recovery and social cohesion; and 3) the exchange between officials directing research policies and networks of research centres.

Due to time constraints it was only possible to answer some of the questions. **Mr. Thieulin** replied that **the next EU- CELAC Summit expects the participation of CSOs and LAs**, although the event is still being designed. He also clarified that both digital inclusion and cybersecurity are part of the ongoing dialogue agenda on digital transformation with LAC authorities. **Ms. Claudia Liebers** from INTPA recognised the key role indigenous communities play in land management and appeals, especially in the green transition, and presented examples of **collaboration with indigenous communities** under the PAcTO 2.0 programme to combat illegal mining and other illicit activities in their territories, as well as in the development of alternatives to coca cultivation, as well as networking with CSOs to protect human rights defenders. **Mr. Jim Stoopman** from INTPA clarified that the **program of responsible business conduct** (beginning in January 2023) calls on all companies, regardless of their size, to avoid any negative impact of their operations. It also seeks to involve workers' organisations and CSOs, together with governments, to develop action plans to adopt international standards and good business practices. It will be assisted by the International Labour Organisation (ILO), the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) and the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR). He said the forum on business and human rights in 2023 will be an excellent opportunity to move in this direction.

IV. Results of the thematic consultation

After the Q&A, participants were divided in three **working groups**: two of them focused on inclusive societies (one in English and one in Spanish) and the third on just transition. Participants were encouraged to answer three questions about challenges and opportunities, actions with greater impact potential and involvement of CSOs and LA.

Inclusive societies: human development, social cohesion and addressing inequalities

Participants agreed on the heterogeneous regional context, and the need to examine particular contexts in order to be able to change policies. They stressed that the greatest challenges to achieving inclusive societies in LAC are related to **increasing intersectional inequalities, migration and forced displacement**, exacerbated by **global warming, conflict and violence, food insecurity and political instability**. Participants emphasised the need for more efficient transnational mechanisms for the **protection of displaced people**, particularly women and girls. They recognised the lack of knowledge about the actual number of displaced people and the reasons

for the migration. They also warned that **pandemic** worsened inequalities, especially gender gaps with female unemployment rates far higher.

Other regional challenges identified were **inflation**, the **fiscal deficit** and **democratic setbacks** that limit civil society participation. Some participants questioned the EU's weak demands for **democratic and human rights** standards by governments with which cooperation agreements are established, including budget support. They believe that the EU could demand greater coherence between the programmatic discourse of partner governments and the achievement of transformative changes. They warned of the risk in some countries of taking for granted that there is a favourable human rights framework, and called for the EU to include greater support for CSOs and LAs in its cooperation strategy.

Participants then discussed opportunities for collaborative actions between the EU and LAC to advance human development and social cohesion. Bi-regional dialogue based on **common values** is perceived as an opportunity to demand **greater coherence** from LAC governments in respect for human rights and democratic participation. The ability to influence the most human rights-friendly **corporate practices** from EU Delegations was also noted. In budgetary matters, they pointed to acting on **fiscal policies** to reduce the deficit and strengthen social investment, including a **possible cancellation of external debt** in exchange for investments in human development and environmental protection. **Decentralisation** was identified both as a challenge and an opportunity (in the education sector, for example). Participants noted that the impacts of **corporate practices** (on human rights) should be closely followed mostly at local level, such as that of EU Delegations.

Bilateral decentralised cooperation can be successfully used, involving to a larger extent direct municipality-to-municipality contacts, as well as cooperation between national associations of local and regional authorities, which also serves as a bridge between the central government and local and regional authorities.

Platforma written input

Several global and regional policy frameworks and agreements were noted as opportunities, including the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs, the Cartagena Declaration, the Comprehensive Regional Protection and Solutions Framework, and the regional strategy for the socioeconomic integration of Venezuelan migrants and their host communities. All of these were noted in addition to using the EU-CELAC level to address challenges and opportunities.

The summit would promote dialogue, cooperation and advocacy in the governments of the region around the strengthening of democracy, the welfare state and respect for human rights in a context of closing spaces for civil society and violence against dissent in the region; and inequality. **Oxfam proposes the establishment of a permanent inter-summit political dialogue forum for the two regions, as well as one of the civil societies of the two regions connecting both forums so that the voices of civil society from both regions can be taken into account and influence the political agenda of the Summit.**

Oxfam written input

Participants exchanged ideas on actions with the greatest potential for impact for the most vulnerable and showed consensus on the importance of bottom-up approaches, with local actions that serve as **pilot initiatives** and whose impact can be assessed and amplified. They agreed on the importance of investing efforts in improving **transparency, accountability** and **anti-corruption** mechanisms, as well as **citizen participation** in public policies, including taking advantage of public procurement and technical training in the field of governance. In the area of fiscal policies, prioritise **public investment** in universal social protection systems, quality health and educational services, as well as food security — including access for small and medium-sized producers to public procurement systems — and care work. In this regard, they also called for increased EU

investment in regional programmes and funds to support **women's organisations**. In order to address the migration challenge, in addition to the effective protection of the **migrant and refugee population**, particularly women and girls, the enormous potential to improve their access to education and decent employment was identified. The massive weight of **remittances** in national economies, particularly in Central America, was mentioned for their potential in poverty alleviation. The exchange of experiences on **reception systems** was also mentioned as an action with significant impact, taking into account the response in Europe to people fleeing the war in Ukraine, as well as the reception in LAC of migrant population from Venezuela.

Finally, CSOs and LAs expressed the need to be **considered as partners**. They also expressed concern about how to involve **social movements** that are not necessarily represented, as well as vulnerable and **less vocal** sectors, such as indigenous populations or people with disabilities. Participants called for increased and accountable role of the private sector. Specifically, they suggested expanding **private sector** participation beyond large companies, including with the cooperative movement and networks of small and medium-sized producers.

The 3 biggest opportunities in advancing inclusive societies are linked with 1. supporting LAC countries to prioritize a shift from fossil fuels to a greener economy, focusing attention on sustainable ways of farming, food security (i.e. agroecology, indigenous agricultural farming compared with the big agro-industrial business) considering natural disaster preparedness and mitigation efforts; 2. increasing effective women's participation and inclusion in the decision-making process, bearing in mind also the native population and their knowledge of the natural conservation systems; and 3. Engaging civil society participation not only as a stakeholder or implementer of EU grants but as an active partner in reaching and shaping the EU objectives in LAC.

ActionAid International written input

Participants emphasised the importance of including the **voices of young people** in the fight against inequalities, building on their dynamism and commitment. In this regard, **Ms. Ana Torres** from INTPA recognised the importance of intergenerational dialogue and referred to the Youth Action Plan in EU External Action (2022-2027), a new global EU policy involving LAC. She pointed out that this plan recognises, among other things, the need for an intersectional approach, the role of young people in responding to global challenges, and in the green and digital transitions.

New and innovative financing models supported by the EU could allow **indigenous organizations** to negotiate, obtain and manage funds with the scale, focus and timeframes necessary to implement indigenous peoples' own governance models which - in the use and enjoyment of their rights - guarantee the conservation, restoration and management of their territories.

...supporting indigenous enterprises, based on bio-economies, can be a key opportunity for the EU to help develop and strengthen adequate and sustainable livelihoods for indigenous communities.

WWF written input

The region needs public policies that guarantee the full exercise of the territorial rights of indigenous peoples, peasant and Afro-descendant communities, which are reflected in turn in the policies and practices of the private sector (in the food, energy and mining chains), with emphasis on access to land, natural commons, as well as free, prior and informed consent, and the full exercise of rights and their own forms of government and laws by indigenous peoples. This must include:

- Protection of defenders of land, territory and environmental rights, and supporting protection measures and access/development to justice.
- Strengthening and updating of environmental protection policies focused with priority on vulnerable ecosystems (Amazon, Andes, Caribbean, and Central America).
- Extensive investment and planning in adaptation processes to the effects of climate change, with priority given to the most vulnerable sectors, groups and territories.

Oxfam written input

Just transitions in a context of green and digital transformation

In the area of **green transition**, emphasis was given to the potential of **indigenous territories and local communities** as scalable models of conservation and sustainable use of environmental goods. They recalled the political opportunity that opens with the renewed commitment of the governments of Brazil and Colombia to stop **deforestation in the Amazon**, as well as the relevance **of the EU Green Deal** on renewable energy and food. They also identified opportunities **to strengthen social protection systems** for the most vulnerable populations in the context of the ecological transition, as well as **the new COP27 Loss and Damage Fund** for Vulnerable Countries.

Actions that can most effectively support the green transition included initiatives related to **climate resilience and pandemics** at the intersection between economic development and environmental protection, **nature-based solutions**, as well as the **bio-economy**. There are a number of initiatives that are currently disjointed, but could be replicated at the regional level, including practices of sustainable land use by indigenous communities. They emphasised the importance of effectively protecting the **collective territorial rights of indigenous communities** and the equitable and sustainable management of natural resources.

In the field of **digitalisation**, participants stated that digital inclusion can contribute to **governance** and the work of human rights defenders, provided that the independence and security of the digital space is ensured. Therefore, they warned about the importance of **cybersecurity**. They also identified the potential to invest in **digital financial inclusion** of the most excluded sectors, to support governance and human rights defenders, including digital security. Support for **digital government** was mentioned as a way to reduce gaps in access to public services.

Regarding the articulation between the EU and CSOs and LA, participants highlighted the desirability of using **networks and platforms** to strengthen technical cooperation, facilitate **direct access to funding** by communities and LA and work on **citizen participation mechanisms**.

To truly achieve the green transition, a large part of the funding available for this aim should be directed through local and regional authorities, as balanced regional development is an important precondition for achieving the objectives of the Green Deal [...] While Latin America is not considered a region responsible for the activities leading to climate change, it is suffering the consequences, showing signs of growing vulnerability in the face of natural catastrophes and ecological threats that hamper development capacity. Policy coherence is crucial to ensure our green ambition in Europe does not have a negative (environmental & biodiversity) impact on partner countries and territories. As well, education on sustainability is key to a green local transition so that people are contributing to solutions, critically thinking to the challenges ahead and adapting their behaviours.

Plataforma written input

They mentioned the example of the network of Ibero-American cities collaborating in the field of green transition. They emphasised the importance of providing **timely information** and **accountability** on the impact of this type of consultation, as well as taking advantage of existing networks and platforms to enhance multi-actor alliances. They also suggested using digitalisation to deliver information with **cultural relevance** and in local languages, as well as to **people with disabilities**, thus promoting inclusion.

he consensus was broad on the importance of effective participation of **women, youth and children** as essential agents of change in addressing the challenges of inclusion, green transition and digitalisation.

In the framework of the EU-LAC Digital Alliance and EU Green Deal actions, the EU can: clarify the role and allow civil society and NGOs to be part of the Team Europe Initiatives; improve Information sharing and public engagement to strengthen participation from the local population, including youth, women and minorities as changemakers; and support the dialogue for social and economic inclusion of the more marginalized population, influencing the public policies towards Sustainable Development Goals and the 2030 Agenda.

ActionAid International written input

In particular, on environmental issues, the shrinking of civic space has detrimental consequences for environmental protection because it restricts the capacity of civil society actors to participate in public debate on an equal footing with those in the private sector and government. This frequently results in unjust social and environmental outcomes, weak and/or biased legal protection, a decline in indigenous lands and protected areas, diminished transparency and social oversight of environmental licensing mechanisms, reduced investment in environmental programs, and the expansion of illegal logging, mining, and the agricultural frontier. As such, efforts by the EU to improve, increase and strengthen interaction and inclusion of civil society in its partnership with the region will be beneficial for the needed transitions.

WWF written input

V. Closure

Mr. Denis Thieulin closed the activity thanking the participants for the quality of the contributions and reiterating the importance of CSOs and LAs engagement pointing out the most relevant aspects and actions with the greatest impact potential to reduce inequalities