

## **EU-Latin American and Caribbean senior officials meeting in Brussels gives boost to cooperation in research and innovation**

**Senior officials from Europe, Latin America and the Caribbean met on 28-29 March 2011 in Brussels, for the first time under the umbrella of a new EU-LAC Joint Initiative for Research and Innovation. Building on existing cooperation between the EU and countries in Latin America and the Caribbean, this Joint Initiative adopted by the Madrid Ministerial Forum and EU-LAC Summit in 2010, aims to deliver greater benefits from scientific cooperation between the two regions. The meeting, attended by senior officials from 32 countries, the Commission and the European External Action Service, endorsed the development of new pilot initiatives in science and technology.**

It is an open secret: Europe's historical ties and common values are particularly strong with Latin America and the Caribbean. In today's interconnected world, research and innovation allow us to modernise our economies and societies in mutually beneficial ways. Cooperation between research teams in the now 27 EU Member States and the 33 countries in Latin America and the Caribbean has been taking place for over 20 years. The benefits of this cooperation have led to many researchers moving between the regions, bringing new ideas to the benefit of society on both sides of the Atlantic and to productive collaborative research in successive EU Research Framework Programmes. For example, the LOTASSA project combined modern genomics with traditional knowledge to support green growth. The 16 partners from Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Denmark, Germany, Slovakia, Spain and Uruguay documented local biodiversity and paved the way for sustainable use of Lotus as forage for livestock<sup>1</sup>.

The EU-LAC Joint Initiative for Research and Innovation was endorsed at last year's Madrid Summit and brings together senior officials responsible for research and innovation in an effort to improve coordination in science. The meeting, co-chaired by the European Commission's Directorate General for Research and Innovation, and Chile's Ambassador to the European Union, took place on 28-29 March in Brussels. It focussed on how to enhance cooperation in pilot activities which reflect major challenges to European, Latin American and Caribbean societies.

Working groups co-led by one country from each region address the pilots. These are: Developing the bioeconomy to guarantee food security; Confronting biodiversity and climate change; Energy; and exploiting the rapid development of information and communication technologies (ICT) for better coming to grips with the many problems, but also opportunities ahead. A cross-cutting working group was also established to address funding and identifying good collaborative practices based on past experience.

With growing interdependence, trade and the movement of people, it makes sense to join forces in research and innovation in areas that affect us all. Europe, Latin America and the Caribbean have a history of cooperation at the level of projects in research and development. Much of this cooperation has been bilateral between individual countries.

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<sup>1</sup> For more information on the LOTASSA project ("Bridging genomics and agrosystem management: Resources for adaptation and sustainable production of forage Lotus species in environmentally-constrained South American soils"), see [www.lotassa.com/online/site/6432|1.php](http://www.lotassa.com/online/site/6432|1.php)

More recently, there has been a move towards stronger bi-regional cooperation, supported also by research and development policies at European level. The enhanced cooperation brought about by the EU-LAC dialogue builds on existing activities financially supported by such instruments as the European Research Framework Programmes, but will encourage more focused collaborations in the three pilots with special attention on the uptake of research results in order to deliver innovation. After just four years of FP7, there are substantially more collaborations (700 participations) than in the previous Framework Programme.

As a contribution to the Joint Initiative, specific targeting for Latin America and the Caribbean in the 2011 work programme<sup>2</sup> of some areas of particular mutual interest should lead to further collaborations to start working later this year and in early 2012. These collaborations in such areas as climate change and biodiversity and sustainable water use in agriculture are expected to deliver real benefits for societies on both sides of the Atlantic.

The brochure 'Towards the EU-LAC Knowledge Area' illustrates the links between bi-regional political commitments and practical action on the ground across many thematic areas and using the full range of cooperation mechanisms. [Click here](#) for the online version.

More information on INCO-Net projects covering Latin America and the Caribbean and the catalogue of currently on-going FP7 projects with at least one LAC partner is available on the regional page for Latin America and the Caribbean: [click here](#).

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<sup>2</sup> <http://ec.europa.eu/research/iscp/index.cfm?pg=eulac-infoday-2010>