

EUROSOCIAL MEETING

*EURO-LATIN AMERICAN DIALOGUE ON
PUBLIC POLICIES FOR SOCIAL COHESION*

CONCEPT NOTE

*Brussels, Belgium
24th-25th of March 2014*

EUROSociAL has become the flagship programme of the European Union in Latin America for social cohesion. Under the motto "Supporting policies, connecting institutions" it brings together political decision-makers and high-level public servants from European and Latin American public administrations to take part in exchanging concrete reform proposals in their respective domains.

It is therefore an opportune time to **present the achievements and results of EUROSociAL in Brussels**, by inviting relevant European and Latin American institutions to learn more about this unique programme, and to reflect on the future of cooperation between the two regions..

The programme enables **horizontal learning between public institutions** ("peers"), to accompany and support strategic public policies in Latin America. It pursues (and obtains) **tangible results at national level**, with substantial contributions to equitable and inclusive policies, while **facilitating, from a more strategic scope, policy dialogue at the regional and bi-regional level**. The EU contribution to this dialogue continues to be relevant, as the European construction(?) and its implementation at the national level could bring interesting lessons learnt (positive or negative) to Latin America, a region that shares more and more issues with Europe, and which has placed concern for equity and social inclusion at the centre of the public agenda. In recent years European countries have faced turbulent times: cuts in public expenditure are a reality, and the way to economic recovery needs to be carefully planned. Despite that, many of the goals towards greater social and regional cohesion remain valid: **the European Welfare State is a dynamic and developing institutional reality**. As such, Europe can also get inspiration from the Latin American experiences and innovations to strengthen its own social model. Latin America is not only a strategic partner in the economic and commercial area, but also promoting internationally shared practices and values which are at the base of the European social model. In this sense, EUROSociAL is an effective operator that supports proposals for the strategic partnership between the two regions. The programme is also highly regarded among Latin American institutions and authorities at the highest level, which has allowed it to engage in result-oriented policy dialogue.

At this juncture, one at which the EU is defining its next development cooperation agenda, it seems relevant to highlight the unique features of a programme like EUROSociAL, not only for its **innovative approach cooperating with Latin America**, but also as an accountability exercise (in particular with regard to presenting its results) EUROSociAL is a strong example of the European cooperation efforts to implement the aid effectiveness agenda and to move forward towards **new cooperation models – which are more horizontal and more inclusive** and therefore more suited to the realities of middle-income countries.

Objectives

The objective of the meeting is to reflect on the Strategic Partnership for the 21st century between Europe and Latin America regions. This partnership has been built on mutual respect and a shared conviction that both sides benefit from working together and learning from each other, as they have inseparable common interests in today's global world. Both regions have maintained an on-going active and dynamic cooperation relationship in many issues. At this current time, when the next agenda for EU-LAC cooperation is being defined, EUROSociAL aims at presenting itself as a useful and valuable mechanism for connecting the two regions.

Therefore, the meeting aims, on the one hand, to show the results and achievements of the Programme, along with contributing to the debate on the new agenda for EU-LAC cooperation. Underlying this debate are the facts that, on one hand, Europe has been strongly affected by the international crisis and, on the other hand, Latin

America, with a bigger economic growth, is a heterogeneous region in which many countries could be caught in a middle-income trap.

Sessions

The meeting will consist of three sessions. The first session will consist of a reflection of the partnership between Europe and Latin America in today's inter-dependent world. In the second session, various Latin American authorities will assess the progresses achieved with the support of EUROsociAL, highlighting what makes this Programme different from others. Finally, at the last session, a discussion on the challenges of cooperation between the two regions will be carried out through a roundtable. Some issues such as the development cooperation with middle-income countries and new priorities for EU-LAC cooperation will be raised in this discussion.

1- EUROPE-LATIN AMERICA: STRATEGIC PARTNERS IN A GLOBAL WORLD

In a changing global context, where geopolitical balances are being redrawn, Europe and Latin America are positioning themselves as **“strategic partners”**. They are natural partners linked by strong historical, cultural and economic ties and share **values and common interest**. At this session two distinguished persons— from Latin American and Europe— will discuss the future of the bi-regional relationship, its mutual benefits and its contributions to global governance.

2- EUROsociAL, A FACILITATOR IN PUBLIC POLICY CHANGE PROCESSES.

EUROsociAL is acting as a **“catalyst” for change processes**, it supports **small** changes which can **drive or sustain deeper processes** for policy reform. During this session various Latin American authorities will assess the progress achieved with the support of EUROsociAL. This session aims to show the main achievements of EUROsociAL and its *modus operandi* to keep a balance between:

- A **regional approach**, which facilitates addressing common problems, **and a national approach**, adapting its support and assistance to the specific context of each country.
- A **strategic level**, that promotes debate and reflection on key topical issues, **and an operational level** with tangible results and a direct effect on citizens.

This session will also emphasize the **peer-to-peer learning process**, its operating modes and its utility for the institutions involved, emphasizing European support and South-South cooperation.

3- CHALLENGES IN COOPERATION BETWEEN EUROPE AND LATIN AMERICA

✓ COOPERATING WITH MIDDLE-INCOME COUNTRIES: INEQUALITY AND NEW SOCIAL GAPS.

Latin America stands at the centre of the debate on cooperation with middle-income countries (MIC). It is a diverse and heterogeneous region facing complex development challenges; which overstep those defined by the Millennium Development Goals (MDG). EUROsociAL has shown itself to be an innovative and relevant programme to cooperate with Latin America.

At a time when cooperation with middle-income countries is being redefined, this roundtable will facilitate a debate on middle-income traps, highlighting the unique aspects of a programme like EUROsociAL for avoiding

these traps. The discussion will start with the presentation of a discussion paper prepared by members of the assessment group of the Orientation Committee.

✓ **THE NEW EU-LA COOPERATION AGENDA**

This session will feature a discussion of the new 2014-2020 European cooperation agenda, whose guidelines have been recently approved by the European Parliament. As bilateral programmes have been cancelled for several of the countries, regional cooperation represents an opportunity to promote the MIC cooperation agenda, and, along these lines, EUROsociAL is a medium from which these countries can gain value.

The roundtable will start with a presentation by a member of the European Parliament, who will explain the strategic axes of cooperation with Latin America.