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## Russia — Latin America Economic Cooperation: Insights from EU — CELAC Sustainable Development Concept

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**Abstract.** The article considers cooperation patterns between the European Union (EU) and CELAC (Community of Latin America and the Caribbean) in the context of creatively applying this experience to a broader topic of Russia — Latin America multilevel cooperation. The concept of sustainable development, which implies interaction in accordance with its three main dimensions: environmental, social and economic, is adopted on the global level. The interaction between EU and CELAC contributes to the progress in achieving the goals of sustainable development, where a lot of attention is paid to the “green economy,” alternative energy, and social aspects, since the environmental aspects’ constraints are providing the most significant impetus to structural changes in the existing development paradigm. This in return is expected to create a model that ensures economic growth based on a green economy, alternative energy, with greater equality and social inclusiveness. At supranational level in the European Union an effective and systemic policy has been formed in the field of nature conservation and combating climate change, which without a doubt can be considered one of the most progressive ones in the world, which creates potential for sharing these experiences with less developed and fortunate nations. European programs for Latin American and Caribbean (LAC) countries have become an important factor in the development of interregional cooperation in environmental protection, biodiversity conservation, and countering natural disasters. The article also focuses on the most recent changes that have occurred in the sphere of interaction between CELAC and EU in the context of COVID-19 pandemic. Massive structural and conceptual changes that have seriously reshaped the priorities and funding of joint programmers between two organizations reflects new priorities for sustainable development in general when it comes to new world realities in post-pandemic world, and could be useful for Russian model for the relations with this region.

**Key words:** CELAC, European Union, Latin America, Russia, cooperation, sustainable development

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## Экономическое взаимодействие России и Латинской Америки: выводы из модели сотрудничества между ЕС и СЕЛАК в рамках концепции устойчивого развития

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**Аннотация.** Рассматриваются модели сотрудничества между Европейским союзом (ЕС) и CELAC (Сообщество Латинской Америки и Карибского бассейна) в контексте творческого применения этого опыта к более широкой теме многоуровневого сотрудничества России и Латинской Америки. На глобальном

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уровне принята концепция устойчивого развития, предполагающая взаимодействие по трем основным его измерениям: экологическому, социальному и экономическому. Наибольшее внимание уделяется экологическому аспекту, поскольку именно подобные ограничения, по мнению экспертов, могут дать толчок структурным изменениям в существующей парадигме развития, которые позволят создать модель, обеспечивающую экономический рост на основе зеленой экономики, использования альтернативной энергии, с большим акцентом на обеспечении равенства и социальной инклюзивности. В ЕС на наднациональном уровне сформирована эффективная и системная политика в области охраны природы и противодействия изменению климата. Европейские программы для стран региона ЛКА стали важным фактором развития межрегионального сотрудничества в области защиты окружающей среды, сохранения биоразнообразия и противодействия стихийным бедствиям. Это взаимодействие способствует прогрессу в достижении целей устойчивого развития, где большое внимание уделяется «зеленой экономике», альтернативным источникам энергии и социальным аспектам. Особенностью статьи является глубокий анализ современного этапа и направления развития сотрудничества в сфере устойчивого развития между двумя организациями. Авторы уделяют особое внимание тем изменениям, которые произошли в связи с пандемией COVID-19, что вынудило ЕС и СЕЛАК существенно переосмыслить стоящие перед ними задачи и существующие потребности. Этот опыт может быть крайне полезным для России в выстраивании отношений с данным регионом.

**Ключевые слова:** СЕЛАК, Европейский союз, Латинская Америка, Россия, сотрудничество, устойчивое развитие

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## Introduction

The main focus of the article is thorough analysis of the sustainable development concept cooperation between the European Union and CELAC with the goal of defining the correct patterns and applying the latter to the broader topic of Russia — Latin America (LA) economic cooperation. Latin American countries are promising partners of Russia in trade, economic, investment cooperation, which is reflected in the mutual refusal of discriminatory actions towards each other they did not follow the path of joining the anti-Russian sanctions introduced by the US and supported by the collective West [Yakovlev, 2021]. Russia and the LA are united by the coincidence on a number of key issues on the world agenda, related to relying on the norms of international law, strengthening the central role of the UN, seeking collective responses to new challenges, which creates a good basis for expanding economic relations, which are currently quite limited. In 2001, the position of the RF in total exports and imports of Latin America was 0.6 % and 1.6 %, and in 2019 — 0.5 % and 0.7 % despite the significant growth of

foreign trade of these countries. During this period, the PRC increased its trade volume by 20 times [Shkolyar, 2021]. Russian investments are also insignificant. The main problem is the lack of incentives to expand the contractual base, to create new negotiating platforms for the development of economic cooperation. Perhaps the example of the ideological convergence of the EU and CELAC in the field of Sustainable Development is a good example for organizing such a basis. Chronologically, the article covers two periods. The former started with the establishment of the CELAC in 2010 and lasted until 2019, and the latter — from 2020 and ongoing. The latter period is shaped by the COVID-19 pandemic, which has seriously changed international relations and keeps shaping new realities in international cooperation. Predictably, the EU — CELAC cooperation is not an exception. The priorities and conceptual basis of the EU — CELAC sustainable development cooperation has experienced sufficient and quite radical changes, reshaping the very notion of sustainable development as these institutions understand it.

The importance of sustainable development cooperation between the EU and Latin America is rather apparent. On the one hand, the European Union may be considered one of the most advanced international actors, making the EU experience a valuable asset to share and promote globally. On the other hand, the Latin America and Caribbean region (LAC) nations are fully aware of the devastating effects of climate change and environmental imbalance that may deepen social inequalities and affect economic development. Gradually, Latin American countries have taken a more active position on climate change and environmental protection. Some researchers (De Castro, Van Dijck & Hogenboom, 2014; Latta & Wittman, 2010) have raised the issue of rational use of bio resources in Latin America and proposed the concept of environmentally unequal exchange. These disbalances leave economies that rely on mineral resource extraction and export unable to escape the poverty trap. Resources are being depleted faster than they can be restored: “Often the result is to leave a polluted hole in the ground and a gaping hole in the social fabric of mining area” (De Castro, Van Dijck & Hogenboom, 2014, p. 17).

For quite some time, the Latin American experience of economic growth and development has been relatively discouraging, which makes it necessary to search for an integrated strategy to reduce poverty and enhance social inclusion, preserve the environment, promote responsible use of natural resources without division into separate areas (Amazonia, Andean region, coastal zones, etc.) or specific problems (indigenous people, gender issues, urbanization) (Arboleda, 2016; Hogenboom, Baud & de Castro, 2012). Nature preservation in Latin America has received some coverage in scientific publications. Researchers note that there is a need to change government policies regarding the development of closed urban water supply systems, household waste recycling, or clean energy usage, and create incentives to foster eco-friendly innovations (Alimonda, Toro Pérez & Martín, 2017; Solíz, 2017). Lack of an adequate technological base is a factor that hinders environmentally friendly use of natural resources in most developing countries (Acosta,

2010; Barreda Marín, 2016). Cooperation in this area is crucial as it takes into account unique characteristics of different states and contributes to strengthening their technological potential. Awareness of the disastrous consequences of environmental inaction in LAC, where climate change and environmental imbalances deepen social inequalities and affect the economies, may help reach consensus and effect joint action to achieve sustainable development.

Currently, multilateral cooperation is primarily determined by the multi-level system of international integration (especially, its regional level). In particular, in addition to interaction at the state level, there is a tendency towards inter-organizational contacts. The EU — CELAC (the most advanced integration project in Europe and the regional bloc of the Latin American and the Caribbean countries, respectively) is an example of the active development of such contacts. There still is potential for both organizations to enhance the mechanisms of joint action against new threats and challenges. The EU has created an effective and systemic policy in environmental conservation and combating climate change which functions at the supranational level. European programs for LAC have become an important factor in developing interregional cooperation in environmental protection, biodiversity conservation, and countering the effects of natural disasters. This interaction contributes to the progress in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG), which emphasize the development of green economy, alternative energy use,<sup>1</sup> and social aspects of development.<sup>2</sup>

Environmental threats that disrupt regional development in Latin America are also

<sup>1</sup> Castro Pereira J. Green Energy in Latin America: Opportunities for the EU — LAC Cooperation // EU — LAC Foundation. November 20, 2017. URL: <https://eulacfoundation.org/en/green-energy-latin-america-opportunities-eu-lac-cooperation> (accessed: 05.11.2021).

<sup>2</sup> Durán Lima J.E., Herrera R., Lebret P., Echeverría M. Latin America — European Union Cooperation. A Partnership for Development // Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC). 2014. URL: [https://repositorio.cepal.org/bitstream/handle/11362/37595/S1420618\\_en.pdf?sequence=1](https://repositorio.cepal.org/bitstream/handle/11362/37595/S1420618_en.pdf?sequence=1) (accessed: 05.11.2021).

acknowledged at the highest level. For instance, the United Nations have set 17 sustainable development goals and promote investment in their achievement. However, global cooperation is often ineffective in tackling regional issues. In this regard, the relevance of the research is further substantiated by the need to study the mechanisms of interregional sustainable development cooperation.

### **Theoretical and Methodological Foundations**

The authors analyze the EU — CELAC sustainable development cooperation within the framework of structural functionalism and organizational theory. The founders of the structural functionalism (Parsons, 1960) note that organizational structures have several common characteristics. The most important one is an orientation towards achieving common goals (Parsons, 1960, pp. 17—19). However, some researchers reject the possibility of effective cooperation at the inter-organizational level as international organizations include individual states, and their official representatives pursue national interests and goals even within these supranational bodies. The theory of structural functionalism bypasses this thesis assuming that individual countries that make up an international organization can be studied as “individual organisms” that are guided by “dependent and independent variables” that change the general background of the “environment.” This suggests that it is possible to view organizations as single independent actors, who “through a hierarchy of power and responsibility” can conduct their policies and thus interact with each other. At the same time, the line of conduct itself is an “internal environment”, and the general goals and objectives of organizations are “external” (Katzenbach & Smith, 1993, pp. 21—22).

To determine what these common goals are and how the parties achieve consensus on them, it is necessary to turn to organizational theory, which is rooted in the Marxist paradigm. For instance, A.W. Gouldner proposed to view the organization’s goals as the goals of its leaders. This approach is quite rational as every

organization has a system of formalized collective decision-making. The implementation of the decisions is carried out through selected bodies and appointed persons (Gouldner, 1959, p. 424).

Therefore, the EU — CELAC cooperation, if analyzed through the lens of the theories mentioned above, can be viewed as a relationship of two independent organizational systems interconnected by a common idea — achievement of the sustainable development goals, with the areas of the cooperation being ecology, social issues, and economic growth. Therefore, the initiatives proposed by the two parties do not necessarily correspond to individual national agendas but come from a group of countries that are ready to participate in interregional cooperation at the multilateral level.

Several historical and political science research methods may be applied to unlock the potential of such cooperation, analyze general environmental programs and initiatives. Firstly, the authors use official documents analysis to identify the normative basis of the EU — CELAC cooperation. Finally, content analysis is used to identify the frequency of contacts and key priorities of cooperation and assess its dynamics and results.

### **Formation of the EU Environmental Policy**

The aggravation of environmental problems, new challenges and threats related to climate change are inevitably becoming global. The trade-off between environmental protection, rational use of resources, and the need for economic development has complex and controversial consequences. The European Union became the first body where systemic awareness of the ecological issues resulted in the formulation of a centralized ecological policy, which stimulated the introduction of resource-saving technologies and stringent emission standards for industrial enterprises in order to reduce pollution. The 1986 Single European Act defined the goals, objectives, principles, and directions of the EU policies, including the environmental protection policy. With the adoption of this act, the EU enacted environmental protection legislation. The Environmental Action Program (EAP) was

initially conceptualized during the Environment for Europe Conference at Dobris (1991). The Dobris Conference set the European common long-term environmental policy priorities. Eco-friendly technologies and effective control over the application of environmental protection regulation have become critical elements of environmental protection in Europe.

The 1992 Maastricht Treaty and the 1997 Amsterdam Treaty signified the emergence of the EU common environmental policy and further development of its legal basis. The 2007 Lisbon Treaty enshrined the principle of the environmental orientation of the EU policy and marked the emergence of a centralized, structured environmental policy for all European countries. The environmental component was introduced into all the EU policies. As a result, the EU was able to adopt large-scale environmental measures, establish the legal framework for regulation and coordination of the member countries' environmental policies, which allowed developing new approaches to environmental protection. Numerous EU directives on environmental protection were rigorously executed and became the basis of national legislation of the EU member countries.<sup>3</sup> Sustainable development, which by then had received official recognition at the UN Conference on Environment and Development, became one of the main objectives of the EU. This was reflected in such strategic documents as "Europe 2020: A Strategy for Reasonable, Sustainable, and Comprehensive Growth"<sup>4</sup> and the EU Seventh Environmental Action Program 2020 (7-EAP).<sup>5</sup>

<sup>3</sup> Environment Policy: General Principles and Basic Framework // European Parliament. May, 2021. URL: <https://www.europarl.europa.eu/factsheets/en/sheet/71/environment-policy-general-principles-and-basic-framework> (accessed: 05.11.2021).

<sup>4</sup> Europe 2020: A European Strategy for Smart, Sustainable and Inclusive Growth // European Commission. 2010. URL: <https://ec.europa.eu/eu2020/pdf/COMPLET%20EN%20BARROSO%20%20%20007%20-%20Europe%202020%20-%20EN%20version.pdf> (accessed: 05.11.2021).

<sup>5</sup> General Union Environment Action Programme to 2020: 'Living Well, Within the Limits of Our Planet' // European Commission. March 31, 2013. URL: <https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/>

7-EAP, for example, identifies nine priority goals for environmental policy: natural capital, resource-efficient economy, healthy environment for healthy people, effective implementation of environmental legislation, improved environmental data, favorable investment climate for environmental conservation, full integration of environmental requirements into other areas of human activity, sustainable urban development, resolving modern environmental problems.<sup>6</sup> The first three goals are long-term and are supposed to be achieved by 2050. The European Climate Adaptation Platform also contains a whole set of new measures to reduce the risk of climate-related disasters. The Eighth Framework Program called "Horizon 2020" is the largest in the history of the EU with a budget of EUR 80 bln. The program is based on advanced science and the EU's industrial leadership<sup>7</sup> and is supposed to produce results by 2020 during the transition to a green economy.

The EU environmental policy and environmental protection initiatives are often implemented in the form of LIFE projects. More than 4,500 initiatives have been implemented in Europe and beyond since 1992 as part of LIFE.<sup>8</sup> This program's total budget reaches EUR 9 bln, with the funding of environmental protection projects alone standing at approximately EUR 4 bln. LIFE includes many projects in different spheres all related to the environmental dimension of sustainable development: combating climate change, improving the quality of water resources, good land use, preserving ecosystems, rational energy diplomacy, ensuring comfortable life in cities without harming the

1d861dfb-ae0c-4638-83ab-69b234bde376 (accessed: 05.11.2021).

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

<sup>7</sup> EU Support to the Community of Latin America and Caribbean States (CELAC) // European Commission. September 26, 2016. URL: [https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/ip\\_16\\_3542](https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/ip_16_3542) (accessed: 05.11.2021).

<sup>8</sup> Regulation (EU) 2021/783 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 29 April 2021 establishing a Programme for the Environment and Climate Action (LIFE), and repealing Regulation (EU) No. 1293/2013 (Text with EEA relevance) // EUR-Lex. April 21, 2021. URL: <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/eli/reg/2021/783/oj> (accessed: 05.11.2021)

environment, reducing harmful emissions, stimulating resource-efficient and low-carbon economic and social development, etc. The implementation of this program in four environmental dimensions, namely, protection of water resources, nature conservation, clean air, and waste management, has contributed to improving the quality of life of Europeans.<sup>9</sup>

The EU also acknowledges global nature of environmental problems and is active in international initiatives to combat climate change, which is also mentioned in 7-EAP. Along with multilateral agreements on environmental protection, the EU provides official development assistance to developing countries and supports their efforts in promoting green economy and eco-friendly technologies.<sup>10</sup> In 2016, the EU increased its contribution to solving global climate problems by 15 % (up to EUR 20.2 bln) and has since become the most prominent international donor in this sphere.<sup>11</sup> Numerous environmental programs and EU initiatives are in high demand in other regions of the globe because, according to the UN, Europe, due to its heterogeneity, may serve as a micro projection of the various challenges and opportunities that the international community faces in creating an inclusive society, ensuring environmental sustainability, achieving equitable economic growth, forming development partnerships and working out models of international cooperation.<sup>12</sup>

<sup>9</sup> Guía para la Estrategia Europea de Desarrollo Sostenible: un futuro sostenible a nuestro alcance // Comisión Europea. Noviembre 2007. URL: [https://www.miteco.gob.es/es/ministerio/planes-estrategias/estrategia-espanola-desarrollo-sostenible/Guia\\_de\\_la\\_Estrategia\\_Europea\\_de\\_desarrollo\\_sostenible\\_VE\\_tcm30-88618.pdf](https://www.miteco.gob.es/es/ministerio/planes-estrategias/estrategia-espanola-desarrollo-sostenible/Guia_de_la_Estrategia_Europea_de_desarrollo_sostenible_VE_tcm30-88618.pdf) (accessed: 05.11.2021).

<sup>10</sup> General Union Environment Action Programme to 2020: 'Living Well, Within the Limits of Our Planet' // European Commission. March 31, 2013. URL: <https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/1d861dfb-ae0c-4638-83ab-69b234bde376> (accessed: 05.11.2021).

<sup>11</sup> EU Support to the Community of Latin America and Caribbean States (CELAC) // European Commission. September 26, 2016. URL: [https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/ip\\_16\\_3542](https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/ip_16_3542) (accessed: 05.11.2021).

<sup>12</sup> Open Working Group on Sustainable Development Goals // United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Sustainable Development Knowledge

## Interregional Partnership of the EU and LAC

Latin America drew the attention of the EU in the mid-1990s when in 1995 the European Commission defined key tracks of the strategic partnership with these countries. The EU — LAC regular summits led to comprehensive cooperation in the political sphere, trade, and economy, security, combating drug trafficking, and migration. The EU — Latin American and Caribbean partnership is based on trade cooperation and large-scale investments and commitment to common political principles: promoting democracy, ensuring effective human rights protection and the supremacy of international law, social cohesion, and sustainable development (Bonilla Soria & Jaramillo, 2014). Latin America is of strategic importance for the EU as a trade partner, supplier of raw materials and merchandise goods, and investment destination, which stimulates the development of political, economic, and social relations between the regions. Thus, in 2007—2017 total EU — Latin America trade doubled and reached EUR 221.6 bln. The EU share in the region's trade reached 14.4 %. The EU is the third trading partner of LAC, and in 2015 exports of goods from CELAC countries to the EU accounted for 33 % of the region's total exports, while imports from the EU accounted for 12 %.<sup>13</sup>

The EU's leading trading partners are Mexico and Brazil, while the main trading partners for CELAC are Germany, Spain, Italy, France, and the Netherlands. The EU has entered into free trade agreements with 26 out of 33 CELAC countries<sup>14</sup> and has become a crucial source of foreign investments. The EU FDI stock reached EUR 825.7 bln in 2016. In turn, Latin American investments in the EU increased from EUR 128.5 bln in 2009 to EUR 250.3 bln in 2016.<sup>15</sup> Rather predictably, in 2016, Brazil and

Platform. 2014. URL: <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/owg.html> (accessed: 05.11.2021).

<sup>13</sup> EU — CELAC Relations // European External Action Service. July 16, 2018. URL: [https://eeas.europa.eu/delegations/malaysia/13042/eu-celac-relations\\_en](https://eeas.europa.eu/delegations/malaysia/13042/eu-celac-relations_en) (accessed: 05.11.2021).

<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid.

Mexico were the primary FDI recipients, while the Netherlands and Spain received most of CELAC FDI.<sup>16</sup> Recently, FDI have focused on the industries related to the extraction of natural resources, infrastructure, and renewable energy (the share of FDI flows into these sectors increased from 4 % in 2005 to 11 % in 2015 and from 1 % in 2005 to 20 % in 2015, respectively).<sup>17</sup> European researchers believe that the EU investments in Latin America should be aimed primarily at developing biofuel, solar, and wind energy in Latin America and the Caribbean, which may be crucial to successful cooperation between CELAC and Europe.<sup>18</sup> Similarly, Latin American investments in the EU (especially in the Netherlands and Spain) rose from EUR 128.5 bln in 2009 to EUR 250.3 bln in 2016.<sup>19</sup>

The cooperation in solving environmental problems and ensuring ecology preservation (such as the development of biotechnologies) was already included in the Program of Scientific and Technical Cooperation between the EU and LAC for 1999—2000. The 2008 Lima Declaration set the task to strengthen interregional cooperation in the field of environmental protection, which would help reduce the risk of natural disasters, gain knowledge about the effects of climate change and reduction of biodiversity, develop renewable energy sources, energy-saving technologies, help with climate change adaptation and implement these provisions in the

national strategies for sustainable development. At the 2010 VI EU — LAC Summit, the EU — LAC strategic partnership was noted to play a critical role in the negotiations on climate change and biodiversity. The parties also initiated a dialogue on climate change that focused on the obligations set forth by the Lima Agenda for Sustainable Development and on exploring new initiatives in environmental protection.

The Action Plan for 2010—2012 featured the objectives to develop institutions for adaptation to climate change, foster experience exchange on renewable energy, efficient energy consumption, and reduce the risk of natural disasters. The EU and CELAC held their first summit in 2013 under the motto “Alliance for Sustainable Development: Assistance and Investment in Social and Environmental Development.” It became a qualitatively new stage in bilateral cooperation in environmental protection. At the summit, all 33 Latin American countries for the first time expressed a unified and coordinated position on environmental issues, displaying a willingness to coordinate actions in the management and protection of natural resources.<sup>20</sup>

Several key points should be highlighted concerning the formation of a joint stance of Latin American nations on environmental issues. For example, the 2002 Third International Summit on Sustainable Development adopted the Latin American — Caribbean Initiative to make sustainable development a strategic priority for the region’s countries. The Forum of Ministers of the Environment held in Panama in 2003 introduced a regional plan, which reflected the objectives to promote access to natural resources and their rational use, environmental protection, urban and infrastructure development, and transition to green economy. Latin American countries actively supported the 2004

<sup>16</sup> Chiacchio F. The European Union with the Community of Latin America and the Caribbean: Where Do We Stand? // Bruegel. December 5, 2017. URL: <https://www.bruegel.org/2017/12/the-european-union-with-the-community-of-latin-america-and-the-caribbean-where-do-we-stand/> (accessed: 05.11.2021).

<sup>17</sup> Panorama Económico y Social de la Comunidad de Estados Latinoamericanos y Caribeños, 2016 // Comisión Económica para América Latina y el Caribe (CEPAL). January 2017. URL: [https://repositorio.cepal.org/bitstream/handle/11362/40916/1/S1601359\\_es.pdf](https://repositorio.cepal.org/bitstream/handle/11362/40916/1/S1601359_es.pdf) (accessed: 05.11.2021).

<sup>18</sup> Castro Pereira J. Green Energy in Latin America: Opportunities for the EU — LAC cooperation // EU — LAC Foundation. November 20, 2017. URL: <https://eulacfoundation.org/en/green-energy-latin-america-opportunities-eu-lac-cooperation> (accessed: 05.11.2021).

<sup>19</sup> EU — CELAC Relations // European External Action Service. July 16, 2018. URL: [https://eeas.europa.eu/delegations/malaysia/13042/eu-celac-relations\\_en](https://eeas.europa.eu/delegations/malaysia/13042/eu-celac-relations_en) (accessed: 05.11.2021).

<sup>20</sup> Recursos naturales: situación y tendencias para una agenda de desarrollo regional en América Latina y el Caribe. Contribución de la Comisión Económica para América Latina y el Caribe a la Comunidad de Estados Latinoamericanos y Caribeños // Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean, Digital Repository. December 2013. URL: <https://repositorio.cepal.org/handle/11362/35891> (accessed: 05.11.2021).

Convention on Climate Change, the Convention on the Conservation of Biological Diversity, and the expansion of cooperation under the Amazon Pact to support sustainable development in the region. Over the 20 years, the Inter-American Association for the Protection of the Environment (*Asociación Interamericana para la Defensa del Ambiente*, AIDA) has made several legislative decisions to protect the biodiversity of Latin American countries. In 2018 the Inter-American Court of Human Rights declared that states should respect the right to life and personal integrity concerning environmental protection while also recognizing that climate change was directly connected to human rights.

The CELAC approach to ecological problems has gradually changed (Pyatakov, 2018). According to the 2020 CELAC Development Plan, the community should aim to develop education, health, science, and technology, equality of citizens, reduce unemployment, and combat climate change and the region's environmental problems.<sup>21</sup> This trend is also represented by the CELAC's adoption of the Plan for Food and Nutrition Security 2025 and support for the UN New Habitat III Sustainable Urban Development Program. Regional and national strategies were adopted to implement the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015—2030. Latin American countries have taken measures to protect ecosystems, reduce deforestation and environmental degradation, and preserve biodiversity and wild flora and fauna threatened by international trade. Similarly, Latin American nations have committed themselves to reducing greenhouse gas emissions in accordance with the Paris Agreement on climate change (Bonilla Soria & Jaramillo, 2014).

Key regional actors have introduced environmental aspects of development into their national policies, elaborated legal frameworks for their implementation, and included them in national development plans. The 2017 V CELAC Summit noted the need to implement national

biodiversity strategies under the Strategic Plan for the Conservation of Biodiversity for 2011—2020. Latin American nations have stressed the importance of creating the United Nations Green Climate Fund, with annual allocations of up to USD 100 bln to developing countries by 2020 to help them adapt to climate change.

Thus, the awareness of the need for joint action in environmental protection has led to the formation of a strategic vision of LAC on the use of the natural resource potential of the region in economic, social, and ecological development, as reflected in the work of the 2015 II EU — CELAC Summit. This summit saw the adoption of the Brussels Declaration and the Action Plan for 2015—2017. Along with priority areas, the documents noted such crucial problems as environmental protection, preserving biodiversity and ecosystems, and developing scientific knowledge about climate change.

The Agreement on EU — CELAC Foundation was approved at the CELAC — EU ministerial meeting held in 2016. It noted that the strategic association of the two regions was taking a prominent shape, and there was noticeable progress in resolving issues related to the environmental aspect of sustainable development. At the 2018 regular meeting of the EU and CELAC foreign ministers, the declaration “Creating bridges and strengthening partnerships to tackle global issues” was adopted, dedicated to sustainable development, environment, climate change, biodiversity, and energy.

### **The EU Environmental Programs in Latin America**

Since 1996, the European Union has annually provided LAC countries with more than EUR 500 mln of Official Development Assistance (ODA). Since 2000, the European Investment Bank has provided additional EUR 1.3 bln in loans for projects of mutual interest.<sup>22</sup>

<sup>21</sup> CELAC 2020 Planning Agenda Proposal // CELAC. 2015. URL: <http://s017.sela.org/media/2087636/2020-agenda-en.pdf> (accessed: 05.11.2021).

<sup>22</sup> EU — Latin America Relations on the Eve of the Lima Summit // European Commission. May 6, 2008. URL: <https://intranet.eulacfoundation.org/en/content/eu-latin-america-relations-eve-lima-summit> (accessed: 05.11.2021).



In 2007—2013 the EU allocated approximately EUR 4 bln for LAC through ODA for social inclusion, education, environmental protection and combating climate change, migration, expanding trade, and supporting small and medium-sized enterprises of LAC countries. Recently, the European Union has expanded interregional scientific research initiatives, making it possible to assess opportunities for cooperation in the socio-economic and environmental spheres. The Sixth Research Framework Program (FP6 — 2002—2006) initiated 221 joint research projects that mobilized 538 teams from Latin America (529) and Caribbean countries (9) and 2679 European (and other non-Latin American) groups with total funding of over EUR 1.3 bln, with the EU providing more than EUR 700 mln. 74 projects dealt directly with environmental issues, not including agricultural projects with an environmental component, such as GO GLOBAL (2006—2009), ALCUE FOOD (2005—2008), FOOD N CO (2006—2009).<sup>23</sup>

The Seventh Research Framework Program (2007—2013) allocated EUR 50.521 mln for international cooperation. As a result, it became more substantial and better coordinated, making it possible to create a basis for interaction in science and technology. The EU countries conducted research programs in different regions of Latin America: CLARIS (2004—2007), CENSOR (2004—2008), INCOFISH (2005—2008), ALARM (2004—2009), CAMINAR (2007—2010), CASES (2006—2008), WAFLA (2006—2009), CEECEC (2008—2010), GUYAGROFOR (2004—2008), ECOST (2005—2008), MEDEA (2008—2011), which were aimed at studying climate change and its implications for agriculture, biodiversity, the functioning of ecosystems, green energy use, and sustainable urban development.<sup>24</sup> In 2013—2015

<sup>23</sup> Hacia el área de conocimiento ALC — UE. La cooperación científica y tecnológica en los retos medioambientales entre América Latina, el Caribe y la Unión Europea // Publications Office of the European Commission. 2008. URL: <https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/38a515cb-e0d5-4d68-b683-79e57fb547c2> (accessed: 05.11.2021).

<sup>24</sup> Hacia el área de conocimiento ALC — UE. La cooperación científica y tecnológica en los retos

the ENSOCIO — LA program “Strategic, Sustainable R&I cooperation with Latin America” was implemented, which focused on climate action, resource efficiency, and raw materials. In terms of ODA for 2014—2020, the European Union provided development assistance to the region based on specific indicators.

ODA is allocated based on the following criteria:

— country needs, in accordance with indicators that proxy economic and social/human development trends and economic growth as well as vulnerability and fragility indicators;

— capacities that are assessed according to a country’s ability to generate sufficient domestic revenues and its access to other sources of finance such as international markets, private investment, or natural resources;

— country commitments and performance, judging upon national investments in education, health, democracy and good governance, and the soundness of national economic and fiscal policies, including financial management.

The impact of the European Union ODA on CELAC countries can be assessed through results analysis based on the progress in the attainment of two objectives. The former focuses on whether the cooperation could promote and support political, economic, social, and environmental policy reforms in partner countries. The latter is devoted to increasing leveraging effect that the European Union aid could have on other sources of development finance, particularly private investment (Kheifets & Konovalova, 2019).

The EU 2014—2020 multi-year regional program for Latin America has provided EUR 925 mln, with EUR 805 mln allocated to continental programs for 18 countries (Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Venezuela, Guatemala, Honduras, Colombia, Costa Rica, Cuba, Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Uruguay, El Salvador, Chile, Ecuador). The program had the following sectoral distribution: EUR 70 mln for ensuring

medioambientales entre América Latina, el Caribe y la Unión Europea // Publications Office of the European Commission. 2008. URL: <https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/38a515cb-e0d5-4d68-b683-79e57fb547c2> (accessed: 05.11.2021).

public safety, development of law enforcement and crime prevention policies, EUR 42 mln for strengthening institutions of power, financial reforms, EUR 215 mln for sustainable development, poverty reduction, and other social problems, EUR 300 mln for environmental protection and adaptation to climate change, EUR 163 mln for cooperation in higher education.<sup>25</sup>

EUR 300 mln, the largest funding awarded, was allocated for environmental protection. EUR 20 mln were donated to 6 Central American countries (Guatemala, Honduras, Costa Rica, Nicaragua, Panama, and El Salvador), where the EU has been promoting the implementation of the Central American Integrated Risk Management Policy (PCGIR) and the Regional Disaster Risk Reduction Action Plan (PRRD). In 2014 the EU adopted a six-year program of financial assistance to the sustainable development of the Caribbean Community countries with total funding of EUR 346 mln, which expanded inter-regional cooperation defined in the 2012 Joint Caribbean — EU Partnership Strategy (Davydov, 2016).

The most extensive funding to solve environmental problems is expected for Bolivia, which has significant problems with water resources; next in line are Honduras, Colombia, and Brazil. The rest of the countries are divided into two groups: the former united the ones with better environmental indicators, such as Peru, Argentina, Mexico, Costa Rica, Venezuela, and the latter consisting of remaining states that exhibit significant gaps in ensuring environmental conservation. Late 2016, the European Commission announced financial assistance for sustainable development to CELAC countries, with EUR 30 mln allocated to Latin American countries and EUR 44 mln to the Caribbean nations.<sup>26</sup>

<sup>25</sup> Development Cooperation Instrument 2014—2020: Multiannual Indicative Regional Programme for Latin America // European External Action Service and European Commission. August 2014. URL: [https://ec.europa.eu/international-partnerships/system/files/dci-multi-indicative-programme-latin-america-august-2014\\_en.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/international-partnerships/system/files/dci-multi-indicative-programme-latin-america-august-2014_en.pdf) (accessed: 05.11.2021).

<sup>26</sup> EU Support to the Community of Latin America and Caribbean States (CELAC) // European Commission. October 26, 2016. URL: [https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/IP\\_16\\_3542](https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/IP_16_3542) (accessed: 05.11.2021).

The research on the ecosystem functioning, problems of biodiversity conservation, restoration of tropical forests, sustainable agriculture, opportunities for the development of green energy, environmental transport, and other important issues in Latin America notes the need to enhance interregional cooperation in the field of ecology.<sup>27</sup> The project of focus was the Euroclima, primarily devoted to monitoring the environmental situation in the region and developing recommendations and action plans. Around 200 research groups of 600 Latin American and European scientists have developed the following documents: manuals on protecting coastal zones and river basins, methods of counteracting soil degradation, a plan to reduce carbon dioxide emissions into the atmosphere.<sup>28</sup> During the second stage of the project, cooperation between Latin America and the European Union remarkably diversified. Such structures as the European Agency for International Development (EuropeAid), ECLAC, and the Inter-American Institute for Cooperation in Agriculture joined the project. Primary areas of cooperation were divided into 7 groups: ecosystems and biodiversity conservation, renewable energy sources, effective water management, reducing the risk of natural disasters, urban mobility, agricultural development, combatting climate change (for further information, see Table 1).

As a result, Bolivia, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Ecuador, Mexico, Peru, and Uruguay that have implemented projects to develop sustainable urban ecosystems and improve transport infrastructure experienced an improvement in the environmental situation.<sup>29</sup> Some European initiatives, such as green taxes, are already widely used by the Latin American and Caribbean countries and are integrated into their national environmental policies and laws.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid.

<sup>29</sup> Shaping Our Common Future: Latin America and the Caribbean — European Union Strategic Partnership // Council of the European Union. 2015. URL: <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/media/30031/qc0415217enn.pdf> (accessed: 05.11.2021).

Table 1

## The EU Ecological Programs in Latin America

Name	Goal	Budget	Results
EUROCLIMA I (2010—2013)	Solving environmental problems of LAC, preserving the ecosystem and biological diversity, developing renewable energy sources, water management, and reducing the risk of natural disasters	EUR 80 mln, with the EU funding of EUR 37 mln (as of 2017)	AQUAKNOW virtual platform for water control
EUROCLIMA II (2014—2016)			BioMa virtual platform for monitoring and combating soil degradation
EUROCLIMA + (2017—ongoing)			National CO <sub>2</sub> Abatement Plans State-based programs based on the ECOPLATA initiative: building infrastructure in coastal areas NAMA Plan: reforms in transport (Colombia, Mexico), energy policy, industry, and land use Ecopoint program: destruction of illegal landfills and waste management (Brazil)
WATERCLIMA LAC (2013—ongoing)	Conservation of water resources of LAC	EUR 8 mln, with the EU funding of EUR 7 mln	Monitoring of river basins and coastal areas prone to natural disasters
EURO-SOLAR (2007—2013)	Expanded access to energy in rural areas, development of renewable energy sources	EUR 36 mln, with the EU funding of EUR 27.8 mln	Providing access to the Internet, use of refrigerators and satellite dishes to more than 300,000 people
RALCEA (2010—2015)	Conducting research on the rational use of water resources, the creation of effective treatment facilities and irrigation systems	More than EUR 2 mln (all funds allocated by the EU)	Introduction of improved water use methods
LAIF (2009—2016)	Financing of projects in energy, agriculture, transport, environmental protection	EUR 323 mln (all funds allocated by the EU)	18 Latin American countries started using this mechanism for financing infrastructure projects
FLEGT South America (2012—ongoing)	Protection of forestry, reduction of illegal logging, control of timber trade	EUR 1.6 mln, with the EU funding of EUR 1.3 mln	EU — FLEGT Action Plan adopted, Forum “Control systems for the management and the rule of law” and “Competitiveness in the Latin American forestry sector” held

Source: EUROCLIMA+: Combatting climate change in Latin America // European Union, Capacity4dec. November 16, 2018. URL: <https://europa.eu/capacity4dev/articles/euroclima-combatting-climate-change-latin-america> (accessed: 05.11.2021).

As for Ecological Efficiency Index (2018), Colombia ranked 42nd among 180 countries, Uruguay — 47th, Panama — 56th, Peru — 64th, Brazil — 69th, Mexico — 72nd, Argentina — 74th. According to the Global Green Economy Index that includes 130 countries,<sup>30</sup> several Latin American countries displayed significant progress. Colombia ranked 12th, Costa Rica— 14th, Uruguay — 22nd, Peru — 29th, Brazil — 33rd, Chile — 37th, Mexico — 41st for 2010—2018. As indicated by the Index, green energy includes energy, transport, sustainable development of agriculture, conservation of habitat, development of aquaculture, recycling of waste,

<sup>30</sup> 2018 Global Green Economy Index (GGEI) // Dual Citizen. 2018. URL: [https://dualcitizeninc.com/global-green-economy-index/index.php#interior\\_section\\_link](https://dualcitizeninc.com/global-green-economy-index/index.php#interior_section_link) (accessed: 05.11.2021).

and conservation of natural biodiversity. We note that Latin America is in the process of forming a common opinion on green economy and pathways to achieve sustainable development, which is reflected by an increase in investments in clean technologies (Cleantech and Greentech), use of new sources of growth based on innovation, development of measures to prevent the catastrophic effects of climate change.<sup>31</sup> Among the new working groups and projects,

<sup>31</sup> Kowszyk Y., Castro M., Maher R., Guidolin A. Responsabilidad Social Empresarial y Objetivos de Desarrollo Sostenible en la Unión Europea, América Latina y el Caribe: Planes Nacionales de Acción y Políticas Públicas para promover la Sustentabilidad // EU — LAC Foundation. February 2019. URL: [https://eulacfoundation.org/es/system/files/responsabilidad\\_social\\_y\\_objetivos\\_de\\_desarrollo\\_sostenible\\_en\\_ue\\_y\\_lac.pdf](https://eulacfoundation.org/es/system/files/responsabilidad_social_y_objetivos_de_desarrollo_sostenible_en_ue_y_lac.pdf) (accessed: 05.11.2021).

platforms for innovations in the fields of energy, technology, bioeconomics, biodiversity (ALCUE NET, ERANet — LAC), climate change, and natural resources (CORDEX — LAC, ENSOCIO — LA), health care (EU — LAC Health) should be highlighted. Latin American countries have shown an example of the successful introduction and development of renewable energy sources during the past few years. However, the main challenge lies in finding the right balance between ecological and socio-economic development. The choice is usually made in favor of rapid socioeconomic development, including through extensive use of natural resources. In this regard, achieving a certain balance is vital to avoid damaging the environment and allow societies to enjoy the benefits of greener economies.<sup>32</sup>

Among the European Union states, Germany and Spain are the most active in organizing joint projects with CELAC. For example, for the programs developed by ERANet — LAC, these countries donated the largest share of the funds, with Germany providing EUR 1.6 mln and Spain — EUR 1 mln.<sup>33</sup> Spain also plays a crucial role in developing projects within the framework of the CELAC — EU dialogue. Spain has been providing financial and technical assistance to the Latin American region through the Spanish International Development Agency (AECID) for three decades. Among the main activities of AECID, there are programs on the accessibility of water resources and education. Experts believe that in order to better promote sustainable development in Latin America and the Caribbean; the Spanish agency should focus primarily on fighting poverty and inequality in all its manifestations and ensuring human rights (Sánchez-Ancochea, 2016).

<sup>32</sup> Vazquez M., Hallack M., Andreão G., Tomelin A., Botelho F., Perez Y., di Castelnuovo M. Financing the Transition to Renewable Energy in the European Union, Latin America and the Caribbean // EU — LAC Foundation. 2018. URL: <https://eulacfoundation.org/en/system/files/renewenergypublish.pdf> (accessed: 05.11.2021).

<sup>33</sup> ERANet — LAC 3rd Multi-Thematic Joint Call 2017/2018 // ERANet — LAC. November 20, 2017. URL: <https://www.era-learn.eu/network-information/networks/eranet-lac/3rd-multi-thematic-joint-call-2017-2018> (accessed: 05.11.2021).

The EU Joint Initiative on Research and Innovation (JIRI) promotes alternative energy sources, which are supposed to have a vast potential for development in the region. In 2014, the region already obtained 25 % of its energy production from renewable sources (hydro, biofuel, solar, geothermal energy), when the global figure stood at only 13 %. Costa Rica, Uruguay, Brazil, Chile, and Mexico created the most favorable conditions for investments in clean technologies.<sup>34</sup> In 2015, investments in renewable energy sources increased in the following countries: Brazil (USD 7.5 bln), Mexico (USD 4 bln), Chile (USD 3.4 bln). These nations are among the ten leaders in the development of clean energy. By 2030 Brazil, Chile, Mexico, Colombia, and Peru plan to increase investment in this industry by USD 359 bln.<sup>35</sup> Brazil, Chile, and Mexico are members of the Mission Innovation, the structure actively used by the EU for international cooperation on clean energy. As part of the Horizon 2020 program, Mexico, Argentina, and Uruguay participate in developing new technologies in biofuels production. In the ICT, CELAC countries participated in 140 projects worth more than EUR 10 mln and 196 grants under the Horizon 2020 program worth around EUR 22 mln. The BELLA project (Building Europe Link to Latin America), a new transatlantic fiber-optic cable between Portugal and Brazil, will unite 12 European and almost all of South America into a robust research network. By many estimates, it can serve as the basis for expanding joint EU — CELAC research activities, where bio-economy is beginning to play a more important role.<sup>36</sup>

<sup>34</sup> Rodríguez A.G., Mondaini A.O., Hirschfeld M.A. Bioeconomía en América Latina y el Caribe. Contexto global y regional y perspectivas // Comisión Económica para América Latina y el Caribe (CEPAL). November, 2017. URL: [https://repositorio.cepal.org/bitstream/handle/11362/42427/1/S1701022\\_es.pdf](https://repositorio.cepal.org/bitstream/handle/11362/42427/1/S1701022_es.pdf) (accessed: 05.11.2021).

<sup>35</sup> Climate-Smart Investment Potential in Latin America: A Trillion Dollar Opportunity // IFC. June, 2016. URL: <https://www.ifc.org/wps/wcm/connect/3e794608-cc7d-4499-9b6f-5342d7b6ddbcb/LAC+1Trillion+6-13-16+web+FINAL.pdf?MOD=AJPERES&CVID=lmsI-Rx> (accessed: 05.11.2021).

<sup>36</sup> Horizon 2020 Roadmap for EU — CELAC S&T cooperation // European Commission. 2017. URL:

Brazil, Mexico, Argentina, and the EU also take part in the Belmont Forum that implements projects aimed at sustainable urbanization and innovative urban solutions for “Food — Water — Energy” program, because by 2030 up to 90 % of the LAC population will be living in cities, while in the rest of the world this figure will be only 80 % (Davydov, 2016). The CELAC countries successfully participated in 44 research projects in the fields of climate change, reducing greenhouse gas emissions, desertification, deforestation, managing water resources, global observation of the Earth, environmental risk management (volcanic, seismic), and biodiversity protection. The EU — LAC relations are characterized by active investment, trade, and development cooperation, all of which carry significant import with regard to climate change. For both parties to effectively cooperate in this field, it is necessary to adopt a global perspective that leaves the traditional North — South divide behind and accepts that all must make concessions without undermining each party’s respective responsibilities and needs.<sup>37</sup>

The EU — LAC relations represent a large number of investments to the new industrial equipment, growth of trade and development cooperation, all of which carry significant import in relation to climate change. Many of the forms and methods that the EU uses in dealing with Latin American countries could serve as good examples for Russia — Latin American cooperation.

### **New Priorities of the EU — CELAC Sustainable Development Cooperation in the Context of the COVID-19 Pandemic**

Despite visible progress of the EU — CELAC sustainable development cooperation over the years, 2020 saw a dramatic shift in its dynamics. The outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic has affected all spheres of global society, including the dynamics of international

humanitarian and environmental cooperation. The global pandemic has also left its mark on the EU — CELAC cooperation.

*During the first phase of the pandemic* (January-July 2020), the EU — CELAC sustainable development cooperation virtually came to a halt. On the one hand, this happened because all nations strived to concentrate their attention and resources on solving their internal problems even at the expense of international cooperation. On the other hand, there were hardly any tools to maintain previous dynamics of the EU — CELAC relations. In this context, widespread national lockdowns and the cessation of international air traffic were the main obstacles hindering the intensity of bilateral contacts between the organizations (de Souza & Lima, 2020).

*The second phase* (August 2020 — January 2021), before vaccination became available globally and, particularly in Latin America, was marked by a gradual revival of the EU — CELAC humanitarian and environmental cooperation carried out within the framework of existing programs. At the same time, this period was characterized by a noticeable shift in cooperation priorities, from abstract to particular issues directly related either to the COVID-19 pandemic itself or to overcoming its consequences (Eremin, 2021), which reflects the interests of both the EU and Latin American countries.

Finally, during *the third phase* (since January 2021), the EU and CELAC sustainable development cooperation priorities have acquired new forms amid changing global context; the funding for the programs was reallocated accordingly. Moreover, the EU has scaled up its efforts to assist Latin American countries with mass vaccination. Notably, the LAC region is experiencing a significant vaccine deficit, which makes this problem particularly urgent<sup>38</sup> and subject to future extra-regional political influence clashes (Degtarev, Ramich & Tsvyk, 2021).

[https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/default/files/research\\_and\\_innovation/strategy\\_on\\_research\\_and\\_innovation/documents/celac\\_roadmap\\_2018.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/default/files/research_and_innovation/strategy_on_research_and_innovation/documents/celac_roadmap_2018.pdf) (accessed: 05.11.2021).

<sup>37</sup> Sanahuja J.A. The EU and CELAC: Reinvigorating a Strategic Partnership // EU — LAC Foundation. March, 2015. URL: [https://eulacfoundation.org/en/system/files/Published\\_versionEN.pdf](https://eulacfoundation.org/en/system/files/Published_versionEN.pdf) (accessed: 05.11.2021).

<sup>38</sup> Latin America’s Vaccine Shortage Threatens Fragile Revival as Pandemic Rages // Reuters. April 26, 2021. URL: <https://www.reuters.com/world/americas/latin-americas-vaccine-shortage-threatens-fragile-revival-pandemic-rages-2021-04-26/> (accessed: 05.11.2021).

In order to analyze the structural transformation of the EU — CELAC humanitarian and environmental cooperation amid the COVID-19 pandemic, it is necessary to identify the areas of cooperation that have been most affected by the change in the external environment.

First, all forms of applied cooperation are affected, as they are hardly implementable without direct contact between the parties and maintaining face-to-face contact through their representatives. In particular, the EU multi-year regional program for Latin America (2014—2020) experienced a significant reduction in funding in 2020, primarily in such areas as support for *sustainable agriculture, biodiversity conservation* (primarily in the Amazon basin and delta), *combating climate change and supporting rural communities*, etc.<sup>39</sup> Implementing these initiatives has become impossible with closed borders and strict lockdown measures introduced both in Europe and some Latin American countries.

Similarly, the EU and CELAC co-funding for the UN Sustainable Development Goals that involved *combating deforestation of tropical forests and achieving zero deforestation* in Latin America by 2030 was temporarily suspended (Ponomarenko, Petrovich-Belkin & Eremin, 2021). Also, in 2020—2021, cooperation between the EU and CELAC on wastewater treatment, recycling, and conservation of hydro resources in the Latin American region was virtually discontinued. At the same time, some financial and material resources were redirected from applied cooperation to the following areas: increasing the transparency of environmental reporting, expanding the information coverage and PR support of environmental activities, and promoting engagement of third parties (in particular, the United States and Canada, and possibly China) in future projects (Suárez-Ruiz, 2021).

Another area of cooperation between the EU and CELAC severely affected during the

COVID-19 pandemic was cooperation in developing and implementing *renewable energy sources*. However, it was affected not only by the pandemic itself, but also by the drop in oil prices and other traditional energy resources in the second and third quarters of 2020 (a consequence of the sharp decline in global demand for energy resources).<sup>40</sup> Consequently, the EU — CELAC joint action in alternative energy became relatively unprofitable for some time. However, by the end of 2020 and especially in the first and second quarters of 2021, as oil prices continued to rise, the cooperation between the parties was restored. Several new projects were launched, to name a few, technical equipment updates of the Hydroelectric Power Station cascade on the Parana River and promoting the development of solar energy in Uruguay (Martínez, 2021).

Thus, summarizing all of the above, we conclude that the environmental agenda of the EU — CELAC cooperation turned out to be of lesser importance compared to contemporary problems related to the spread of the coronavirus infection, which led to a reduction in the intensity of contacts.

Oddly, the COVID-19 pandemic has given impetus to the development of other areas of cooperation between the organizations. In particular, those are the areas in which direct contact between the parties is not required, and joint work can be carried out online or remotely.

Firstly, significant efforts have been invested in the intensification of *scientific interaction* between the EU and CELAC. Another primary direction of cooperation between the parties was *medicine and healthcare*, which is quite understandable given the changes ushered in by the global pandemic. In particular, the EU and CELAC co-funded Brazilian studies on the specificity of the immune response to the SARS-CoV-2 virus (2019-nCoV) under changing environmental conditions (temperature, humidity, sterile or non-sterile environment, contact with other patients, etc.) (Ortiz-Martínez et al., 2021). In addition, Latin American specialists were

<sup>39</sup> Development Cooperation Instrument (DCI) 2014—2020 Multiannual Indicative Regional Programme for Latin America // European Commission. 2014. URL: [https://ec.europa.eu/international-partnerships/system/files/dci-multi-indicative-programme-latin-america-august-2014\\_en.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/international-partnerships/system/files/dci-multi-indicative-programme-latin-america-august-2014_en.pdf) (accessed: 05.11.2021).

<sup>40</sup> Ambrose J. Oil Prices Dip Below Zero as Producers Forced to Pay to Dispose of Excess // The Guardian. April 20, 2020. URL: <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/apr/20/oil-prices-sink-to-20-year-low-as-un-sounds-alarm-on-to-covid-19-relief-fund> (accessed: 05.11.2021).

actively involved in developing and testing the European AstraZeneca vaccine in December 2020 — February 2021 (Ortiz-Prado et al., 2021).

Cooperation between the EU and CELAC in combating the COVID-19 pandemic has given additional impulse to cooperation between the parties in other medical fields. Thus, the European Union has actively funded Brazilian and Argentinian scientists' efforts to combat allergic diseases, study the impact of dehydration on the weakening of the human immune system, etc. (Storino et al., 2021). A separate group of collaborative studies was devoted to analyzing the sanitary conditions in the largest cities of Latin America (São Paulo, Rio de Janeiro, Lima, Mexico City, etc.) (Suárez-Ruíz, 2021). Other scientific disciplines that experienced intensified cooperation between the EU and CELAC in 2020—2021 include *theoretical biology, ecology, and hydrology*. For example, in February-May 2021, the European Research Council funded a series of scientific studies aimed at computer tracking of bird and animal migration routes in South and Central America (Suárez-Ruíz, 2021). Invited European scientists also developed more effective tools for monitoring water quality in large cities and rural areas of Latin American states.

The COVID-19 pandemic also brought about a radical change in cooperation between the EU and CELAC in the humanitarian sphere, particularly in education. As one of the fundamental pillars of the sustainable development concept, it underwent enormous changes worldwide in 2020—2021. Perhaps the most prominent feature of these transformations has been the *digitalization of education*, i.e., the increasing use of advanced information technologies in the educational process. This explains why significant funding under the EU multi-year regional program for Latin America (2014—2020) was redirected from environmental expenditures (see above) to educational and social expenditures in 2020.<sup>41</sup> The result has been the introduction of new

<sup>41</sup> Development Cooperation Instrument (DCI) 2014—2020 Multiannual Indicative Regional Programme for Latin America // European Commission. 2014. URL: [https://ec.europa.eu/international-partnerships/system/files/dci-multi-indicative-programme-latin-america-august-2014\\_en.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/international-partnerships/system/files/dci-multi-indicative-programme-latin-america-august-2014_en.pdf) (accessed: 05.11.2021).

technologies and teaching methods in e-learning, which has given a strong impetus to the development of education in many Latin American countries (especially Uruguay and Colombia) (Ortiz-Martínez et al., 2021). It is crucial to outline that the EU 2021 Scholarship Program for Latin America has similar goals.<sup>42</sup>

The successful use of Russian vaccines against the COVID-19 pandemic in Latin American countries significantly changes the perception of Russia in the region, shows the economic scientific, technical and economic potential, creates new opportunities for the comprehensive expansion of cooperation in new conditions, when economic recovery and food security are needed.

The cooperation between the EU and CELAC in *human rights protection* has also been quite controversial in 2020—2021 as it has been seriously hampered by border closures and the imposition of restrictive measures due to lockdowns, which meant that in 2020 and 2021 the European Parliament traditional monitoring of human rights in Latin America could not be carried out. At the same time, the intangible aspects of the interaction between the EU and CELAC in human rights protection continued to develop. Due to the specifics of the external environment, the focus of human rights activities has shifted to the information sphere, where the EU and CELAC cooperated on a wide range of issues and jointly fought against inappropriate behavior on the Internet, cyberbullying, and insults to human dignity, gender inequality in IT companies and rapid spread of false information (colloquially known as “fake news”).<sup>43</sup>

A separate area of cooperation between the EU and CELAC in human rights is the prevention or combating of the *potential consequences of the leakage of personal data* into the global network. The most significant case from 2020—2021 was

<sup>42</sup> 2021 Scholarship Programme for Latin America: Mission Statement // Coimbra Group. 2021. URL: [https://www.coimbra-group.eu/sp-latin-america-2021\\_offline/](https://www.coimbra-group.eu/sp-latin-america-2021_offline/) (accessed: 05.11.2021).

<sup>43</sup> Digital Sovereignty: Commission Kick-Starts Alliances for Semiconductors and Industrial Cloud Technologies // European Commission. July 19, 2021. URL: [https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/IP\\_21\\_3733](https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/IP_21_3733) (accessed: 05.11.2021).

the joint work of the EU, CELAC, and the UK Information Commissioner's Office (ICO) to investigate a significant leak of personal data of Brazilian citizens and companies from the international credit bureau Experian.<sup>44</sup>

### Conclusion

Latin America and the Caribbean as a region is in a paradoxical situation with regard to environmental and energy issues. The region is a significant player in biodiversity, nature preservation, and climate change, but the cycle of economic growth that the region saw during the previous decade was based on a boom in natural resources exports, which, in turn, led to a re-commoditization of the economies of the region, particularly in South America. This led to the emergence of specific investment patterns that only promoted the logic of "extractionism" that has dominated the regional economy so far. In general, such extraction activity is defined mainly by scant processing of natural resources and a severe negative impact on environmental sustainability. The countries of Latin America genuinely have a long way to go to make their development model more sustainable and competitive. It is vital to achieve environmental sustainability through structural changes, which will reduce the differences in productivity compared to most developed countries.

Thus far, the EU — CELAC made it possible to expand interregional cooperation, which was focused on joint research to better identify the region's problems, exchange experience and technologies, finance specific environmental improvement programs, preserve biodiversity, counter climate change, and develop renewable energy technologies. The LAC states are convinced that some problems related to the environment can be surpassed by fruitful cooperation both within the region and with non-regional partners, primarily the European Union, where an effective and

systematic nature conservation policy and a sustainable economy model has been formed.

The cooperation between the EU and CELAC to promote the concept of sustainable development, despite highly unfavorable external environment, continued and in some areas even intensified during the global pandemic. Meanwhile, there has been a significant shift in focus (and, consequently, funding) from more abstract aspects of cooperation to more concrete ones related to dealing with the global pandemic's environmental, humanitarian, and economic consequences. The areas most affected were those supporting sustainable agriculture and rural communities, developing renewable energy, conserving biodiversity, and combating global climate change. At the same time, cooperation between the EU and CELAC in education and basic science (primarily medicine, biology, and ecology) significantly intensified during the pandemic. The cooperation in human rights protection continued, with the greatest attention paid to human rights protection on the Internet and in the information space in general.

Thus, CELAC and the EU share similar political values, and strategic interaction between these organizations is equally important for both of them. Latin America and Caribbean countries show progress in overcoming regional environmental crises through joint action with the European Union. Through its assistance to CELAC, Europe seeks to strengthen its position in LAC and outpace China and the United States in terms of cooperation with the region, which is quite significant for its trade. The progressive environmental policy enacted in the EU gives it an advantage over other countries in the long run. The CELAC — EU dialogue in sustainable development is mutually beneficial, with both sides adhering to a pragmatic and diplomatic course. The experience of cooperation and coordination between the European Union and Latin America, and the Caribbean offers a solid foundation for constructing a new form of globalization in alignment with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its Sustainable Development Goals.

In the post-COVID period Russia has an opportunity, on the example of positive cooperation between the EU and Latin America,

<sup>44</sup> ICO Takes Enforcement Action against Experian after Data Broking Investigation // Information Commissioner's Office. October 27, 2020. URL: <https://ico.org.uk/about-the-ico/news-and-events/news-and-blogs/2020/10/ico-takes-enforcement-action-against-experian-after-data-broking-investigation/> (accessed: 05.11.2021).



to use complementarity and the competitiveness of our economies, to develop new forms and areas for long-term cooperation. Russia has the chance to propose a new energy matrix for the development of hydropower and renewable

energy sources, the high technologies and the digital economy, the cooperation in medicine and pharmaceuticals, in sustainable agricultural development to ensure food security.

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