



ANALYTICAL RESEARCH

EU-LATIN AMERICA RELATIONS

**ANALYZING COOPERATION FROM A
UKRAINIAN PERSPECTIVE**

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EU-LATIN AMERICA RELATIONS: ANALYZING COOPERATION FROM A UKRAINIAN PERSPECTIVE

Russian full-scale invasion of Ukraine in early 2022 has created challenges for both the European Union and Latin America. This policy paper presents a comprehensive analysis of key areas of cooperation and the activation of collaboration within the European Union (EU), Latin America (LA), and Ukraine, particularly focusing on the period following February 24, 2022. The paper begins with a retrospective examination of pre-2022 cooperation to establish a baseline for understanding the subsequent shifts in dynamics. It then delves into the challenges Europe faced post-Russian invasion into Ukraine, exploring new cooperation formats and analyzing the presidencies of EU Council countries from 2022.

Special attention was paid to the role of Spain's presidency in the Council of the EU in strengthening the dialogue between Europe and LA, the main results of the EU-CELAC Summit along with the negotiation of the Trade Agreement with MERCOSUR. Looking ahead to 2024, the paper discusses anticipated changes and opportunities, considering the presidencies of Belgium and Hungary and the elections to the European Parliament. Additionally, it examines Ukraine's potential role in the evolving EU-Latin America relations.

Finally, the paper provides a set of recommendations for Ukrainian authorities, the European Union, and interested Latin American partners to enhance cooperation and collaboration across these regions for common benefits.

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I. Analysis of Key Areas of Cooperation and Activation of Collaboration after February 24, 2022

Brief Overview of pre-2022 cooperation

In 1990, the European Community and Latin American countries of the Rio Group signed the Rome Declaration, which became the basis for institutional dialogue between the parties. According to the document, the parties agreed to hold annual ministerial conferences alternately in both regions. From 1991 to 2003, there were eleven such meetings between the EU and the countries of the Rio Group.

Since the 1990s, the EU has paid particular attention to economic cooperation with the island countries of the Caribbean. CARIFORUM, which was created in 1992, became the basis for supporting the economic dialogue. It includes 15 CARICOM states and the Dominican Republic. In 2008, an economic agreement was signed between CARIFORUM countries and the EU, according to which a free trade zone was established between the island countries of the Caribbean basin and the EU.

In addition, CARIFORUM is a subgroup of the Organization of African, Caribbean and Pacific States (OACPS), which was created in 1975. In 2000, the so-called Cotonou¹ Agreement was concluded between the European Union and OACPS. Among the Caribbean countries, only Cuba has not signed the Agreement. The agreement is aimed at reducing poverty in the OACPS countries and their integration into the world economy.

Since the end of the 1990s, regular biennial meetings have been started between the EU and the countries of Latin America. The first summit between the heads of state of several Latin American countries and the EU was held on June 28-29, 1999 in Rio de Janeiro (Brazil), where the parties agreed to develop a strategic partnership focused on strengthening democracy, the rule of law, international peace and political stability. Then the Presidents of Brazil, Mexico and the European Council co-chaired the meeting. From 1999 to 2010, six such summits were held. According to the results of the last summit in Madrid (May 2010), it was decided to create the EU-LAC fund, which was designed to strengthen the bi-regional partnership.

After the establishment of CELAC during the Latin American and Caribbean Unity Summit in February 2010 in Playa del Carmen (Mexico), which included all 33 countries of the region, institutional cooperation with the EU was delegated to this organization. The first CELAC-EU Summit was held on January 26-27, 2013 in Santiago (Chile). The II EU-CELAC Summit held in Brussels in 2015 was the last high-level meeting attended by a large number of leaders of both regions for the next eight years. For a long time, relations between the EU and Latin America have been characterized by a low level of political interregional dialogue. The EU-CELAC summit,

¹ the city in Benin, where the signing took place.

which was supposed to take place in El Salvador in 2017, was postponed² due to the appeal of a number of Latin American countries in view of the extremely difficult political and socio-economic situation in Venezuela. The divergence of views of CELAC member countries on the solution of the "Venezuelan issue" led to the internal split of the integration association into two factions: on the one hand, the ALBA countries³, which, despite sanctions and criticism from the international community, supported the Venezuelan government, on the other - members of the Lima Group⁴, who criticized the breakdown of the democratic order in the country under Nicolas Maduro and called for a return to free democratic elections. Another event that further weakened CELAC was the termination of Brazil's membership in the period from 2020 to early 2023. On the other hand, for many EU countries, Latin America was not an important direction in their foreign policy, except for Spain and Portugal. The latter have always given priority to ties with the region, given the strong cultural and historical features and investments in various sectors of the economy of Latin American countries. In addition, the migration crisis of 2016 further diverted the attention of European leaders from the Latin American region, and the key attention of the EU's foreign policy was given to the Middle East. In particular, in the security strategy⁵ of the EU (*A Global Strategy for the European Union's Foreign And Security Policy*), which was adopted in 2016, Latin America was given a secondary place. But despite this, in the paragraph devoted to cooperation with Latin America, it was noted that efforts should be directed to the conclusion of a free trade agreement with MERCOSUR, which was eventually signed in 2019 (still not ratified).

The Covid-19 pandemic pushed the European side to step up steps to restore interregional dialogue. In March 2020, the Euro-Latin American Parliamentary Assembly, in a joint declaration, called for an urgent meeting of the EU-LAC ministers via video conference to establish enhanced cooperation to combat Covid-19. In the same year, two important meetings at the ministerial level took place. On July 10, a conference was held at the initiative of Spain, France and the EU, which was attended by representatives of foreign policy departments from 18 countries (Germany, Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Croatia, Ecuador, Slovenia, Spain, France, Italy, Mexico, the Netherlands, Peru, Portugal, the Dominican Republic, Sweden). In a joint statement⁶, the parties underscored their shared "commitment to address shortages of critical medical supplies by facilitating the timely circulation of equipment and products needed to prevent and treat disease, and view future access to future vaccines as a global public good. To this end, we support the "Access to Covid-19 Tools (ACT) Accelerator" initiative..." Another ministerial meeting was organized by the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Germany, Heiko Maas, who then headed the German Presidency of the Council of the EU, and the High Representative of the EU, Josep Borrell, on December 14 via video conference. The joint communiqué⁷ highlighted that as of December 2020, Team Europe has allocated more than €2.4 billion to Latin

2 Message of the Co-Presidents of the Euro-Latin American Parliamentary Assembly to the EU and CELAC Foreign Ministers / Euro-Latin American Parliamentary Assembly. - Brussels, 16 and 17 July 2018.

3 the organization includes 10 member countries: Antigua and Barbuda, Bolivia, Cuba, Dominica, Grenada, Nicaragua, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Saint Lucia, St. Vincent and Grenadines, Venezuela.

4 the organization was created in 2017 with the aim of solving the crisis in Venezuela. Includes 12 member countries: Argentina (left the organization in 2021), Brazil, Canada, Chile, Colombia, Costa-Rica, Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico, Panama, Paraguay, Peru.

5 A Global Strategy for the European Union's Foreign and Security Policy 2016, (P.37).

6 Declaración de los ministros de Asuntos Exteriores de dieciocho países de Europa, América Latina y el Caribe, y el Alto Representante de la Unión Europea para Asuntos Exteriores y Política de Seguridad – COVID-19, 10 de julio de 2020.

7 Joint Communiqué: EU27 - Latin America and Caribbean Informal Ministerial Meeting, Berlin, December 14.

America for the emergency response to Covid-19, strengthening health, water and sanitation systems and addressing socio-economic consequences. In addition, it was noted that the European Commission launched the AL-INVEST VERDE program worth 33 million euros, which was aimed at supporting small and medium-sized enterprises in the countries of Latin America and the Caribbean region on their way to a more sustainable, green and circular economy.

In the autumn of the following year, Josep Borrell visited such Latin American countries as Peru and Brazil with the aim of giving new impetus to the cooperation between the EU and Latin America. Then a memorandum of understanding on international cooperation was signed⁸ in Brazil, which allowed the parties to join forces in projects with other partner countries.

Another significant event of 2021 was the XXVII Ibero-American Summit which took place on April 20-21 in a hybrid format in Andorra. The event was attended by the presidents of Guatemala, the Dominican Republic, Portugal, the King of Spain, as well as the Portuguese and Spanish prime ministers. Most of the high-ranking officials from Latin American countries took part in the meeting online. One of the key features of this Andorran meeting was the participation of French President Emmanuel Macron, for the first time in the entire history of the Ibero-American Summits.

Shift in cooperation dynamics post-Russian invasion into Ukraine

Russian full-scale invasion of Ukraine in February 2022 caused serious economic losses in various regions of the world. The European Union faced, first of all, an unprecedented increase in energy prices. This was due to the fact that the Russian Federation took the place of the key supplier of gas, oil and coal to Europe and instrumentalized this fact accordingly. The European leadership sees the reduction of its dependence on Russian energy imports as a means of diversifying supplies, enhancing energy efficiency and accelerating the use of renewable sources. President of the European Commission Ursula von der Leyen said *"the quicker we switch to renewables and hydrogen, combined with more energy efficiency, the quicker we will be truly independent and master our energy system"*⁹. In view of this, the strengthening of cooperation with Latin America appears very promising. The Latin American region is extremely rich in copper, lithium, zinc, nickel, iron, manganese, gold, silver and rare earth metals – resources that are essential for the energy transition.

In early June 2023, the European Union adopted a new program¹⁰ to strengthen the EU's partnership with Latin America and the Caribbean. Its key points are the following:

- A renewed of the political partnership;
- Strengthening common trade agenda;
- Rolling out Global Gateway investment strategy to accelerate a fair green and digital transition and tackle inequalities;

⁸ Borrell visita América Latina: es hora de reactivar la cooperación / The Diplomatic Service of the European Union, 7 November 2021.

⁹ REPowerEU: Joint European action for more affordable, secure and sustainable energy / European Commission, 8 March 2022.

¹⁰ New Agenda to strengthen EU's partnership with Latin America and the Caribbean / European Commission, 7 June 2023.

- Joining forces for justice, citizen security and the fight against transnational organized crime;
- Working together to promote peace and security, democracy, rule of law, human rights and humanitarian aid;
- Building a vibrant people-to-people partnership.

The implementation of this program began with the Latin American tour of Ursula von der Leyen to the key partners of the EU in the region - Brazil, Argentina, Chile and Mexico. During her visit to Brazil on June 12, Ursula von der Leyen announced¹¹ that the EU would invest 10 billion euros in Latin America as part of the Global Gateway program. Among the other outcomes of this visit was the signing of a memorandum of understanding on critical raw materials with Argentina.

It is also worth noting the place of the Latin American vector in the program documents of the presiding countries in the EU Council from the beginning of 2022. In the joint program¹² of the presiding trio of France-Czech Republic-Sweden (January 1, 2022-June 30, 2023), it was noted that the dialogue at the highest level with Latin America would be supported. However, if we compare the presidencies' programs of each of these countries, we can trace the gradual increase in attention to the Latin American vector. In the program of France¹³, which presided over the EU Council from January 1 to June 30, 2022, Latin America was not mentioned at all, instead Africa and the Indo-Pacific region were present among other regions of the Global South. In the program of the Czech Republic (July 1 - December 31, 2022)¹⁴, it was emphasized that in Latin America, the EU "*will work to develop reciprocal trade, protect human rights and strengthen democracy and the rule of law*". Sweden, which presided from January 1 to June 30, 2023, noted in its program¹⁵ that it would develop and strengthen transatlantic cooperation, including with Latin America. In addition, the Swedes emphasized that in order to strengthen the competitiveness of the EU, they will continue negotiations on free trade agreements with Mercosur, Chile and Mexico.

Analysis of approaches to Latin America by other countries - Germany, France, Portugal, etc.

In light of the diminishing significance of the Chinese market for European exports and the economic challenges stemming from Russia's invasion of Ukraine, EU countries have started exploring new markets in Latin America. European leaders are now more diligently scheduling time to meet with their Latin American counterparts, attempting to personally make time for visits to the region or coinciding at joint summits and other events such as the UN General Assembly, G-20 Summits, United Nations Climate Change Conference, etc. This indicates that

11 Statement by President von der Leyen at the joint press conference with Brazilian President Lula da Silva / European Commission, 12 June 2023.

12 Taking forward the Strategic Agenda 18-month Programme of the Council (1 January 2022 - 30 June 2023) / Council of the European Union, Brussels, 10 December 2021.

13 Recovery, Strength and a Sense of Belonging. Programme for the French Presidency of the Council of the European Union, 1 January to 30 June 2022.

14 Europe as a Task: Rethink, Rebuild, Repower. Programme of the Czech Presidency of the Council of the European Union, 1 July to 31 December 2022.

15 Swedish Presidency of the Council of the European Union, 1 January to 30 June 2023.

European leaders have adopted a contact diplomacy approach to enhance relations with Latin American states.

Spanish Prime Minister Pedro Sánchez made a visit to Latin America in August 2022, concluding with commitments to bilateral investment treaties and export diversification. The dynamics of relations are also often influenced by the ideological factor; the European left tends to be more sympathetic to the left-wing leaders of Latin America, and a similar dynamic is observed with right-wing forces.

Big interest in this direction is shown by Germany, represented by Chancellor Olaf Scholz. At the beginning of 2023, he, accompanied by a delegation of businessmen, toured South America, visiting Argentina, Chile, and Brazil. Berlin emphasized cooperation in the fields of renewable energy, green hydrogen, and the trade of raw materials. Despite President Macron's expressed intentions in 2022, France has not yet undertaken a visit by its president to the region.

During all the meetings and visits, European leaders raised the issue of opposing and condemning Russian aggression in Ukraine, emphasizing the imperative for a decisive stance against the aggressor.

An important area of work is the activity of embassies in LAC countries. This includes, in particular, the promotion of cultural cooperation and the hosting of joint events, especially in the countries of the Latin American region.

Evaluation of the negotiation of Trade Agreement with Mercosur

One of the largest and strongest integration associations in South America is the Mercosur economic bloc (as of 2023, the GDP was \$5.7 trillion, making it the 5th largest economy in the world). The bloc currently includes Brazil, Argentina, Paraguay, Uruguay, and Bolivia (which joined on November 28, 2023). Negotiations on the conclusion of a trade agreement between the EU and Mercosur began back in 1999, and in 2019, a preliminary political agreement was reached, initiating the current stage of agreement preparation. The purpose of this agreement is to eliminate tariffs, various restrictions, and regulations to achieve free trade between the blocs. The plan is to liberalize 90% of inter-bloc trade.

The negotiation process is proceeding very slowly due to points of contention on both sides. The Green Pact introduced by the EU in 2019 caused concern on the part of Latin American partners. On the European side, the most resistant is France (and, to a lesser extent, Ireland) due to the agrarian lobby, which fears competition from cheaper South American suppliers. Therefore, Paris demands the application of the same environmental and sanitary requirements to farmers as those existing in the EU, and the banning of meat with hormones. Subsequently, the EU hesitated to ratify the agreement due to the lack of commitments by Brazilian President Jair Bolsonaro to protect the deforestation of the Amazon rainforest (for example, this was one of the reasons why the Dutch parliament passed a resolution against ratifying the EU-Mercosur trade agreement in 2020).

From the side of Latin America, the decision mainly depends on the main economies of the bloc - Brazil and Argentina. The primary driver in this process is President Lula, who nevertheless hopes to modernize the bloc to overcome its paralysis and successfully conclude negotiations on an agreement with the EU.

Brazil held the presidency of the bloc from July to December last year, and during that time, Lula engaged in extensive diplomatic efforts, participating in numerous meetings with the EU

leaders. Although a few practical results were achieved, there was an indication that this deal could be concluded, particularly considering Spain's significant support as the holder of the presidency of the Council of the European Union.

An attempt to sign the agreement was made at the last LXIII Summit of Presidents, which took place on December 4-5, 2023. Despite all hopes, it ended in failure due to the position of Argentina, which believes that this agreement puts the country's producers in an unfavorable position by providing access to the internal market for European products and fostering competition with Europeans on the markets of other Mercosur countries.

Therefore, Argentina put forward a number of proposals to amend the agreement, including the recognition of Mercosur national certificates, the creation of a fund for small and medium-sized enterprises, etc. This position of Argentina did not come as a complete surprise, because back in the summer, then Minister of Foreign Affairs, Santiago Cafiero, had already voiced¹⁶ the necessity of updating the agreement to narrow the gap between the blocs. He pointed out that the situation had evolved since 2019, when the basic agreement was reached, with Mercosur trade now surpassing previous levels.

Despite everything, the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Brazil, Mauro Vieira, told reporters that the agreement between the EU and Mercosur could be signed next year. Notwithstanding the statements of politicians following the summit in Rio, the situation seems to have reached a deadlock.

On the other hand, agrarian circles and environmental organizations in the EU oppose the agreement. Given that the European Parliament elections are coming up soon, any ideas that might be unpopular with voters have a better chance of being shelved. The large-scale protests by farmers that began in Europe in January 2024 clearly dampen optimism regarding the signing of the agreement. European governments are unlikely to escalate conflicts with farmers by endorsing an agreement that is unpopular among agricultural sector representatives.

In the end, Macron announced¹⁷ that the process of concluding the agreement had been halted. Largely due to France's position, the agreement was not signed in July 2023. The French president insists on negotiations similar to those held with Chile and New Zealand and advocates for the creation of a European control force for product imports. Due to the lack of political agreement in the EU, Vice President of the European Commission Valdis Dombrovskis canceled his trip to Latin America at the last moment in early February.

The big question is how Mercosur will be able to develop and act as a single body in connection with the election of the libertarian Javier Milei as the president of Argentina. In his election campaign, he was skeptical about the prospects of this organization and even said that it "needs to be liquidated as an organization that serves the interests of corrupt officials." On the other hand, there is hope that with Milei, if he is ready to cooperate, it will be possible to quickly settle the issue with the agreement with the EU. Moreover, Foreign Minister-designate Diana Mondino called¹⁸ for the organization to be modernized and said the new government will intend to sign this agreement.

16 Alberto Fernández at Mercosur summit: 'No one can condemn us to be just raw material providers' / Buenos Aires Herald, 4 July 2023.

17 EU-Mercosur trade agreement negotiations halted hours before signing, says Macron / EURACTIV, 2 February 2024

18 La canciller de Milei dijo que la intención del futuro gobierno es que el Acuerdo Mercosur-UE se firme / Ambito, 30 de Noviembre 2023.

At the last LXIII Summit of Presidents, in a joint communiqué¹⁹, the leaders confirmed their common desire to resume dialogue on concluding a balanced agreement for both sides. In parallel, Mercosur continues to work on trade agreements with EFTA and ASEAN.

Therefore, for Mercosur to sign this agreement, it is important that Lula and Milei agree on a common vision, which can give impetus to the final signing of the agreement in 2024. The fate of the agreement, in general, will largely depend on the decision of the new president of Argentina. Given the libertarian and pro-Western views of the new leader of Casa Rosada, it can be assumed about his positive role in this process, despite previous criticism of Mercosur in general. Uruguay has traditionally advocated the conclusion of an agreement (although Uruguay is also looking towards China, with which it seeks to conclude free trade agreements, this action may signify an actual withdrawal from the customs union). Until next summer, the presidency is in the hands of Paraguay's president, Santiago Peña, who expressed²⁰ pessimism about the deal and said he would turn his attention to other markets. He also noted that some European countries proposed overly stringent environmental requirements for the agreement.

For the EU, this agreement will strengthen its position in competition with the USA and China. It also has a significant economic impact because 40% of the products sold by the EU to the LAC region go directly to Mercosur countries. However, EU leaders need to convince France to concede, and the European Parliament elections, where various right-wing and left-wing forces will raise the issue of the Mercosur treaty as a threat to the national agricultural and mining sectors, may become an obstacle. In view of the latter, the text of the agreement may have to be rewritten again, and its adoption will be postponed until after the elections. Belgium, which holds the EU Council presidency next semester, has faced criticism over the deal in its southern Walloon region. The failure to sign the agreement, after 30 years of difficult negotiations, will result in an increase in the geopolitical distance between the regions and the loss of significant opportunities for cooperation.

19 Comunicado conjunto de los presidentes de los Estados Partes del Mercosur y Bolivia / Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores, Comercio Internacional y Culto de Argentina, 7 de Diciembre 2023.

20 El presidente de Paraguay se suma al pesimismo por el acuerdo del Mercosur-UE / Ambito, 4 de Diciembre 2023.

II. The Role of the Spanish Presidency of the Council in Strengthening Cooperation

Spain's presidency and EU-Latin America relations

From July 1 to December 31, 2023, Spain held the presidency of the EU Council, which became the most favorable opportunity for the European Union to strengthen cooperation with Latin American countries. The intensification of cooperation with Latin America became one of the priority directions of the Spanish presidency. In its program²¹, the Spanish side noted that it will increase the presence of the European Union in the Latin American region through the Global Gateway initiative, fostering the participation of the private sector and supporting the just, green and digital transitions in the region. Spain will pay special attention to the Investment Agenda with the region, and continue the EU-LAC Digital Alliance.

During the meeting of the Foreign Affairs Council on July 18, 2022, it was agreed to strengthen transatlantic relations and *"bring about a qualitative leap in the relations between the EU and LAC countries"*²². At the same time, Spain initiated the EU-CELAC Summit during its presidency. On October 27, 2022, a meeting of the EU-CELAC foreign ministers took place in Buenos Aires, which renewed the political dialogue between the two regions and marked the beginning of preparations for the summit. The achievement of this meeting was the adoption of the so-called road map, which outlined the bi-regional agenda. At the XXVIII Ibero-American Conference held in March 2023, Pedro Sánchez stated that the *"EU-CELAC summit to be held in Brussels will not be a declarative summit, but will start a regular and intensified political dialogue between the region and European institutions aimed at common solving all global challenges"*²³.

In addition, Spain, which in its priorities of the presidency declared support for Ukraine against Russian aggression, tried to promote the strengthening of support for the Ukrainian side from Latin American countries. With this in mind, on July 1, on the first day of Spain's presidency, Pedro Sanchez paid a visit to Ukraine, during which he invited Volodymyr Zelensky to speak at the EU-CELAC Summit. But due to the resistance of a number of Latin American countries, this initiative could not be implemented.

Assessment of achievements and failures at the Brussels EU-CELAC Summit

On July 17-18, 2023, after an eight-year break, the III EU-CELAC summit took place in Brussels. A number of leaders of Latin American countries arrived to participate in the summit: Argentina, Colombia, Chile, Uruguay, Brazil, etc. Mexico was represented at the summit by Minister of Foreign Affairs Alicia Barcena. Representatives from Cuba (President Miguel Díaz-Canel), Nicaragua (Minister of Foreign Affairs Denis Moncada) and Venezuela (Vice President Delsey Rodriguez) also took part in the summit. The meeting in Brussels was co-chaired by the

21 Programme Spanish Presidency of the Council of the European Union, 1 July to 31 December 2023.

22 Foreign Affairs Council, 18 July 2022. Main results / Council of the European Union.

23 Pedro Sánchez: "La Cumbre UE-CELAC será una oportunidad histórica para continuar fomentando y perfeccionando nuestra relación multilateral" / La Moncloa, 26 de Marzo 2023.

President of the European Council - Charles Michel and the President of St. Vincent and the Grenadines - Ralph E. Gonsalves, who acted as the interim head of CELAC.

The main topics of the Brussels EU-CELAC summit were: European investments in the LAC, development of trade and economic cooperation, Russian war in Ukraine, climate change issues, digital transition, political crisis in Venezuela, the issue of the Falkland (Malvinas) Islands, the situation on Haiti, as well as ending the US trade and economic embargo against Cuba. During the meeting, the EU announced the launch of the Global Gateway investment program for Latin America and the Caribbean and promised to invest 45 billion euros in a number of projects in the region until 2027, which will be directed in four main directions: a just green transition, inclusive digital transformation, human development and resistance to health and vaccines. In particular, in Costa Rica the EU invests in the electrification of public transport, in Colombia - the construction of a metro line, in Brazil - the expansion of telecommunications networks in the Amazon region, etc. In the case of Chile, the Team Europe Initiative (TEI) on Green Hydrogen (GH2) was developed for promoting investment opportunities.

The following results of the EU-CELAC Summit in Brussels were reached:

- Adoption of the roadmap²⁴ between the EU and CELAC for 2023-2025, where it was noted that the next IV EU-CELAC summit should be held in Latin America.
- Conclusion of an agreement in the field of clean and renewable energy with Argentina (Memorandum on Energy Cooperation) and Uruguay (Memorandum of Understanding, which lays the foundations for future investments in renewable energy and hydrogen energy in particular).
- Signing of memoranda of understanding with Ecuador, El Salvador and Honduras, which lay the foundations for bilateral political dialogue through "periodic consultations".
- Signing with Chile a memorandum of understanding to deepen cooperation in the field of supply chains of raw materials necessary for clean energy and the digital transition of both partners.
- Releasing €10 million to tackle the unprecedented humanitarian crisis in Haiti.
- EIB lending €300 million to Banco Santander Brazil for investments in solar energy.
- EIB will finance climate actions projects in Chile worth more than 300 million euros

The issue of the Russian war in Ukraine has become one of the most difficult political points for reaching a consensus between European and Latin American leaders. Ralph E. Gonsalves said²⁵ that "*they could not allow the summit of the two continents to be exclusively about Ukraine.*" In the joint declaration²⁶ signed by 59 out of 60 leaders (the paragraph on the war in Ukraine refused to be approved by Nicaragua), in paragraph 15, the participants of the summit expressed "deep concern on the ongoing war against Ukraine... and supported the need for a just and lasting peace." However, this paragraph does not mention Russia as an aggressor in this war. Such a relatively neutral wording of this provision of the declaration, which was the subject of long discussions between representatives of the EU and CELAC, testifies to the diplomatic success of the Latin American side, which sought to reduce the role of the issue of the Russian-Ukrainian war.

24 EU-CELAC roadmap 2023 to 2025. Brussels, 17 July 2023.

25 EU-CELAC Summit: Press conference by Ursula von der Leyen, Charles Michel, R.Gonsalves & A.Fernández / European Commission, 18 July 2023.

26 Declaration of the EU-CELAC Summit 2023/ European Commission, 18 July 2023.

III. Prospects for Development of Relations in 2024 and Ukraine's Position

Anticipated changes and opportunities in 2024 (presidencies of Belgium and Hungary. Elections to the European Parliament)

2024 will go down in history as the biggest election year in history - elections will cover 40 countries with 41% of the world's population and 42% of GDP. In the context of the development of relations between the EU and LAC, the main ones will be the elections to the European Parliament, as well as in Mexico, Salvador, Panama, Uruguay and Venezuela.

A lot of attention is focused on how the elections in Mexico will impact its foreign policy. The current president of Mexico, Andrés Manuel López Obrador, has shown little interest in international relations in general, has never visited Europe as president, and his statements have damaged relations with Spain, the main ally in the region. Regardless of whether the representative of the ruling party MORENA, Claudia Sheinbaum, or the representative of the united opposition, Xóchitl Gálvez, wins the presidential elections - the second economy of Latin America is anticipating a restart and a return to active international politics, including the strengthening of active contacts with Europe.

Without a doubt, Nayib Bukele, who enjoys great popularity among the population thanks to his successful fight against crime, will win a second term in El Salvador. His administration supports cooperation with the EU, particularly in improving security, despite criticism of his crime-fighting methods and accusations of authoritarian tendencies.

The focus will also be on the elections in Venezuela in 2024. With the mediation of the United States, on October 17, 2023, in the capital of Barbados, Bridgetown, an agreement (a road map for the electoral process) was signed between the Maduro government and the United Opposition Platform. In exchange for the lifting of sanctions, the Maduro regime pledged to facilitate free elections, but the continued persecution of opposition candidates and the announcement of the annexation of the Esequibo region in neighboring Guyana show an intention to stay in power at all costs. The situation with human rights, the holding of democratic elections, and tensions on the Venezuelan-Guyanese border will be in the focus of the European Union's attention.

In addition, elections will also be held in the Dominican Republic, Panama, and Uruguay, which, however, will not have a particularly significant impact on the dynamics of EU-LAC relations.

The European Parliament, as the world's only multinational parliamentary assembly and the only institution of the European Union elected directly by citizens, stands out for its importance in the international arena. The 2024 elections are becoming a pivotal moment for the political future of Europe, potentially causing changes in the composition and leadership of the European Union's key institutions. Recent elections in EU countries have shown a rise in the popularity of the far right, which may be less interested in large investments in Latin America. Also, as already mentioned above, elections to the European Parliament may become an obstacle to the conclusion of an agreement between the EU and Mercosur.

After Spain, in the year 2024, the Council of Europe will be led by Belgium and Hungary – countries that, compared to Spain, have less experience in relations and actual ties with the region. From January 1 to June 30, 2024, the presidency of the Council of the EU will be in Belgium. In the program²⁷ of its presidency, the country notes the interconnectedness of the modern world and the need for a global solution to current issues, emphasizing the strengthening of the multilateral trade system («Global Europe»). Belgium also faces challenges with the supply of drugs from the region, so it aims to contribute to the fight against organized crime and drug trafficking.

The main goal is to provide unwavering assistance to Ukraine, which should also be included in the context of cooperation between the EU and LAC. Belgium plans to develop a new Strategic Agenda for 2024-2029, which should include continuing the course to expand European influence on the countries of the Global South, including Latin America. In general, Spain, Belgium, and Hungary adopted a trio program²⁸ in 2023 for the continuity of work, emphasizing the strengthening of international partnership, multilateral cooperation, and security in all its dimensions.

Ukraine's potential role in the evolving EU-Latin America relations

Since 2022, Ukraine has been pursuing a global international policy by establishing comprehensive relations with countries in various regions, including the Latin American region. Simultaneously, European integration remains a priority for Ukraine, where significant progress has been made – it has become a candidate for accession and is awaiting a decision on the start of accession negotiations. In light of this, Ukraine can play an important role in the development of relations between the EU and LAC, adding new content and dynamics to it.

Ukraine is preparing to hold a Global Peace Summit at the level of heads of state and government in 2024, with the broad participation of countries from the Global South. This summit presents a great opportunity to strengthen relations between the EU and LAC, establishing a common position on crucial global issues in alignment with the Ukrainian formula for peace, covering aspects such as food security, radiation and nuclear security, energy security, implementation of the UN Charter, and the start of the reform of the UN, the Security Council.

In addition, Ukraine plans to hold a Ukraine-Latin America summit to strengthen dialogue with the countries of the region. The newly elected president of Argentina, Javier Milei, has already announced his readiness to host such a summit in his country. This presents another opportunity to build a bridge between the European and American continents.

The process of rebuilding Ukraine can become an important factor in strengthening relations between the EU and LAC. With the investments allocated by the European Union for the post-war reconstruction of Ukraine, Latin American companies can supply the necessary materials for this process and jointly develop technologies. The reconstruction of Ukraine can become one of the largest infrastructure projects in the world, so the involvement of Latin America can be beneficial for all three parties.

²⁷ The Belgian presidency programme, 1 January to 30 June 2024.

²⁸ Trio programme - Spain, Belgium and Hungary, 1 July 2023 to 31 December 2024.

IV. Recommendations

For Ukrainian authorities

1. Create a working group for the reconstruction of Ukraine involving three parties—Ukraine, the EU, and LAC countries—to attract Latin American Producers capable of participating in and supplying the necessary products for the process.
2. Hold the Ukraine-Latin America Summit in Argentina in 2024 with the assistance of the administration led by Argentine President Javier Milei and the active participation of EU representatives.
3. Increase initiatives to organize joint conferences, seminars, and round tables of academic and expert communities aimed at deepening mutual understanding among representatives of Ukraine, the EU, and Latin American countries. Encourage the hosting of joint events by diplomatic missions of Ukraine and the EU in Latin American countries.
4. Joint local development programs: European investments alongside Ukrainian digital technologies.

For European Union

1. Restructure of approaches in the EU's foreign policy strategy regarding Latin America: changing the homogeneous vision of the region to the formation of policies taking into account the characteristics of individual countries.
2. As part of the reform of the UN Security Council, provide support to Brazil for its inclusion in the expanded body.
3. Employ all available mechanisms to ensure democratic elections in Venezuela while strongly condemning the aggression of the Nicolás Maduro regime against Guyana. This aggression, viewed as an attempt to instigate another regional conflict with global implications, underscores the urgency of addressing the breakdown of the world order following Russia's invasion of Ukraine.
4. Explore opportunities for expanding cultural and educational exchanges among Ukraine, the European Union, and Latin America to enhance mutual understanding and strengthen bilateral relations.
5. Promote the participation of Latin American partners in both the Ukraine-Latin America Summit and the Global Peace Formula Summit is crucial. This effort is not only essential for bolstering support for Ukraine but also for enhancing the EU's presence and influence in Latin America.

For interested Latin American Partners

1. Collaborate with EU representatives to promote fair elections in Venezuela and support the country's democratization process. This initiative is crucial for stabilizing the situation in the country.
2. As the security situation in the region, especially in Ecuador, continues to deteriorate, it is imperative to enhance cooperation with the EU in the security sphere. In this context, the experience of the Ukrainian authorities, who have successfully maintained security in the country despite war and sabotage, is of great importance.
3. To join the provisions of Ukraine's Peace Formula on ecocide, with the aim of strengthening the ecological security of the world.



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EU-LATIN AMERICA RELATIONS: ANALYZING COOPERATION FROM A UKRAINIAN PERSPECTIVE

Policy brief of the Latin America and the Caribbean study program of the Foreign Policy Council "Ukrainian Prism" within the framework of the project with the support of the International Foundation "Renaissance".

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