SPIDER
EU-LAC Digital Partnership

Progress Snapshot

This Progress Snapshot provides an overview of key advancements and milestones achieved in the SPIDER project. As we work toward fostering **inclusive and human-centered digital transformation,** this document highlights our progress in aligning **digital dialogues' commitments** with national policies and strategies, and **implementing dialogue outcomes** across BELLA countries in LAC.

Context

The EU-LAC collaboration on digital transformation led to the establishment of the BELLA network, enhancing interconnectivity for companies, research centers, and institutions. However, its full potential remains untapped, limiting digital progress in LAC.

Despite growing **EU-LAC digital dialogues**, a gap remains between political commitments and practical implementation.

SPIDER seeks to bridge this gap by **aligning digital dialogues with national strategies** and **leveraging BELLA's interconnectivity** to advance AI, 5G, Blockchain, HPC, and more, fostering an inclusive, human-centered digital transformation.

Project objectives and Methodology

SPIDER supports the implementation of EU-LAC digital dialogue outcomes and the adoption of digital transformation technologies. The project is built on four key premises:

1. The BELLA network's full potential **remains untapped**.
2. The **lack of a framework** for the implementation and monitoring of **digital dialogue commitments** hinders EU-LAC cooperation.
3. **Limited awareness** and **misalignment** with national strategies slow down implementation.
4. Digital gaps disproportionately affect **vulnerable groups**, especially in Central America.

To address these challenges, SPIDER employs design thinking, co-creation workshops, and a human-centred, inclusive approach. Its strategy is structured around three pillars: (1) assessing BELLA's potential through surveys, focus groups, and calls for ideas, (2) the Digital Dialogues Implementation Forum and Working Groups, and (3) the Twinning Programme for EU-LAC digital hubs collaboration.

Progress and analysis

SPIDER is making strategic progress in key areas to drive a human-centred, inclusive, and sustainable digital transformation between the EU and LAC regions.

a) Framework for EU-LAC cooperation on digital transformation

SPIDER has **developed a concept note** that establishes the framework for implementing political outcomes from EU-LAC digital dialogues to **enhance cooperation on digital transformation**. Through a participatory process of data collection and co-creation workshops, the concept note has identified synergies and common areas across geographical regions and strategic technologies supported by BELLA's infrastructure, which plays a vital role in reducing the digital divide between EU and LAC regions.
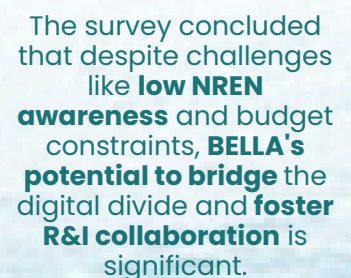
b) **Mapping of dialogues' commitments and thematic priorities for digital transformation**

SPIDER is conducting a mapping to **analyze digital transformation commitments** emerging from EU-LAC digital dialogues. This work focuses on identifying common priorities in key technologies such as AI/ML, 5G, Blockchain, Cloud Computing, HPC, and Cybersecurity.

As part of this process, we are **examining commitments** from dialogues involving Brazil, Mexico, Argentina, and regional initiatives like the Pacific Alliance, MERCOSUR Digital, and the EU-LAC Digital Alliance. Additionally, we are **integrating findings** from BELLA's Open Dialogue Sessions (ODS) to ensure alignment with existing policy discussions. This analysis will help define pathways for **strengthening EU-LAC cooperation** and advancing digital transformation efforts.

c) Actionable insights

SPIDER survey evaluated the current **state of the digital ecosystem** interconnectivity between Europe and LAC, as well as the potential of the BELLA for digital transformation. The survey was carried out in April-May 2024, and received 357 responses. The survey results highlight the critical role of high-speed internet connectivity and identify regional disparities in national research and education networks awareness and utilization. It showed that telecommunications providers dominate the general connectivity and cloud services, yet NRENs play a critical role in academic and research services. It also **underlines the growing importance** of the use of computing resources hosted by cloud providers, particularly in LAC, against research organizations hosts.

> The survey concluded that despite challenges like **low NREN awareness** and budget constraints, **BELLA's potential to bridge** the digital divide and **foster R&I collaboration** is significant.

Focus Groups insights emphasize the need for strategic alignment, increased visibility, and tailored interventions to maximize the potential of BELLA and **foster meaningful EU-LAC digital collaborations.** The focus groups gathered 24 experts to deep dive into the capabilities and awareness of BELLA infrastructure and technological priorities for EU-LAC collaboration. The findings revealed that the real challenge to **unlocking the potential of BELLA** lies in understanding its full range of capabilities beyond basic internet connectivity. The unexploited potential is intensified by **uneven national infrastructure development**, particularly in Latin America, which limits the full utilization of the BELLA network across regions. The experts concluded that BELLA's capacity to foster cross-regional collaboration in emerging technologies **remains significantly untapped.**

The findings also highlighted **Artificial Intelligence** as the technology sparking the greatest interest and potential for EU-LAC collaboration, with particular emphasis on startups developing AI solutions in both regions. **Cybersecurity** emerged as another promising bridge-building domain, while the cleantech sector showed significant collaborative potential due to shared global challenges.

Lastly, despite participants noticing **minimal implementation challenges** with BELLA itself, they emphasized the **need for policy frameworks** that promote its advanced capabilities and facilitate meaningful cross-regional partnerships in priority technological domains.

d) EU-LAC Digital Dialogues Implementation Forum (DIF)

DIF has been established as a multi-stakeholder platform to **stimulate dialogues and policy debate**, and to support the implementation of R&I commitments resulting from EU-LAC digital dialogues. DIF Working Groups on Human-Centred Digital Transformation and DEI - Diversity, Equality and Inclusion, come together to decisively **tackle digital transformation related problems** and to provide opinions and recommendations to EU-LAC digital dialogues. **More than 75 members** joined the WGs, including dialogues' decision-makers, NRENs, RFOs, RPOs, digital and ICT companies, among others. The first DIF Annual Meeting took place in Rio de Janeiro jointly with TICAL 2024 around the theme "*Connecting knowledge: AI and data as catalysts for academic and social transformation.*"

This RedCLARA's flagship conference attracted more than 200 scientists, policymakers, entrepreneurs, and other stakeholders across LAC and Europe. DIF´s session was dedicated to discussing, sharing, and collaborating on strategies and solutions to promote "Dialogues between LAC and Europe" in view to transform policies into action. DIF´s discussions are **central to strengthening collaboration** in digital transformation and **integrating DEI in international cooperation** as a bridge to solve global challenges.

e) SPIDER Community of Practice

SPIDER's Community of Practice (CoP) is **growing as a dynamic network** of professionals championing human-centred digital transformation, and diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI). CoP members advocate for sustainable solutions and collaborate across academia, industry, and policymaking to advance EU-LAC digital dialogues and maximize BELLA's impact.
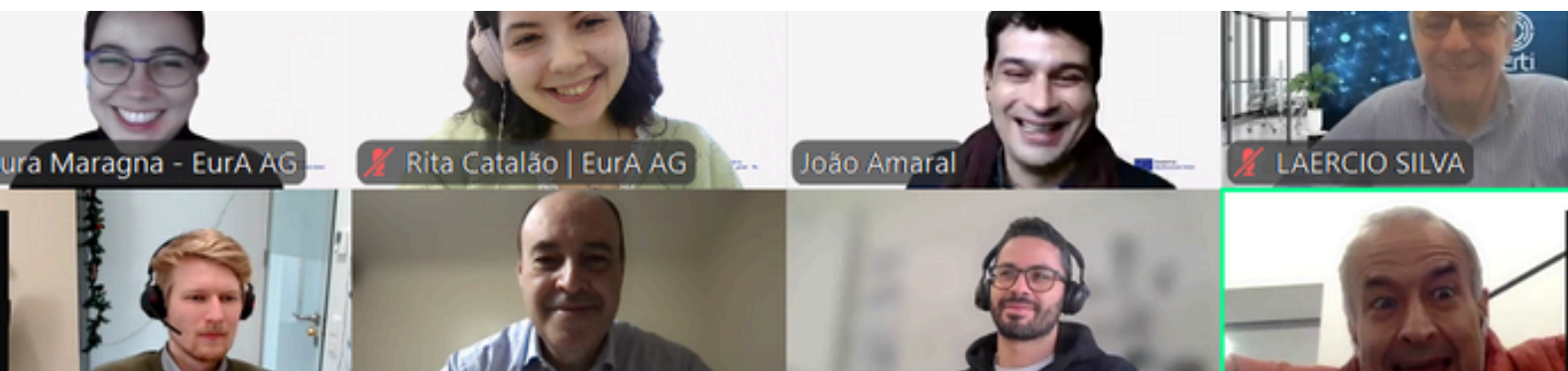

Join our CoP

f) Twinning Programme for digital innovation hubs

SPIDER's Twinning Programme has successfully **established a structured model** for EU-LAC digital innovation cooperation. After mapping 176 innovation hubs, five strategic partnerships were formed, connecting ten organizations working on AI, 5G, and cybersecurity.

Through MoUs and Action Plans, these partnerships ensure clear accountability and measurable progress. Cross-regional knowledge exchange—facilitated through mentorship, investor matchmaking, and capacity-building activities—continues to strengthen EU-LAC innovation ties. The programme is proving to be a scalable policy model, driving long-term collaboration and digital transformation between both regions.

Sustainability and legacy

SPIDER has generated added value differentiated outputs, which makes the project unique and impactful. Taken together, the project results will provide a unique toolkit for Dialogues and EU-LAC Cooperation on Digital Transformation, ensuring technologies are guided by values and principles of a human-centred and inclusive approach.

#1 Framework for EU-LAC cooperation on digital transformation.
This conceptual framework defines the basis to implement the political outcomes of digital dialogues, alongside qualitative indicators to assess and monitor the undertaking of dialogues´ outcomes and commitments.

#2. Mapping the digital transformation landscape.
Extensive mapping of EU-LAC digital dialogues and agreements. It comprises interlinked data collection related to digital transformation and analyses relevant commitments resulting from regional, bilateral and multilateral dialogues between Europe and LAC, including action plans, roadmaps, joint declarations and statements. It also identifies common bi-regional thematic priorities related to digital transformation technologies, such as AI, 5G, Blockchain, HPC, Cloud Computing, Cybersecurity and VRE.

#3 EU-LAC Digital Dialogues Implementation Forum (DIF).
DIF is established as a multi-stakeholder mechanism to foster dialogues, promote policy debate and facilitate the exchange of information and best practices to support the implementation of R&I commitments resulting from EU-LAC digital dialogues. DIF´s Working Groups on Human-centred Digital Transformation and Diversity, Equality and Inclusion, provide inputs to set up the roadmap and recommendations to support the implementation of EU-LAC dialogues´ commitments.
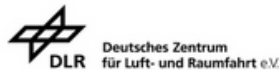
#4. SPIDER Community of Practice (CoP).
The CoP will bring together relevant actors from both sides of the Atlantic, including stakeholders from academia (NRENs, Universities, Research centres, centres of excellence) and industry, policy makers, investors, etc. Members of the CoP will serve as ambassadors to disseminate the benefits of adopting an inclusive and human-centred digital approach to build strategic partnerships for transatlantic cooperation and help scale up the experience on the use of BELLA across LAC and Europe.

#5 Twinning Programme for EU-LAC digital partnerships.
The Twinning Programme brings together digital innovation hubs from EU and LAC to stimulate the development of digital partnerships and new business opportunities benefiting from the BELLA infrastructure. The programme supports Action Plans of twinned innovation hubs and provides a services portfolio with best practices, a mentoring programme to companies, SMEs and start-ups, as well as matchmaking between innovators and investors from both sides of the Atlantic.

Consortium