SPIDER
EU-LAC Digital Partnership

Insights of 2nd SPIDER-DIF event

13 November 2025, from 14:30 to 16:30 (GMT-6)

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Introduction to the DIF Report

The Digital Dialogues Implementation Forum (DIF) is a dialogue-oriented platform promoted within the SPIDER project to foster structured exchange between Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC) and Europe on digital transformation, research and innovation, and inclusive cooperation models. The second DIF event took place on 13 November 2025, in the framework of TICAL 2025[1], continuing and deepening the bi-regional dialogue initiated during the first 2024 DIF edition.

The content of this DIF focused on advancing from dialogue and mapping exercises towards practical implementation, sustainability, and long-term cooperation frameworks. The discussions were informed by evidence generated within SPIDER, including the mapping of EU–LAC digital dialogues and agreements through the SPIDERHUB platform and the SPIDER survey and focus groups on the use and potential of the BELLA infrastructure.

The event was structured around two thematic panels, each addressing a key dimension of EU–LAC digital cooperation:

- **Panel 1: From Vision to Action – Consolidating EU–LAC Digital Dialogues Towards a Future Roadmap for Cooperation**
    - Moderator: Luis Vargas (National Research and Education Network - CEDIA, Ecuador)
    - Panelists:
        - Willy Carvajal (Delegation of the European Union to Costa Rica, Costa Rica)
        - Eliana Ulate Brenes (Ministry of Science, Innovation, Technology and Telecommunications – MICITT, Costa Rica)
        - Nicolás Trujillo (Ministry of Science, Technology, Knowledge and Innovation – MinCiencia, Chile)
        - Rubén Carrandi (EU–LAC Digital Accelerator / European Business and Innovation Centre Network – EBN, Brussels)
- **Panel 2: BELLA Beyond Borders – Unlocking the Future of EU–LAC Research and Innovation Connectivity**
    - Moderator: Paola Arellano (National Research and Education Network - REUNA, Chile)
    - Panelists:
        - Luis Cadenas (Latin American Cooperation of Advanced Networks – RedCLARA, LAC)
        - Luis Martín Flores (GÉANT, Europe)
        - Paul Fervoy (Siftia / Federation of Information Technology Entities in Latin America – ALETI, Costa Rica)
        - Alessandra Zini (28DIGITAL, Brussels)

This report summarizes the main insights emerging from the discussions, organized by thematic areas for each panel.

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[1] https://tical2025.redclara.net/en

Panel 1: From Vision to Action – Consolidating EU–LAC Digital Dialogues Towards a Future Roadmap for Cooperation

In recent years, digital cooperation between Europe and Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC) has grown steadily. Numerous political and technical dialogue spaces have been established, addressing strategic topics such as artificial intelligence, 5G, blockchain, cybersecurity, cloud computing, and virtual research environments.

The SPIDER project conducted a comprehensive mapping of this cooperation, analyzing over 90 dialogues and more than 50 EU–LAC agreements, including actors, commitments, and outcomes. This mapping revealed a rich ecosystem of initiatives but also highlighted recurring challenges: institutional fragmentation, lack of coordination among stakeholders, and the absence of systematic monitoring mechanisms to translate political commitments into concrete results.

To address these challenges, SPIDERHUB, a digital platform leveraging artificial intelligence, was developed. It organizes, links, and visualizes information on EU–LAC agreements and dialogues, enabling evidence-based decision-making. The platform embodies the panel's theme: moving from vision to action.

Additionally, SPIDER analyzed EU–LAC collaboration under Horizon Europe, covering 335 projects. European participation is led by Spain, Italy, Germany, and France (over 43% of projects), while in LAC, Brazil, Argentina, and Colombia account for 39–22% of projects. A deeper analysis of participating organizations shows higher diversification on the European side and higher concentration on the LAC side, reflecting differences in program awareness, administrative capacity, organizational maturity, and existing networks.

Finally, beyond basic and applied research, Europe demonstrates stronger knowledge and technology transfer, while in LAC private sector engagement is still emerging. Analyzing by type of actor: Higher Education Institutions dominate in LAC, whereas Europe exhibits a more balanced mix between academia and private sector, suggesting that increased private sector involvement could enhance sustainability and impact of cooperation.

The first panel of the DIF built on findings from the SPIDERHUB platform, which mapped EU–LAC digital dialogues and agreements. The discussion centered on translating dialogue and mapping into practical, sustainable cooperation frameworks.

Governance, Policy Alignment, and Regulatory Frameworks
- Development of common regional governance frameworks across LAC is essential for effective bi-regional cooperation.
- Legislative and normative frameworks facilitate cross-border collaboration and reduce fragmentation.
- Chile's experience with data center guidelines was highlighted as an example of successful policy implementation.
- Coordination with international entities must be strengthened to avoid duplication of initiatives.

Strategic Prioritization and Impact
- Mapping exercises should be complemented by impact measurement mechanisms.
- High-impact initiatives should be prioritized within the ecosystem to maximize value.
- Establishing thematic priorities with regional segmentation enhances effectiveness.
- LAC countries should be encouraged to move from participation to co-leadership roles in EU–LAC projects.

Sustainability and Long-Term Commitment
- Political cycles pose challenges and thus, monitoring mechanisms are needed to track commitments over time.
- Sustainable financing and multilevel leadership are essential to maintain long-term projects.
- Early planning for project sustainability should include identification of potential allies and funders.

Collaboration Models and Stakeholder Inclusion
- Structural and cultural shifts are needed to foster public–private and academic–private partnerships.
- Shared funds can enhance societal impact and encourage joint ownership of initiatives.
- Inclusion of underrepresented stakeholders such as civil society, private sector, and judicial entities was emphasized.

Digital Infrastructure and Capabilities
- Chile's Humboldt submarine cable was mentioned as an example of strong regional digital infrastructure.
- The combination of infrastructure, governance, and policy is key to translating dialogue into practical action.

Panel 2: BELLA Beyond Borders – Unlocking the Future of EU–LAC Research and Innovation Connectivity

Digital interconnection between Europe and LAC has reached a new scale. Thanks to BELLA, both regions now benefit from a high-capacity, secure infrastructure dedicated to science, innovation, and education. Yet the strategic questions remain: why now, and for what purpose? BELLA is not just fiber or bandwidth; it enables shared technological sovereignty, frontier research, and new bi-regional digital value chains.

Within SPIDER, two complementary actions were undertaken to explore BELLA's potential:
1. A survey of the EU–LAC ecosystem, collecting 132 responses from universities, NRENs, research centers, companies, and technology hubs.
2. Four focus groups with experts, discussing the role of BELLA for critical technologies: AI, Cloud, HPC, 5G, cybersecurity, and virtual research environments.

Three main patterns emerged:
- Opportunity is recognized, particularly in LAC, but greater visibility is needed, especially in Europe. Complementarities are clear (e.g., AI + environmental data, Cloud + health platforms, HPC for simulations), but there is not yet a critical mass identifying BELLA as the infrastructure for this.
- Barriers are mostly organizational and political, rather than technical: lack of sustained political alignment, limited agile funding mechanisms, and absence of structured EU–LAC matchmaking programs.
- BELLA enables new cooperation models: secure data exchange, expansion of research networks, shared sandboxing, pilot deployments, and advanced technical testing.

This panel discussed findings from the SPIDER survey and focus groups on BELLA, focusing on how the infrastructure can enable research, innovation, and collaboration ecosystems.

Visibility, Awareness, and Promotion
- The existing BELLA interconnection requires increased visibility to reach a wider set of stakeholders.
- Improved promotion and dissemination strategies are essential to link diverse actors.
- BELLA is not only a technical asset but also a symbolic and institutional platform enabling collaboration.

Ecosystem Development and Practical Applications
- Creation of micro-projects can demonstrate BELLA's concrete value as an important infrastructure.
- Practical applications such as Copernicus data access exemplify the potential for innovation.
- Development of a matchmaking platform connecting use cases with infrastructure capabilities was recommended.
- Key thematic areas identified include sustainable agriculture, digital health, clean energy, and AI adoption.

Governance, Coordination, and Institutional Frameworks
- NRENs play an essential role in enabling and sustaining collaboration.
- Institutional frameworks must complement connectivity to avoid fragmentation.
- A regional agenda with coordinated actions among organizations is necessary for effective collaboration.
- Bridging the gap between academic networks and productive sectors remains a priority.

Resource Mobilization and Sustainability
- Alignment of financial and political strategies is required to support project development.
- Visibility, transparency, and accessibility of funding opportunities should be strengthened to enable broader participation and engagement across both regions.
- The implementation of knowledge and experience exchange programmes, including high-level technical residencies and in-person mobility schemes, is essential to align digital maturity levels, foster interoperability between EU–LAC digital ecosystems, and consolidate long-term, trust-based cooperation.
- Leveraging BELLA's symbolic value can help enable broader collaborative programs.