

POSITION PAPER

TOWARDS AN INTER-REGIONAL DIGITAL AGENDA BETWEEN LATIN-AMERICA AND EUROPE

EMF is the European Club of e-Excellence, the cross-stakeholders' network accelerating the digital economy. Around a core group of highly innovative and market-driven ICT SMEs, EMF gathers a broad group of stakeholders in the digital economy: associations and clusters, large companies, research organisations, public entities, investors, individual advisors, etc. EMF thus represents the true engines of the European digital economy, while its network reaches out to more than 15.000 ICT-related entities throughout Europe and the world.

EMF has been participating since November 2008 in the Pro-Ideal project¹ (see www.pro-ideal.eu) which has gathered considerable practical experience in proactive collaboration between ICT actors in Latin-America & the Caribbean (LAC) on one side and the European Union (EU) on the other side. In the light of the recent EU-LAC Summit in Madrid (18 May) and the publication by the EU of the Digital Agenda, its new ICT strategy for 2010-20 (19 May), EMF would like to support the ICT dialogue with its contribution towards strengthening the EU-LAC ICT relationship.

Overall, EMF strongly believes that Latin-America and Europe should reinforce their relationship. The two regions have common cultural interests and are economically compatible. The Latin American markets are currently expanding very strongly. Europe should support this expansion and help making it sustainable. Long-term partnerships should be developed in education, training, science, research, marketing and sales. However, the relationship should not be one-side. While there are many opportunities in Latin America for European players, there are equally important opportunities in Europe for Latin American players.

The Madrid EU-LAC Summit

EMF welcomes the Madrid Declaration² summarising the conclusions of the EU-LAC Summit of 18 May 2010.

EMF furthermore applauds the Recommendations³ of the Madrid Ministerial Forum on Science and Technology (14 May 2010) and the La Granja Declaration⁴ of the Ministerial Forum on the Information Society (15 March 2010).

In particular, EMF fully shares the statement of objectives as expressed in the Madrid Action Plan⁵: [EU & LAC states should encourage] "new initiatives for more effective coordination and cooperation aiming at interconnecting knowledge, science; research and innovation; as well as business, entrepreneurial, and research centres and networks from the EU and LAC countries, leading to an improved uptake and dissemination of research results for innovation in particular for the micro and SMEs".

In the context of the current economic outlook, EMF would like to emphasise that an intensified dialogue and cooperation on digital agenda strategies between the two regions must be of mutual benefit for LAC and EU stakeholders.

Thus, EMF strongly supports the proposal for an EU-LAC Joint Initiative for Research and Innovation "combining instruments at national, regional and bi-regional level as appropriate in a complementary and synergistic manner" (Madrid Action Plan).

To enable the implementation of the strategic aims at grassroots level, EMF furthermore calls for the appointment of ICT NCPs in countries where there are currently none and encourages an intensified collaboration with (current and future) NCPs. In addition, EMF would welcome an intensified collaboration between ICT NCPs and the Pro-Ideal network of Project Angels (see www.pro-ideal.eu/project_angels).

EMF is also very supportive of the concept of developing "an interface between research and innovation through a knowledge and innovation centers network to facilitate social appropriation of knowledge and technology and capacity building, in particular keeping in mind the micro and SMEs", as called for in the Madrid Action Plan. Itself a knowledge and innovation centre for highly innovative and market-driven SMEs, EMF is very keen to participate in such a network.

Towards an Inter-Regional Digital Agenda

EMF finds many important synergies between the conclusions of the Madrid Summit and the priorities set in the Digital Agenda⁶, Europe's new ICT strategy for the period 2010-2020. In particular, the Digital Agenda points out that "the Digital Single Market... needs an external face because progress on many of the policy issues can only be achieved on an international level". EMF would like to stress that LAC and EU countries are indeed natural allies, not only historically and culturally, but also in terms of policy harmonisation and, even more importantly, in scientific & technological cooperation and trade development. EMF calls for the inter-regional EU-LAC ICT S&T Agenda endorsed by the Madrid Summit to address ICT in the broadest sense, including digital infrastructures, as well as services and applications. The Digital Agenda rightly identifies the importance of "unlocking the potential of cultural and creative industries" and the La Granja Declaration emphasises cultural and linguistic diversity. ICT infrastructures are potent vectors for a thriving services and applications market driven by cultural and linguistic diversity. The technologies available, e.g. currently under-used language technologies, must lend their support to this goal in a more targeted manner. This might be achieved by rebalanced, carefully focused cross-stakeholders R&D projects (as described below), involving SMEs as key players alongside industrial companies and research institutions. A higher involvement of SMEs will, in turn, require "light and faster access to FP7 funds for SMEs" as rightly noted in the Digital Agenda. This is all the more true for SMEs of LAC countries.

Beyond digital infrastructures, services, applications and content, EMF would like to emphasise the importance of persons. Long-lasting and trusting relationships are always based on personal relationships. The Persons Programme of FP7 plays a crucial role in this context and mechanisms such as Marie Curie, Erasmus Mundus etc. are already encouraging academic exchanges. Similar mechanisms should be made available or extended for exchanges at corporate level, in particular between SMEs, with a particular focus, for example, on facilitating market *research* [our emphasis]. Furthermore, EMF calls upon LAC and EU countries to reinforce their collaboration at the level of e-skills. These are very important for the competitiveness of both regions. EMF would strongly support a stronger international outreach of e-skills-related activities currently undertaken within European frameworks such as the Life-long Learning Programme⁷ and the CEN Workshop on ICT-Skills⁸.

Securing the involvement and buy-in of international partners in standardisation activities relating to core infrastructures, methodologies and processes for the global markets should be another priority. The standardisation effort is often resisted by players who expect to establish their technologies as de facto standards in large, non-fragmented markets from which they may conquer the world. However, as long as Europe and Latin America are not single markets,

standardisation is essential to overcome fragmentation. Moreover, "standardisation is an important factor in disseminating the fruits of research and innovation"⁹. For all these reasons, an international standardisation dialogue should become a strong component of the S&T agenda between Europe and Latin America.

With regard to the Capacities Programme of FP7 and more particularly the ICT Programme, EMF would like to make the following technical suggestions:

1. The "development" component in joint R&D projects involving European and Latin American partners should be strengthened. Research and Development are separate activities that require different skills sets. Too often, FP7 projects are heavily "research" slanted and the "development" as well as "exploitation" activities are carried out by research teams. In order to ensure "an improved uptake and dissemination of research results" (as called for in the Madrid Action Plan), it appears to be of critical importance not only to include partners with appropriate expertise in development, dissemination and exploitation, but to guarantee that their role and influence in projects is not secondary. If this is properly addressed, projects will generate stronger technical prototypes, ready for exploitation in the global markets, particularly in the promising markets of Latin America.
2. Besides encouraging the involvement of Latin American research partners, Latin American SMEs should be closely associated to European companies in the demonstration and exploitation phase of R&D projects in order to prepare a successful global exploitation phase. This would furthermore necessitate a profound re-evaluation of the importance of market *research* [our emphasis] and R&D and technology transfer as important components of R&D projects. Currently very few projects address transferability in a satisfactory manner. Additionally, it must be emphasised that in markets like Latin America, technology transfer alone will not yield sufficient results if it does not go in parallel with broader knowledge transfer and capacity building. These elements must be considered when acting with partners from the LAC region.
3. Geographical distance is often cited as an obstacle for Latin American partners to become successfully involved in the planning phase of EU-funded R&D projects. Furthermore, the considerable investment necessary upfront combined with the high risk of failure discourages some (of the best) potential partners to participate early on. The creation of a generic mechanism facilitating the participation of LAC partners in already running projects might be a way of avoiding unnecessary efforts. Latin American partners could thus join projects that they consider of interest and, vice versa, European partners could start focussing on inviting the adequate LAC partners once their projects have been approved. Such a mechanism was part of the 2009-2010 ICT Work Programme. It should not only be reinstated, but generalised.
4. Regular joint calls, such as the one initiated with Brazil in the 2010-2011 ICT Work Programme, could be a good instrument not only to streamline the relationship between EU and LAC R&D road maps, but also initiate a more systematic planning of the collaboration between project partners on both sides of the Atlantic.
5. As part of joint calls or independently, it might be useful to explore the concept of mini-Integrated Projects (IPs) in areas of common interest: education, health, e-government, agriculture, tourism, environment protection, etc. Such mini-IPs should be envisaged only in areas where a concrete and promising collaborative opportunity has been clearly defined on both sides and with due consideration of the remarks under point 1. above. They should involve 5-6 partners from each side of the Atlantic for a total budget of 5 to 10 MEUR. Mini-IPs could thus be a way to ensure that a

critical mass of resources is combined in strategic areas of common interest to make a real difference in EU-LAC R&D collaboration.

¹ The views expressed in this position paper are those of EMF (www.emfs.eu). The Pro-Ideal project partners have contributed to many of them, but may not be considered bound by the current version of this position paper.

² Madrid [Declaration](#) of the 18 May 2010 EU-LAC Summit

³ [Recommendations](#) of the 14 May 2010 Ministerial Forum on Science and Technology

⁴ La Granja [Declaration](#) of the 15 March Ministerial Forum on the Information Society

⁵ Madrid [Action Plan](#) 2010-2012

⁶ [A Digital Agenda for Europe](#)

⁷ For example through projects such as [CompTrain](#), [EQF-Code](#), [ProInternet](#)

⁸ [CEN Workshop on ICT-Skills](#)

⁹ John Ketchell, Innovation Director of CEN-CENELEC, speaking at EFI2010, Trento, 23 June 2010