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**The role of summits in the development of interregional
cooperation programs between the European Union and
Latin America: The cases of Eurosocial and Euroclima**

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Doctoral Dissertation

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Abstract	1
List of Tables	3
List of Diagrams	6
List of Graphs	7
1. INTRODUCTION.....	8
2. CONTEXTUAL FRAMEWORK.....	16
2.1 An overview of the relationship between the European Union and Latin America.....	16
2.2 Levels of dialogue.....	21
2.3 Interregional cooperation mechanisms.....	22
3. LITERATURE REVIEW.....	29
3.1 Interregionalism.....	29
3.2 The interregional relationship between the European Union and Latin America.....	38
4. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK: SUMMIT DIPLOMACY AND THE PRACTICE OF SUMMITRY.....	46
4.1 Evolution of the concept of summit diplomacy.....	46
4.2 The practice of summitry at the regional level.....	57
5. RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY.....	59
5.1 Research traditions and methodological choice.....	59
5.2 Time framework.....	60
5.3 Case study selection.....	61
5.4 Data collection and analysis.....	64
5.5 Research ethics, validity and reliability.....	69
5.6 Limitations of the methodology.....	71

6. CASE STUDIES.....	73
6.1 Eurosocietal: Biregional cooperation program on social cohesion.....	73
6.1.1 Context and background: Importance of social cohesion for the European Union and Latin America.....	73
6.1.2 Introducing Eurosocietal.....	78
6.1.3 Eurosocietal from the analysis of the interviews: Summits as guideline-providers and the importance of relational capital.....	83
6.1.4 Eurosocietal from the analysis of the summit declarations and action plans: Guidelines on social cohesion.....	92
6.1.5 Eurosocietal from the analysis of its institutional reports: The role of the summits guidelines in the development of Eurosocietal.....	107
6.2 Euroclima: Biregional cooperation program on environmental sustainability and climate change.....	126
6.2.1 Context and background: Importance of environmental policies for the European Union and Latin America.....	126
6.2.2 Introducing Euroclima.....	129
6.2.3 Euroclima from the analysis of the interviews.....	134
6.2.4 Euroclima from the analysis of the summit declarations and action plans: Guidelines on sustainability and climate change.....	143
6.2.5 Euroclima from the analysis of its institutional reports: Tracking summit guidelines in Euroclima's operations.....	157
7. ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION.....	182
8. CONCLUSIONS.....	197
REFERENCES.....	205
APPENDICES.....	220

Abstract

In 1999, a strategic partnership between the European Union (EU) and Latin America was established with the aim of strengthening political dialogue, cooperation initiatives and economic ties between the two regions. A set of biennial summits convening the Heads of State and Government was held to foster mutual understanding and address shared challenges. However, these summits were interrupted from 2015 to 2023 due to several internal and external circumstances that hindered the continuity of high-level political dialogue. Against this background, it is crucial to inquire about the significance of these meetings, the implications of their interruption, and the evolution of interregional cooperation during the non-summits period. In particular, this research aims to identify the role of summits between the Heads of State and Government of the EU and Latin America in the development of interregional cooperation programs and to what extent the lack of summits affected the functioning of these programs. To this end, a comprehensive study was conducted through the analysis of two case studies: Eurosocio and Euroclima. These cooperation programs were created by a mandate of the summits to address the issues of social inclusion and sustainable development, respectively. To conduct this study, a time framework of ten years was selected, encompassing two specific periods: from 2010 to 2015, referred to as the summits period, and from 2016 to 2020, identified as the non-summits period. A multi-method qualitative methodology was implemented by conducting a three-phase process of data collection and analysis, which involved the examination of interviews and primary documents. The results of this research revealed that summits play the role of providing guidelines that shape the operating mechanisms and implementation processes of cooperation programs. The main consequence of the lack of summits was the lack of new summit-driven guidelines. However, the continuity of the cooperation programs was not affected by the absence of summits due to their adherence to old summit-driven guidelines, which became structural characteristics of these programs, and the incorporation of new guidelines from external sources, such as regional forums in the case of Euroclima and international practices in the case of Eurosocio. Furthermore, the building of relational capital and the uninterrupted EU budget allocation also ensured the continuity of these cooperation programs during the non-summits period. These findings contribute to enriching the debate on the usefulness and relevance of summits and shed

light on the factors that strengthen interregional cooperation programs during non-summits periods by providing empirical evidence from the case studies of Eurosocial and Euroclima.

List of Tables

Table N° 1. EU-Latin American Summits.....	18
Table N° 2. EU-Latin America Thematic Cooperation Programs.....	24
Table N° 3. EU-Latin America Facilities.....	26
Table N° 4. Other Cooperation Mechanisms between the EU and Latin America.....	26
Table N° 5. Concepts and characteristics of summits and summit diplomacy classified by author.....	53
Table N° 6. Pool of cases.....	62
Table N° 7. Articles related to social cohesion and inclusion in the Madrid Declaration.....	93
Table N° 8. Articles related to social cohesion and inclusion in the Santiago Declaration.....	95
Table N° 9. Articles related to social cohesion and inclusion in the Brussels Declaration.....	96
Table N° 10. Summary of Section 3 of the Madrid Action Plan.....	99
Table N° 11. Summary of Section 5 of the Madrid Action Plan.....	100
Table N° 12. Summary of Section 7 of the Santiago Action Plan.....	101
Table N° 13. Correspondence between institutional reports and summit-driven guidelines in the macro area of Democratic Governance.....	110
Table N° 14. Correspondence between institutional reports and summit-driven guidelines in the macro area of Social Policies.....	113
Table N° 15. Correspondence between institutional reports and summit-driven guidelines in the macro area of Justice and Citizen Security.....	115
Table N° 16. Correspondence between institutional reports and summit-driven guidelines in the macro area of Public Finances.....	116

Table N° 17. Correspondence between institutional reports and summit-driven guidelines in the policy area of Democratic Governance.....	120
Table N° 18. Correspondence between institutional reports and summit-driven guidelines in the policy area of Gender Equality.....	123
Table N° 19. Correspondence between institutional reports and summit-driven guidelines in the policy area of Social Policies.....	125
Table N° 20. Articles related to sustainability and climate change in the Madrid Declaration.....	143
Table N° 21. Articles related to sustainability and climate change in the Santiago Declaration.....	145
Table N° 22. Articles related to sustainability and climate change in the Brussels Declaration.....	147
Table N° 23. Summary of Section 2 of the Madrid Action Plan.....	150
Table N° 24. Correspondence between the institutional report on the results of Euroclima's first phase and summit-driven guidelines.....	161
Table N° 25. Correspondence between the institutional report of Euroclima's second phase and summit-driven guidelines.....	163
Table N° 26. Correspondence between Euroclima's consolidated report 2017 and summit-driven guidelines.....	167
Table N° 27. Correspondence between Euroclima's consolidated report 2018 and summit-driven guidelines.....	171
Table N° 28. Correspondence between Euroclima's consolidated report 2019 and summit-driven guidelines.....	174
Table N° 29. Correspondence between Euroclima's consolidated report 2020 and summit-driven guidelines.....	180
Table N° 30. Themes of the summits declarations in 2010, 2013 and 2015.....	188

Table N° 31. Comparison of Eurosocietal's and Euroclima's strategies during the non-summits period.....	195
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List of Diagrams

Diagram N° 1. Levels of dialogue between the EU and Latin America.....	22
Diagram N° 2. EU-Latin American cooperation mechanisms.....	23
Diagram N° 3. Time framework of the research.....	61
Diagram N° 4. Eurosocial's operational framework.....	79
Diagram N° 5. Structure of Eurosocial II.....	81
Diagram N° 6. Structure of Eurosocial+.....	82
Diagram N° 7. Structure of Euroclima I.....	131
Diagram N° 8. Structure of Euroclima II.....	132
Diagram N° 9. Structure of Euroclima+.....	133

List of Graphs

Graph N° 1. Gini index by region.....	74
Graph N° 2. Homicide rate by country.....	75
Graph N° 3. Trends in the homicide rate in the Americas and Europe.....	76
Graph N° 4. Corruption perception index in the Americas.....	77
Graph N° 5. Eurosocial's budget.....	78
Graph N° 6. Global greenhouse gas emissions.....	126
Graph N° 7. Observed and expected impacts linked to climate change in Latin America.....	127
Graph N° 8. Euroclima's budget.....	130

1. INTRODUCTION

Summits have progressively become one of the major rituals of international politics (Jönsson and Hall, 2005). High-level meetings between representatives of different countries have often paved the way for reaching agreements even amidst turbulent circumstances. While the practice of leaders convening to discuss matters of governance and statecraft can be traced back to antiquity, what is notable in recent times is the frequency of these meetings and the extent to which they have replaced traditional methods of diplomatic communication (Dunn, 1996). In this sense, some scholars argue that summitry is a controversial but irreversible development in modern diplomatic practice (Melissen, 2003).

Several advantages have been attributed to the holding of summits such as enhancing mutual understanding among different actors, accelerating negotiation processes, facilitating crisis management, building trust among leaders, formulating agreements and formal commitments, and drawing global attention to specific matters. However, a variety of challenges have also emerged in the context of this practice, such as the inexperience of some political leaders in conducting negotiations, possible miscalculations and disagreements stemming from the immediacy of the discussions, high organizational and logistical costs, and the limited scope of results compared to the expectations.

While being a common practice in the realm of international relations, summits have faced disruptions affecting their continuity. A recent example was the Covid-19 pandemic, a global phenomenon that not only halted in-person events but also disrupted the overall dynamics of international exchanges. However, there are also interruptions in summitry arising from internal crises rather than external constraints. This was the case of the summits between the Heads of State and Government of the European Union (EU) and Latin America, interrupted from 2015 to 2023.

These two regions have been considered “natural allies” given their solid cultural, historical and economic ties (Roy, 2012). In this sense, most scholars agree on assessing the EU-Latin America relationship as a deep-rooted partnership between like-minded regions in terms of values and principles. As Domínguez (2015) points out, “despite nuances and differences, the gaps between the European and Latin American worldviews

are considerably smaller in comparison to the diplomatic clashes between the European Union and other regions or countries” (p. 2).

In 1999, a strategic partnership between the EU and Latin America was established with the aim of strengthening political dialogue, cooperation initiatives and economic ties between the two regions. This partnership was considered a critical component of a “new institutional architecture”, marking significant progress in the relationship (Grisanti, 2004). A set of biennial summits convening the Heads of State and Government was held to foster mutual understanding and work together in order to address shared challenges. Several cooperation programs were created as a result of this periodic dialogue.

However, the biregional relationship has faced significant challenges, mostly stemming from intraregional crises. On one hand, the EU grappled with the emergence of multiple problems such as the Euro crisis in 2008, the migration crisis in 2015 and the Brexit process in 2016, which had a negative impact on its interregional relations. On the other hand, Latin America experienced a profound regional fragmentation due to ideological disagreements over the Venezuelan crisis, political instability in some countries, and the prevalence of national interests over regional unity, hindering the international projection of the region and weakening its interregional links. This complex scenario led to the interruption of summits between the Heads of State and Government of the EU and Latin America from 2015 to 2023. This was an unprecedented fact in the history of the biregional relationship.

While summitry has been a pivotal aspect of the EU-Latin American relationship, some scholars have questioned its usefulness based on a perceived lack of concrete results. In this sense, Ayuso (2015) argued that biregional summits became a diplomatic formality instead of being an opportunity to solve issues and give impetus to policies. Meanwhile, some authors identified a growing sense of stagnation and fatigue, highlighting the lack of dynamism in summit discussions (Maihold, 2007; Gardini & Malamud, 2016; Quevedo Flores, 2019). Other scholars emphasized the need to rethink the institutional structure of the biregional relationship given the limitations of the summits (Altmann Borbon, Rojas Aravena & Beirute Brealey, 2011).

The complex scenario of the EU-Latin American relationship provides an opportunity to assess the significance of summits, the implications of their interruption and the evolution

of interregional cooperation during the non-summits period. Against this background, this dissertation aims to answer the following research questions:

1. What is the role of summits between Heads of State and Government of the EU and Latin America in the development of interregional cooperation programs?
2. To what extent did the lack of summits between Heads of State and Government of the EU and Latin America affect the functioning of interregional cooperation programs?
3. What factors contributed to the level of impact of the lack of summits on interregional cooperation programs?
4. What are the similarities and differences in the strategies of the cooperation programs to address the non-summits period?

Regarding the first question, the hypothesis is that summits between Heads of State and Government of the EU and Latin America play the role of establishing priorities to be followed by interregional cooperation programs, facilitating the alignment of policy agendas and evaluating the progress of these programs over the years. For the second question, the hypothesis is that the functioning of interregional cooperation programs was affected only to a limited extent by the lack of summits, as they were able to continue their ongoing projects and even launch new operational phases during the non-summits period without encountering significant obstacles. Accordingly, the hypothesis for the third question is that the level of impact of the lack of summits on interregional cooperation programs was limited because they have achieved a certain degree of autonomy from the high-level dialogue based on their institutional strength and the support received from partner governments in both regions. Finally, the hypothesis for the fourth question is that the strategies employed by the cooperation programs to address the non-summits period shared similarities such as the reinforcement of existing partnerships, the continuation of previously agreed projects, and the reliance on established institutional frameworks to maintain momentum, although there were differences in the level of engagement with partners and the funding structure of each program.

In order to provide answers to the research questions and test the hypotheses, a case study approach was applied, focusing on the examination of two cases: Eurosocial and Euroclima. These two cooperation programs stood out as the most suitable cases to analyze for several reasons. In terms of significance, both programs focus on topics in which the

EU is the most important partner for Latin America, namely social cohesion and sustainable development. Moreover, these topics were two of the key points highlighted in the summits since the beginning of the strategic partnership. In terms of methodology, the examination of Eurosocia and Euroclima allowed for a comparison between an older and a more recent cooperation program, as the former was created in 2005 and the latter in 2010. In addition, the traceability of these programs' operations was more feasible as the access and availability of information was better compared to other cooperation programs, which increased the chances of obtaining more meaningful findings.

Regarding the research design and methodology, a multi-method qualitative study was implemented following a three-phase research process, including data collection and analysis from 1) interviews with staff from Eurosocia and Euroclima, 2) summits declarations and action plans, and 3) institutional reports. The interviews provided first-hand information on the internal dynamics of these cooperation programs, allowing for an in-depth understanding of their functioning and development. The summits declarations and action plans, as the main documents resulting from the summits, provided insights into the approaches proposed by the leaders on the issues addressed by Eurosocia and Euroclima, namely social cohesion and sustainable development. Lastly, the institutional reports provided inputs on the development of the cooperation programs over the years, allowing for their analysis and comparison.

The time framework of this research spanned from 2010 to 2020, comparing two consecutive five-year periods: from 2010 to 2015, denominated as the summits period, and from 2016 to 2020, referred to as the non-summits period. The functioning and performance of Eurosocia and Euroclima during the summits and non-summits periods was compared to assess their changes over time and the effects of the lack of summits on the development of these cooperation programs.

The research topic of this dissertation holds relevance for several reasons. Firstly, the emergence of new phenomena at the international level has raised the need to rethink the discipline of International Relations (IR) and its tendency to focus on the states' behavior. In this sense, some scholars highlight the importance of integrating the study of regions and their relationships into the central concerns of IR (Katzenstein, 2005; Paul, 2012; Acharya, 2014; Voskressenski & Koller, 2019). Without addressing area studies, the IR discipline cannot provide a satisfactory account of how international society evolves or an

accurate diagnosis of its dynamics and changes (Hurrell, 2020). Moreover, the analysis of regions and their relationships involves not only how regions manage their economic, political and cultural space, but also how they shape the global order through their interactions (Acharya, 2014).

In particular, the interregional relationship between the EU and Latin America is of special importance amid the ongoing changes at the international level. On the one hand, in the face of the growing competition between China and the US, the cooperation between the EU and Latin America can help these regions maintain a certain degree of autonomy and room for maneuver while serving as an alternative space of collaboration in the context of a polarized world. On the other hand, the emergence of global crises, such as the Covid-19 pandemic and climate change, brings to the forefront the fact that cooperative action, not only between states but also between regions, has become crucial. Cooperation between the EU and Latin America can contribute to addressing these challenges by merging their respective capacities. In this setting, academic contributions to the analysis of the EU-Latin American relationship and its interregional cooperation gain special relevance.

Lastly, the study of the relationship between the EU and Latin America is underrepresented in the literature on the external relations of these regions. Research on their linkages with China and the US has captured much of the debate, leaving aside the analysis of this biregional partnership and creating an imbalance in the literature. As a consequence, there is a significant gap in the understanding of the potential synergies and opportunities inherent in the EU-Latin America relationship, which demands scholarly attention and examination.

This dissertation aims to contribute to the literature on the EU-Latin America relationship by providing a complex assessment of the relevance of summits between Heads of State and Government, analyzing their role in the development of interregional cooperation programs and determining whether the lack of summits affected the functioning and continuity of these programs. While recent studies analyzed a variety of challenges to the relationship, including the rise of intraregional crises and the consequences of the Covid-19 pandemic (e.g. Casanueva, 2020; Haider & Clemente Batalla, 2020; Ayuso, 2021; Quevedo, 2022), no research explored the impact of the absence of summits.

This dissertation also aims to enrich the literature on the study of interregionalism, which is another underrepresented field on its own. Considering the gaps identified in the

literature, this research seeks to shed light on topics such as the development of interregional cooperation programs and the challenging periods in interregional relations. Particularly, the inquiry of this dissertation builds on the work of Gardini and Malamud (2016, 2018) which posits that interregionalism is primarily based on a summitry exercise that provides spaces for dialogue and frameworks for enhancing cooperation. In this sense, the lack of summits can be considered a challenging period in an interregional relationship, with potential repercussions on the development of interregional cooperation programs. This research aims to offer new empirical evidence on this issue, addressing the pressing need to broaden the field of study highlighted by some scholars (e.g. Mattheis & Litsegård, 2018).

In addition, this dissertation aims to engage in the debate on the usefulness of summitry considering the criticism of this practice due to the limited scope of its results and its high organizational and logistical costs. In this sense, it is important to inquiry about the real impact of the political dialogue that takes place at summits and understand whether it is convenient to continue holding these meetings despite their inherent limitations. In particular, this study examines the role of summitry in interregional cooperation and assesses the effects of the lack of summits in the continuity of interregional cooperation programs by analyzing the case studies of Eurosocial and Euroclima.

This research has a set of limitations that must be acknowledged. Firstly, the impact of the lack of summits on trade and investments between the EU and Latin America is beyond the scope of this dissertation. The study focuses exclusively on the role of summits in the development of interregional cooperation programs. While the financial and economic aspects of the relationship are undoubtedly important, their analysis requires a different research approach and should be addressed in a separate study.

Second, the focus of this study is exclusively on the region-to-region cooperation programs. Therefore, the research does not address the analysis of cooperation between the EU and subregions or individual countries in Latin America. While several EU member states such as Spain, France and Germany have their own cooperation initiatives towards Latin America, these government-led efforts are not included in the framework of this dissertation. As Freres (2000) pointed out, the cooperation fostered by the EU as a whole is, in a sense, “the only ‘real European’ aid because generally the bilateral programs reflect national interests” (p. 68).

Furthermore, it should be noted that the cooperation between the EU and the Caribbean countries is not within the scope of this research. The reason is that, despite being included in the biregional summits, these countries followed a different dynamic in terms of cooperation as they were part of the Cotonou Agreement, a treaty between the EU and the members of the Organization of African, Caribbean and Pacific States (OACPS). In this regard, the Multiannual Indicative Regional Program for Latin America 2014-2020 highlighted that “EU cooperation with Latin America and the Caribbean is governed by two separate legal frameworks and therefore programmed separately” (p. 6). While these legal frameworks were unified in 2021, the Caribbean countries were not part of the cooperation programs analyzed in this dissertation during the time framework of the research (2010-2020).

Finally, the scope of this dissertation encompasses the region of Latin America, which is a debated geographical delimitation. Therefore, it is important to clarify that, when this research refers to Latin America, the concept includes the following countries: Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Cuba, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Dominican Republic, Uruguay and Venezuela.

The structure of this dissertation is the following: First, a contextual framework is provided aiming to explain the historical background of the relationship between the EU and Latin America as well as its levels of dialogue and interregional cooperation mechanisms. Later, the literature review is presented to portray the scholarly debate on the phenomenon of interregionalism and the interregional relationship between the EU and Latin America. Following this, the conceptual framework is introduced in order to understand the concept of summit diplomacy and the evolution of this practice since its early days to modern times, adding emphasis on the regional level.

Subsequently, the research design and methodology of the dissertation are presented to provide a detailed explanation of the data collection and analysis process as well as the rationale behind the methodological choice and its limitations. The ensuing section introduces the case studies of Eurosocial and Euroclima. Both case studies have the same structure, portraying their background and history as well as the results obtained from the examination of the interviews, summit declarations, action plans and institutional reports. This section is followed by the analysis and discussion reflecting the main findings

provided by the data, their interpretation in light of the existing literature and the answers provided to the research questions. Finally, the conclusions encapsulate the key insights drawn from the study.

2. CONTEXTUAL FRAMEWORK

2.1 An overview of the relationship between the European Union and Latin America

The relationship between Europe and Latin America is based on deep historical roots dating back to the time of colonization. The discovery of America marked a turning point, ending the continent's isolation and initiating its active engagement in international exchanges. The arrival of the European colonizers in the "new world" has been interpreted from different perspectives. While some analysts consider it an encounter of civilizations, others view it as an invasion that wiped out the native indigenous communities. These contrasting visions have significantly influenced Latin America's understanding of its modern and contemporary history since the very time of colonization, as well as the nature of its relationship with Europe (Rubiolo, 2002).

Regardless of this debate, it is a fact that the political history of the region has a strong European imprint. In this sense, several milestones in Latin America's history are closely related to phenomena originating in Europe (Ayuso & Gardini, 2018). Moreover, the political and cultural influence of countries such as Spain, Portugal, France and England remained important in the region after the colonial era. While this influence did not mean that Latin America lacked its own development models, the region has always been closer to the European political and cultural movements compared to other parts of the world (Van Klaveren, 2004). Yet, it is worth noting that the relationship between Latin America and Europe has experienced fluctuations over time, marked by periods of ups and downs in their biregional ties.

After Latin America's independence in the early 19th century, many changes in its relationship with Europe followed. Spain and Portugal were no longer trade mediators between both regions. This resulted in a direct relationship with countries such as Great Britain, France and Germany based mainly on commodities exports from Latin America. As these exchanges steadily increased, a new dependency on Europe emerged. However, at the end of the 19th century, the United States (US) gained more importance for Latin American countries in terms of economic partnership. Following the American industrial rise, the 20th century was marked by the leading role of the US in Latin America.

After the World Wars, the European integration process marked an important change in how this region related to the world. In fact, the creation of the European Economic Community (EEC) was considered the emergence of Europe as a player with a single voice in the international system (Bretherton & Vogler, 1999). The institutionalization of the European integration process entailed changes not only in the region's self-perception but also in its relationship with other actors. Furthermore, the EEC project became a model to follow for regions like Latin America, where various regional initiatives such as the Central American Common Market (CACM) and the Latin American Free Trade Agreement (LAFTA) emerged with the aim of emulating the European process.

A biregional rapprochement began in the 1980s when the EEC engaged in cooperative efforts to end the Central American armed conflicts. The EEC played an essential role as a supporting actor in the peace processes of Nicaragua, El Salvador, and Guatemala (Ayuso & Caballero, 2018). This was considered one of the major efforts to achieve regional stability and consolidate democracy in the continent at that time. The process led to the creation of the San Jose Dialogue, the first initiative of biregional political understanding. This dialogue was seen as a sign of emerging European normative power in Latin America (Ayuso, 2019).

It should be noted that Spain and Portugal played a crucial role in promoting the Euro-Latin American rapprochement in subsequent years. Following their accession to the EEC in 1986, these countries became the primary channel for bolstering the relationship between the two regions due to their close ties and cultural affinities with Latin America (Ayuso & Gratius, 2016). This bond gave rise to the concept of "Ibero-America" as a distinct area of social and cultural exchanges (Roy & Domínguez, 2010). Notably, Spain and Portugal pointed to their "special relationship" with Latin America as a vital contribution to the then-nascent EEC's foreign policy, following the steps of other countries that had "Europeanized" their post-colonial relations –e.g. France with Africa and the United Kingdom with the Commonwealth (Ruano, 2018).

In the 1990s, the biregional relation acquired special relevance due to major changes in both regions. On the one hand, following the tumultuous period commonly known as "the lost decade", Latin American countries adopted a series of liberal policies aimed at revitalizing their economies. These economic reforms presented investment opportunities in the privatization process of state-owned companies, which increased European interest

in the region (Grabendorff, 2004). Latin America, in turn, viewed Europe as a potential alternative ally to reduce its economic dependence on the US. On the other hand, the creation of the European Union and the development of its foreign policy played a pivotal role in reassessing the rapprochement with other regions. In this context, the EU expressed a strong interest in institutionalizing its relationship with Latin America (Freres & Sanahuja, 2005). This resulted in the establishment of a strategic partnership between both regions in the late nineties.

In 1999, the First Summit between the Heads of State and Government of the EU and Latin America was held in Rio de Janeiro. This event served as a platform to launch the biregional strategic partnership, which was seen as a critical component of a “new institutional architecture” between these regions, aiming to strengthen their mutual understanding through the creation of joint action programs (Grisanti, 2004). Political dialogue, regional cooperation and trade were established as the three main pillars of the strategic partnership, as stated in the declaration of the summit. Subsequently, biregional summits were held every two or three years (until 2015), serving as the primary forum for decision-making, with summit diplomacy becoming a key element of this interregional relationship. These summits allowed for the creation of interregional cooperation programs aimed at advancing projects in specific areas of common interest. A table featuring the list of the summits is presented below.

Table N° 1. EU-Latin American Summits

Summit	Place	Dates
I EU-LA Summit	Rio de Janeiro, Brazil	Jun 28-29, 1999
II EU-LA Summit	Madrid, Spain	May 17-20, 2002
III EU-LA Summit	Guadalajara, Mexico	May 28-29, 2004
IV EU-LA Summit	Vienna, Austria	May 12-13, 2006
V EU-LA Summit	Lima, Peru	May 16-17, 2008
VI EU-LA Summit	Madrid, Spain	May 17-20, 2010
VII EU-LA Summit (named I EU-CELAC Summit)	Santiago, Chile	Jan 26-27, 2013
VIII EU-LA Summit (named II EU-CELAC Summit)	Brussels, Belgium	Jun 10-11, 2015
IX EU-LA Summit (named III EU-CELAC Summit)	Brussels, Belgium	Jul 17-18, 2023

Source: Own elaboration based on European Parliament (2023)

It is worth mentioning that a key milestone in this process was the relaunching of the strategic partnership in 2010 at the sixth biregional summit held in Madrid. This renewal came after a period of perceived fatigue in the relationship. An action plan was introduced as a complementary document to the summits declarations aiming to set specific tasks for interregional cooperation programs, follow up on the progress of the relationship, and ensure compliance with agreements signed at the summits. In this sense, the action plans could be considered the materialization of the political will for cooperation expressed in the summits declarations.

Over the years, the lack of a common institution representing Latin America became a significant obstacle to the relationship. In this sense, the divergence between the interests of each country made it difficult to reach consensus before attending biregional summits. In 2012, with the creation of the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC) –the first bloc that brought together all Latin American and Caribbean countries– a new stage in the biregional relationship began. CELAC was recognized as the official interlocutor of Latin America and the Caribbean, which would facilitate relations with other actors such as the EU.

While CELAC was expected to strengthen the biregional dialogue by serving as the single voice of Latin America, this aspiration encountered a contrasting reality. The proliferation of subregional initiatives has shaped the nature of the EU-Latin American interregionalism, resulting in a dialogue between the EU, as a single actor, and a plethora of organizations and schemes on behalf of Latin American countries. As Gardini, Koschut and Falke (2018) noted, “a Latin American perspective on interregionalism cannot escape the fact that the region is extremely diverse and hardly cohesive” (p. 211). Thus, despite the creation of CELAC as an attempt to unify Latin America under a single voice, a common understanding in the region remains an unachieved goal (Ruano, 2018).

In recent years, the EU-Latin American relationship has faced significant challenges. On the EU’s side, the confluence of the Euro crisis in 2008 and the migration crisis in 2015, labeled as the “polycrisis”¹, had a negative impact on the EU interregional relations (Ayuso, 2019). Furthermore, the complexities surrounding the Brexit process and the emergence of the Covid-19 pandemic demanded substantial attention from the EU

¹ This concept was mentioned by Jean-Claude Juncker, the President of the European Commission, in one of his speeches in 2016.

authorities. The consequences of this adverse context included a reduction of cooperation funds to Latin America (as observed by Jung, 2022), the lack of new joint initiatives and, in general, more skepticism from Europe towards the biregional relationship. It should be noted that while Latin America experienced a loss of prominence in European foreign policy, other regions such as Africa and the Middle East gained greater attention as they posed more urgent challenges to the EU.

On the Latin American side, CELAC's low level of institutionalization, compounded by its inability to reach consensus due to the prevalence of national interests over regional unity, and ideological disagreements on the Venezuelan crisis, significantly impacted the EU-Latin American relationship. Moreover, the creation of the Lima Group in August 2017 marked a turning point in the regional polarization over the situation in Venezuela, further intensifying the existing fragmentation. Comprising predominantly conservative governments from Latin America, the Lima Group emerged as a diplomatic initiative to exert pressure on Nicolás Maduro's government, uphold democratic values and human rights in Venezuela, deliver humanitarian aid, and seek a peaceful resolution to the conflict in this country. This coalition vehemently criticized the Maduro's administration for undermining democratic norms.

In its first declaration, the Lima Group requested the EU and the CELAC's Pro Tempore Presidency to postpone the EU-CELAC Summit scheduled for October 2017, a move that ultimately led to the summit's definitive cancellation. As a consequence of this interruption of the biregional dialogue, coupled with the mentioned intraregional crises, no biregional summits were held between 2015 and 2023. This was an unprecedented fact in the more than twenty years of strategic partnership. While a few ministerial meetings were convened during this eight-year span, their influence on decision-making did not parallel the impact that the summits between Heads of State and Governments had.

Despite this adverse scenario, the strategic partnership endured, with several initiatives still active to this day. In this sense, it is important to highlight that the EU-Latin American relationship comprises a set of mechanisms and programs that involve a wide variety of actors, characterizing this relation as a complex and polymorphic interregionalism case (Ayuso & Gardini, 2018). While biregional summits serve as a primary channel of communication, there is also a multiplicity of mechanisms creating a complex network of

agreements and cooperation programs around which the relationship evolves. This multi-layered approach provides flexibility and dynamism to the biregional partnership.

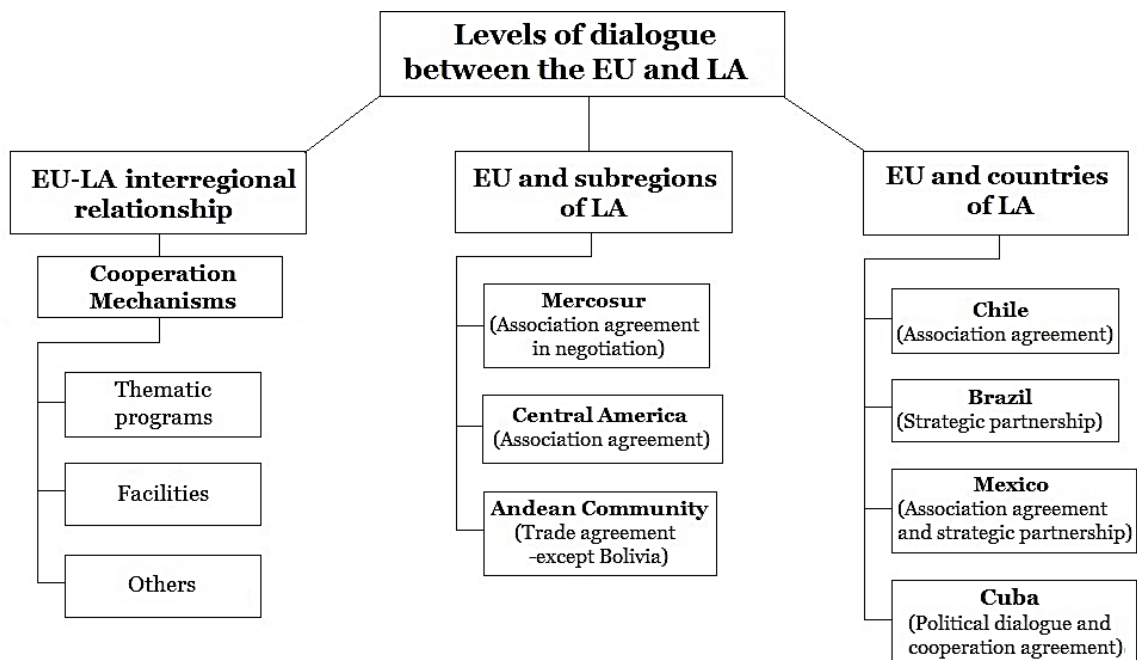
In concurrence with the biregional summits, meetings involving the private sector and civil society organizations were held. However, as these dialogues were contingent on the occurrence of the summits, they were affected by the lack of them. In this context, the most resilient spaces have been the interregional cooperation programs. These programs continued their activities despite the stagnation of summit diplomacy between the EU and Latin America. An analysis of their functioning during the non-summit period could provide valuable insights into the relationship's evolution beyond the high-level dialogue, which was considered for many years the centerpiece of the biregional relationship.

2.2 Levels of dialogue between the EU and Latin America

As mentioned earlier, the relationship between the EU and Latin America has evolved within an intricate network of agreements and mechanisms involving a diverse array of actors. This complexity is partly a product of the particular approach that the EU has employed in its engagement with Latin America. Given the multiple challenges faced by Latin America in achieving consensus during the biregional negotiations, the EU has adopted a strategic approach by establishing direct lines of communication with subregions and individual countries. While this approach has somewhat diminished the significance of bloc-to-bloc dialogues, it has proven instrumental in enabling the EU to secure agreements that were otherwise elusive when dealing with Latin America as a whole, especially in terms of trade.

When the EU engages with Latin America, there are three main levels of dialogue to consider: the interregional relationship, the negotiations between the EU and the subregions of Latin America, and the agreements between the EU and specific countries (see Diagram N° 1). According to the European External Action Service (2018), these three levels of EU engagement with Latin America are complementary and mutually reinforcing. Each of them exhibits distinct dynamics and involves different types of agreements. This dissertation focuses on the interregional level.

Diagram N° 1. Levels of dialogue between the EU and Latin America



Source: Own elaboration based on European External Action Service (2018) and Müller et al. (2017).

As previously mentioned, the first summit declaration in 1999 established that the relationship between the EU and Latin America rests upon three main pillars: trade, political dialogue and cooperation. At the interregional level, a trade agreement was not developed due to the lack of consensus in Latin America about the possibility of negotiating as a bloc with the EU on this matter. Therefore, the EU engaged in trade negotiations only with subregions and individual countries in Latin America. In contrast, the other two pillars were able to develop at the interregional level. In this context, biregional summits between the Heads of State and Government are the most important representation of the political dialogue and serve as a pivotal platform for agreements on the pillar of cooperation. This pillar is underpinned by a set of interregional mechanisms, as discussed below.

2.3 Interregional cooperation mechanisms

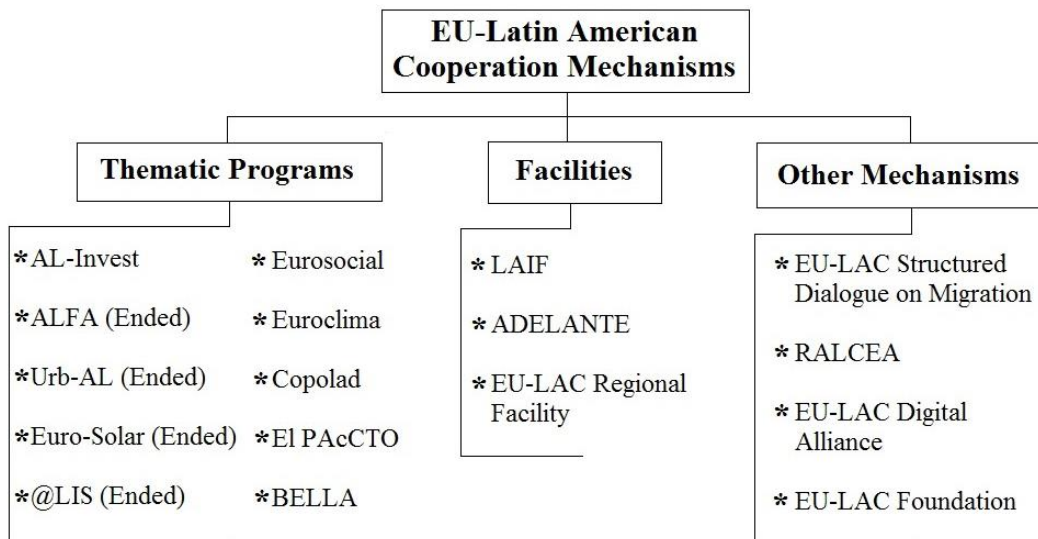
Cooperation between the EU and Latin America has developed through an intricate network of mechanisms and programs that evolve in different ways. Their particular evolution has been shaped by the interest that each topic arouses, the willingness of different actors to work together and the availability of resources. The EU-Latin American

cooperation mechanisms can be classified into three main categories: thematic programs, facilities and other mechanisms. The cooperation mechanisms are relevant for both regions due to several reasons:

For the EU, the deployment of cooperation mechanisms allows for the consolidation of its international image, linked to a commitment towards sustainable development, by promoting democracy and social inclusion in the destination countries and by positioning it as the fundamental actor of contemporary international relations. In turn, LAC countries aspire to benefit even more from the receipt of finances designed to support their development (Chanona, 2007, p. 42).

A diagram introducing EU-Latin American cooperation mechanisms is presented below.

Diagram N° 2. EU-Latin American cooperation mechanisms



Source: Own elaboration based on Durán Lima et al. (2014) and European Commission (2022).

The first category is thematic programs. The emergence of specific areas of common interest between the EU and Latin America gave rise to these programs. Many of them were created in the framework of the biregional summits. These programs exhibit varying degrees of institutionalization, with some being more established and developed in comparison to others. A few of them were in operation for a defined period, but their mandates were not renewed or their functions were integrated into other programs. Ten

thematic programs have been created over more than twenty years of strategic partnership. An overview of these programs is presented in the table below.

Table N° 2. EU-Latin America Thematic Cooperation Programs

Name	Objective	Timeframe
AL-Invest	Initially, its primary goal was to attract European investments to Latin America; however, it subsequently evolved to address the promotion of internationalization and the facilitation of enhanced productive capacities among micro, small, and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs) in the Latin American region. The latest phase of the program introduced a new approach focused on green transition and innovation.	1994-present
ALFA	The aim of this program was to foster joint development of universities in Europe and Latin America by providing funding for projects proposed by networks of higher education institutions in these regions. Furthermore, it sought to establish or enhance communication between academic communities in both areas by facilitating the exchange of students and scholars between educational institutions. This program was active until 2015.	1994-2015
Urb-AL	This program aimed to promote decentralized cooperation, with a particular emphasis on urban development in different regions and cities. It sought to establish direct connections between European and Latin American local communities through the dissemination and application of best practices in urban policies. This program ended in 2013.	1996-2013
Euro-Solar	The program sought to promote the adoption of renewable energy sources while ensuring that remote regions had access to dependable and cost-effective electricity sources. In this sense, it aimed to provide marginalized rural communities –often lacking reliable electricity access– with renewable energy derived from both solar and wind sources. This program was active until 2013.	2007-2013
@LIS	This program was conceived as an alliance for information society between the EU and Latin America. Its main goal was to establish dialogue and cooperation on policy and regulatory frameworks in critical areas such as health, education and governance while increasing interconnection capacity between actors of the information society in both regions. This program was active until 2014.	2008-2014

Eurosocietal	Eurosocietal's goal is to contribute to the reduction of inequality by improving levels of social cohesion and strengthening institutions of Latin American countries. Eurosocietal provides support for the process of designing, reforming and implementing public policy, focusing its action on the areas of gender equality, democratic governance and social policy.	2005-present
Euroclima	Its primary objectives are twofold: to support Latin American countries in their efforts to mitigate and adapt to the impacts of climate change, and to promote sustainable development in the region. Euroclima achieves these goals by providing technical assistance, financial resources, and knowledge sharing to enhance climate resilience and reduce greenhouse gas emissions in various sectors, such as energy, agriculture, and transportation.	2010-present
Copolad	This program aims to help Latin American countries to formulate and improve drug policies by creating a space to analyze and discuss the challenges related to their design and implementation, establishing compatible information systems, implementing evidence-based practices, and fostering cooperation among national agencies responsible for drug policies to address both drug demand and supply.	2010-present
El PAcCTO	Its primary goal is to provide technical support to Latin American countries in their efforts to combat organized crime effectively. This support involves enhancing the entire criminal justice system and fostering cooperation across three key components: police collaboration, cooperation within justice systems, and penitentiary system improvement.	2017-present
BELLA	This program aims to narrow the digital divide and enhance the digital ecosystem for science, technology, education and innovation in Latin America by fostering connections among companies, research centers, educational institutions and government and academic networks.	2016-present

Source: Own elaboration based on the websites of these programs

The second category is facilities. Facilities are mechanisms of financial assistance established to provide funding and support from the EU for development projects and initiatives in Latin America. These facilities often serve as vehicles for pooling resources, coordinating efforts, and facilitating partnerships between multiple stakeholders to achieve common development objectives. They may involve the blending of funds from different sources, including grants, loans, and contributions from governmental, intergovernmental,

and private sector entities. LAIF, ADELANTE and the EU-LAC Regional Facility for Development in Transition are part of this category.

Table N° 3. EU-Latin America Facilities

Name	Objective	Timeframe
LAIF	LAIF (Latin American Investment Facility) aims to mobilize funding for development projects in Latin America by blending EU grants with financial resources from European and regional institutions, governments and the private sector.	2010-present
ADELANTE	ADELANTE promotes triangular cooperation as an innovative partnership modality by co-financing projects across various thematic areas, in several countries and with diverse types of stakeholders.	2015-present
EU-LAC Regional Facility for Development in Transition	The EU-LAC Regional Facility for Development in Transition aims to foster an open dialogue between the two regions on how transitioning economies can enhance their strategic and policy capabilities to align with the Sustainable Development Goals.	2017-present

Source: Own elaboration based on the websites of these programs

Finally, the third category is other cooperation mechanisms. This category encompasses those mechanisms that cannot be included in the two previous categories. These mechanisms have emerged to promote a mutual understanding of shared challenges requiring common solutions and concrete result-oriented cooperation. This category includes mechanisms ranging from biregional dialogues to international organizations such as the EU-LAC Foundation.

Table N° 4. Other Cooperation Mechanisms between the EU and Latin America

Name	Objective	Timeframe
EU-LAC Structured dialogue on migration	The EU-LAC Structured dialogue on migration is a forum based on the principle of shared responsibility aiming to enhance the knowledge on EU-Latin American migration and reinforce the commitment of both regions to address migration issues.	2009-present
RALCEA	RALCEA serves as a platform to develop a Latin American network of knowledge centers in the water sector and contribute to the improvement of decision-making at the political and technical level.	2010-present
EU-LAC Digital	The EU-LAC Digital Alliance aims to foster cooperation for an inclusive digital transformation in both regions. This dialogue	2023-present

Alliance	addresses matters such as the expansion of digital infrastructure, the promotion of transparency and accountability, and the advancement of innovation in digital products and services, among others.	
EU-LAC Foundation	The EU-LAC Foundation was created in 2010 to strengthen and promote the biregional strategic partnership by facilitating policy discussions, enhancing mutual understanding and fostering active participation from civil societies in both regions. Originally constituted as a foundation, it attained official recognition as an international organization with legal personality under public international law in 2019.	2010-present

Source: Own elaboration based on the websites of these programs

The scope of this dissertation focuses only on the first category of cooperation mechanisms, namely the thematic programs. This selection is grounded in several considerations. First, the thematic programs focus on specific areas of common interest agreed upon mostly at the biregional summits, rendering them closely tied to these events. Thus, they can be viewed as concrete manifestations of the expressed willingness to cooperate by the Heads of State and Government of both regions. Second, and in line with the previous point, by focusing on thematic programs the dissertation can contribute to a more focused and coherent scholarly discussion on specific areas of EU-Latin American cooperation, potentially leading to a more impactful contribution to the field. Finally, due to their level of institutionalization, thematic programs have more readily available documentation, data, and information compared to other cooperation mechanisms, which facilitates a more comprehensive analysis and interpretation of the selected case studies, making them more suitable for a research project with limited time and resources such as this dissertation.

Likewise, the dismissal of the other two categories, namely facilities and other mechanisms, in this dissertation is duly justified. First, these mechanisms are not closely linked to the interregional summits process (except for a couple of them). They emerged in other contexts, thus requiring a different set of analytical frameworks to examine them. Secondly, their heterogeneity poses challenges in conducting a coherent and cohesive analysis, since they involve a broader range of dynamics and stakeholders. Finally, the limited institutionalization of some of these mechanisms made it difficult to analyze them and collect enough information about them.

Therefore, the thematic programs were selected as the interest group of mechanisms to study. They comprise the pool of case studies available for examination within the scope of this dissertation, namely the interregional (bloc-to-bloc) cooperation between the EU and Latin America. Within the group of thematic programs, the selected case studies for the paired comparison of this dissertation are Eurosocietal and Euroclima. Detailed explanations for this specific choice are provided in section 5.3 on Case study selection. This research analyzes these two thematic programs to assess the role of summits in their development and the impact of the lack of summits on their functioning with the aim of contributing to a better understanding of these cooperation mechanisms.

3. LITERATURE REVIEW

The literature review is the methodical compilation of information sources relevant to a given research topic in order to provide a description, summary and critical evaluation of these works (Fink, 2014). This compilation enables the researcher to identify what has been done in the field, recognize the main methodologies and research techniques, discover relationships between different approaches of the topic, seek new lines of inquiry and place his/her own research in the context of the existing literature (Randolph, 2009).

The literature review of this dissertation was created following a historical approach (Kennedy, 2007; Onwuegbuzie & Frels, 2016) in which the relevant literature is organized and presented in chronological order to portray the evolution of the main developments and findings in the field identifying the limitations of previous studies. The search of the literature was conducted through academic search engines such as Google Scholar as well as databases such as EBSCO, JSTOR, SAGE, EISZ, among others. The documents found in this search were articles, books, book chapters, working papers, institutional reports and dissertations. Relevant references from these documents were selected, retrieved and reviewed in order to complement the previous search. This process was repeated multiple times until the point of saturation was reached (when no new relevant documents were found).

This literature review is focused on the study of two main subjects: interregionalism and the interregional relationship between the European Union and Latin America. The origin and development of these topics as well as their main studied issues and current debates are portrayed in order to identify gaps in the literature, introduce the context in which the research question of this dissertation emerged, and explain the contribution of this dissertation to the literature in these areas of study.

3.1 Interregionalism

Studies on interregionalism emerged in the second half of the twentieth century based on the incipient experience of the then called European Economic Community (EEC). At that moment, group-to-group dialogues promoted by the EEC were the main form of interregionalism (Hånggi, 2000). Interest in interregional relations arose along with the study of regionalism as the way in which regions relate to each other is one of the issues to

consider when analyzing their institutionalization process (Hänggi, 2006). The first approximations to the interaction between regional systems were elaborated by Yalem (1962), Kaiser (1968), and Boyd & Feld (1980).

Yalem (1962) studied the incipient spread of regional blocs in the international system and the emergence of relations between them. He analyzed the extent to which interregional relations would help to build a more peaceful global order in the context of the Cold War. He stated that the existence of an international organization was necessary to encourage interregional cooperation by promoting common spaces of consensus and cohesion. Meanwhile, Kaiser (1968) focused on the study of 'regional subsystems' examining their relationship with the superpowers. Moreover, he analyzed how these subsystems interacted with each other proposing a set of possible scenarios ranging from confrontation to cooperation between them. Boyd and Feld (1980) studied the regional systems across the world unfolding a comparative study among them. They described the main characteristics of each regional system and highlighted the patterns of 'transregional relations' derived from their possible interdependence.

It is important to note that, in its early days, interregionalism was mostly overshadowed by the prevalence of the studies on regionalism. It was in the 1990s and early 2000s when interregionalism gained more relevance in academia thanks to the work of authors such as Heiner Hänggi, Ralf Roloff and Jürgen Rüländ, among others. However, researches on this field were initially limited to the study of the European Community's external action and its policy of cooperation with other regional groups (Molano-Cruz, 2007). This limited approach was the result of the academic consensus on the fact that the European integration was the only regional project that behaved as a single actor in the international arena, a phenomenon that was labeled as 'regional actorness' (Bretherton & Vogler, 1999). Later, interregional studies extended their focus to the interactions between Europe, North America and East Asia which was called "the Triad" of interregional relations since they were considered as the leading regions in the world economy (Hänggi, 2000; Roloff, 2006).

The boom of interregional studies in the 1990s and early 2000s is explained by the international context at that moment. The end of the Cold War raised expectations on a global transformation in which new actors would gain relevance. Some scholars such as Hettne (2003) proposed that the wide expansion of globalization would lead to the existence of an inter-civilizational dialogue on the level of the macro-regions. Meanwhile,

authors such as Roloff (2006) argued that the proliferation of regional organizations and the rise of interactions between them would influence the structure of the international system and question the role of the states in it. Furthermore, he stated that changes in the distribution of power after the Cold War and the management of complex interdependences between world regions were determined factors behind the emergence of interregionalism as a phenomenon to study in the discipline of International Relations.

In this context, the concept of interregionalism became a matter of debate among scholars in the field. Edwards and Regelsberg (1990) defined interregionalism as group-to-group dialogues, whereas authors such as Link (1998) claimed that interregionalism should be understood as an instrument of cooperative competition between world regions. Roloff (2001) stated that interregionalism is rather a process of widening and deepening political, economic, and societal interactions between international regions. Meanwhile, Rüländ (2002) referred to it as regularized encounters between clearly defined entities for sharing information in order to address specific policies.

Later, Aggarwal and Fogarty (2004) conceptualized interregionalism as a policy strategy represented by the pursuit of formalized intergovernmental relations across distinct regions, especially focusing on the economic component of these relations. In contrast, Gilson (2005) pointed out that interregionalism may not only represent the relations between independent regions but may be regarded as a process whereby, through their mutual interaction, regions come to recognize themselves as such. In this sense, according to Gilson, a region may create its own identity as a result of establishing relations with another region. In turn, Hänggi (2006) briefly defined interregionalism as the institutionalization of the relations between regions while Hwee and López i Vidal (2008) stated that interregionalism has the potential to become a new layer of interaction in an increasingly complex global order.

Lehoczki (2015) pointed out that interregionalism represents “regular forms of cooperation between regions or actors from different regions and is a result of the parallel phenomena of globalization and regionalism” (p. 379). In this sense, she identified the link between interregionalism and the three waves of regionalism, being the third one the most convenient for the rising of interregional relations as the first and the second ones were still limited by the dynamics of the Cold War. In fact, Roloff (2006) had previously pointed out that interregionalism is a variable of regionalism and its emergence has been closely linked to the evolution of regional systems. Finally, beyond the multiplicity of definitions and

interpretations, “regionalism and interregionalism do exist, actually proliferate, and are widely accepted” (Gardini, 2018, p. xii).

When examining scholarly work on interregionalism, Heiner Hänggi outstands as one of the most important authors in the field. He worked on the conceptualization of interregionalism and categorization of interregional relations. Hänggi proposed three types of interregional relations: pure interregionalism which refers to group-to-group dialogues, transregionalism which addresses arrangements between less institutionalized regional groups, and hybrid interregionalism which denotes relations between a region and third states in other regions (Hänggi, 2000). In the early 2000s, other authors followed Hänggi's work aiming to provide new interpretations of interregionalism. Rüländ (2002) categorized interregionalism as a new level in the multi-tiered system of international relations, which was linked to the proliferation of “regional organizations increasingly interacting with each other and developing actor qualities of their own” (p. 3). Furthermore, from the analysis of different theoretical approaches, Rüländ proposed five functions of interregionalism: Balancing, institution-building, rationalizing, agenda-setting and identity-building.

According to Rüländ's argument, balancing is related to the realist approach and implies that interregionalism would serve to balance power in the international system. In this sense, an interregional relation would be understood as a coalition against other emerging alliances or regional hegemons. On the contrary, institution-building comes from the liberal approach and refers to the creation of norms and structures to regulate dialogue and cooperation between regions. Meanwhile, rationalizing means that interregional relations serve to reach consensus between regions about certain issues in order to promote them on the international agenda. Therefore, the interregional level would be a filter to prevent unsolved issues from becoming bottlenecks in global forums. In the same context, agenda-setting refers to the possibility that regions agree on lobbying in favor (or against) certain issues at international organizations. Finally, identity-building is related to the constructivism approach and entails that interregionalism may stimulate the construction of regional identities by highlighting differences between regions and strengthening their internal cohesion.

Meanwhile, Hettne (2003) studied interregionalism in the framework of great powers leadership. He argued that, in the context of global regionalization, two views on the world governance prevail, one led by the EU and the other by the US. Both have opposite proposals on the development of regionalism and interregional relations. On one hand, the

EU model encourages the creation and proliferation of regional blocs and supports interregionalism as a feasible form of global governance. This model revolves around a post-Westphalian view according to which nation-states have lost their preponderance. On the other hand, the US-led proposal privileges bilateral agreements for specific purposes, prioritizing a neo-Westphalian view based on the role of nation-states. Thus, according to Hettne, the most convenient model for the rise of interregionalism would be the one led by the EU.

Other authors provided contributions to the field from the study of specific cases. For instance, Stuhldreher (2003) analyzed the capacity of interregionalism to influence global governance by studying the case of the relationship between the EU and Mercosur. She examined how this relationship has created positive synergies reinforcing commitments that may be transferable at the multilateral level. Moreover, she proposed the existence of a new global architecture in which the states' actions are framed by interregionalism. Meanwhile, based on his study of the ASEAN-EEC case, Robles (2004) highlighted the importance of social structures and non-state actors in the development of interregional relations and questioned the possible emergence of an interregional level of analysis in the International Relations field. Likewise, Reiterer (2006) studied the relationship between the EU and East Asia assessing the benefits of creating interregional linkages. Reiterer considered interregionalism as a diplomatic tool through which regions create a shared space of understanding to face common challenges. He claimed that interregionalism constructs identities through mutual recognition, provides the framework for networking and sets agendas more efficiently.

Other works in the 2000s were focused on interregionalism from the EU perspective. Aggarwal & Fogarty (2004) assessed and compared the EU interregional relationships to determine which factors have had the greatest effect on these interregional processes and what the main outcomes were in each particular case. Specifically, they studied "whether and how the experience of establishing interregional commercial agreements with the EU encouraged counterpart regions to coalesce both economically and politically, and perhaps to adopt organizational forms of regional governance similar to those of the EU over time" (Aggarwal & Fogarty, 2004, p. 345). Söderbaum & Van Langenhove (2005) explored the role of the EU as a global actor emphasizing the importance of interregionalism as a foundation for its external policies. Through the analysis of five case studies, they examined the variation in the EU interregional approach across different regions and

sectors. They highlighted that various types of actors –both state and non-state– are involved in the interregional processes creating complex multi-actor networks and coalitions.

Following these studies, some scholars claim that the main promoter of interregional relations has been the EU, considering that it is the most institutionalized region and has evolved as an actor with a single voice in the international arena (Bretherton & Vogler, 1999; Hettne & Söderbaum, 2005; Söderbaum, Stålgren & Van Langenhove, 2005; Giacalone, 2007). In this sense, the EU has been looking for other regional interlocutors in the world but regional blocs are in different phases of consolidation in other latitudes. Nevertheless, some authors argue that, after the end of the Cold War, the EU has intended to create a hub-and-spoke system in which Europe is in the center of the interregional networks in the world (Hänggi, Roloff, & Rüländ, 2006).

The EU's interest in promoting interregionalism is a quite explored topic in the field. Specifically, the role of the EU as an 'external federator' in other regions has been commonly discussed in the literature (Rüländ, 2002; Sanahuja, 2007; Costa & Dri, 2014; Santander, 2015; Ayuso & Caballero, 2018). This role refers to the intention to strengthen other regional groups by creating pressure for them to speak with a single voice when negotiating with the EU. According to Quevedo Flores (2017), the interest of the EU in promoting interregionalism was to export its institutional model and practices to other regions. Despite this Eurocentric trend, analyses about interregionalism between regions such as Latin America, the Middle East, Africa, and Southeast Asia have emerged later (Fawcett, 2005; Rubiolo, 2016; Röschenhaler & Jadowski, 2017; Kotsopoulos, & Goerg, 2018; Ruíz Valverde, 2018; Hamanaka, 2019). Yet, studies about the EU are still the most predominant in the field.

Another topic that has caught the attention of scholars over the years is the interregional relation between the EU and Asia in the framework of the Asia–Europe Meeting (ASEM). Gilson (2002) analyzed the evolution and development of ASEM from a constructivist perspective. By studying this case, she concluded that the process of interregional interaction is a socio-political construction that can shape the very nature of the constituent regions, while these, in turn, influence the terms of the interaction, as happened between Asia and the EU. Meanwhile, Hwee and López i Vidal (2008) assessed the performance of ASEM by identifying the main strengths and shortcomings of this process and analyzing the dynamics of power within these regions. Besides, they examined the functions of

interregionalism proposed by Rüländ (2002) and evaluated their pertinence and applicability in the case of ASEM.

From another perspective, Robles (2008) undertook a critical assessment of ASEM after a decade of its creation examining its role in the discussion of social development, modification of Asian laws and cultural dialogue. Robles came to a skeptical conclusion about the equal basis of the biregional dialogue by arguing that ASEM perpetuates the asymmetry and hierarchical relationship between the EU and Asia. On the other hand, Allison (2015) examined the dynamics of norm diffusion between the EU and ASEAN, and its impact on the EU actorness. In her analysis, Allison focused on three main aspects: economic integration, the institutionalization of regionalism and the development of political norms. She concluded the study by demonstrating how, despite the asymmetry of the biregional relationship, ASEAN has managed to shape the EU actorness in Asia.

The study of the relationship between the EU and Latin America has also been a well-documented topic. Linkages between these two regions are based on a broad sense of shared values with very deep roots (Grabendorff, 2003). Both pioneered the creation of regional integration processes during the first wave of regionalism in the 1950s (Molano-Cruz, 2007). In fact, Latin America has stood out for its aspiration to follow the European model, which was reflected in the creation of multiple regional blocs that sought to emulate European integration. The relationship between the EU and Latin America is a case that reflects the complexity of interregionalism since a multiplicity of mechanisms and forums have been simultaneously developed, involving a very broad diversity of actors (Ayuso & Gardini, 2018). This relationship has been regarded as multifaceted and polymorphic because of the increasing diversity and heterogeneity of its linkages (Ayuso & Caballero, 2018). A broader examination of this interregional relation is presented in the next section of this literature review.

As for the categorizations in the field of interregionalism, new proposals have emerged over the years. In 2016, Gardini and Malamud proposed a new typology of interregional relations based on two criteria. The first relates to the type of involvement of what they called “the senior partner” –the most powerful actor in the interregional relation. The second concerns the dimension in which the interaction takes place, which may be either politico-institutional or socioeconomic. Thus, “by combining the two criteria, four ideal-typical patterns of interregional relations emerge: leadership, emulation, cooperation, and exchange” (Gardini & Malamud, 2016, p. 8).

The analysis of Gardini and Malamud also highlighted the importance of summits as the most outstanding manifestation of interregionalism since exchange and dialogue at the highest political level are crucial for further interregional interactions. They asserted that interregionalism is mostly a “summitry exercise” (Gardini & Malamud, 2016, p. 10). However, these authors pointed out that the excess of summits may be prejudicial as “proliferation tends to decrease the marginal returns for all stakeholders of huge international assemblies” causing a “summit fatigue” (p. 11). Moreover, there is a set of challenges that arise when organizing this kind of event, namely the massive logistic effort, high organization costs, blurry participation of non-state actors and the question of how to assess the “success” of the summits, among others.

Regarding this topic, some authors warned of the danger that interregionalism would focus excessively on summitry. For example, Doidge (2014) pointed out that, by following this tendency, interregionalism may become mostly rhetorical or symbolic which may create a mismatch between expectations of what may be achieved and the actual performance of interregional relations to deliver these results. However, other scholars state that interregional summits are beneficial because they serve as forums for dialogue, provide frameworks for enhancing cooperation, increase the sense of priority of a relationship and allow following up on ongoing processes (Baert, Scaramagli & Söderbaum, 2014; Gardini, Koschut & Falke, 2018). Furthermore, declarations stemmed from summits may produce actual results considering that “when a rhetoric and narrative exercise is repeated through time and widely accepted, this shapes political interests, values and legitimacy and therefore it determines policy actions and choices too” (Gardini & Malamud, 2016, p. 16). In any case, this debate is still relevant in the field.

The latest works about interregionalism have been a series of books that compile the ideas of several authors in one edited volume. This is the case of Baert, Scaramagli & Söderbaum (2014), Telo, Fawcett & Ponjaert (2016), Gardini, Koschut & Falke (2018), Mattheis & Litsegård (2018), and Cairo & Bringer (2019). Baert, Scaramagli & Söderbaum (2014) gathered authors with different theoretical perspectives to encourage dialogue among them throughout the book, focusing on the role of actors and institutions that are engaged in interregional relations and providing analyses on different cases of the EU interregionalism. In the same line, Telo, Fawcett & Ponjaert (2016) examined the European interregionalism aiming to provide a complex assessment about the international

role of the EU in the emergent multipolar world by observing the main drivers of cooperation with other regions.

Meanwhile, Gardini, Koschut & Falke (2018) went beyond Eurocentrism in the field and analyzed interregionalism in the Americas highlighting the particularities of the Western hemisphere when establishing interregional relations. They provided an exhaustive review of linkages between the American continent and other regions across the globe as well as an analysis of how different regions within the Americas relate to each other. From a broader view, Mattheis & Litsegård (2018) studied interregionalism in the Atlantic space which includes the Americas, Europe and Africa. They accounted for the differences, conflicts and convergences between regional organizations in this geographical space, examining the purposes behind the establishment of interregional relations and considering the future possibilities for the Atlantic area. Finally, Cairo & Bringer (2019) focused on the relationship between the EU and Latin America from a geopolitical perspective analyzing dynamics of cooperation and regional narratives as well as the importance of persistent inequalities and the role of social movements.

In sum, interregionalism is a dynamic area of study still in its infancy. Despite the existence of several works in the field, interregionalism is still underrepresented in the academic literature considering that it “constitutes an additional level of interaction in the world system” and “needs to be analyzed in its own right and not only within the framework of regionalism” (Söderbaum, Stålgren & Van Langenhove, 2015, p. 378). There is a pressing need for further research on the emergence and development of interregionalism and its implications in the international system. Furthermore, it is important to encourage studies that go beyond the Eurocentric approach and include other regions in the analysis.

Specifically, some gaps in the literature on interregionalism are related to uncharted areas such as: emerging forms of interregionalism, challenging periods in interregional relations, development of interregional cooperation programs, engagement of regional actors in interregional activities, comparative studies between interregional relations, management of security issues at the interregional level, asymmetry in interregional relations, South-South interregionalism, main institutional drivers within interregional relations, interregionalism as a tool for advancing national agendas, the influence of interregionalism on regionalism, the impact of identity and cultural aspects on interregional ties, actorness in the context of interregionalism, interregional civil society networks, overlapping

interregionalism, among others. Moreover, many scholars argue that the field would benefit from an expansion in terms of cases and methods that provide new empirical evidence (Mattheis & Litsegård, 2018).

This research aims to contribute to narrowing the gap related to the study of the development of interregional cooperation programs in the context of challenging periods in interregional relations, such as the lack of summits. Considering the growing scholarly attention to the debate on the importance of summitry in interregionalism, this research seeks to analyze the role of summits in the development of interregional cooperation programs and assess whether the lack of summits entails a crisis or stagnation in the functioning of these programs. The inquiry of this dissertation builds on the work of Gardini and Malamud (2016, 2018) which posits that interregionalism is primarily based on a summitry exercise that provides spaces for dialogue and frameworks for enhancing cooperation. Consequently, the lack of summits can be considered a challenging period in an interregional relationship, with potential repercussions on the development of interregional cooperation programs.

As the relationship between the EU and Latin America experienced a non-summits period from 2015 to 2023, it is a suitable case study to assess the effect of the summits and the lack of them on interregional cooperation programs. Moreover, among the pool of cases to study, the EU-Latin America is the only interregional relationship that has experienced such a prolonged non-summits period, which makes it an appropriate case to analyze this phenomenon. The contribution of this dissertation in the field of interregionalism is to provide empirical evidence on the development of interregional cooperation programs during non-summits periods based on the case studies of Eurosocietal and Euroclima. This work follows the academic trend of contributing to the field by offering empirical evidence from the study of a specific case, which has been followed by authors such as Stuhldreher (2003), Robles (2004), Reiterer (2006), Hwee & López (2008), Allison (2015), Ayuso & Gardini (2018), among others. In this sense, this research aims to address the need for new empirical evidence in the field.

3.2 The interregional relationship between the European Union and Latin America

The literature about the links between the EU (formerly the EEC) and Latin America has evolved progressively as the relationship has grown over the years. Only a few studies were conducted during the decades of 1980 and 1990. The main topics discussed during

this period were the role of Spain and Portugal in the European rapprochement towards Latin America (Ashoff, 1982; Aguirre, 1986; Del Arenal, 1990), the EEC's involvement in the Central American peace process (Grabendorff, 1984; Smith, 1995), and the challenges of the incipient biregional relationship (Muñiz, 1980; Wionczek, 1980; Grabendorf, 1987; Vellinga, 1995).

In 1996, Ayuso studied the role of the EU integration process as a key factor in its relationship with Latin America. She argued that the more European integration was strengthened, the better relations with Latin America became. Thus, between 1957 and 1970, when the EEC was still in its consolidation phase as an actor in the international system, legal instruments for the institutionalization of the dialogue with Latin America had not yet been developed. During the nineties, when the EU was established, a greater rapprochement with the region developed. She also highlighted the role of biregional parliamentary conferences in “awakening a favorable sensitivity to Latin American problems, especially among like-minded political forces” (Ayuso, 1996, p. 151).

Parallel to the academic debates, biregional relations were also studied by the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC). For example, in 1999, ECLAC researchers prepared a special report as a preamble of the first biregional summit. This report described the economic situation in both regions, as well as the strategy for European rapprochement with Latin America. The document pointed out that while the EU recognized Latin America as a unit, differentiated approaches to the subregions were developed. It also highlighted that the economic reforms implemented by Latin American countries since 1990 boosted their economic growth, which increased the interest of European investors in the region. Topics such as the effects of the EU's eastward expansion for Latin America and the evolution of the biregional economic ties were also studied by members of this institution (ECLAC, 1995; 1998).

A greater number of studies on EU-Latin American relations were published in the 2000s as a result of the establishment of the so-called strategic partnership between the two regions. In particular, a recurring topic in the literature during the early 2000s was the possibility of a confrontation between the US and the EU for influence in Latin America. In fact, this region was considered a space of competition between the US and the EU in the post-Cold War context where the EU had the possibility of emerging as an alternative power in the unipolar world (Cervantes, 2000; Freres, 2000, Sanahuja, 2000; Briceño Ruíz, 2001; Grabendorff, 2003; Freres, 2004).

Scholars looked at trade as an example that illustrated this competition. In 1994, the US proposed the creation of the Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA) to further its economic interests in the region. Researchers such as Briceño Ruíz (2001) argued that the EU devised the creation of a strategic partnership with Latin America “to defend the gains in trade and investments achieved since the mid-1980s which could be reversed by a FTAA” (p. 206). However, there was no academic consensus on this issue. Instead, some scholars argued for the possibility of an Atlantic triangle of cooperation and trade between the US, the EU and Latin America that would promote liberal principles and avoid power competition between the US and the EU in the region (Van Klaveren, 2004; Grabendorff, 2005).

In 2004 there was a particular increase in publications on EU-Latin American relations in the context of the third biregional summit held in Guadalajara. In this period, the first concerns about the effectiveness of the strategic partnership were raised. The lack of concrete results of the biregional summits (Freres, 2004; Whitehead, 2004), the diminishing importance of the relationship (Grabendorff, 2004; Van Klaveren, 2004), and the need for a more substantial commitment between the two regions (Grisanti, 2004; Lozano Arredondo & Velázquez Castillo, 2004; Sanahuja, 2004) were the most discussed topics in the academic debate at the time.

In the following years, some scholars warned about changes in the political configuration of both regions that posed new challenges to the relationship. On one hand, the EU enlargement increased the heterogeneity of the bloc in terms of values and worldviews, as well as external interests (Freres & Sanahuja, 2005; Torrent & Francia, 2005). Meanwhile, political divisions appeared in Latin America due to the emergence of a South American integration project led by Brazil and the disinterest of Mexico in the region due to its strong attachment to the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) (Sanahuja, 2007). This divergence of orientations and interests between the regional leaders shaped a new Latin American geopolitical reality. Thus, internal changes both in the EU and in Latin America made it harder to conciliate common positions and move forward the biregional relationship (Freres, Gratius, Mallo, Pellicer & Sanahuja, 2007; Maihold, 2007; Krakowski, 2008).

Later, a new debate arose in the literature: the question of whether the EU would prioritize individual negotiations with Latin American countries or whether the biregional relationship would remain the most important space for dialogue (Del Arenal, 2009, Ayuso

& Foglia, 2010; Altmann Borbón, Rojas Aravena, & Beirute Brealey, 2011). In this sense, researchers observed a change in the strategy of the EU, which, faced with the fragmentation of the region and lack of a single interlocutor, opted to strengthen rapprochement with some of the Latin American countries individually (Malamud, 2012; Quevedo Flores, 2012). This change raised doubts about the continuity of biregional relations as a dialogue between two main actors: the EU and Latin America.

However, the decade of 2010 brought a major milestone for the biregional relationship: the creation of CELAC. The emergence of a single interlocutor representing Latin America was perceived in academic circles as the beginning of a new era for the strategic partnership. A sense of optimism about the prospects of the relationship emerged as new agendas were on the horizon (Bonilla & Ortíz, 2012; ECLAC, 2012; Casanueva, 2013). Nevertheless, some authors documented the challenges arising from this transformation and called for consistent commitment from both regions to strengthen the biregional partnership (Gratius, 2013; Sanahuja, 2013; Tovar, 2013; Gardini & Ayuso, 2015; Ayuso & Gratius, 2016).

Nowadays, a new wave of issues is being addressed in the academic literature. The lack of biregional summits between 2015 and 2023 created a perception of stagnation in the relationship (Ayuso, 2019; Casanueva, 2020; Quevedo Flores, 2022). A set of intraregional crises has fueled this situation. On the one hand, Brexit and the rise of populist leaders have triggered a set of uncertainties about European integration and its international leadership (Luchian, 2018). As a result, the EU has become a more introspective bloc (Mori, 2018). On the other hand, despite the creation of CELAC, Latin American fragmentation has prevailed and deepened over the years (Gratius, 2017; Díaz Barrado, 2018). Therefore, a regional consensus remains an unachieved goal. In addition to these crises, the Covid-19 pandemic posed an unprecedented challenge that had negative economic, political and social repercussions not only in the EU and Latin America but throughout the world (Quevedo Flores, 2022).

Despite this adverse context, scholars highlight the importance of the biregional relationship and the need to strengthen it in the face of current challenges (Ruano, 2018; Serbin & Serbin Pont, 2018; Ayuso, 2021; Quevedo Flores, 2021). Some studies propose to revitalize the strategic partnership and rethink the guidelines that have sustained it during these decades by implementing new strategies and involving actors at different levels (Sanahuja & Ruiz, 2019; Haider & Clemente Batalla, 2020; Ayuso, 2021; Quevedo

Flores, 2022). In this regard, it should be noted that, in recent years, countries such as Hungary created their own unilateral initiatives to strengthen ties with Latin America regardless of their geographical and cultural distance from that region (Nagy, 2018). These efforts reflect how, despite the adverse context, Latin America is on the radar of some European countries.

In this sense, it is important to acknowledge the contribution of Hungarian scholars to the study of the relationship between the EU and Latin America. The work of István Szilágyi in this field is particularly outstanding. He analyzed the strategic partnership between these regions by examining its historical background (Szilágyi, 2011), its gradual institutionalization and the emergence of biregional summits (Szilágyi, 2014), the common values and shared challenges (Szilágyi, 2017), and the importance of subregional blocs and interregional actors (Szilágyi, 2020). Interregionalism between the EU and Latin America has also been studied by Bernadett Lehoczki, who examined in detail the historical evolution of biregional exchanges in the context of Latin America's experiences with interregionalism (Lehoczki, 2020). Another important contribution was the book "Regional and bilateral relations of the European Union" edited by Zoltán Gálik and Anna Molnár, which included two chapters on the EU-Latin American relationship. The first, written by Mónika Szente-Varga, delved into the bilateral and regional relations of the EU with Mexico, Central America and the Caribbean, providing a rich historical analysis based on the study of communication channels, financial links and institutionalized spaces for exchange. The other chapter was written by István Szilágyi and focused on the relations between the EU and South America in the broader context of the EU-Latin American ties, examining the foundations of the relationship, highlighting the role of the Ibero-American Community of Nations and describing the new topics in the biregional agenda.

In addition to reviewing the evolution of the academic debate, it is important to identify patterns that have emerged in the body of literature over time. First, one of the most recurrent themes when analyzing the EU-Latin America relationship is the awareness that there is a set of common values and shared views between the two regions. According to the literature, these values are mainly: support for democracy, respect for the rule of law, defense of Human Rights, interest in regional integration and strengthening of multilateralism (Crawley, 2000; Freres, 2000; Grabendorff, 2003, 2014; Sanahuja, 2011b; Van Klaveren, 2011; Ayala Castiblanco, 2022). For some scholars, the strong European inheritance and political influence in Latin America are key factors to consider in this

regard (Van Klaveren, 2004; Malamud, 2010; Bonilla & Ortíz, 2012; Sanahuja, 2014). Although the study of common values and shared views has played a secondary role in discussions of the biregional relationship, it remains a consistent pattern in the literature throughout the study period.

Another key topic when addressing the EU-Latin America relationship is the asymmetry between the two regions (Sanahuja, 2000; Grabendorff, 2003; Del Arenal, 2009; Malamud, 2010; Grabendorff, 2013; Domínguez, 2015; Szilágyi, 2020). First, the difference in the complexity level of integration processes of the EU and Latin America –now represented by CELAC– has turned their relationship into a dialogue between two completely different actors. As Domínguez (2015) points out, “the relationship between the European Union and Latin America is emblematic of the complexity of interregionalism between regions with distinct levels of regionness” (p. 13). For some scholars, this asymmetry has meant a passive, secondary role for Latin America when negotiating with the EU (Maihhold, 2010; Sanahuja, 2013; Domínguez, 2015; Gratius, 2017; Díaz Barrado, 2018). Second, there is a large gap in terms of economic development and social welfare between the two regions. Some experts consider this asymmetry as an obstacle to advance on a truly biregional partnership as it is perceived that the agenda is set by the EU while crucial issues for Latin America do not weigh heavily in the dialogue (Sanahuja, 2013; Gratius, 2017). For instance, key economic issues for Latin America –such as external debt, direct investment and reduction of European agricultural subsidies– have not received sufficient attention from the EU (Grabendorff, 2004).

This is closely related to another important pattern in the literature: the study of the interests of each region when creating the strategic partnership. Regarding European interests, scholars identified the need to consolidate the role of the EU as a major international actor and further develop its Common Foreign and Security Policy (Freres, 2000; Martin, 2001; Sanahuja, 2004; Domínguez, 2015). In this sense, the EU was interested in exporting its own integration model to other regions in order to be able to establish bloc-to-bloc negotiations with similar partners. In particular, Latin America was considered fertile ground for replicating the European integration process due to its historical willingness to create regional blocs, which generated high expectations about the development of integration processes in the region. Some authors argued that the EU intended to be an “external federator” of regionalism in Latin America (Freres & Sanahuja, 2005; Sanahuja, 2007). In addition, economic interests were also important for the EU, as

Latin America has been a key supplier of commodities and raw materials in the international trading system (Grisanti, 2004).

As for Latin American interests, the establishment of closer relations with major powers, such as the EU, has usually been linked to high expectations of greater economic growth and development. This pattern is present both in the academic literature and in official reports authored by institutions such as ECLAC. Thus, Latin America expected trade with and investments from the EU to boost economic development and improve the region's international insertion. Furthermore, the EU was expected to become an ally that could counterbalance US influence in Latin America (Briceño Ruíz, 2001; Grabendorff, 2003; Freres, 2004). It is important to highlight that development aid from the EU was also expected to increase. In this regard, some studies analyzed EU-Latin America cooperation projects and assessed their benefits and drawbacks in the short and medium term (Durán Lima, Herrera, Le Bret & Echeverría, 2014; Sanahuja, Tezano Vázquez, Kern & Perrotta, 2015; Díaz Barrado, 2018; Sanahuja & Ruíz Sandoval, 2019).

However, as some scholars have pointed out, many of these interests were not fully satisfied, which led to a sense of disappointment in the biregional relationship (Malamud, 2010; Van Klaveren, 2011; Bonilla & Ortíz, 2012; Ruano, 2017). On the European side, expectations about Latin American integration were not fulfilled due to the reluctance of Latin American countries to create a supranational entity to which they would transfer sovereign powers. Thus, European prospects of replicating its own model in the region remained unsatisfied (Grabendorff, 2004; Gratius, 2013). Moreover, due to the fragmentation of Latin America, the negotiation of trade agreements with the EU had to be handled at the subregional level and not all the cases have come to fruition. Over the years, these unfulfilled expectations weakened the EU's interest in the biregional relationship (Gratius, 2017).

In the case of Latin America, expectations of increased trade and investment have not been fully met either. On the one hand, when negotiating trade agreements with the EU, some Latin American countries were very critical of European protectionism in the agricultural sector and the EU's non-tariff restrictions, which made negotiations more difficult (Grabendorff, 2003; Malamud, 2010; Bonilla & Ruíz, 2012). On the other hand, the attractiveness of the region for European investors did not remain steady due to fears of possible legal instability (Grabendorff, 2004). In terms of cooperation, in 2014 the EU established a new classification of aid recipients that excluded some Latin American

countries due to their status as middle-income countries, which was heavily criticized by the governments of the region (Prado Lallande, 2014; Sanahuja, 2015; Ruano, 2017; Mori, 2018; Sanahuja & Ruíz Sandoval, 2019).

Dissatisfaction with the relationship is also reflected in concerns about the effectiveness of the main channel of dialogue, namely, the summits between the Heads of State and Government of the two regions. Scholars have argued that the multiplicity of meetings did not necessarily lead to concrete results (Freres, 2004; Leví Coral, 2007; Malamud, 2010; Maihold, 2010; Tovar, 2013; Ayuso & Gratius, 2016). In addition, Grabendorff (2003) pointed out the difficulty of reaching consensus within each region before attending these summits, mainly in the case of Latin America. Frequently, Latin American countries failed to establish a common position due to their divergence of interests and the lack of an institutionalized entity acting as a single interlocutor vis-à-vis the EU (Sanahuja, 2004; Van Klaveren, 2004; Freres & Sanahuja, 2005; Del Arenal, 2009). Although the creation of CELAC was intended to fulfill this role, this regional forum has not received sufficient support from its members.

Against this backdrop, this dissertation aims to assess the relevance of summits for the EU-Latin America relationship, analyzing their role in the development of biregional cooperation programs and determining whether the lack of summits from 2015 to 2023 implied stagnation in the development of cooperation programs. These questions emerged in consideration of the gap identified in the literature in terms of empirical studies that examine the impact of summitry on biregional cooperation and the practical consequences of the lack of summits on the EU-Latin America relationship.

In this sense, while recent studies have analyzed multiple challenges to the relationship, including the rise of intraregional crises and the consequences of the Covid-19 pandemic (e.g. Casanueva, 2020; Haider & Clemente Batalla, 2020; Ayuso, 2021; Quevedo, 2022), no research explores the impact of the absence of summits. Although there is an academic debate on the effectiveness of these meetings, the study of the lack of them has not been addressed in the literature. This type of analysis is necessary because it reveals how biregional cooperation evolves in the non-summits period, providing a contribution to the literature on the role of these high-level events. This dissertation aims to accomplish this task by examining and comparing the development of cooperation programs such as Eurosocial and Euroclima in the context of summits and non-summits periods.

4. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK: SUMMIT DIPLOMACY AND THE PRACTICE OF SUMMITRY

4.1 Evolution of the concept of summit diplomacy

Summitry is a controversial but irreversible development in modern diplomatic practice (Melissen, 2003). When in power, political leaders run into certain issues that must be handled jointly with peers at the international level. While negotiations can be conducted by mediators, personal meetings are important to strengthen relationships between leaders and promote joint solutions to common challenges. In recent years, political leaders have been increasingly involved in the performance of diplomatic roles on the international stage, including participation in bilateral and multilateral summits with their counterparts (Melissen, 2003, p. 1).

Historically, encounters between leaders date back to ancient times when the first societies needed to negotiate in order to coexist (Plischke, 1972). Furthermore, “the practice of sovereigns meeting to discuss their affairs is one which pre-dates the establishment of resident embassies in the fifteenth century” (Dunn, 1996, p. 3). However, modern summitry as an institutionalized phenomenon is a mid-twentieth-century development (Melissen, 2003). In fact, the study of summits gained special relevance after the Second World War as summitry became an established component of interstate relations (Jönsson and Hall, 2005). Some summits are considered major historical events such as the Yalta conference in February 1945, the Soviet-American summits in the 1970s–1980s, or Nixon’s trip to China in 1972, among others (Grosser, 2020).

The term was introduced by Winston Churchill in 1950 when he referred to meetings between the leaders of the great powers as “summits” (Dunn, 1996; Melissen, 2003). Initially, this term alluded only to encounters between high-level leaders to address international issues related primarily to wars. However, as the number and purpose of high-level meetings increased, some scholars argued that this definition should be broadened to include a diverse range of encounters (Dunn, 1996, p. 4). The gradual transformation of summit agendas is a result of the changing international system in which summitry has taken place. The growing interdependence between countries, the

multilateralization of international politics and the increasing complexity of global challenges have contributed significantly to this transformation.

Summit diplomacy and summitry as such have been conceptualized from different perspectives and their definition has evolved progressively over time. Elmer Plischke, one of the pioneers in the study of summits, described summit diplomacy as a practice “engaged in by political principals above the cabinet or ministerial rank, including the participation of chiefs of state, heads of government, a few others who qualify by virtue of their official positions” (1972, p. 323). Hence, for Plischke, the most important characteristic of summit diplomacy is that the diplomatic function is exercised at the “highest level”. According to this author, summit diplomacy involves not only joint conferences but also personal communications, state visits and other type of exchanges such as phone calls.

Professor David H. Dunn also reflected on the conceptualization of “summitry” and criticized Plischke’s approach to use the term of summit diplomacy to describe a set of diverse diplomatic practices, overstressing the definition. Dunn highlighted the exceptional character of the summits and how their formal and ceremonial dimension distinguishes them from other types of communications and diplomatic practices. According to Dunn (1996), summitry is “the meeting of political leaders for official purposes, an activity which constitutes diplomacy at the highest level” (p. 20). Dunn argued that this practice became more recurrent as certain technological developments appeared (e.g. air travel, telephonic communication), several democratization processes emerged and globalization flourished. Interestingly, the commonly accepted definition of summit diplomacy is closer to Dunn’s view: summit diplomacy is the personal meetings of heads of state or government—as contrasted with diplomacy at the ambassadorial or ministerial level (Plano & Olton, 1988). Yet, other authors suggest that “a universally accepted definition [of summitry] remains elusive” (Mace, Thérien, Tussie & Dabène, 2016, p. 2).

According to Richard Feinberg (2013), several drivers have made summits commonplace in modern diplomacy. First, populations prefer that the highest political authorities make the big decisions instead of “faceless bureaucrats”. Summits convey the idea that the leaders are exercising control over the unfolding events. Secondly, the interconnectedness of global issues demands an integral response from authorities with the broadest view that

can set priorities among the involved areas. Third, leaders aim to be perceived by their own populations as the decision-makers behind significant historical events. Finally, in the context of interdependence and multipolarity, states want to participate actively in global governance. These drivers have provided the conditions that encouraged the rise of foreign policy coordination at the level of presidents and prime ministers.

Geoff Berridge (2010) proposed a categorization of summits in three main types: serial summits, ad hoc summits and high-level exchanges of views. Each of them serves different purposes. Serial summits are more conducive to sustained negotiations as they occur at predetermined intervals and are likely to have clearer and more comprehensive rules of procedure. Ad hoc summits tend to attract more attention than serial summits and are summoned to deal with specific issues that must be resolved at once as there is no guarantee of a subsequent meeting. High-level exchanges of views are also ad hoc meetings but they have a lower profile: they have a miscellaneous agenda (if they have an agenda at all) and serve to nudge previous talks forward and even rescue those negotiations deadlocked on a particular point.

Meanwhile, Feinberg (2013) distinguished a specific form of summitry that emerged in the second half of the 20th century and he labels it as “institutionalized multilateral summitry”. According to Feinberg, this practice refers to official meetings of heads of state and government, attended by at least several leaders and generally many more that convene repeatedly, and that are underpinned by one or another form of institutionalized bureaucratic structure that facilitates preparation and continuity. Feinberg noted that multilateral summits exhibit varying degrees of institutionalization depending on several factors. He identified seven variables to measure the depth of summit institutionalization: mission statement (founding charters or treaties), meeting periodicity, control over agenda-setting, secretariats (intergovernmental bureaucracies), financial resources, ministerial forums and evaluation mechanisms (Feinberg, 2013).

Regarding the functions of summitry, several authors have provided their perspectives on the topic. Berridge (2010) identified five main functions that might be successfully advanced by summitry, namely “promoting friendly relations, clarifying intentions, information gathering, consular work and negotiation” (p. 167). Melissen (2003) proposed that summitry serves as: 1) an educational practice for leaders without international experience, 2) a space for private consultation between leaders, 3) a platform for pre-

negotiation of agreements, and 4) an opportunity to keep up momentum of ongoing talks. Meanwhile, Alice Pannier (2020) argued that summits “may send a diplomatic signal about the importance of a certain bilateral relationship, consolidate it, move matters forward that cannot be dealt with by embassies, and sign declarations and/or binding agreements” (p. 21). Finally, Mace et al. (2016) point out that summits also serve a function of legitimation of norms and practices.

Multiple advantages have been attributed to the practice of summitry. Plischke (1972) argues that summit diplomacy facilitates mutual understanding among nations, leads to speedier agreements and makes easier the solution of bilateral impasses. Meanwhile, Donald Cameron Watt (1963) analyzed summitry in the context of the Cold War and explained that the regular employment of summits is justified by four main arguments. The first is the need to use all the available diplomatic things to solve a conflict, which leads to the use of summits. The second refers to the idea that summits can serve to remove misunderstandings. The third states that only in meetings “at the summit” could the intentions of a country be tested. The fourth points out that it is crucial to negotiate at the level where decisions are taken.

According to Dunn (1996), the advantages of summits are mainly: 1) the opportunity for political leaders to get to know their peers and better gauge their conduct, 2) the possibility of overcoming the mutual distrust that exists between parties who are unfamiliar with each other, 3) the symbolic role of the summits to reinforce alliances or reestablish broken pacts, 4) the propaganda value of the summits for both the countries and the individuals concerned, 5) the opportunity for leaders to explain their policy positions to foreign counterparts and to be briefed in turn by the latter on the other party’s position, 6) the imposition of deadlines on a negotiation process, and 7) the possibility of elevating issues to the top of the international agenda and dealing with problems with a speed and authority lacking in the established diplomatic channels.

Meanwhile, Feinberg (2013) proposed that the meetings of heads of state and government bring potentially huge pay-offs such as providing the leaders the possibility to oversee the international agenda and interrelationships across issues and domains to best weigh priorities and seek to balance interests across competing goals. Deadlines set by summits can drive decisions, “compelling both national bureaucracies and international negotiators to resolve thorny issues” (p. 308). Moreover, summits encourage the commitment of

leaders to mobilizing resources to implement initiatives, provide a visible platform to educate the population about the realities and opportunities of international affairs, and are spaces to “promote convergence among the agendas and goals of other diffuse and disconnected multilateral venues” (p. 309).

However, several disadvantages have also been associated to summits. Plischke claimed that “it is difficult to assess accurately the importance of most summits, except with considerable hindsight” as there is a persistent “inability to perceive and evaluate direct benefits resulting from them, while indirect and subsidiary consequences often are less apparent or may seem to be unimportant” (Plischke, 1972, p. 335). Keith Eubank (1966) provided a pessimistic diagnosis of summits, arguing that meetings between heads of government do not necessarily lead to better or more efficient negotiations. Moreover, Eubank coincided with Plischke in highlighting that the summits usually have limited results. He argued that “summit conference[s] can never be a quick cheap cure for international ills whose treatment requires time, labor and thought” (Eubank, 1966, p. 209).

Melissen (2003) identified a state of crisis in the recent development of summit diplomacy due to multiple reasons. First, there has been an excessive proliferation of summits and many of them have not had clear outcomes. Therefore, there are significant doubts about the usefulness and pertinence of these meetings. Secondly, summitry imposes a heavy burden on diplomatic resources as the preparation and follow-up of meetings at the highest level are time-consuming for those in supporting roles. These processes also require significant financial resources which are hard to justify especially when facing times of austerity. Finally, many civil society organizations have become more involved in the summits since they have identified these meetings as a stage to promote their views. Therefore, dealing with these pressure groups and considering their demands in summits’ agendas is a new challenge for summitry nowadays.

Meanwhile, Dunn (1996) argued that the main disadvantages of summits are: 1) the danger that leaders will form judgments on insufficient or ideologically motivated grounds at summits, 2) the risk that the lack of diplomatic expertise of the leaders may impede the negotiation of an agreement or lead to a misunderstanding, 3) the potential of clashes of personality, 4) the possibility that mistaken political messages can be conveyed inadvertently during summits, and 5) the significant investment of time and energy that summits require. In this sense, Jönsson and Hall (2005) highlighted that, as the agenda of

national leaders is increasingly filled with engagements abroad, “their absence from the domestic political scene is often criticized and entails certain political risks” (p. 93). Meanwhile, Feinberg (2013) pointed out that summitry implies another set of risks, such as the prevalence of the personal agendas of the leaders over the common interests, the tension due to the leaders’ inherent nationalism, the dangers of failed expectations, and the risk of unrealistic commitments.

Against this background, an intense debate has arisen regarding the usefulness of summits based on their advantages and disadvantages. Plischke (1972) argues that the benefits outweigh the drawbacks as long as summits are organized in a measured and thoughtful way. He claimed that summit diplomacy is not the great solution for all the problems in the international system but it can be used frugally and “for limited, well-chosen purposes” (p. 344). Obinna CL (2018) contended that, despite its pitfalls, summit diplomacy has contributed immensely to promoting and stabilizing relations between nations and is a worthy and constructive practice in international relations. Dunn (1996) also expressed a favorable opinion about the usefulness of summits, arguing that “summitry, while not without its risks, can bestow considerable benefits if employed judiciously and with caution” (p. 265). He remarks that summitry has taken its place alongside the traditional channels of diplomatic discourse in a way that complements them.

On the other hand, skeptical assessments have also arisen in the literature. Melissen (2003) stated that it has proven difficult for the quality of summits to keep pace with their quantity, resulting in a decline in the summits’ credibility and usefulness. Watt (1963) argued that the risks derived from summit diplomacy outweigh its expected benefits, as “it is clearly highly hazardous, depending for its success on the fortunate constellation of a very much larger number of variables than most political techniques of bargaining and negotiation” (p. 502-503). Furthermore, Gardini and Malamud (2016) warned that the excess of summits may be prejudicial as “proliferation tends to decrease the marginal returns for all stakeholders of huge international assemblies” causing a “summit fatigue” (p. 11).

Finally, the practice of summitry is subject to diverse interpretations depending on the theoretical framework through which it is analyzed. Watt (1963) explained that according to the liberal-idealist view “conflicts between nations arise essentially from a failure in understanding, a failure in communication between the two sides” (p. 493). Therefore,

face-to-face contact between leaders is crucial to restore communication, repair the break and dispel mutual suspicions. On the contrary, the realist view holds that a summit is a very delicate matter as heads of states inexperienced in the nuances of international contact may create unnecessary confrontations and misunderstandings with other leaders. Hence, according to this perspective, diplomatic negotiations should be left to professional diplomats and personal meetings between leaders should be limited.

The study of summit diplomacy has revolved around debates on the definition, characteristics and functions of summitry, the advantages and disadvantages of this practice as well as their usefulness and prospects in international diplomacy. The relevance of this practice has been endorsed by several authors considering the role of collective action to face global challenges. However, criticisms of summits have also stood out as a recurring topic in the literature. In order to better understand the conceptualizations and approaches to summitry and summit diplomacy, as well as review common points and differences between them, Table N° 5 summarizes the main contributions of authors on this topic. Finally, it is important to note that summitry, and specifically summit diplomacy, remains undertheorized in the field of International Relations despite its growing recognition as an important practice (Ku, 2022).

Against this background, summit diplomacy should be examined in depth by analyzing case studies that provide empirical evidence of its trade-offs. This dissertation aims to shed light on this debate by examining summitry between the EU and Latin America and its role in the development of interregional cooperation programs. For the purposes of this research, summits are defined as personal meetings of heads of state or government, as opposed to diplomatic engagements at the ambassadorial or ministerial levels. This definition was chosen due to its clarity, conciseness, and accurate representation of the phenomenon as meetings at the highest level. Additionally, it aligns with the commonly accepted understanding within the field.

Table N° 5. Concepts and characteristics of summits and summit diplomacy classified by author

Author	Definition of summit	Advantages	Disadvantages	Functions	Usefulness and desirability
D. C. Watt (1963)	Summits are multilateral meetings between heads of government, usually from inimical countries (Cold War perspective).	From the liberal-idealist view, summits help to restore communication during conflicts, repair the break and dispel mutual suspicions.	From the realist view, inexperienced heads of government may create unnecessary confrontations and misunderstandings with other leaders.	Solve conflicts, remove misunderstandings, test intentions of other leaders, and facilitate decision-making.	The risks derived from summit diplomacy outweigh its expected benefits. Summits success depends on many variables with uncertain results.
K. Eubank (1966)	Summits are understood as meetings of heads of state.	Summits offer a unique forum for direct communication between world leaders, facilitating the resolution of conflicts, swift decision-making, and the building of trust and personal relationships.	Summits do not necessarily lead to better or more efficient negotiations. They usually have limited results.	Not specified.	Summit meetings are not a simple or cheap solution for international problems that need careful, long-term work and thinking.
E. Plischke (1972)	Diplomacy at the “summit” is diplomacy at the “highest level”, referring to the diplomatic function exercised by politicians above the cabinet and ministerial rank (i.e. chiefs of state, heads of government). Summit diplomacy involves not only meetings but also personal communications, state visits	Summits and summit diplomacy facilitate mutual understanding among nations, lead to speedier agreements and make easier the solution of bilateral impasses.	Summits usually have limited results. It is challenging to accurately assess the direct benefits of summits.	Not specified.	The benefits of summits outweigh their drawbacks as long as they are organized in a measured and thoughtful way. Summit diplomacy cannot solve all the problems but can be used frugally and “for

	and other type of exchanges such as phone calls.				limited, well-chosen purposes” (p. 344).
J. C. Plano & R. Olton (1988)	Personal diplomacy by heads of state and government, in contrast to diplomacy at the ambassadorial or ministerial level.	Summits “may establish broad areas of agreement” and “may break deadlocks at lower levels”. They “improve the climate of relations between states” (p. 245).	In some cases, summits may be too expeditious because leaders lack a fallback authority for further reflection, they are often not seasoned diplomats, and the nature of their negotiations can lead to riskier failures.	Not specified.	Summit diplomacy as a mechanism for the conduct of international relations “has inherently no greater potential for success than other kinds of diplomacy” (p. 245).
D. H. Dunn (1996)	Summitry is “the meeting of political leaders for official purposes, an activity which constitutes diplomacy at the highest level” (p. 20).	Summits are beneficial because 1) politicians can understand peers and their behavior better, 2) summits help to overcome mutual distrust between unfamiliar parties, 3) they strengthen alliances or restore broken pacts, 4) they provide propaganda value for countries involved, 5) leaders can explain policies and learn about foreign counterparts’ positions, 6) summits set deadlines for negotiation, 7) they	The disadvantages of summits are: 1) leaders may make biased judgments at summits, 2) leaders’ lack of diplomatic expertise can hinder agreements or cause misunderstandings, 3) personal clashes among leaders are possible, 4) political messages can be unintentionally miscommunicated, 5) summits demand a substantial time and energy investment.	Information-gathering, agenda-setting, exerting leadership and conflict-mediation, sign agreements, establishment of dialogues.	“Summitry, while not without its risks, can bestow considerable benefits if employed judiciously and with caution” (p. 265).

		raise issues to the top of international agenda and enable quick action.			
J. Melissen (2003)	Meetings between leaders at the highest level.	Summit advantages include: fostering relationships between leaders, streamlining agreement processes, and maintaining negotiation momentum.	Summit disadvantages include: difficult to reach clear outcomes, strain on diplomatic resources, high financial costs, and pressure from interest groups.	Summits serve as: 1) a learning opportunity for inexperienced leaders, 2) a venue for private consultations, 3) a platform for pre-negotiating agreements, and 4) a way to maintain momentum in talks.	The increasing frequency of summits has made it challenging to maintain their quality, leading to a decline in their credibility and effectiveness.
C. Jönsson & M. Hall (2005)	“International meetings at the highest levels of government involving direct communication between political leaders” (p. 92).	Not specified.	Diplomatic inexperience of politicians, domestic political risks, strain on diplomatic resources, intensive follow-up, and high economic costs.	Not specified.	The disadvantages of summits outweigh their unclear benefits.
G. R. Berridge (2010)	Multilateral diplomacy at the highest level of political authority.	Enormous symbolic potential, international visibility of leaders and achievement of diplomatic purposes. Other advantages depend on the type of summit.	Inexperience of political leaders in diplomatic matters, vulnerability of agreements to changes in leadership, and high logistical costs.	The main functions of summitry are “promoting friendly relations, clarifying intentions, information gathering, consular work and negotiation” (p. 167).	Judiciously employed and carefully prepared, summits are valuable to achieve diplomatic purposes.
R. Feinberg (2013)	Gatherings at the maximum level of political authority, meetings among leaders at	Advantages of summits include: 1) strategic agenda	Summitry risks include: personal agendas	Not specified.	Overlapping summit agendas raise “summit fatigue”

	the apex of state power.	oversight, 2) decision-driving deadlines, 3) resource mobilization commitment, 4) public education on international affairs, and 5) alignment of multilateral agendas.	overshadowing common interests, nationalist tensions, unmet expectations, and unrealistic commitments.		concerns. “More could be done to maximize the value added by the universe of summits” (p. 316).
G. Mace, J. P. Thérien, D. Tussie & O. Dabène (2016)	A universally accepted definition of summitry remains elusive.	Summits serve to shape agendas, facilitate policy formulation, foster socialization of politicians, and legitimate government leaders and their policies.	Summit drawbacks include: overloaded leaders’ agendas, pressure on diplomatic and bureaucratic resources, possible neglect of national affairs management due to the focus on the international agenda, and lack of leaders’ preparation or expertise.	The functions of summitry are: dialogue and socialization, agenda-setting, negotiation and coordination, and legitimation of norms and practices.	“There is a direct relationship between the degree of institutionalization of summits and their utility. The more summitry is institutionalized, the more likely it is to fulfill its objectives and produce concrete outcomes” (p. 3).
C. L. Obinna (2018)	Summits are meetings of political leaders at the highest level, regardless of frequency, to negotiate pressing issues.	Summits foster personal relations among leaders, promote harmonious international relations, promote agenda setting, and enhance understanding among high-level leadership.	Summits may result in inconvenient deals due to time pressure to negotiate, pose risks to leaders’ well-being, and entail high economic costs.	Not specified.	“Summit diplomacy, despite its pitfalls, is a worthy and constructive means of diplomacy” (p. 1).

Source: Own elaboration based on the books and articles of the listed authors

4.2 The practice of summitry at the regional level

Regions have increasingly turned to summits as a means of addressing shared challenges and fostering cooperation. Regional summits bring together heads of state, government officials, and key stakeholders to deliberate on issues ranging from economic integration and security cooperation to environmental sustainability and social development. The institutionalization of regional summitry reflects a recognition of the interconnected nature of many contemporary problems, which transcend national borders and require collaborative solutions (Mace et al., 2016). Such summits not only facilitate dialogue and negotiation but also serve as platforms for establishing norms, setting agendas, and forging agreements that shape regional governance.

Regarding the practice of summitry in Europe, one of the most important precedents is the Congress of Vienna in 1815 –a landmark diplomatic gathering to restore the European order and stability after the Napoleonic Wars. This congress brought together the major powers of the time to negotiate and reshape the political landscape of the continent, establishing a framework for multilateral diplomacy. Throughout the 19th century, other important summits followed, such as the Congress of Paris in 1856, which addressed the Crimean War and further entrenched the practice of diplomatic meetings. These early summits laid the groundwork for more structured and frequent diplomatic engagements in Europe, paving the way for the complex system of regional governance that would develop in the 20th century.

Summits became a central mechanism for fostering cooperation and integration in Europe in the aftermath of World War II. The Congress of Europe in 1948 marked a significant effort to promote unity and peace, leading to the establishment of the Council of Europe (Dunn, 1996). The formation of the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC) in 1951 institutionalized regular high-level meetings among member states, setting the stage for deeper economic and political integration. This momentum culminated in the creation of the European Council in 1974, which formalized the practice of summits among heads of state or government to guide the European integration process.

Since the creation of the EU in 1993, summits have been an integral part of its functioning, providing a platform for high-level decision-making and policy coordination among member states. The European Council has convened regularly to address key issues and shared challenges of the countries of the EU. These summits have been instrumental in

advancing European integration, facilitating the adoption of agreements such as the Maastricht Treaty in 1992 and the Lisbon Treaty in 2007. Additionally, the EU summits have played a pivotal role in responding to significant challenges such as the financial crisis of 2008 and the migration crisis of 2015.

Regarding the practice of summitry in the Americas, meetings at the highest level have also been a key mechanism for cooperation and diplomatic engagement in this region. Beginning with the Pan-American Conferences from 1889, these gatherings brought together leaders to discuss issues of mutual concern, including security, economic development, and democracy. The creation of organizations such as the Organization of American States (OAS) in 1948 institutionalized summitry in the region, providing a platform for regular high-level meetings among member states. Particularly, the Summits of the Americas became a key forum focused on democracy, trade and social development.

Furthermore, the emergence of new regional mechanisms in Latin America in the 2000s, such as UNASUR and CELAC, created the need for more summits dedicated to discussing key issues exclusively among Latin American countries, without the involvement of external actors. In this sense, summits in this period reflected Latin America's growing assertiveness on the global stage and its efforts to promote collective action and solidarity within the region (Mace et al., 2016). These meetings provided a platform for Latin American nations to address regional challenges more autonomously, fostering a sense of regional identity and independence in their diplomatic engagements.

Finally, it is important to highlight that both Europe and Latin America have been active actors in international forums and summits, significantly shaping international policies and agreements. These regions have demonstrated a strong commitment to multilateralism and global cooperation (Ayala Castiblanco, 2022). In this regard, they have actively engaged in summits at forums such as the United Nations and the G20, and led efforts in specific topics like environmental sustainability at global instances such as the Paris Agreement. Their participation in these meetings underscores the importance of regional perspectives in shaping global policies and achieving collective goals.

5. RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

5.1 Research traditions and methodological choice

Studies on interregionalism have been conducted by using data collection methods such as participant observation (e.g. Gardini & Malamud, 2016), interviews with diplomats, stakeholders and scholars (e.g. Costa & Dri, 2014; Allison, 2015; Gardini & Malamud, 2016; Kotsopoulos & Goerg, 2018), review of primary and secondary documents (e.g. Kotsopoulos & Goerg, 2018; Ruíz Valverde, 2018), and surveys (e.g. Allison, 2015). As for the research approaches, case study is the most common strategy to conduct research on interregionalism since it leads to an in-depth inquiry into a topic or phenomenon within its real-life setting.

With respect to research exploring the relationship between the EU and Latin America, most of the studies are based on the analysis of primary and secondary documents (e.g. Martín, 2002; Lozano Arredondo & Velázquez Castillo, 2004; Torrent & Francia, 2005; Quevedo Flores, 2007; Roy & Dominguez, 2007; Ayuso & Foglia, 2010; Ripoll Navarro, 2012; Mori, 2018; Bouzas, 2019; Sanahuja & Ruíz Sandoval, 2019; González Sarro, 2020; Tvevad, 2020), interviews with diplomats, government officials and scholars (e.g. Grisanti, 2004; Freres & Sanahuja, 2005; Hernández & Sandel, 2013; Domínguez, 2015; Icaza, 2015; Sanahuja, 2015; Sanahuja, Tezano Vázquez, Kern & Perrotta, 2015; Serbin & Serbin Pont, 2018; Fernández Martínez & Haider, 2020), descriptive and inferential statistics (e.g. ECLAC, 1999, 2012, 2018; Grisanti, 2004; Consortium DRN-ADE-ECO-NCG, 2005; Gratius, 2013; Durán Lima, Herrera, Le Bret & Echeverría, 2014; Prado Lallande, 2014; Bartesaghi, De María & Melgar, 2021), and participant observation (e.g. Icaza, 2015).

Considering these research traditions and the specific research questions addressed in this dissertation, data for this study was collected from interviews and primary documents (summit declarations, action plans and institutional reports). On the one hand, interviews were conducted with people working in the selected cooperation programs in order to obtain first-hand information and gain a deeper understanding about 1) the importance of summits in the functioning of these programs and 2) the development of the programs during the summits and non-summits periods. As noted by Allison (2015), interviews provide “the insight, depth and contemporaneity that cannot be obtained from other

sources” (p. 10). Interviews have been employed as a data collection method in studies addressing interregional relationships such as the EU - ASEAN partnership (Allison, 2015), the North America - Sub-Saharan African linkages (Kotsopoulos & Goerg, 2018) and several interregional relations involving the EU (Costa & Dri, 2014). Gardini’s and Malamud’s work (2016) stands out for the use of interviews to study the relationship between the EU and Latin America. In this dissertation, interviews provide an individual-level perspective composing a set of parts that contribute to a greater whole since broader views, interpretations and patterns are obtained from aggregating and analyzing the interviews responses.

On the other hand, primary documents are essential in research as they offer original information that remains unaltered by external parties, thus minimizing the potential for bias or misinformation. Methodologically speaking, all types of text contain information that could be treated as a form of data. When processed into a structured form, the textual record provides a rich source of data to fuel the study of politics and international relations (Benoit, 2020). This dissertation analyses three types of primary documents: 1) summit declarations, 2) action plans and 3) institutional reports. Summit declarations and action plans are examined to understand the objectives and guidelines provided by summits for the development of cooperation programs. This analysis brings to light how summits relate to cooperation programs, what kind of guidelines are provided in the summits, and what are the intended objectives of these guidelines. Meanwhile, institutional reports are examined to identify the incorporation of these guidelines in the functioning of cooperation programs, recognizing differences and similarities between them. The examination of these reports provides inputs for the analysis of the cooperation programs during summits and non-summits periods, allowing for their comparison. A detailed explanation of how interviews and primary documents were applied in this research is provided in section 5.4. on data collection and analysis methods.

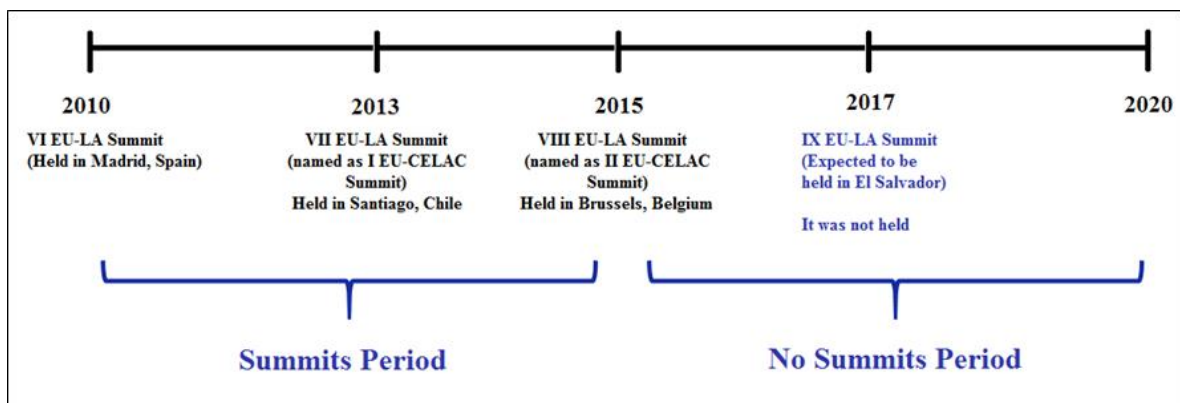
5.2 Time framework

Although summits between the EU and Latin America started in 1999, this research focuses on a more recent timeframe: from 2010 to 2020. The year 2010 was selected as the starting point of the study for two main reasons. Firstly, the biregional summit held in Madrid in 2010 marked the relaunch of the strategic partnership, meaning a new era in the biregional relationship. Secondly, this change resulted in the introduction of action plans,

which are documents featuring concrete actions and expected results that the EU and Latin American leaders target in certain work areas. These documents are crucial for the research as they, in conjunction with summits declarations, portray the outcomes of the summits in terms of biregional cooperation, facilitating the monitoring of provided guidelines on cooperation programs.

The temporal delimitation of this research serves the purpose of comparing two consecutive five-year periods: from 2010 to 2015, denominated as the “summits period”, and from 2016 to 2020, referred to as the “non-summits period” (see figure below). 2015 marked the end of the “summits period” because it was the year when the last EU-Latin American summit was held (an event that would not be resumed until 2023). The comparison between these two periods intends to reveal the changes and continuities in the development of cooperation programs, aiming to understand the role of summits in this process. Thus, this comparison ultimately serves the purpose of answering the research questions of this dissertation.

Diagram N° 3. Time framework of the research



Source: Own elaboration

5.3 Case study selection

In order to provide answers to the research questions raised in this dissertation, a case study approach is applied. This approach refers to the intensive study of a specific case (or cases) for the purpose of understanding a larger group of units (Gerring, 2004). In particular, this dissertation applies a paired comparison. As Tarrow (2010) pointed out, paired comparison is a method of analysis distinct from both single-case studies and multi-case analysis, most often associated with qualitative approaches, but compatible with a

variety of specific methods. The use of paired comparison entails assessing the impact of a single variable on outcomes of interest in two cases while examining how common mechanisms are influenced by the particular features of each case. According to Tarrow (2010), paired comparison offers “a balanced combination of descriptive depth and analytical challenge that progressively declines as more cases are added” (p. 246).

However, it is essential to acknowledge its limitations, especially the assumption that observable variables in the case studies will exhaust all the possible causes of an outcome, as well as the challenges in generalization and the representativeness of the results (Tarrow, 2010). As Gerring (2004) points out, the tradeoff between comparability across all the cases and the representativeness of those selected is a general feature of this approach. Despite the limitations, case studies provide a deep analysis of complex, multifaceted phenomena, uncovering context-specific insights and nuances that other approaches might miss. As Tarrow (2010) explains, while individual case studies produce multiple observations, the paired comparison provides doubly useful ones.

The case selection for the paired comparison conducted in this dissertation implied choosing two cases among the existent cooperation programs between the EU and Latin America. The pool of cases included ten thematic programs introduced in section 2.3., namely, AL-Invest, ALFA, Urb-AL, Eurosolar, @LIS, Eurosocial, Euroclima, Copolad, El PAcCTO, and BELLA. The following table summarizes their topic and timeframe.

Table N° 6. Pool of cases

Thematic Cooperation Program	Topic	Timeframe
AL-Invest	Support to MSMEs, green transition and innovation	1994-present
ALFA	Higher education	1994-2015
Urb-AL	Urban development	1996-2013
Eurosolar	Renewable energy	2007-2013
@LIS	Information society and interconnectivity	2008-2014
Eurosocial	Social cohesion and reduction of inequality	2005-present
Euroclima	Climate change and environmental sustainability	2010-present
Copolad	Drug policies	2010-present

El PAcCTO	Fight against organized crime	2017-present
BELLA	Digital ecosystem and interconnectivity	2016-present

Source: Own elaboration based on websites of the cooperation programs

The time framework of this research limited the case selection because, among these ten programs, only four were active during the entire study period (from 2010 to 2020), namely, AL-Invest, Eurosocietal, Euroclima, and Copolad. Considering the paired comparison method employed in this dissertation, it was necessary to select only two case studies from these four options. Eurosocietal and Euroclima were the selected cases. These two programs were considered the most suitable to analyze for several reasons.

In terms of significance, Eurosocietal and Euroclima focus on issues in which the EU is the most important partner for Latin America. On the one hand, the EU stands out from other cooperation partners by its commitment to addressing a pressing need in Latin America, namely social inclusion and cohesion. This approach contrasts with that of other actors like the US, which tends to prioritize areas such as military assistance when cooperating with Latin American countries. On the other hand, the EU and Latin America are strategic allies in the environmental sector on the basis of Latin America's relevance in biodiversity preservation and the EU's leading role in green transition and environmental policies. Their commitment to this issue was reflected in their pivotal role in promoting the Paris Agreement in 2015 (Edwards, 2018; ECLAC, 2018). Finally, Europe has been, in many ways, an example for Latin America when it comes to social cohesion and sustainable development. As the EU has served as a role model in these areas, it has been crucial for Latin America to receive its support. Furthermore, cooperation in these two topics reflects the priorities signaled by the summits since the very beginning of the biregional partnership, which was reflected in the summits declarations.

In terms of methodology, Eurosocietal and Euroclima constitute a fitting comparison in several respects. Firstly, these cooperation programs were launched in different years (Eurosocietal was created in 2005 and Euroclima in 2010) which allows to compare two different cases in terms of length, revealing how older and newer cooperation programs perform. Second, the traceability of these programs over time is more feasible as the access and availability of information is better compared to other programs. This increases the chances of obtaining more meaningful findings. Finally, both Eurosocietal and Euroclima belong to the so-called "flagship" cooperation programs between the EU and Latin

America, meaning that they stand as the most representative and serve as a guiding example for other programs. As mentioned in section 2.3., Eurosocioal “contributes to reducing inequality, improving levels of social cohesion and strengthening the institutions in Latin America” (Eurosocioal, 2022), while Euroclima aims to “reduce the impact of climate change and its effects in Latin America by fostering climate mitigation, adaptation, resilience and investment” (Euroclima, 2022).

On the other hand, it is important to mention the reasons why AL-Invest and Copolad were excluded from consideration as suitable case studies to analyze in this dissertation. AL-Invest was disregarded because its mission underwent significant changes over the years, making it challenging to compare its activities consistently. The program’s focus shifted from investment attraction to support for MSMEs and later to green transition and innovation. In contrast, Copolad’s mission remained consistent. However, the availability of information on Copolad is significantly lower compared to other cooperation programs, posing a challenge for comprehensive research due to insufficient data for analysis. Additionally, the topics addressed by AL-Invest and Copolad have received less attention in the EU-Latin America relationship than those addressed by Eurosocioal and Euroclima.

As Tarrow (2010) argues, paired comparison is methodologically rich and diverse. It gains analytical leverage from a variety of methods that allow analysts to approach the research questions from different angles (Tarrow, 2004). Following this line, this dissertation includes a set of different research methods in order to provide a comprehensive understanding of the cooperation programs’ performance during the summits and non-summits periods. Furthermore, as Patton (2002) points out, well-structured case studies should be holistic and context-sensitive. This research aimed to achieve a holistic approach by incorporating a variety of data collection and analysis methods, providing a set of pieces of information from which a complete panorama of the selected case studies is presented.

5.4 Data collection and analysis

In consideration of the research question and the multidimensionality of the topic, a multi-method qualitative study was implemented. This type of study refers to a combination in which more than one data collection technique is used with associated analysis techniques, but restricted within qualitative world view (Tashakkori & Teddlie as cited by Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2016). The multi-method qualitative study in this research was

conducted by processing interviews and primary documents in a three-phase process of data collection and analysis. The combination of these data sources increased the reliability of the research by enabling triangulation (cross-verifying information from different angles) and provides a more comprehensive understanding of the case studies.

The first phase of this process entailed the conduction of interviews with staff of Eurosocio and Euroclima. Interviews were chosen as a data collection tool because, as mentioned above, they provide first-hand information not obtainable through other means, allowing for an in-depth understanding of the functioning and evolution of these cooperation programs over the years. The selection of interviewees followed the purposeful sampling approach, meaning that they were selected due to their position and role in Eurosocio and Euroclima (details regarding the profiles of the interviewees are provided in Appendix N° 1). Access to the participants was achieved through institutional emails available to the public at the website of the cooperation programs. The snowball sampling approach was also applied since the interviewees recommended other people who could provide more information on the analyzed topics.

The total number of interviews was ten. Five interviews were conducted with members of Eurosocio and five with members of Euroclima. Seven interviewees hold middle management positions and three are members of the directorate-general of the programs. Three of the interviewees no longer work in the programs but were working there during the period examined in this dissertation. The interviews were conducted through virtual platforms such as Zoom and Teams and were approximately 30 to 50 minutes in length. A predetermined list of questions was asked of all respondents to facilitate comparative data analysis and elicit qualitative data responses (the list of questions is available in Appendix N° 2). Yet, the interviews were semi-structured, meaning that other questions were raised following the course of the conversation. The researcher aimed at giving freedom to the interviewees to add topics that would provide further information aligned with the purpose of the research.

Recording interviews was desired but not all the participants were willing to be recorded. When the participants did not allow it, answers were registered by note-taking. The interviews were conducted mostly in Spanish (with a couple of exceptions) since this is the mother tongue of the participants that work in these cooperation programs (most of them are from Spain and Latin America). In fact, this is a revealing signal of the central role of

Spain in the functioning of these cooperation programs. The answers and results of the interviews were translated in English by the researcher.

The transcriptions and notes of the interviews were processed by using thematic analysis, which is a qualitative analysis method that entails searching across a data set to identify, analyze and report repeated patterns (Braun and Clarke, 2006). In this type of analysis, themes are “are essentially recurring motifs in the text” and emerge as “the product of a thorough reading and rereading of the transcripts or field notes that make up the data” (Bryman, 2012, p. 579). Repetition is one of the most common criteria for establishing that a pattern within the data deserves to be considered a theme. However, a theme must also be relevant for answering the research question and connected to the focus of the research (Bryman, 2012). Thematic analysis was chosen over other options because of the flexibility of the coding structure, which avoids prescriptive procedures that do not match with the particularities of the research.

This method implied the creation of a codebook according to which the collected data was assessed and classified in specific themes and subthemes (see Appendix N° 3). Reflexive thematic analysis with an inductive approach was followed, thus the codes and themes emerged directly from the analyzed data. This approach provides high flexibility, enabling researchers to modify, delete or introduce codes during the data examination process (Braun & Clarke, 2019). It often entails repetitive and reflective cycles of coding, aiming to refine the codebook according to the most meaningful insights from the data. This process was conducted by hand coding, which means that no qualitative computer software program was employed, allowing for a deeper contact and familiarization of the researcher with the data. The answers of the interviewees were categorized and scrutinized to identify their similarities and differences. The researcher examined how the responses were related to each other and what conclusions could be inferred from these relationships. The aim of this phase was to understand, from an insider perspective, the development of the cooperation programs during both the summits and non-summits periods and the role of the summit diplomacy in the functioning of these programs. At the end of this phase, one of the most important results was that the summits provided guidelines that helped shape operational aspects of cooperation programs. Building upon this finding, the next phase aimed to identify what were the specific guidelines provided by the summits and what were their characteristics.

Thus, the second phase of the methodological process entailed the collection of the declarations and action plans that resulted from the summits held during the study period, namely

- VI EU-Latin American Summit: Held in Madrid, Spain (May 17-20, 2010)
- VII EU- Latin American Summit (named I EU-CELAC Summit): Held in Santiago, Chile (Jan 26-27, 2013)
- VIII EU- Latin American Summit (named II EU-CELAC Summit): Held in Brussels, Belgium (Jun 10-11, 2015)

The summit declarations and action plans were also examined by using thematic analysis. As the findings of the interviews underscored the significance of summits in offering guidelines to Eurosocial and Euroclima, the document analysis in this phase focused on identifying and characterizing the specific guidelines furnished by summits to these cooperation programs. Therefore, following the steps of thematic analysis, the documents were examined in detail to identify specific key themes (guidelines in this case) and classify them according to particular categories. In this sense, a codebook was created and the main patterns in the text were categorized according to the codes (see Appendix N° 4).

According to the Oxford English Dictionary, a guideline is defined as “a rule, principle, or general statement which may be regarded as a guide to procedure”. Meanwhile, the Cambridge Dictionary defines a guideline as “information intended to advise people on how something should be done or what something should be”. Considering these definitions, this section of the analysis aimed to identify guidelines on social cohesion and environmental sustainability (the work areas of Eurosocial and Euroclima respectively) within the text of summits declarations and action plans from 2010 to 2015. By identifying these guidelines the researcher was able to assess their scope and determine the type of orientations they provided to the cooperation programs.

The third and last phase of the process was the collection and analysis of the institutional reports from Eurosocial and Euroclima. To this end, the researcher conducted an exhaustive search of official documents in the websites of these cooperation programs, looking for documents published between 2010 and 2020 (the period selected for the purpose of this study). The documents were classified according to their type and content. Among the found documents there were: technical studies, working papers, institutional reports, promotional brochures and newsletters. The researcher reviewed all of them and

selected those that presented information about the functioning of the cooperation programs. Institutional reports were the documents that presented this type of information.

In the case of Eurosocioal, the institutional reports correspond to the lines of action of the program. In the summits period, Eurosocioal had ten areas of work, divided into fourteen lines of action (on Eurosocioal's structure, see Section 6.1.2). Seventeen documents from this period were analyzed, as some lines of action had more than one document. In the non-summits period, Eurosocioal had three areas of work and thirteen lines of action. Twelve documents from this period were analyzed, as one of the lines of action did not have its corresponding institutional report. In the case of Euroclima, its structure is different than Eurosocioal and, besides, its institutional reports were not divided according to the lines of action or thematic sectors. Instead, Euroclima published periodical institutional reports corresponding to the phases of the program and the general results. Therefore, there were fewer documents to analyze. One document presented the results of the first phase (2010-2013), another document introduced the results of the second phase (2014-2016) and four annual institutional reports were published from 2017 to 2020. In total, six documents of Euroclima were analyzed. Summing up the institutional reports of Eurosocioal and Euroclima, thirty five documents were analyzed in this phase of the research.

The researcher processed these institutional reports through thematic analysis and, as a continuation of the previous stage, the aim of this phase was to identify whether the guidelines provided by the summits declarations and action plans were reflected in the institutional reports of Eurosocioal and Euroclima, looking for possible common patterns in the documents published during both the summits and non-summits periods. This phase identified changes and continuities in the non-summits period compared to the summits period, assessing whether the same guidelines were maintained in both periods, and if not, what kind of guidelines were followed.

In sum, the proposed methodology used the case studies of Eurosocioal and Euroclima to answer the research questions through a three-phase process as follows: 1) the analysis of interviews provided an insider's view on the functioning of these cooperation programs during the summits and non-summits periods and revealed the role of summits as providers of guidelines, 2) the analysis of summit declarations and action plans portrayed the connection between the summits and the cooperation programs, and presented the specific guidelines provided by the summits, and 3) the analysis of institutional reports examined

how the summit-driven guidelines were reflected in the functioning of the cooperation programs, whether there were common patterns during both the summits and non-summits periods, and what changes emerged over time.

5.5 Research reliability, validity and ethical considerations

When conducting research, aspects such as the reliability, validity and ethical considerations must be taken into account in order to ensure the quality, integrity, and responsible conduct of the research process. On the one hand, research reliability refers to the consistency of the causal mechanism that the researcher is seeking to analyze and the degree to which the findings are really independent of accidental circumstances of the research (Kirk and Miller, 1986, as cited in Patton, 2015). In the case of this dissertation, the researcher hypothesized that there may be a connection between the absence of summits and the performance of cooperation programs. The existence of a relationship between these two variables is tested in this research. To increase the reliability, the researcher assessed the connection between these variables by applying a set of different data collection techniques and analysis procedures. Moreover, the researcher employed a validation process, which sought to corroborate the findings from each data collection phase by comparing them to the results obtained in the subsequent research phases. This process aimed to either confirm or refute the connection between the summitry exercise and the performance of the selected biregional cooperation programs. The researcher combined multiple types of data, collection methods and techniques –qualitative data from interviews, summit declarations, action plans and institutional reports– in order to increase the consistency and reliability of the results. According to Creswell & Creswell (2018), the use of multiple approaches “enhance the researcher’s ability to assess the accuracy of findings as well as convince readers of that accuracy” (p. 274).

On the other hand, research validity refers to the degree to which the findings are interpreted in a correct way (Kirk and Miller, 1986, as cited in Patton, 2015) and how truthful the research results are (Joppe, 2000, as cited in Golafshani, 2003). In this regard, the researcher is aware of the existence of several factors that could potentially jeopardize the validity of the results of this dissertation. One of them is the researcher’s own subjective perspective. This phenomenon is called reflexivity and highlights the role of the researcher in the research and how his or her own view affects the results of the research (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

Certainly, the researcher may be affected by multiple factors altering his or her perception of the research object. In this case, the researcher was aware of this limitation and tried to minimize the possibility of committing mistakes that could lead to an error in the research by following a very rigorous process. The researcher was committed to critically reviewing the narrative developed throughout the research and continually confronted it with alternative proposals to avoid the confirmation bias that may arise throughout the process. Moreover, the researcher asked for feedback from other colleagues and her supervisors when advancing in the research process to identify biases and diminish them. To this end, the researcher participated in several international conferences during the whole research process to share her hypotheses and the preliminary results with other researchers and scholars aiming to receive their feedback.

In the case of data collection from primary sources such as interviews, the research validity may also be affected by participant bias, meaning that the responses of the interviewees are influenced by their own biased perceptions and opinions. Yet, that is a natural condition of human beings and a typical phenomenon when conducting interviews. To counteract the effect of participant bias, the researcher selected interviewees in different positions and areas of the cooperation programs to get a complete and less biased picture of the possible effects of the lack of summits in these programs.

Finally, in terms of ethical considerations, every qualitative research must involve moral and responsible conduct aiming to hold researchers accountable for their actions and decisions, especially when the research involves the participation of human beings. In the case of this dissertation, as several interviews were conducted, a set of specific considerations had to be taken into account. In this regard, interviewees were duly informed of the purposes and scope of the research. The participants filled an informed consent form following the standards of the European Union's 2016 General Data Protection Regulation (EU GDPR). The informed consent form provided details on the implications of the research, the rights of the participant and the duties of the researcher when analyzing collected data.

Anonymity was guaranteed to protect the privacy of those who voluntarily agreed to participate in this research. The participants felt more comfortable knowing that the researcher would not reveal their identity, which allowed them to provide more

information that enriched the research findings. In this sense, Coffelt (2017) pointed out that

To keep participants safe from harm, embarrassment, or repercussions from employers, for example, informants may feel secure with assurances of anonymity or confidentiality in order to provide their experiences to researchers. Researchers, therefore, have the ethical responsibility to ensure that the individuals who participate in research are not connected to the study or identifiable by name, address, or birthdate, etc. (p. 228)

Furthermore, since the interviews were semi-structured, participants had the possibility to include topics that they considered relevant to mention according to their opinion and they were not restricted to follow only the asked questions.

5.6 Limitations of the methodology

The conduction of this particular methodology implied a set of limitations. Firstly, documentary research presented several challenges throughout this study. One of the primary difficulties revolved around limited access to documents associated with the activities of Eurosocial and Euroclima. For example, in the case of the institutional reports from the earlier years, it was very difficult to find them as the websites were outdated and some links did not function. Moreover, some of the available reports contained references pointing to internal documents that were not accessible to the public, creating a barrier to deeper research. Furthermore, analyzing the reports posed its own set of obstacles, as many of them lacked specific and quantifiable data, offering only general information and large descriptions of the activities of the cooperation programs. This limitation added a layer of complexity to the research process as the absence of detailed data hindered the possibility of drawing concrete conclusions on the performance of the programs.

Regarding the interviews, some difficulties also emerged. The primary mode of communication with prospective interviewees was via email. Thirty individuals working in Eurosocial and Euroclima were contacted by the researcher. However, only ten persons were willing to participate in the study, resulting in a smaller pool of interviews than initially anticipated. Despite employing the snowball effect technique to expand the network of interviewees, many potential participants did not engage with the researcher's communications, thereby limiting the depth and breadth of the available data for the study.

Fortunately, those who agreed to participate in the study hold pivotal positions in Eurosocial and Euroclima and their valuable contributions provided crucial insights to understand the impact of the lack of summits on these cooperation programs.

6. CASE STUDIES

6.1 Eurosocal: Interregional cooperation program on social cohesion

6.1.1 Context and Background: Importance of social cohesion for the EU and Latin America

Inequality and social exclusion have deepened exponentially in recent decades due to several reasons. Some scholars argue that the globalization process did not equally favor societies as a whole, nor did all countries have the same capacity to benefit from it (Alderson & Nielsen, 1999; Bourguignon, 2015; Kentor, 2001; Reuveny & Li, 2003). Other authors posit that unfavorable income changes and rising inequality are not entirely attributable to dynamics such as international trade or offshoring but rather to a variety of factors (Bussmann, De Soysa & Oneal, 2005; Firebaugh, 2003; Helpman, 2018; Lindert & Williamson, 2003). In this sense, one of the most important drivers of inequality identified in the literature is the mismanagement of national governments, as it has significantly contributed to an unequal distribution of wealth in society (Milanovic, 2005; Neckerman & Torche, 2007; Pontusson, Rueda & Way, 2002; Stewart & Berry, 2000).

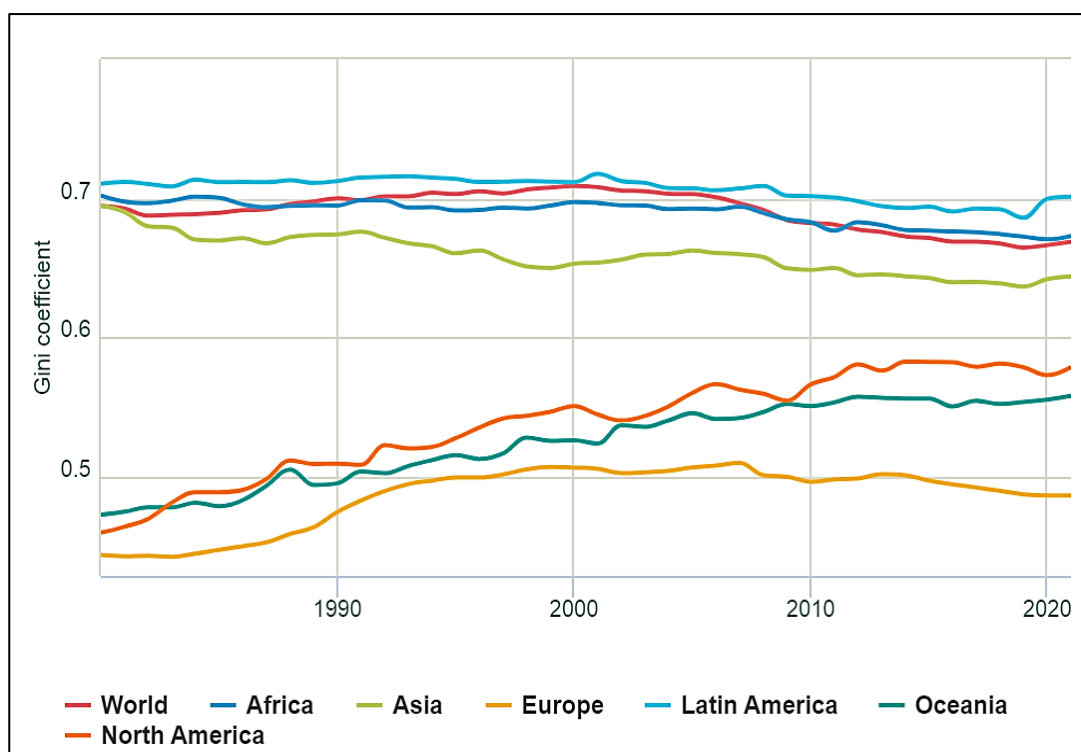
Economic disparities are an obstacle to the enforcement of people's rights as they impede social mobility and hinder equal access to public services. They also have significant implications for growth and macroeconomic stability as they can "lead to a suboptimal use of human resources, cause investment-reducing political and economic instability, and raise crisis risk" (Dabla-Norris et al., 2015, p. 5). Moreover, rising inequality erode trust in governments and institutions, which may be perceived as being influenced by privileged sectors of society and failing to address the needs of the wider population. Consequently, reducing social gaps is a crucial and urgent task, especially in countries with the highest inequality rates. This context has led to the emergence of social cohesion as a concept that advocates the provision of decent living conditions for all members of a society.

Despite its recognized importance in global governance, there is no unanimously-agreed definition of social cohesion. According to the Council of Europe (2010), social cohesion is "the capacity of a society to ensure the well-being of all its members -minimizing disparities and avoiding polarization- to manage differences and divisions" (p. 2). Meanwhile, Berger-Schmitt (2002) defined social cohesion as a concept consisting of two

dimensions: the first concerns the goal of promoting equal opportunities and reducing disparities, and the second refers to the goal of strengthening social relations within a society. Jenson (2010) identified a third component related to the importance of effective institutions and responsive governance. Finally, ECLAC (2008) stated that social cohesion is not only an end but also a means to achieve economic development.

Social cohesion is particularly important in a region like Latin America, which is one of the most unequal according to the World Inequality Report 2022 (see Graph N° 1), and where a small minority enjoys significant wealth and power, while the majority live in poverty and lack access to basic services such as healthcare and education (UNDP, 2021). This high rate of inequality is not merely a matter of moral concern; it engenders far-reaching implications that hinder economic growth and contribute to political instability (ECLAC, 2008). Moreover, inequality in Latin America is closely linked to issues of violence, crime and corruption, making it a fundamental challenge to be addressed in order to achieve the development of the region.

Graph N° 1. Gini index by region



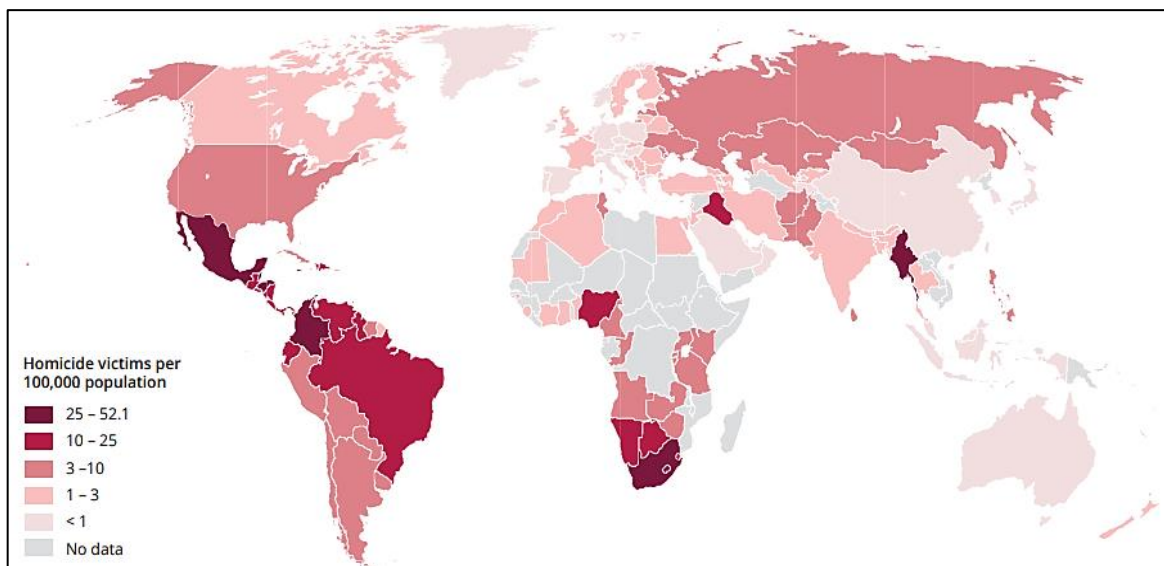
Source: World Inequality Database (2022)

As the Global Study on Homicide 2023 points out

Around the world, societies with high income inequality typically register high levels of violence. In Latin America and the Caribbean, for example, the subregion with the highest homicide rates worldwide, the richest 10 per cent of the population earns 22 times more than the poorest 10 per cent, making the gap between rich and poor double that in advanced economies. High inequality also increases vulnerability to crises and disruptions, generating additional potential knock-on effects for (violent) crime (UNODC, 2023, p. 75).

The graph below illustrates the homicide rates by country, highlighting Latin America as one of the most violent regions of the world.

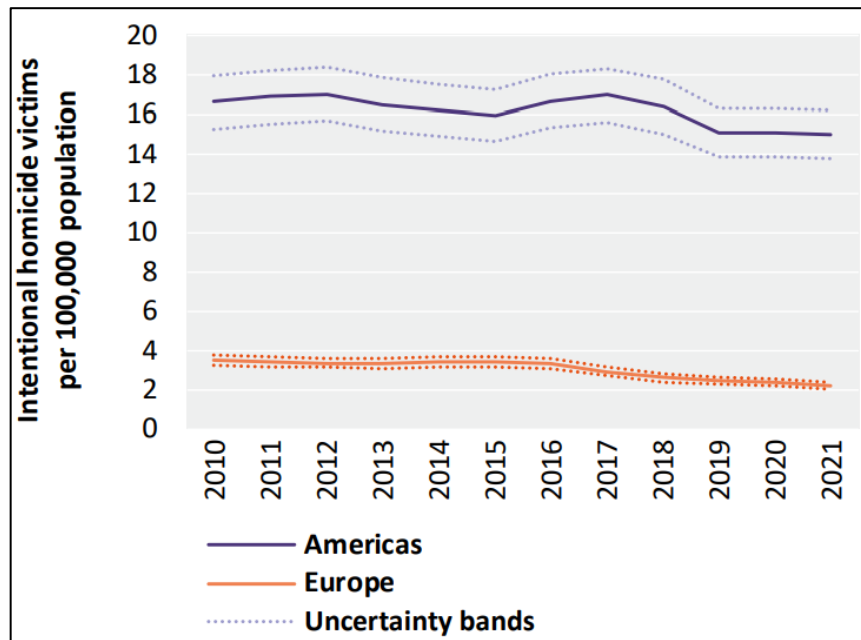
Graph N° 2. Homicide rate by country



Source: Global Study on Homicide (UNODC, 2023)

The difference in crime rates between Latin America and developed regions like Europe is stark. As mentioned above, factors such as poverty, inequality, and limited access to education and opportunities contribute to higher rates of crime in many Latin American countries. Additionally, issues such as drug trafficking, gang violence and political instability further exacerbate the situation. The graph below illustrates the regional difference in homicide rate trends.

Graph N° 3. Trends in the homicide rate in the Americas and Europe

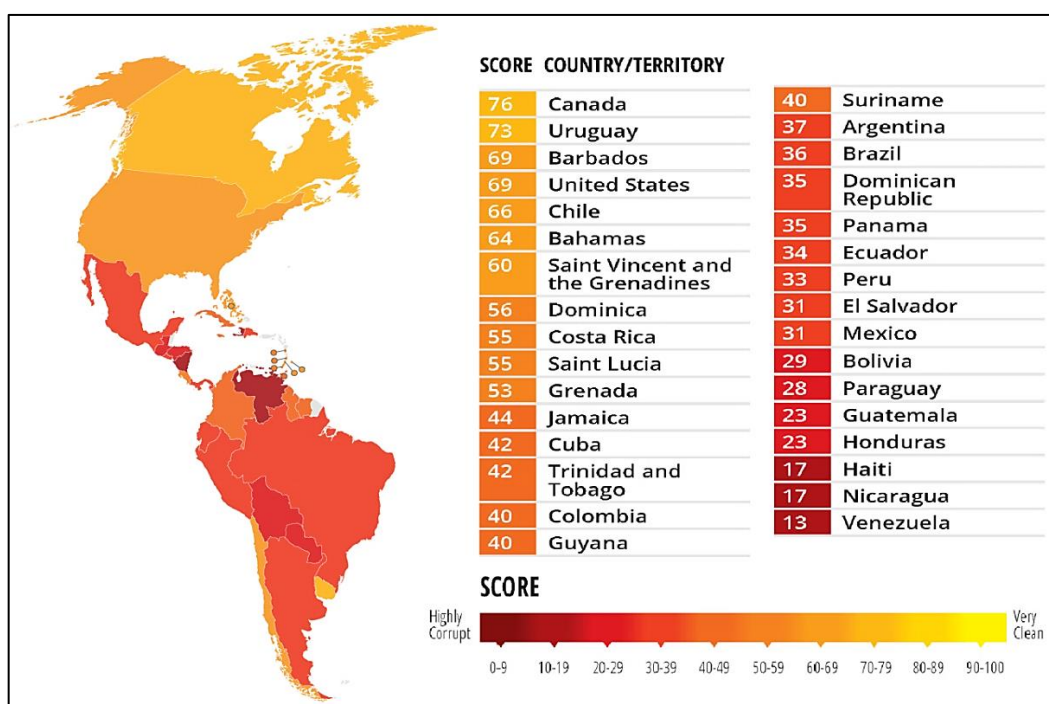


Source: Global Study on Homicide (UNODC, 2023)

Corruption is also a persistent problem in Latin America, posing significant challenges for the region. Corruption and inequality are deeply intertwined, forming a vicious cycle that undermines social cohesion and economic progress. In societies marked by significant wealth gaps, corrupt practices often flourish, as those in positions of power exploit their influence for personal gain. This exacerbates inequality by diverting resources away from social policies and public services, perpetuating a cycle of poverty and marginalization. Some of the most corrupt countries in the world are located in Latin America, as evidenced in Graph N° 4.

The region's historical and persistent socioeconomic disparities and structural problems call for concerted efforts to close gaps and foster a sense of unity among diverse communities and groups. In this context, promoting social cohesion in Latin America is essential to reducing inequality, fostering inclusive growth, mitigating the risks of political unrest and creating a more stable and prosperous society for all its members.

Graph N° 4. Corruption perception index in the Americas



Source: Corruption perceptions index (Transparency International, 2023)

In the case of the EU, social cohesion is a distinctive feature of its own integration process. The concept of social cohesion “has been developed and incorporated in large measure in the EU acquis, by associating itself with the ‘European social model’ which seeks to safeguard the social component of integration” (Morazán, Sanahuja & Ayllón, 2011, p. 10). Furthermore, social cohesion has been a hallmark of the EU’s image in the world (Freres & Sanahuja, 2006; Jung, 2022). In this sense, it became its distinguishing mark compared to the rest of the West and, particularly, a differentiating behavior vis-à-vis the US, which has endowed Brussels with a certain moral authority (Wachter Sosa, 2019).

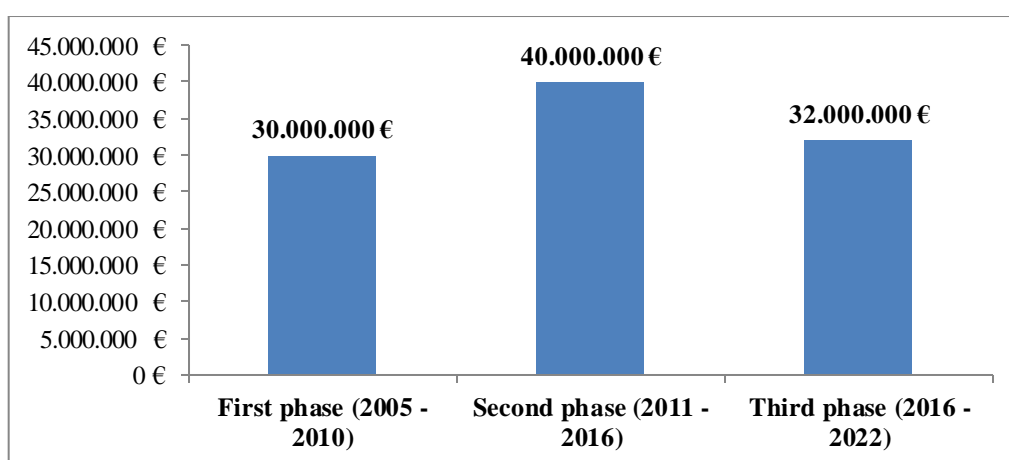
The EU and Latin America have a shared interest in tackling inequality, albeit stemming from different socioeconomic contexts. On the one hand, the EU, distinguished by its highly developed welfare systems, champions the idea that societal progress hinges on empowering all members to contribute to sustainable growth, thereby ensuring widespread prosperity. On the other hand, the fact that Latin America stands as one of the most unequal regions globally creates a pressing need to address disparities and uplift marginalized segments of the population. This shared interest in tackling inequality unites the EU and Latin America, fostering avenues for cooperation and mutual learning in their endeavor to promote a more just and inclusive global society.

Against this background, social cohesion has become one of the top priorities of their strategic partnership. In the framework of the third biregional summit held in Guadalajara in 2004, the leaders from both regions acknowledged the responsibility of their governments to lead reforms aimed at increasing social cohesion by fighting poverty, inequality and social exclusion. They underlined their determination to build fairer societies by favoring social investment on education at all levels, nutrition, health, housing, water supply and sanitation, as well as employment-intensive infrastructure development projects (Declaration of Guadalajara, 2004). Following this line, Eurosocial was created from an explicit mandate of the Heads of State and Government of the EU and Latin America aiming to position social cohesion at the top of the biregional cooperation agenda.

6.1.2 Introducing Eurosocial

Eurosocial is “a program for cooperation between the European Union and Latin America that contributes to reducing inequality, improving levels of social cohesion and strengthening the institutions of 19 Latin American countries” (Eurosocial, 2022). It is funded by the European Commission, which has provided support for the process of designing and implementing public policy by promoting “a space for peer-to-peer learning and experience exchange between counterpart institutions of the two regions” (Eurosocial, 2022). The European Commission allocated 30 million euros to cover the implementation of Eurosocial during its first five years; a budget that some experts considered limited (Wachter, 2019). For the second phase of the program, the allocated budget was 40 million euros, while for the third phase it was 32 million euros (European Commission, 2016).

Graph N° 5. Eurosocial’s budget

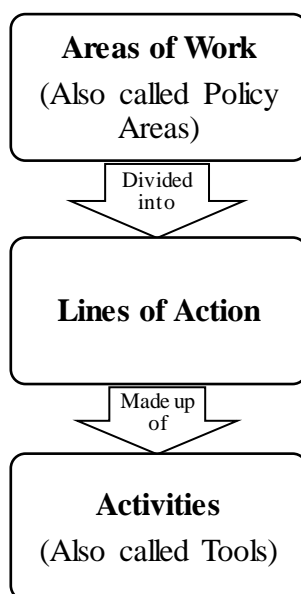


Source: Own elaboration based on European Commission (2016)

Throughout its various operational phases, Eurosocal has refined its methodologies and strategies in response to feedback received over time. In its first phase, Eurosocal concentrated on five main areas of work: justice, taxation, health, employment and education (Eurosocal, 2009). The second phase broadened the focus to include ten areas: education, employment, social protection, health, public finances, democratic institutionalism, social dialogue, decentralization, justice and citizen security. In the third phase, Eurosocal adopted a different approach by targeting only three macro-areas, namely democratic governance, gender equality, and social policies.

Eurosocal's operational framework is built upon a structure consisting of areas of work that are further divided into lines of action. These lines of action are made up of a range of activities, also called tools, linked to the public policy cycle (López & Páez, 2018). This structure allows for a systematic and organized approach to address the diverse needs of its stakeholders, facilitating efficient implementation and coordination of activities. A diagram of this structure is presented below.

Diagram N° 4. Eurosocal's operational framework



Source: Own elaboration based on Eurosocal (2013)

The lines of action constitute result-oriented itineraries of accompaniment to public policies. Each line of action consists of a combination of activities organized around a logical sequence aimed at supporting the design, implementation, and evaluation of public policies in the corresponding area of work (Eurosocal, 2013). The activities undertaken

within the lines of action, also called tools, are modalities of cooperation within the framework of peer-to-peer learning. Eurosocietal offers a whole range of activities that can be flexibly tailored and combined in the most effective way to meet the specific needs expressed by the recipient country. These activities include: exchange visits, work meetings, encounters, internships, missions, specialized consultancies, analytical work, and training courses (Eurosocietal, 2013).

Evolution of the program: Eurosocietal II and Eurosocietal+

As mentioned earlier, Eurosocietal has had three operational phases. The time framework of this dissertation (2010-2020) coincides with the last two phases of Eurosocietal. During the period that this dissertation refers to as “summits period”, the program was called Eurosocietal II since it was its second phase of operation. The release of this second phase was approved by the Heads of State and Government of the EU and Latin America at the Madrid Summit in May 2010. Subsequently, in December 2010, a consortium of seven institutions was chosen to manage Eurosocietal (four from the EU and three from Latin America)².

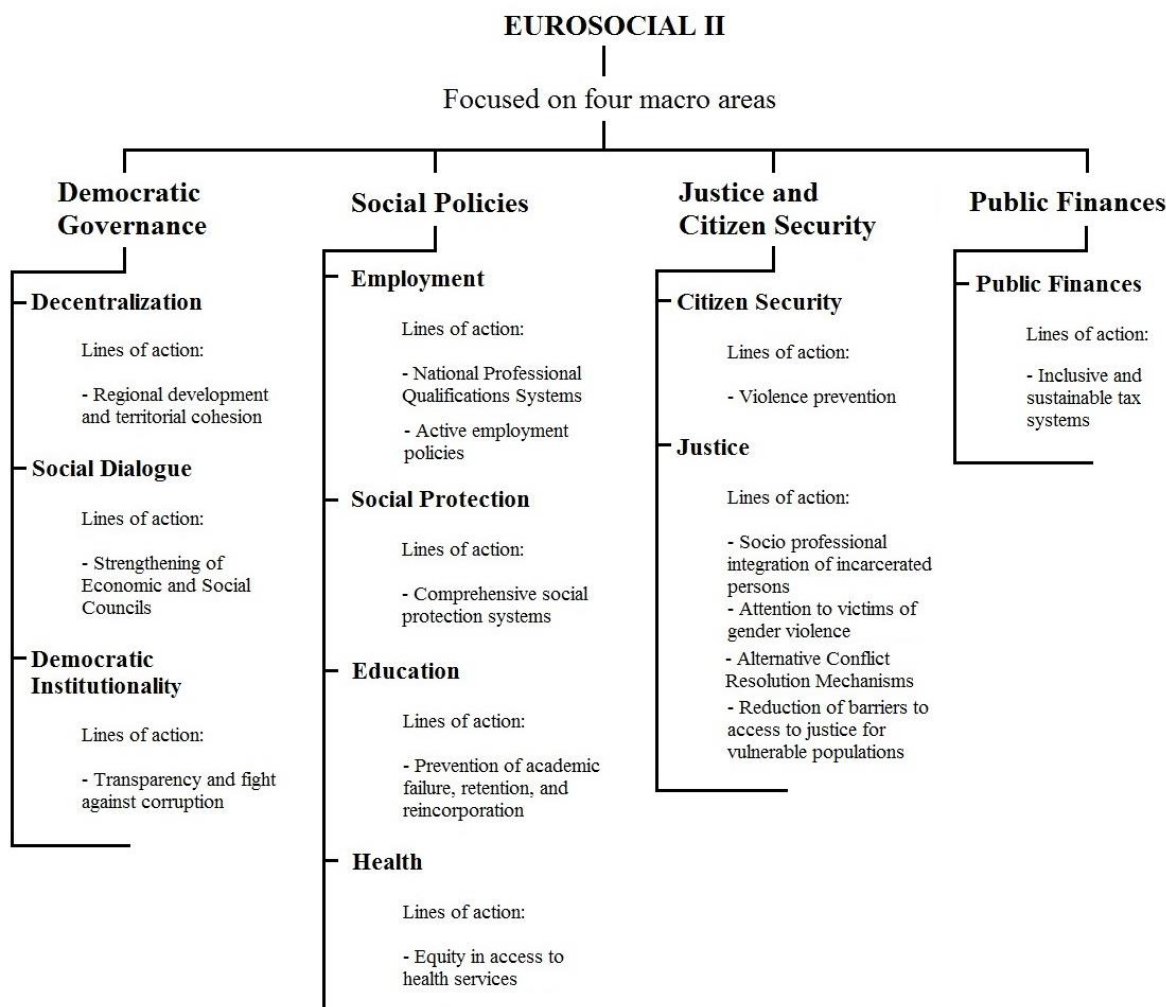
Considering that the first phase of Eurosocietal (2005-2010) had been created by the mandate of promoting social cohesion established at the third EU-Latin American summit in 2004, the second phase of this program (2010-2016) aimed to give continuity to this policy mandate, which had been renewed in successive summits. Therefore, Eurosocietal II “incorporates recommendations and orientations based on the lessons learnt in the previous phase to guarantee the linkage between the instrument (experience exchanges) and its objective (social cohesion)” (Eurosocietal, n.d, para. 3). The program sought to contribute to the design, reform and implementation of public policies by making available to the institutions involved the knowledge of similar experiences in other Latin American and European countries, which could provide innovative elements for future policy reforms.

As mentioned earlier, this second phase of the program focused on ten areas of work: Decentralization, social dialogue, democratic institutionalization, employment, social

² These institutions were: the International and Ibero-American Foundation for Administration and Public Policies (FIIAPP) from Spain, the German Agency for International Cooperation (GIZ), the France Expertise International (FEI), the International Italo-Latin American Organization (IILA), the Colombian Presidential Agency of International Cooperation (APC), the National School of Public Administration (ENAP) from Brazil, and the Central American Integration System (SICA). This consortium was led by the FIIAPP.

protection, education, health, justice, citizen security and public finances. They were grouped in four macro-areas or strategic axes as shown in the following diagram.

Diagram N° 5. Structure of Eurosocial II



Source: Own elaboration based on Eurosocial (2015)

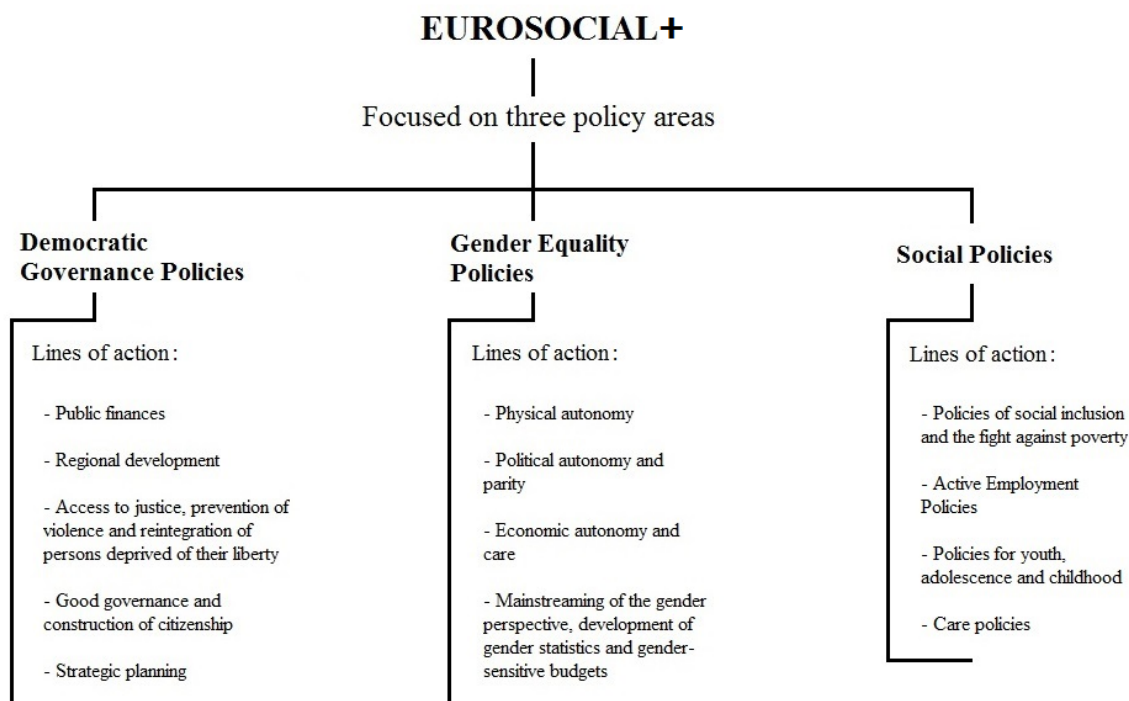
Meanwhile, during the period of time that this dissertation refers to as “non-summits period”, Eurosocial entered into a third phase of the program denominated Eurosocial+. In contrast to the previous phase, the consortium that managed Eurosocial was only composed of four institutions³.

As mentioned above, Eurosocial changed its approach in its third phase, focusing on three areas of work (also called policy areas), namely democratic governance, gender equality,

³ These institutions were: the International and Ibero-American Foundation for Administration and Public Policies (FIIAPP), the Expertise France, the International Italo-Latin American Organization (IILA), and the Central American Integration System (SICA). As in the previous period, the consortium was led again by FIIAPP.

and social policies, with various lines of action within them as shown in the following diagram.

Diagram N° 6. Structure of Eurosocial+



Source: Own elaboration based on Eurosocial (2022)

Eurosocial’s third phase focused on enhancing dialogue and coordination with Latin American countries to improve the process of identifying key policies that promote social cohesion at the national level. From an intersectoral and complementary approach, Eurosocial aimed to assist countries in achieving their national objectives while contributing to the 2030 agenda. To facilitate this dialogue, Eurosocial implemented the Country Dialogue Roundtables methodology as part of its overall strategy for strengthening ties with partner countries. The creation of Country Dialogue Roundtables (*Mesas País*) was a crucial step in the establishment of comprehensive and inclusive national roadmaps that involve multiple actors and dimensions of government. This approach allowed Eurosocial to prioritize interventions that effectively addressed the most pressing issues related to inequality and social cohesion.

To understand Eurosocial’s development over the years and the role of the biregional summits in this process, this chapter is divided into three subsections reflecting the three-phase process of data collection and analysis proposed in this dissertation (as explained in

section 5.4). The first presents the main findings of the interviews conducted with Eurosocietal's staff aiming to understand, from an insider perspective, the development of the program during the summits and non-summits periods, as well as the role of summit diplomacy in its functioning. The second subsection examines how summits influenced Eurosocietal's development by analyzing the summit declarations and action plans to identify the definition of social cohesion promoted by the EU and Latin American leaders, the guidelines provided to encourage social cohesion, and Eurosocietal's expected role in achieving this goal. Finally, the last subsection presents the analysis of Eurosocietal's institutional reports aiming to identify whether the guidelines provided by the summits declarations and action plans were reflected in these reports, looking for possible common patterns during the summits and non-summits period.

6.1.3 Eurosocietal from the analysis of the interviews: Summits as guideline-providers and the importance of relational capital

When analyzing the interviews conducted with the staff of Eurosocietal, five key themes were identified: The main characteristics of Eurosocietal as a cooperation program, its major challenges over the years (including the period of the Covid-19 pandemic), the impact of the lack of summits on the EU-Latin America relationship, the impact of the lack of summits on Eurosocietal and, finally, what is the role of summits in the functioning and evolution of Eurosocietal. These five topics are addressed in depth according to the insights provided by the interviewees. An additional section is included in order to explore what the interviewees categorized as "relational capital", a pivotal topic to understand the performance of Eurosocietal during the non-summits period.

Main characteristics of Eurosocietal

This section examines how Eurosocietal's staff defined and described this cooperation program. It is worth mentioning that all interviewees provided a positive evaluation of the program and pointed out its contribution to bring visibility to the issue of social cohesion in Latin America. They highlighted the substantial growth of Eurosocietal, particularly noting its efficiency and improved operational methods. In this sense, Interviewee N° 4 asserted that Eurosocietal has proven to be a well-designed and well-executed initiative that focuses on two crucial areas for Latin America: the consolidation of public management and the enhancement of societal welfare. This participant also mentioned that Eurosocietal

serves as one of several instruments within the biregional alliance between the EU and Latin America, resulting from collaborative efforts between the two regions.

All interviewees agreed that the Eurosocial program has undergone significant improvements and changes over the years. For example, Interviewee N° 3 pointed out that during the first phase, the program was led by five different institutions, each responsible for a specific area, while in the second phase a single institution took the leading role and other partners played secondary roles, resulting in enhanced cohesion and effectiveness of the program. The interviewees also highlighted that Eurosocial's development has been built upon its previous phases. Initially, the working areas were characterized by having very broad scopes, which some participants described as a challenge. However, in the most recent phase, there was a deliberate focus on a smaller number of areas, allowing for a more in-depth approach and reducing the number of involved actors. The aim was to foster better coordination and coherence among the participating entities. As noted by Interviewee N° 5, the portfolio of activities was quite "atomized" previously.

The interviewees consistently highlighted several key characteristics of the program, including its demand-driven nature, flexibility, promotion of horizontal policy dialogue, and focus on networks. Notably, all interviewees emphasized Eurosocial's demand-driven nature, which makes it more responsive to the specific needs of Latin American countries without imposing any particular agenda. According to Interviewee N° 3, this characteristic has significantly contributed to Eurosocial's relevance, as the program actively engages in reform processes of public institutions in Latin America. This participant also added that Eurosocial's relevance lies in its ability to provide timely and appropriate inputs, responding effectively to the current needs of the region. Furthermore, Eurosocial is a key factor in promoting the sustainability of public policies, especially in times of government transitions, as Interviewee N° 5 asserted.

The respondents also highlighted the program's flexibility in adapting its content to the evolving needs of the recipient countries. For example, Interviewee N° 2 noted that, unlike rigidly structured programs, Eurosocial does not adhere to a strict schedule of activities but rather adapts according to the evolution of the policy cycle. This inherent flexibility enables the program to respond to changing circumstances swiftly. Several participants (Interviewees N° 1, N° 2 and N° 3) cited Eurosocial's response to the Covid-19 pandemic as an example of its flexibility. They underlined the capacity of this cooperation program

to adjust to the extraordinary situation and address new demands arising from the pandemic, demonstrating its adaptability.

As a third notable characteristic, the interviewees pointed out that Eurosocal serves as a platform for promoting horizontal dialogue (mentioned by Interviewees N° 2 and N° 5), with a particular emphasis on addressing the specific demands of the countries (mentioned by Interviewee N° 2). According to Interviewee N° 5, this collaborative approach sets an example for other instances within the biregional relationship and promotes a style of genuinely listening to the needs of Latin American nations. An illustrative example of this horizontal dialogue is the establishment of *Mesas País*, which are dedicated spaces for dialogue involving authorities or delegates from various ministries within a country. These *Mesas País* allow Eurosocal to gather the demands expressed by Latin American countries. Additionally, as a fourth significant attribute, some participants emphasized that Eurosocal actively promotes policy dialogue (mentioned by Interviewees N° 2, N° 3 and N° 5) and facilitates necessary policy changes to enhance equity and social cohesion within countries (mentioned by Interviewee N° 3). As Interviewee N° 5 pointed out, this policy dialogue takes place at both the national and regional levels, building a complementary relationship between the two. Additionally, Eurosocal facilitates the exchange of experiences among peers, further fostering this policy dialogue, as asserted by Interviewee N° 2.

Finally, another frequently mentioned characteristic was Eurosocal's promotion of interinstitutional collaboration, fostering coordination among multiple institutions and encouraging a multidisciplinary approach, as highlighted by Interviewees N° 1 and N° 5. In this sense, the program operates through extensive networks (mentioned by Interviewees N° 2 and N° 5), establishing a robust sense of trust with partnering institutions (mentioned by Interviewee N° 3). In fact, as Interviewee N° 5 stated, Eurosocal has evolved into a facilitator among governmental institutions, leveraging its extensive experience and building trust with numerous countries in Latin America. Later in this document, a dedicated section will delve into this characteristic in detail (see Relational Capital).

Major challenges for Eurosocal

When conducting the interviews, the question about the most critical challenges faced by Eurosocal was posed to ascertain whether any of the interviewees would mention the lack of summits as a noteworthy obstacle in the program's operations. However, none of the

participants identified the absence of summits as a major challenge for Eurosocioal. Instead, they emphasized several other significant issues. First of all, positioning the program within the Latin American cooperation landscape emerged as a crucial challenge in its early stages, as Interviewee N° 2 pointed out. Establishing a solid presence and reputation in this area required deliberate efforts and strategic engagement. Secondly, the broad scope of the program in its initial phases was proven inconvenient for the implementation of projects, as Interviewees N° 2 and N° 3 noted. Adapting to changing circumstances while maintaining a clear focus required careful management and continuous refinement. Thirdly, the mobilization of experts from Central and Eastern Europe posed difficulties due to their limited familiarity with Latin America, as noted by Interviewee N° 2. In this sense, the countries that have engaged the most in the program are Spain, France, Italy and Germany. Finally, the need to adapt Eurosocioal's actions to political changes occurring in Latin America was also difficult and challenging, as Interviewee N° 4 pointed out. This participant stated that understanding the work areas' agenda and the political momentum of the countries was crucial to address them in a timely manner. This required a keen awareness of the prevailing political climate and the ability to align activities accordingly.

Within the context of challenges, particular attention must be given to the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on the functioning of Eurosocioal. In this regard, Interviewees N° 1 and N° 4 remarked on the changes that the Covid-19 pandemic brought to the projects led by Eurosocioal, considering that all in-person activities had to be suspended or transferred to virtual platforms. The program had to react quickly, adapt its capacity for action and coordinate with the countries the appropriate responses to face the emergency, as Interviewee N° 4 revealed.

However, despite the difficulties, Eurosocioal's staff reported a notable increase in their workload compared to the pre-pandemic period. For example, Interviewee N° 4 stated that "instead of decreasing, the activities increased [...] digital media allowed us to do much more things, much more exchange, much more technical assistance while spending less". As a result, Eurosocioal not only endured the trials posed by the pandemic but also demonstrated enhanced performance, as noted by Interviewees N° 1 and N° 4. The participants explained this situation based on two factors. First, the fact that Eurosocioal is a demand-driven program, therefore, when countries requested modifications to existing projects in order to address the urgent demands arising from the pandemic, Eurosocioal readily accommodated these changes, prioritizing the countries' demands. Secondly, the

program's inherent flexibility allowed it to swiftly adjust its actions in response to evolving country-specific demands, thus facilitating its ability to navigate the transformations prompted by the pandemic.

Finally, considering that Eurosocal moved its activities to virtual platforms during the pandemic, its work continued despite the restrictions of in-person interactions. For example, activities such as work meetings, encounters, internships, missions, specialized consultancies, analytical work, and training courses were successfully conducted virtually. Although Eurosocal's staff acknowledged that the virtual format lacked the same essence as face-to-face interactions, it helped them achieve the goals they had set before the pandemic emerged, as Interviewee N° 1 declared. In fact, according to Interviewee N° 4, they even discovered that virtual modalities unlocked new possibilities for accomplishing tasks. To manage the situation effectively, Eurosocal also increased its workforce and extended the duration of certain ongoing activities, as Interviewee N° 1 noted. Ultimately, the program began implementing a hybrid work model in consideration of the "new normality".

The impact of the lack of summits on the EU-Latin America relationship

The analysis of the interviews unveiled the views of Eurosocal's staff regarding the status of the EU-Latin America relationship in the context of the lack of summits between Heads of State and Government from 2015 to 2023. Overall, the prevailing consensus is that the lack of summits had a negative impact on the relationship. Interviewee N° 3 argued that this situation resulted in a stagnation of the biregional relationship, as its "momentum" was lost. Similarly, Interviewee N° 2 contended that the lack of biregional summits caused the relationship to lose its course. This view was reinforced by the observation that these regions no longer prioritize each other and their collaboration in multilateral forums has weakened, as revealed by Interviewee N° 5.

Interviewee N° 3 posited that the absence of summits could indicate a lack of interest from both regions in strengthening their relationship. However, this participant suggested that the situation could be reversed in the medium term through consistent and incremental efforts in biregional cooperation. Meanwhile, Interviewee N° 4 drew attention to the fact that the EU's diminishing priority for Latin America has been acknowledged by Joseph Borrell, the High Representative of the EU for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, who, during his time in office, has emphasized the importance of revitalizing the relationship

between the two regions. In this regard, Interviewee N° 3 stressed a current renewed interest in Europe to restore its “privileged relationship” with Latin America. It is worth noting that the 2023 Summit between the two regions was primarily promoted by Spain and strategically scheduled to coincide with Spain’s presidency of the Council of the EU (from July to December 2023).

In the context of a weakened biregional relationship, the increasing engagement of actors like China and Russia in Latin America is a matter of concern for the EU. Specifically, Interviewee N° 5 highlighted that China has filled the void left by the EU through the establishment of linkages based on investments, loans, and cooperation with Latin America. Against this backdrop, the social and development agenda has lost some relevance in the region because, as this participant argued, the EU has stood out as the sole actor promoting a development model centered on the welfare state in Latin America⁴. Furthermore, this participant emphasized that summits could have facilitated the coordination of a common stance between the two regions on the global agenda⁵.

This interviewee also underlined the growing recognition among the EU authorities of the importance of forging alliances in an era of uncertainty. In this sense, Latin America, tied to Europe by historical bonds, becomes crucial since it is a region that the EU can count on to advance a multilateral agenda focused on common interests and address geopolitical issues and internal threats, as stated by Interviewee N° 5. However, this participant also stressed the need for the EU to adopt a more open-minded approach and display greater attentiveness to the concerns of its Latin American partners. He highlighted the importance of offering equitable agreements that benefit both regions, avoiding extractivist practices. Considering the existing asymmetries, it is essential to acknowledge these differences and find common ground that respects the specific contexts and challenges of each region.

The impact of the lack of summits on Eurosocial’s functioning

When inquiring about the consequences of the absence of summits on the performance of cooperation programs such as Eurosocial, the general consensus among participants was that it did not have a major impact on the functioning of these programs. Interviewee N° 2

⁴ This perspective aligns with the arguments of some scholarly works by authors mentioned earlier, such as Freres and Sanahuja (2006), Wachter Sosa (2019), and Morazán, Sanahuja and Ayllón (2011).

⁵ A revealing example mentioned by the interviewee was the fact that Latin America did not vote unanimously to condemn the invasion of Russia to Ukraine in the United Nations session in March 2022. Countries such as Bolivia, Cuba, El Salvador and Nicaragua refrained from condemning the invasion, while Venezuela did not participate in the vote.

remarked that these cooperation programs successfully established subsequent operational phases in recent years without encountering significant issues. This observation confirms that the lack of summits did not cause any noticeable disruptions or hindered their functioning.

When seeking explanations for this situation, Interviewee N° 4 pointed out that the continuity of these programs can largely be attributed to the positive reception and recognition they have received from the recipient countries. This participant specified that the EU pays special attention to the views of the countries that are “particularly important in geostrategic terms”. Furthermore, the interviewee highlighted the value of feedback received by Brussels from EU delegations in Latin American countries, as it provides valuable insights into the performance of Eurosocal in those nations.

According to Interviewee N° 3, the continuity of cooperation programs such as Eurosocal is driven by a “bottom-up pressure” exerted by the institutions involved in these programs. This participant stated: “these programs continue because they are successful, because we all fight for them to continue. It is not just inertia”. However, this interviewee acknowledged that the absence of summits has impacted the capacity of these programs to “nurture” political dialogue. Interviewee N° 5 echoed this view, emphasizing that the style of dialogue established by Eurosocal with Latin America serves as an exemplary model for other areas of the relationship and should be replicated.

A particular aspect remarked by the participants was the significance of the networks of work established by Eurosocal throughout Latin America (mentioned especially by Interviewees N° 2, N° 3, N° 4 and N° 5). These networks enabled Eurosocal to develop what the participants called “relational capital”. The participants argued that this relational capital has played a vital role in sustaining the program’s operations, even in the absence of summits, by providing resilience and support. In fact, the networks themselves are strong advocates for the program’s existence, as Interviewee N° 3 pointed out. Thus, their support has emerged as a crucial pillar for Eurosocal’s operations over the years. Further details on this aspect are provided later (see the section Relational Capital).

The role of summits in the development of Eurosocal

When discussing the role of the summits between the Heads of State and Government of the EU and Latin America, Eurosocal’s staff categorizes them as “agenda-building

instruments” and “follow-up mechanisms”. The participants asserted that these summits play a pivotal role in guiding the cooperation programs to align with the biregional priorities. In this sense, biregional priorities are considered as “needed to frame the biregional programs”, according to Interviewee N° 1. Meanwhile, Interviewee N° 4 noted that identifying these priorities holds particular significance because biregional cooperation is understood as a means to strengthen partnership ties around common interests, which are discussed in the summits.

The significance of summits as guiding forces was acknowledged even by employees who joined the program during the non-summits period. Thus, although they did not directly participate in the summits, they learned from their colleagues about the significance of these events for the program. In this sense, employees working in Eurosocal since its inception remarked that the program was created from an explicit mandate established during the Guadalajara Summit in 2004. Interviewee N° 2 emphasized that this mandate, endorsed by the Heads of State and Government of both regions, bestowed legitimacy upon Eurosocal. According to this participant, as this mandate was reaffirmed in subsequent summits, these events have been considered a “guiding thread” by the program.

However, Eurosocal’s staff mentioned that alternative mechanisms have served as valuable sources of guidance for the program in the context of the lack of summit-driven guidelines. Unlike the summits, these alternative mechanisms have remained in place. For instance, Interviewee N° 2 stressed the importance of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) as guiding principles during Eurosocal’s most recent phase. The participant explained that all the results achieved in this phase have been aligned with the SDGs, which has been “a turning point” in the program and a “hallmark” in this phase, according to the interviewee’s own words.

In the particular case of the Gender Equality area, the agenda created in the framework of the Regional Conference on Women in Latin America and the Caribbean has provided guidelines and established priorities to follow in the absence of other guiding mechanisms such as the biregional summits, as Interviewee N° 1 explained. However, this participant admitted that these guidelines differ from the ones provided by the biregional summits because the EU is not involved in this process.

Notably, some participants pointed out that Eurosocal provided reports and other inputs to facilitate the organization of the summits. For example, Interviewee N° 2 remarked that

Eurosocietal was often required by Brussels to submit reports regarding the topics and areas they were working on. This insight reveals the role of the inputs from cooperation programs to build the agenda of the summits. In this sense, it is possible to establish a bidirectional relationship between the summits and the cooperation programs. As mentioned earlier, Interviewee N° 3 emphasized the importance of the cooperation programs to “nurture” the high-level political dialogue. As this participant noted, it is crucial to establish a closer link between the policy dialogue led by Eurosocietal and the political dialogue established by the summits.

Finally, the role of the summits as providers of guidelines and agenda setters was also evident when the interviewees asserted that Eurosocietal was eagerly awaiting the outcomes of the summit scheduled for July 2023 since it would provide new orientations and topics to be incorporated into the program, as mentioned by Interviewees N° 2, N° 3, N° 4, and N° 5. This anticipation demonstrates the reliance of Eurosocietal on the summit results, highlighting the influence these high-level gatherings have on shaping the direction and focus of the program. As Interviewee N° 4 said: “We hope that new priorities will be defined there [in the upcoming summit], new lines of joint action, and that, therefore, Eurosocietal will also be at the service of them in its area of social cohesion”.

Relational capital and its importance for Eurosocietal

The analysis of the interviews revealed a noteworthy concept referred to as “relational capital” by the interviewees. This concept represents one of the key factors ensuring the continuous operation of Eurosocietal during both summits and non-summits periods. Relational capital, as described by Interviewee N° 3, encompasses establishing trust and sharing knowledge among the participating institutions of this cooperation program. This practice has fostered a “bottom-up process” that persisted even in the absence of high-level dialogue.

Relational capital within Eurosocietal has been cultivated through the networks formed during the implementation of its projects. Interviewees N° 3 and N° 5 characterize them as “bottom-up” networks. They emerged when Eurosocietal identified shared demands among certain countries, prompting the program to engage with them collectively and subsequently form new networks. Over time, other countries joined these networks, further expanding their reach and impact. Moreover, communities of practice have been established within these networks to facilitate knowledge-sharing and collaboration, as

mentioned by Interviewee N° 5. Notably, some interviewees acknowledged that certain networks were formed by leveraging pre-existing ones, such as the Ibero-American networks. This observation underscores the significant role played by Spain and Portugal as intermediary countries between the EU and Latin America, as discussed in the contextual framework and supported by the literature review on the relationship between these two regions.

Finally, as stressed by Interviewee N° 2, the development of these networks has resulted from collaborative efforts involving active participation from the countries involved. According to this participant, these networks have developed their own agenda and governance model, which lends them considerable legitimacy due to their ability to bring together numerous institutions. Furthermore, valuable expertise and know-how have been accumulated through collaborative efforts within these networks. Thus, these networks form the foundation of Eurosocietal's regional-level activities. Interviewee N° 3 emphasized the importance of taking Eurosocietal's relational capital to a higher level as "there is so much of potential in the cooperation programs in terms of institutional and political relations between the EU and Latin America". This interviewee argued that this potential is being lost.

6.1.4 Eurosocietal from the analysis of summit declarations and action plans: Guidelines on social cohesion

Summit declarations are the most significant documents resulting from summits. Such documents reflect the state of diplomatic relations, as well as the evolution of joint objectives and common views. They provide key insights into the essence of the summits, the agreements reached by the leaders, the expectations of the relationship and the plans for the future. In the context of the EU-Latin America relationship, the action plans (introduced in 2010) are also essential documents. These plans provide information on key areas of interest and their corresponding work programs, including cooperation activities and expected results. Therefore, these documents are crucial for analyzing the ongoing processes in the biregional relationship.

In this section, a total of six documents were examined: three summit declarations and three action plans corresponding to the summits held in Madrid (2010), Santiago de Chile (2013) and Brussels (2015). These documents reveal the links between summits and

cooperation programs such as Eurosocial, the guidelines provided by the Heads of State and Government at these events, and their intended goals. For this reason, an overview of the declarations and action plans is presented below followed by an analysis of the identified guidelines and themes portrayed in these documents.

Madrid Declaration (2010)

Social cohesion and the promotion of inclusive societies is a topic that has special relevance in the declaration of the biregional summit held in Madrid in 2010. In fact, the slogan of this summit was “*Towards a new stage in the biregional partnership: innovation and technology for sustainable development and social inclusion*”. This slogan reflected the overarching objective of relaunching the relationship and establishing key priorities, one of which being social inclusion.

The declaration provides a general overview of how social cohesion is understood by the leaders of both regions and what should be the key areas of interest for cooperation programs aimed at addressing this issue. In this document, social cohesion is understood as a result of several preconditions. Hence, a broad view of social cohesion is promoted including aspects such as macroeconomic and fiscal policies, employment, education, science and technology, among others. The table below synthetizes the existing mentions of social cohesion, poverty and inequality in the Madrid Declaration.

Table N° 7. Articles related to social cohesion and inclusion in the Madrid Declaration

Article	Content
Article 8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Economic approach to social cohesion: Focused on the importance of implementing macroeconomic policies designed to prevent future financial crises and their economic and social consequences. - Emphasis on the need to reinforce support especially for vulnerable and poor people in developing countries.
Article 10	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Development cooperation policies: Aim to achieve the target of ODA/GNI ratio of 0.56% for the EU by 2010, as stated in the Monterrey Consensus and the Vienna Summit declaration. - Importance of working towards achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).
Article 30	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Commitment to promote integrated strategies and public policies –including social protection and fiscal policies– aimed at eradicating poverty and reducing inequality

	and social exclusion.
Article 37	- Objectives of the Action Plan: Design of cooperation programs targeting areas that promote social inclusion and cohesion such as regional integration, interconnectivity, education and employment.
Article 38	- Prioritization of cooperation activities related to science, technology and innovation for achieving social inclusion.

Source: Own elaboration based on the Madrid Declaration (2010)

Although Eurosocio is not explicitly referenced in the declaration, it is worth noting that this cooperation program aligned with the commitment to social inclusion and cohesion outlined in the declaration, promoting the implementation of projects aimed at strengthening public policies, as recommended by the EU-Latin American Heads of State and Government. The leader's commitment with social-oriented development strategies is reflected in Eurosocio's working methodology.

Santiago Declaration (2013)

This summit was the first in which the Latin American countries were represented within the framework of CELAC. The theme of this summit was "*Alliance for Sustainable Development: Promoting Investments of Social and Environmental Quality*", reflecting a close connection between sustainable development and social inclusion. An important milestone at this summit was the expansion of the biregional Action Plan, achieved by incorporating new chapters focused on gender and investments, respectively.

The recognition of the need to promote gender equality and female empowerment had a strong impact on the reconfiguration of Eurosocio, as the third phase of the program (launched in 2016) included a new policy area focused on gender equality policies. In this sense, Eurosocio started to promote the mainstreaming of gender throughout all aspects of its projects and activities. This included efforts to address gender-based violence, improve women's access to economic opportunities, promote women's leadership and participation in decision-making processes, and enhance gender perspective across various sectors.

Other topics were also in the agenda of this summit when addressing social cohesion, inclusion and fight against poverty and inequality. The table below summarizes them.

Table N° 8. Articles related to social cohesion and inclusion in the Santiago Declaration

Article	Content
Article 10	- Commitment to adopt policies that promote trade and investment based on cooperation, complementarity, solidarity and social inclusion.
Article 17	- Development requires the prioritization of inclusive economic growth, health, education, equity, and justice, among other aspects. - Commitment to work towards eradicating poverty, fostering equality, including gender equality, and social inclusion.
Article 27	- Need to strengthen biregional cooperation to improve the coherence and effectiveness of the development policies, emphasizing the achievement of the MDGs. - EU's commitment to achieve its collective target of an ODA/GNI ratio of 0.7% by 2015. - EU's commitment to cooperate with middle-income CELAC countries, taking into account their different levels of development to define the most appropriate form of cooperation.
Article 32	- Willingness to exchange experiences and best practices and explore possibilities for biregional cooperation on social security systems.
Article 38	- Commitment with gender equality by strengthening women's political participation, economic autonomy and participation in the labor force to foster fair and egalitarian societies.
Article 39	- Investments as source of positive spill-over effects on social and environmental responsibility and development of local communities.

Source: Own elaboration based on the Santiago Declaration (2013)

The declaration remarks that promoting an inclusive, fair and equitable society requires a multidimensional approach, which is also reflected in the organizational structure, policy areas and lines of action of Eurosocial. Although there is no explicit reference to Eurosocial in this declaration, it is possible to identify that the areas prioritized by the leaders of both regions regarding social inclusion and cohesion correspond to Eurosocial's lines of action such as health, education, employment, social dialogue, democratic institutionality, citizen security, and justice. Moreover, the MDGs were considered a roadmap for the biregional development efforts (as stated in article 27) and provided a clear framework for addressing critical issues, such as poverty, education, health, and gender equality, among others. In this regard, MDGs, later called SDGs, were taken into account when planning and proposing Eurosocial+ goals in 2016. In fact, the lines of

action and their corresponding projects matched with the Development Goals, as appropriate.

Brussels Declaration (2015)

The Brussels Summit placed significant importance on social cohesion as a critical component of its agenda. In fact, the theme of the summit was “*Shaping our common future: working together for prosperous, cohesive and sustainable societies for our citizens*”, which was also in line with the declarations of the previous summits. The Heads of State and Government pledged their commitment to the realization of the right to development, as outlined in Article 8 of the declaration. Notably, development is frequently labeled as sustainable and inclusive in this declaration, providing a purposeful view of this concept and indicating a clear definition of the type of development that the EU and Latin America strive to promote.

Table N° 9. Articles related to social cohesion and inclusion in the Brussels Declaration

Article	Content
Article 21	- Commitment to work to achieve strong, inclusive, sustainable, balanced growth, with a view to pursuing sustainable development and delivering better and more equitable living standards, dignified and productive employment and decent work, in particular for all vulnerable groups.
Article 25	- Commitment to eradicate poverty in all its forms and achieving sustainable development in its three dimensions (economic, social and environmental) in a balanced and integrated manner. - Commitment to strengthen the global partnership for development, promote policy coherence, and adopt innovative approaches to mobilize resources for sustainable development and innovation. - Regular follow-up to the Post 2015 Agenda. - EU’s commitment to achieve its collective target of an ODA/GNI ratio of 0.7% in the timeframe of the post-2015 agenda.
Article 41	- Commitment to implementing measures such as promoting citizen participation, strengthening access to information, and increasing democratic governance in order to fight corruption and achieve more equitable and cohesive societies.
Article 44	- Reaffirmation of the importance of the strategic partnership to achieve more democratic, prosperous, equitable, inclusive, cohesive and fair societies.
Article 45	- Biregional economic links as drivers of inclusive economic growth and social equity.
Article 48	- Policies promoting trade and investment should be based on solidarity and social

	inclusion and cohesion.
Article 51	- Importance of international cooperation based on mutual interests to face global challenges and build a more inclusive development agenda.
Articles 52 and 55	- Importance of various modalities and mechanisms of cooperation to better leverage efforts to achieve inclusive societies.
Article 59	- Commitment to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). - Importance of integrating lessons learned from previous successful cooperation experiences.
Article 64	- Commitment to achieving higher levels of social inclusion and economic on a voluntary basis such as the Eurosocal program.
Article 68	- Prioritization of promotion of decent work to achieve more inclusive societies. - Need to exchange experiences and best practices and explore possibilities for biregional cooperation on social security systems.

Source: Own elaboration based on the Brussels Declaration (2015)

These articles reflect that the Heads of State and Government had a clear understanding of the complex and interconnected nature of inclusive and sustainable development as well as the need for a comprehensive and integrated approach to address the issues of poverty and inequality. They recognized the importance of international cooperation and partnership to address these issues and highlighted the need for a shared commitment by all countries to achieve inclusive and sustainable development.

Notably, this declaration explicitly mentions Eurosocal and its role in biregional cooperation. In this regard, the leaders affirmed: “we remain committed to achieving higher levels of social inclusion and economic, social and territorial cohesion, equality and access to public services, in accordance with national policies and bi-regional programs on a voluntary basis such as the Eurosocal programme” (Brussels Declaration, 2015, p. 13).

It is important to note that the commitment to transparency and accountability in public policies stated in Article 41 of the declaration was reflected in Eurosocal and its transformation over time, as the third phase of the program launched in 2016 included a policy area focused on democratic governance policies. Moreover, article 68 regarding to issues such as the importance of decent work, and the formalization of labor was reflected in the line of action called Active Employment Policies in the area of social policies in Eurosocal+.

The declaration recalls and celebrates “the decisions taken in Santiago to include a chapter on gender equality and women’s empowerment in our action plan and establish a bi-

regional dialogue on gender issues” (Brussels Declaration, 2015, p. 15), which reinforced the importance of gender equality in the biregional relationship and made it an essential pillar of Eurosocial’s work in its latest phase.

Action plans

Action plans are documents featuring concrete actions and expected results that the EU and Latin American leaders target in certain work areas. Action plans were introduced in 2010 as complementary documents to the summit declarations. Thus, so far there have been three action plans: the Madrid Action Plan (2010), the Santiago Action Plan (2013), and the Brussels Action Plan (2015). As mentioned in their introduction, these documents include several initiatives corresponding to the priorities set at their respective summit as encompassed in the final declarations. Particularly, “the action plan identifies instruments and activities which, if properly implemented should lead to concrete results guaranteeing ownership and capacity building in key areas, which are directly or indirectly linked with the central theme of the Summit” (Madrid action plan, 2010, p. 1).

The three action plans have the same structure. The difference between them is that the Santiago Action Plan (2013) and the Brussels Action Plan (2015) added two more work areas each. Moreover, while the Madrid Action Plan and the Santiago Action Plan have exactly the same content (except for the chapters added in the latter), the Brussels Action Plan has some paragraphs rephrased from its original version presented in the two previous action plans, and includes new cooperation activities and expected results. In this regard, important changes were made in the sections on migration and drug trafficking. Finally, it is important to mention that the Santiago Action Plan refers for the first time to the Latin American region as CELAC in consideration of the creation of this regional bloc.

Madrid Action Plan (2010)

As the first action plan, this document set a precedent in terms of cooperation priorities and specific actions to achieve concrete results in six areas of work. These areas were: 1) Science, research, innovation and technology, 2) Sustainable development; environment; climate change; biodiversity; energy, 3) Regional integration and interconnectivity to promote social inclusion and cohesion, 4) Migration, 5) Education and employment to promote social inclusion and cohesion, and 6) The world drug problem.

The specific work areas requiring the involvement of Eurosocial were those related to social cohesion, namely Section 3 “Regional integration and interconnectivity to promote social inclusion and cohesion”, and Section 5 “Education and employment to promote social inclusion and cohesion”. Regarding Section 3, the primary objectives pertain to boosting regional integration and increasing social inclusion and cohesion while also contributing to the broader aim of poverty eradication in consideration of the MDGs. The work program of this section comprises three parts: dialogue, cooperation activities, and expected results. The table below summarizes the content of these parts.

Table N° 10. Summary of Section 3 of the Madrid Action Plan

Part	Content
Dialogue	Employ all existing mechanisms to ensure a dynamic exchange of views on this topic between the EU and Latin America, mentioning explicitly those available under the Eurosocial program.
Cooperation activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Mobilization of resources through the work of the Latin America Investment Facility (LAIF) as a provider of grants aiming to leverage funds from financial institutions for investment projects and technological transfers. - Establishment of the EU-Caribbean Infrastructure Fund with the aim of improving physical infrastructure and related services. - Supporting the development of effective public social policies and strengthening local entrepreneurial environments and corporate social responsibility.
Expected results	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Implementation of projects in areas such as energy efficiency, sustainable transport, and social and economic networks leading to greater regional integration, social cohesion, and technological transfer when applicable. - The establishment of partnerships between the public administrations of the EU and Latin America should support the management and implementation of social policies in areas such as education, health and social security, justice administration, taxation, and employment.

Source: Own elaboration based on the Madrid Action Plan (2010)

From this section, the objective defined at the Dialogue entails a clear mandate to Eurosocial to promote and keep active the biregional dialogue on this issue and become the platform to enable an exchange of views. Meanwhile, the selected areas in the second expected result ended up being Eurosocial’s work areas for its second phase (Eurosocial II), demonstrating a direct influence of the action plan on the structure and functions of Eurosocial.

Regarding Section 5, the main aims in this area are to promote education at different levels and improve the functioning of the labor markets through triangular cooperation and corporate social action. This should contribute to increasing social inclusion and cohesion by facilitating access to employment and job opportunities, especially for vulnerable groups, including women and young people.

Table N° 11. Summary of Section 5 of the Madrid Action Plan

Part	Content
Dialogue	Creation of a regular biregional dialogue on education and employment, building upon the results of previous forums on social cohesion
Cooperation activities	The document refers to the importance of improving access to higher education, lifelong learning and vocational training, promoting mobility and exchanges between institutions from the EU and Latin American countries, fostering formal employment, reducing discrimination at work, and exchanging experiences and knowledge on labor systems.
Expected results	The increase of mobility and academic exchanges between students, teachers, and institutions, the formulation of strategic reviews of labor market information systems, the establishment of inclusive technical and vocational education and training institutions, a better integration of young workers into decent and productive jobs, a reduction in school dropout rates, and the strengthening of linkages between basic, professional and higher education.

Source: Own elaboration based on the Madrid Action Plan (2010)

It should be noted that the way the cooperation activities are portrayed in this section lacks specificity and precision, as they are formulated as objectives rather than specific activities. Furthermore, they do not define the concise means by which they will be implemented, the responsible institutions, or the expected timeframe for completion. On the other hand, it is important to highlight that the expected results of this section have a discernible impact on the development of Eurosocial's working area concerning education. This is evident in Eurosocial's documentation regarding this domain, which consistently references them, and their prioritization as the main objectives of Eurosocial's education projects.

Santiago Action Plan (2013)

As mentioned earlier, this action plan has exactly the same content as the Madrid Action Plan, except for the two additional work areas incorporated at this summit. These areas are gender and investments and entrepreneurship for sustainable development, corresponding

to Sections 7 and 8 of the action plan respectively. Of these two work areas, gender is the one that relates to Eurosocio, since the area of investments and entrepreneurship for sustainable development concerns to the work of the Latin America Investment Facility (LAIF) and, partly, Euroclima. It is important to note that the inclusion of gender issues in the biregional action plans significantly influenced the formulation of Eurosocio's third phase (2016-2022), as gender equality became an independent area of work in this phase of the program. A table summarizing Section 7 is presented below.

Table N° 12. Summary of Section 7 of the Santiago Action Plan

Part	Content
Dialogue	Need to create a biregional space to facilitate the exchange of experiences and collaboration on gender-related matters, promoting gender equality and women's empowerment across various fields of the CELAC-EU dialogue.
Cooperation activities	Promotion of women's political and popular participation, actions on the fight against gender-based violence, support for women's economic empowerment and wage equality, and the identification of areas of exchange and cooperation for mutual learning in gender mainstreaming in public policies with the aim of optimizing existing practices and lessons learned in this area.
Expected results	The organization of seminars aimed at fostering the exchange of experiences, the sharing of best practices, and identification of the most effective measures to prevent and combat gender-based violence and promote economic empowerment and participation of women in the workforce. The plan also highlights the importance of the voluntary information exchange between the EU and Latin America on the latest developments in gender policies.

Source: Own elaboration based on the Santiago Action Plan (2013)

The Santiago Action Plan's section on gender issues is closely linked to some of the goals of Eurosocio's third phase and has provided a roadmap for the actions of its working area on Gender Equality Policies. In fact, it is possible to identify a correspondence between the cooperation activities outlined in Section 7 of the Santiago Action Plan and the lines of action on Eurosocio's Gender Equality Policies. In essence, Eurosocio has taken up the challenge of fostering women's political participation, eliminating gender-based violence, and promoting the economic empowerment of women by incorporating the Santiago Action Plan's objectives in its own Gender Equality Policies efforts.

Brussels Action Plan (2015)

The Brussels Action Plan launched in 2015 is the last action plan between the EU and Latin America. While it has essentially the same content as the previous two action plans, it introduces two additional working areas, increasing the total number of working areas to ten: 1) Science, research, innovation and technology, 2) Sustainable development; environment; climate change; biodiversity; energy, 3) Regional integration and interconnectivity to promote social inclusion and cohesion, 4) Migration, 5) Education and employment to promote social inclusion and cohesion, 6) The world drug problem, 7) Gender, 8) Investments and entrepreneurship for sustainable development, 9) Higher education, and 10) Citizen security.

Regarding the sections relevant to Eurosocial, Section 3 on regional integration and interconnectivity included a small change in the wording of its main objectives by including a mention of the pursuit of the Post 2015 Development Agenda and a comment on the importance of favoring decent job creation as a key element to achieving these objectives. It also has a new paragraph emphasizing that the biregional dialogue on this topic could use “all available instruments, organizations, mechanisms and associations related to international cooperation established between and within the EU and CELAC, in order to enhance the relationship between both regions” (Brussels Action Plan, 2015, p. 7). Moreover, this part also contains a new bullet point that sets the following goal:

Engage in a dialogue on territorial cohesion and equity and on regional development policies, with a particular focus on cross border cooperation and on territorial development strategies, to strengthen the capacity of the regional and urban authorities to promote economic development and innovation and social inclusion and cohesion (Brussels Action Plan, 2015, p. 7).

This paragraph entailed a new guideline for Eurosocial, which was incorporated in its third phase from 2016 in the work area of democratic governance policies, specifically within its line of action related to regional development. This line of action includes the concept of territorial cohesion as one of its main cornerstones and promotes the exchange of experiences and debate between the EU and Latin America on this topic. The document also emphasized on the implementation of territorial development policies, which alludes to the same objective of incorporating a territorial cohesion approach to regional

integration and interconnectivity and also corresponds to the Eurosocial's modifications discussed above.

As for Section 5 entitled "Education and employment to promote social inclusion and cohesion", the first paragraph, which relates to the main aim of this section, added a new part emphasizing the importance to "develop, in both regions, skills for employment, promote decent and dignified job creation, thereby increasing income and contributing towards the overall objective of poverty eradication" (Brussels Action Plan, 2015, p. 12). Moreover, the rephrasing of some of the cooperation activities and expected results in this section includes a special focus on disadvantaged populations such as people with disabilities, youth, the elderly, and women. As a sign of direct correspondence, this focus is reflected in two lines of action in Eurosocial's work area of social policies: active employment and policies for youth, adolescence and childhood. Both allude to the situation of these populations and place special emphasis on promoting their labor inclusion, employability, education and preparation for the labor market.

This section also adds bullet points regarding the issue of safety and health at work, including the preparation of a Latin American, Caribbean and EU roadmap on this topic, as well as the establishment of a technical group to develop this roadmap. However, there is no specific mention of this issue in Eurosocial's work areas and lines of action. Some activities of Eurosocial may have incorporated this approach, but not as required in the action plan.

Sections 7 and 8 related to gender and investments/entrepreneurship respectively, remained unchanged. However, as mentioned earlier, two new sections were added to the action plan to address new priorities identified by the EU and Latin American leaders at the Brussels Summit. On the one hand, Section 9 concerning higher education outlines cooperation activities expected to be led by the EU-CELAC Joint Initiative for Research and Innovation (JIRI) and the EU-CELAC Knowledge Area. On the other hand, Section 10 concerning citizen security refers to cooperation activities that fall under the competence of the PACcTO cooperation program.

It is important to point out that some of the initiatives mentioned in Section 10 were implemented by the line of action of access to justice, prevention of violence and reintegration of persons deprived of their liberty in Eurosocial's work area of Democratic Governance Policies. These initiatives were specifically related to the aim of sharing

experiences in areas such as social policies for law enforcement, rehabilitation, social reintegration, restorative justice, and institutional strengthening of criminal justice systems. In this sense, Eurosocial revealed a strong commitment to the development of social cohesion in diverse areas, reinforcing its multifaceted approach.

Identified guidelines in summits declarations and action plans regarding social cohesion and inclusion

After thoroughly reviewing the contents of the EU-Latin American summits declarations and action plans in the realm of social cohesion and inclusion, guidelines and main themes were identified in these documents. Identifying guidelines involved recognizing certain characteristics or elements that distinguished them from other types of information. Guidelines are designed to provide instructions, recommendations, or advice on how to accomplish a specific task or goal. These guidelines were portrayed in several ways, including the emphasis on the importance of certain issues, recommendations for addressing specific areas, and the prescribed approach to certain topics. The guidelines and themes identified are tracked in Eurosocial's institutional reports from 2010 to 2020 (section 6.1.5) in order to understand whether and how the orientations provided by the summits were reflected in the functioning of Eurosocial.

Identified guidelines in summits declarations

1. Social cohesion and inclusion are achieved through the promotion and implementation of public policies and integrated strategies aimed at eradicating poverty and reducing inequality and social exclusion. This guideline was identified in all the summit declarations.
2. The promotion of social cohesion and inclusion encompasses actions in a wide array of issues such as education, health, social protection, fight against corruption, empowerment of women, dignified employment and scientific development. This guideline was identified in all the summit declarations, with differentiated emphasis in each declaration.
3. The achievement of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), and later the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), is crucial to build more inclusive societies and eradicate poverty. This guideline was present in all the summit declarations.
4. Social inclusion and cohesion encompasses the implementation of macroeconomic policies designed to promote inclusive growth and prevent the social consequences

of economic crises, especially for the most vulnerable populations. This guideline was specifically identified in the Madrid and the Brussels declarations.

5. Social inclusion and cohesion addresses the need to increase women's empowerment by strengthening their political participation and leadership, economic autonomy and equal and balanced participation in the labor force and also to eradicate all forms of violence and discrimination against them. This guideline was specifically identified in the Santiago Declaration.
6. Investments are crucial for social cohesion as they play a key role in the creation of dignified work with social inclusion and provide positive spill-over effects on several economic sectors. This guideline was specifically identified in the Madrid and Santiago declarations.
7. The promotion of social cohesion and inclusion entails the promotion of sustainable development. This guideline was particularly emphasized in the Brussels Declaration.
8. Achieving social cohesion and inclusion entails a commitment to transparency and accountability in public finances as well as strengthening the fight against corruption. This guideline was particularly emphasized in the Santiago and Brussels declarations.
9. Promoting social cohesion and inclusion implies a commitment to democratic governance by implementing measures such as promoting citizen participation, strengthening access to information, and improving public management effectiveness and efficiency. This guideline was particularly emphasized in the Brussels Declaration.
10. To promote social cohesion and inclusion, it is crucial to integrate lessons learned from previous successful experiences. This guideline was particularly emphasized in the Brussels Declaration.
11. The promotion of social cohesion involves a commitment to collaborate on a global scale in the pursuit of a development agenda. This guideline was particularly mentioned in the Brussels Declaration.
12. Eurosocial as a biregional cooperation program is connected to the commitment of the EU and Latin America to the achievement of higher levels of social inclusion and economic, social and territorial cohesion, equality and access to public services. This statement was found in Article 64 of the Brussels Declaration.

Identified guidelines in action plans

1. Social cohesion and inclusion is promoted by regional integration and interconnectivity. This is reflected in Section 3 of all action plans.
2. Promoting social cohesion entails working towards the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). This guideline was present in all the action plans.
3. Eurosocial as a biregional cooperation program should ensure adequate biregional dialogue on regional integration to promote social cohesion and integration. This statement was found in Section 3, paragraph A of all action plans.
4. Social cohesion and inclusion require the promotion of investments in infrastructures favoring interconnectivity as well as the development of economic networks and entrepreneurial projects. The action plans assigned this guideline specifically to the cooperation mechanism LAIF (on this mechanism, see Section 2.3 Interregional Cooperation Mechanisms).
5. Social cohesion and inclusion require the establishment of partnerships between public administrations of the EU and Latin America through institutional strengthening and cooperation. These partnerships promote the implementation of effective social policies in areas such as education, health, lifelong learning, social security and social services, administration of justice, taxation and employment. This guideline was found in Section 3, paragraph G of all action plans.
6. Social cohesion and inclusion are promoted by education and employment. This is reflected in Section 5 of all action plans.
7. Social cohesion and inclusion are benefited by cooperation initiatives on education such as improving access to higher education, lifelong learning and vocational training as well as promoting mobility and exchanges between institutions from the EU and Latin American countries. This is detailed in Section 5 of all action plans.
8. Social cohesion and inclusion are benefited by cooperation initiatives on employment such as fostering formal employment, reducing discrimination at work, and exchanging experiences and knowledge on labor systems. This is detailed in Section 5 of all action plans.
9. Gender equality, as a precondition for social cohesion and inclusion, entails the promotion of women's rights including their political participation, economic

empowerment and the elimination of all forms of violence against them. This guideline was included in Section 7 of the Santiago and Brussels action plans.

10. The promotion of gender equality, as a precondition for social cohesion and inclusion, encompasses the biregional exchange of experiences and best practices. This guideline was included in Section 7 of the Santiago and Brussels action plans.
11. Social cohesion and inclusion imply engaging in a dialogue on territorial cohesion and equity on regional development policies, with a particular focus on cross border cooperation and on territorial development strategies. This statement was found in Section 3, paragraph C of the Brussels Action Plan.
12. Citizen security, as a precondition for social cohesion and inclusion, entails sharing experiences in areas such as social policies for law enforcement, rehabilitation, social reintegration, restorative justice, and institutional strengthening of criminal justice systems. This guideline was introduced in Section 10 of the Brussels Action Plan.

6.1.5 Eurosocal from the analysis of its institutional reports: The role of the summits guidelines in the development of Eurosocal

The analysis of institutional reports corresponds to the third phase of the data analysis process of this dissertation. Institutional reports are documents that present the overall results of the cooperation programs and describe their performance in a specific area of work or period of time. These reports were thoroughly examined to determine whether the guidelines identified in the summits declarations and action plans were reflected in their content, thereby revealing the influence of the summits on the functioning of these cooperation programs during both the summits and non-summits periods. In this section, a correspondence between some of the main parts of the reports and the summit-driven guidelines is identified, revealing a clear linkage between the functioning of the biregional cooperation programs and the summits between the EU and Latin America.

- **Eurosocal's institutional reports during the summits period**

This section accounts for the analysis of Eurosocal's institutional reports covering the period from 2010 to 2016 when the program was in its second phase and was called Eurosocal II. Reports from each line of action were scrutinized in detail in order to understand whether and how the guidelines provided by the summits are reflected in the functioning of Eurosocal. A total of seventeen documents were reviewed from this period

corresponding to the lines of action at that time in Eurosocial. These reports were obtained from the SIA system (Sistema de Información de Actividades in Spanish), which is accessible via the website <http://sia.eurosocial-ii.eu/>. This system aimed to register all activities, provide documentary information, and host various reports and statistics on Eurosocial.

However, it is important to acknowledge the limitations of this analysis. Firstly, the SIA system is outdated and no longer functioning at an optimal level. Some of the links do not work properly, and as a result, not all the documents from the relevant period were accessible on the website anymore. Another obstacle in the data collection was that some of the additional reports referred to in the reviewed documents were only available to Eurosocial staff and not accessible to the general public. Therefore, these restrictions impeded the researcher from obtaining information that might have allowed for a more comprehensive overview of Eurosocial's work in this phase of the program. Fortunately, all the reports regarding Eurosocial's lines of action were accessible.

This section will be divided according to Eurosocial's macro areas and their corresponding areas of work and lines of action during the summits period, in line with the obtained documents. As was mentioned in Section 6.1.2, this phase of the program focused on ten areas of work: decentralization, social dialogue, democratic institutionality, employment, social protection, education, health, justice, citizen security and public finances. Thus, the analysis presented here corresponds to Eurosocial's structure during that period. To revisit the macro areas, areas of work and lines of action of Eurosocial, see Diagram N° 5 in section 6.1.2.

Macro area 1: Democratic Governance

Democratic Governance was chosen as one of Eurosocial's macro-areas of work in its second phase because it is a concept that includes the promotion of equity, citizen participation, pluralism and development, which are crucial elements for social cohesion (Eurosocial, 2014). Achieving these goals requires efficient and effective political and state institutions that have legitimacy among their citizens and operate under principles of transparency and legality. Corruption, violence, impunity or a lack of access to justice undermine the capacities of states and hinder the achievement of these ends. Therefore, strengthening democratic governance is necessary for the formulation of inclusive policies and the efficient performance of states' administrative and management functions.

Following this logic, this macro area comprises three areas of work, namely *Decentralization* (also known as Regional Development), *Social Dialogue* and *Democratic Institutionalality*. The objective of incorporating these three areas under this specific denomination is to emphasize the broadening and pluralization of the actors participating in the public arena and to strengthen the scope of public policies in the greatest number of territories in each country. Each of these areas of work has one line of action. The institutional reports analyzed in this section correspond to the lines of action.

The line of action of the area of *Decentralization* is called Regional Development and Territorial Cohesion. The institutional report of this line of action reflects the guidelines provided in Section 3 of the Madrid Action Plan and Article 64 of the Brussels Declaration regarding regional integration to promote social inclusion and territorial cohesion. In this sense, activities in this line of action aimed to guide and support the design and implementation of public policies in Latin American countries in order to promote regional development. These activities were based on three working lines: 1) regulatory frameworks supporting regional development processes, 2) mechanisms of coordination between different levels of government to guarantee the effectiveness of state interventions, and 3) management instruments implementing government policies.

The line of action of the area of *Social Dialogue* is called Strengthening of Economic and Social Councils. The Economic and Social Councils (ESCs) aim to be complementary citizen representation bodies and promote communication between states and civil society to achieve consensual solutions regarding issues traditionally handled by politicians and special interest groups. According to its institutional report, Eurosocial's activities aimed to support ESCs through the exchange of experiences between peer institutions from the EU and Latin America on different topics, promoting consensus and concerted action between economic and social actors as well as stimulating greater involvement from organized civil society in public policies in each country. This approach reflects the guideline identified in the action plans highlighting the role of partnerships between EU and Latin American public administrations, through institutional strengthening and cooperation in order to achieve social inclusion.

The line of action of the area of *Democratic Institutionalality* is named Transparency and fight against corruption. Its objective was to promote better institutional and social cooperation to prevent and identify cases of corruption, enhancing coordination among the

relevant actors and sectors. According to its institutional report, the activities in this line of action were based on four working lines: 1) transparency and access to public information, 2) strengthening of public-private cooperation in the fight against corruption, 3) improvement of reporting mechanisms, and 4) coordination between agencies in the investigation and punishment of corruption cases and economic crimes. This line of action aligns with the guideline from the Santiago and Brussels declarations underscoring the commitment of the leaders from the EU and Latin America to the fight against corruption. The guideline on the importance of exchanging experiences and best practices is also followed as Eurosocial placed significant emphasis on partnering with networks to combat economic and financial crimes linked to corruption. The Latin American Network for Transparency and Access to Information (RTA) played a significant role in this effort, as well as other national networks in Latin America partnering with Eurosocial.

Table N° 13. Correspondence between institutional reports and summit-driven guidelines in the macro area of Democratic Governance

Area	Line of Action	Corresponding Guidelines	Summit Document
<i>Decentralization</i>	Regional Development and Territorial Cohesion	- Ensure dialogue on regional integration to promote social cohesion and integration. - Commitment to achieve higher levels of territorial cohesion.	- All action plans (Section 3). - Brussels Declaration (Art. 64).
<i>Social Dialogue</i>	Strengthening of Economic and Social Councils	Establishment of partnerships between public administrations of the EU and Latin America.	All action plans (Section 3).
<i>Democratic Institutionalality</i>	Transparency and fight against corruption	Commitment to transparency and accountability in public finances as well as strengthening the fight against corruption.	Santiago and Brussels declarations.

Source: Own elaboration based on the analysis of Eurosocial's institutional reports

Macro area 2: Social Policies

Social Policies are essential for states to reduce social inequalities, promote inclusive growth and reduce poverty, which in turn can lead to greater economic stability, social cohesion, and improved quality of life for individuals and society as a whole. This macro-area encompassed four areas of work, namely *Employment, Social Protection, Education,*

and *Health*. Its aim was to address the vulnerabilities faced by both individuals and households and ensure access to essential services for the entire population, especially the most vulnerable sectors (Eurosocietal, 2014).

The area of *Employment* had two lines of action: National Professional Qualifications Systems and Active Employment Policies. The first one aimed to promote the creation of National Professional Qualifications Systems (NPQS) to formulate methodological protocols that define the qualifications required for technical and technological positions, enabling standardization of such profiles and their inclusion in a unified occupational catalog. In this sense, Eurosocietal contributed to the advancement of policy dialogue and implementation of policies concerning the design and management of NPQS.

The second line of action, called Active Employment Policies, aimed to promote policies that contribute to reducing disparities by increasing employment and professional opportunities especially for vulnerable groups. The activities were based on two working lines: 1) modernization and improvement of public employment offices, and 2) integrated frameworks of professional qualification. Eurosocietal's work in the lines of action of *Employment* totally aligns with the guideline identified in Section 5 of the action plans on how social cohesion and inclusion are benefited by cooperation initiatives on employment such as fostering formal employment, reducing discrimination at work, and exchanging experiences and knowledge on labor systems.

The area of *Social Protection* had one line of action called Comprehensive Social Protection Systems. Eurosocietal supported the design of policies to build this kind of systems, being peer learning an indispensable tool for policy dialogue. Countries such as Spain, Germany, Belgium, Hungary, Slovakia, Italy, Finland, the Netherlands, Poland and Portugal engaged in knowledge-sharing activities with various Latin American countries. The exchanges covered a range of topics, including job placement, public care systems, homelessness, and solidarity economy, among others. This line of action was perhaps the most representative of Eurosocietal as it addressed the core of the problems in terms of inequality and poverty, which aligns with the guideline identified in the summits declarations on the fact that social cohesion and inclusion are achieved through the promotion and implementation of public policies and integrated strategies aimed at eradicating poverty and reducing inequality and social exclusion. Moreover, this line of

action promoted the exchange of experiences and best practices between the EU and Latin American countries, which is the working method proposed by the summits declarations.

The area of *Education* had one line of action called Prevention of academic failure, Retention and Reincorporation. This line of action acknowledged the fact that completing secondary education became a major challenge for many students in Latin American countries. Eurosocial promoted two working lines: 1) Early school leaving prevention and reintegration, and 2) strategies of transition from school to work. Activities in these lines included the implementation of national-level strategies for promoting school retention, the development of models for the management and support of rural schools, the design of strategic plans for national literacy programs, the creation of unified information systems for public education, among others.

This line of action reflected the guideline provided by the action plans regarding the importance of education to promote social inclusion and reduce inequality. However, it is important to note that the guideline provided by the action plans emphasized access to higher education while Eurosocial's activities focused more on secondary education. This difference is possibly explained by the fact that Eurosocial realized the need to prioritize secondary education as a result of meetings with local governments and based on its demand-driven approach.

Finally, the area of *Health* had one line of action called Equity in access to health services. Eurosocial recognized that access to healthcare systems plays a significant role in promoting social cohesion and, despite the progress made in expanding health systems, inequality still determines the access of different groups to healthcare services. The goal of this line of action was to strengthen primary care models with a focus on families and communities and to improve policies for managing human resources, thereby enhancing the quality and efficiency of healthcare provision and expanding its coverage. It also aimed to improve equity in access to medications by promoting rational use to address issues such as medication availability, pricing, dosage, effectiveness, and quality. Although the area of health did not have a specific section in the action plans derived from the summits, it is mentioned in the summits declarations as one of the areas covered by social cohesion as part of its multidimensional nature.

Table N° 14. Correspondence between institutional reports and summit-driven guidelines in the macro area of Social Policies

Area	Line of Action	Corresponding Guidelines	Summit Document
<i>Employment</i>	- National Professional Qualifications Systems - Active Employment Policies	Social cohesion and inclusion are benefited by cooperation initiatives on employment such as fostering formal employment and exchanging experiences on labor systems.	All action plans (Section 5).
<i>Social Protection</i>	Comprehensive Social Protection Systems	Social cohesion and inclusion are achieved through the promotion and implementation of public policies and integrated strategies aimed at eradicating poverty and reducing inequality.	All summit declarations.
<i>Education</i>	Prevention of academic failure, Retention and Reincorporation	Social cohesion and inclusion are benefited by cooperation initiatives on education.	All action plans (Section 5).
<i>Health</i>	Equity in access to health services	No corresponding guidelines found.	

Source: Own elaboration based on the analysis of Eurosocio's institutional reports

Macro area 3: Justice and Citizen Security

The aim of this macro area was to help the population, especially the most vulnerable sectors, to overcome the barriers they face to access justice and conflict resolution mechanisms by strengthening the resources and capacities of public administrations to provide these services (Eurosocio, 2014). In addition, it supported the organization of relevant actors for the social prevention of violence, addressing public safety problems from a perspective focused on the guarantee of fundamental rights and prevention. As the name implies, this macro area integrates two areas, namely *Citizen Security* and *Justice*.

The line of action of the area of *Citizen Security* is named Violence Prevention. Eurosocio acknowledged that tackling the issue of violence demanded a holistic strategy taking into account not only the law enforcement and legal dimensions, but also social and economic factors. The aim of this line of action was to enhance violence prevention as part of public security policies, with a special focus on addressing youth violence. While violence

prevention was not explicitly mentioned in the summits declarations and action plans as part of social cohesion and inclusion (except for gender-based violence), addressing this issue may be a result of meetings with local governments and their expressed need to cover this topic in Eurosocio. Moreover, the summits declarations only refer to the concept of security in terms of social security and the only violence-related issues referred to were transnational organized criminal activities (mentioned in the Santiago declaration). Citizen security was introduced as a topic only in the summit declaration and action plan at the Brussels Summit in 2015.

On the other hand, the area of *Justice* had four lines of action: Socio professional integration of incarcerated persons, attention to victims of gender violence, alternative conflict resolution mechanisms, and reduction of barriers to access to justice for vulnerable populations. Regarding the first line of action, Eurosocio promoted the inclusion of incarcerated individuals and their proper reintegration into society through the exchange of successful experiences between different countries in areas such as vocational training, work during incarceration and employment opportunities after release. The second line of action focused on the fight against gender violence in Latin America due to the prevalence of this problem in the region and the possibility of promoting the implementation of effective public policies based on successful European experiences.

The third line of action pertained to the creation of Alternative Conflict Resolution Mechanisms (ACRMs) that provided rapid and satisfactory solutions to relatively simple disputes, allowing more efficient case management and benefiting the most vulnerable populations. Finally, the fourth line of action was related to the continuation of Eurosocio's efforts on the reduction of barriers to access to justice after the creation of the Brasilia Rules, a comprehensive set of guidelines aiming to improve access to justice for vulnerable populations, achieved by the first phase of the Eurosocio program. The program resumed this line of action and continued its efforts towards ensuring the proper implementation of these rules by creating more accessible pathways for vulnerable communities to exercise their fundamental rights.

The area of *Justice* was the one with the most lines of action in Eurosocio II, demonstrating its significance in the framework of Eurosocio's work in Latin America. However, it is striking that the only line of action with a corresponding summit-driven guideline was the one related to attention to victims of gender violence. The documentary

analysis reveals a conspicuous absence of references to the topic of justice in the summit declarations and action plans during the study period. Therefore, the relevance of this area of work may be attributed to the fact that it was inherited from the first phase of Eurosocioal (from 2005 to 2010). This observation holds particular significance as it reflects that, although Eurosocioal generally followed the guidelines provided by the summit declarations and action plans, it also demonstrated its capacity to shape its priorities autonomously based on the insights gained from prior operation phases, creating a sense of actorness.

Table N° 15. Correspondence between institutional reports and summit-driven guidelines in the macro area of Justice and Citizen Security

Area	Line of Action	Corresponding Guidelines	Summit Document
<i>Citizen security</i>	Violence Prevention	No corresponding guidelines found.	
<i>Justice</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Socio professional integration of incarcerated persons - Attention to victims of gender violence - Alternative conflict resolution mechanisms - Reduction of barriers to access to justice for vulnerable populations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - No corresponding guidelines found. - Gender equality, as a condition for social cohesion and inclusion, entails elimination of all forms of violence against women. - No corresponding guidelines found. - No corresponding guidelines found. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Santiago and Brussels action plans (Section 7).

Source: Own elaboration based on the analysis of Eurosocioal's institutional reports

Macro area 4: Public Finances

This macro area was especially relevant as social cohesion and inclusion require guaranteeing adequate financing for public policies implemented to meet these goals. In fact, in most Latin American countries, tax systems have shortcomings hindering the achievement of greater social cohesion (Eurosocioal, 2014). This macro area reflects Eurosocioal's commitment to support the creation of sustainable, equitable, and functional tax systems that increase fiscal space for financing social policies in Latin America. The main goal was to address the challenge of reducing income disparities and improving

public services by developing more progressive tax systems. This macro area only had one area of work, namely *Public Finances*.

The line of action of the area of *Public Finances* is called Inclusive and Sustainable Tax Systems. Eurosocial acknowledged the importance of improving the structure of tax systems to make them progressive and redistributive. This line of action aimed to support tax reform processes by sharing successful European and Latin American practices, building on the experience of the first phase of Eurosocial, and leveraging the inputs of various operational partners in public finances and other areas of the program. This line of action aligns with the guideline from the summits declarations regarding the implementation of macroeconomic policies designed to promote inclusive growth. It also relates to the guideline on the commitment to transparency and accountability in public finances to achieve social inclusion. Furthermore, this line follows the guideline from the action plans related to the establishment of partnerships between EU and Latin American public administrations, through institutional strengthening and cooperation, to support the management and implementation of effective social policies in areas such as taxation.

Table N° 16. Correspondence between institutional reports and summit-driven guidelines in the macro area of Public Finances

Area	Line of Action	Corresponding Guidelines	Summit Document
<i>Public Finances</i>	Inclusive and Sustainable Tax Systems	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Social inclusion and cohesion encompasses the implementation of macroeconomic policies designed to promote inclusive growth. - Commitment to transparency and accountability in public finances. - Establishment of partnerships between public administrations of the EU and Latin America. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Madrid and Brussels declarations. - Santiago and Brussels declarations. - All action plans (Section 3).

Source: Own elaboration based on the analysis of Eurosocial's institutional reports

- **Eurosocial's institutional reports during the non-summits period**

This section encompasses an analysis of Eurosocial's institutional reports covering the period from 2016 to 2020 when the program began its third phase and was called Eurosocial+. As in the previous section, the institutional reports from each line of action

were thoroughly examined to understand whether the guidelines provided by the summits were still reflected in the functioning of Eurosocial despite the lack of summits and, if not, which guidelines were followed. It is worth noting that all reports from this period feature a section detailing the specific SDGs associated with the respective line of action. This is evidence of the relevance of SDGs in this phase of Eurosocial and aligns with the emphasis placed on the SDGs in the Brussels Declaration and Action Plan.

Twelve documents were reviewed from this period corresponding to the lines of action of Eurosocial+. Following the same structure as the analysis of documents in the summits period, this section will be divided according to Eurosocial's policy areas and their corresponding lines of action during the non-summits period. To revisit the policy areas and lines of action of Eurosocial in this period, see Diagram N° 6 in section 6.1.2.

Policy area 1: Democratic Governance

This policy area is the continuation of the macro area called under the same name in the previous phase. According to Eurosocial's website, this policy area promotes, endorses and preserves equality, participation, pluralism and development by focusing on the effectiveness and efficiency of the states and their legitimacy in the eyes of citizens. This policy area comprises five lines of action, namely *public finances*, *regional development*, *access to justice*, *prevention of violence and reintegration of persons deprived of their liberty*, *good governance and construction of citizenship*, and *strategic planning*.

The line of action of *public finances* was created from the macro area of the same name that was part of the structure of Eurosocial's previous phase. This line of action supported redistributive fiscal reforms and tax policies in Latin American countries. Its aim was not only to increase tax capacity but also to foster greater citizen involvement, instill more confidence in tax institutions, enhance fiscal collection efficiency, and combat fraud and tax evasion. Eurosocial contributed to achieving these goals by supporting the institutional strengthening of national tax systems, promoting regulatory developments to implement fiscal policies, and accompanying budgetary reforms.

In the framework of this line of action, Eurosocial partnered with the Ministries of Finance and Economy and the tax administrations in different countries to strengthen and modernize public tax collection systems. Eurosocial also collaborated closely with prominent international organizations that offered their specialized knowledge and well-

established networks to achieve concrete results in regulatory, institutional, or procedural aspects. This is a clear example of the summit-driven guideline on establishing partnerships between EU and Latin American public administrations through institutional strengthening and cooperation, proposed in the action plans.

The line of action of *regional development* is a follow-up to the line of action with the same name in the previous phase of the program. As Eurosocial acknowledged the importance of territories, it aimed to promote tailored public policies that suit their specific needs, reinforce the decentralization process, enhance regional competitiveness, and endorse collaborative strategies in border regions. Activities in this line of action are articulated around four strategic axes: 1) Multilevel governance strategies, 2) Competitiveness, productivity and innovation systems in the territory, 3) Cross-border cooperation programs, and 4) Improvement of land use and urban development initiatives. These activities clearly reflect the proposed initiatives in Section 3 of the action plans. Furthermore, this line of action aligns with the guideline outlined in the action plans highlighting the importance of regional integration and interconnectivity, as well as the relevance of territorial cohesion stated by the Brussels Declaration.

The line of action of *access to justice, prevention of violence and reintegration of persons deprived of their liberty* is another example of a macro area of Eurosocial II that became part of an area of work in the third phase of the program. This line of work comprises a combination of some of the activities held in the macro area of Justice and Citizen Security in Eurosocial II. Following the aims of its predecessor, this line of work assists vulnerable populations by guaranteeing the protection of their rights and promoting their integration and inclusion in society. Some of the former lines of action in the Justice and Citizen Security macro area such as violence prevention, implementation of Alternative Conflict Resolution Mechanisms, reduction of barriers to access to justice, reintegration of incarcerated persons, and awareness of rights, guidance, and legal assistance, became strategic axes in this phase of the program.

In order to eliminate barriers to accessing justice, Eurosocial relies on existing judicial and extrajudicial institutional mechanisms and promotes innovative approaches in the activities of this line of action. At the regional level, several collaboration platforms are supported in order to facilitate knowledge generation, experience exchange, and agenda building. One of the most important projects in this regard has been the support to the Brasilia Rules to

improve access to justice for vulnerable populations, which was also part of the previous phase of the program and was continued in Eurosocial+. While the summits declarations and action plans did not have a specific section related to access to justice and violence prevention, this line of action follows the guideline from the action plans related to the establishment of partnerships between EU and Latin American public administrations to support the management and implementation of effective social policies in areas such as administration of justice.

The line of action of *good governance and construction of citizenship* gives continuity to the area of Democratic Institutionalities from Eurosocial II. Therefore, it promotes actions on transparency, accountability, access to information and the fight against corruption, but it also includes an additional component on citizenship building. Its main objective is to establish trustworthy, collaborative, and reciprocal connections between governments and citizens. The activities of this line of action are divided into four strategic axes: 1) transparency policies, access to information and data protection, 2) the fight against corruption, 3) mechanisms for citizen participation, and 4) education for democratic citizenship.

This line of action reflects the guideline from the summits declarations stating that social cohesion and inclusion entail a commitment to transparency and accountability in public finances as well as strengthening the fight against corruption. This line also aligns with the guideline on pursuing democratic governance by promoting citizen participation, strengthening access to information, and improving public management effectiveness and efficiency.

Finally, the line of action of *strategic planning* is a new line of action in the area of work of Democratic Governance. It aims to increase the effectiveness of resource allocation through the monitoring and evaluation of public policies, as well as to improve coordination among planning, budgeting, and organizational structure in the processes of public policy formulation. Unfortunately, no documents were available for consultation on the Eurosocial's website in relation to this line of action. For this reason, it was not possible to provide an overview of the activities conducted in this line of action and its correspondence with summit-driven guidelines.

Table N° 17. Correspondence between institutional reports and summit-driven guidelines in the policy area of Democratic Governance

Line of Action	Corresponding Guidelines	Summit Document
<i>Public finances</i>	Establishment of partnerships between public administrations of the EU and Latin America.	All action plans (Section 3).
<i>Regional development</i>	- Ensure dialogue on regional integration to promote social cohesion and integration. - Commitment to achieve higher levels of territorial cohesion.	- All action plans (Section 3). - Brussels Declaration (Art. 64).
<i>Access to justice, prevention of violence and reintegration of persons deprived of their liberty</i>	Establishment of partnerships between public administrations of the EU and Latin America.	All action plans (Section 3).
<i>Good governance and construction of citizenship</i>	- Commitment to transparency and accountability in public finances as well as strengthening the fight against corruption. - Commitment to democratic governance by implementing measures such as promoting citizen participation, strengthening access to information, and improving public management effectiveness and efficiency.	- Santiago and Brussels declarations. - Brussels Declaration.
<i>Strategic planning</i>	No institutional report was found.	

Source: Own elaboration based on the analysis of Eurosocial's institutional reports

Policy area 2: Gender Equality

Gender Equality is a new area of work in Eurosocial and represents one of the biggest changes in the structure of the program. Its aim is to promote profound changes in the social structure that causes inequalities between women and men. The significant focus on the gender component is a notable characteristic of the third phase of Eurosocial. In this sense, a specialized unit called Help Desk was created to reach a higher level of integration of the gender perspective in Eurosocial and its actions in public policies in Latin America. This unit fosters a systematic approach that allows for the institutionalization and systematization of the gender perspective at every level of the program. This policy area is divided in four lines of action: *physical autonomy, political autonomy and parity,*

economic autonomy and care, and mainstreaming of the gender perspective, development of gender statistics and gender-sensitive budgets.

The line of action of *physical autonomy* revolves around the ability of individuals, particularly women and gender minorities, to have control over their bodies and make decisions about their physical well-being without interference, coercion, or discrimination from others. To promote physical autonomy, Eurosocijal supports activities in three areas: 1) Fight against gender violence, 2) Sexual and reproductive health, and 3) Changes in masculinities. Biregional meetings have been organized to promote the exchange of successful experiences and coordinate joint efforts between the EU and Latin America to foster gender equality. This line of action follows the guidelines from the summits declarations (specifically the Santiago Declaration) and action plans (particularly the Santiago and Brussels Action Plans) regarding the need to promote gender equality and women's rights as a condition to achieve social inclusion and cohesion. While physical autonomy was not mentioned explicitly in these documents, it aligns with the general aim of promoting women's empowerment. Moreover, the organization of biregional meetings fulfills the summits' mandate to provide a space to exchange experiences and best practices to promote gender equality.

The line of action of *political autonomy and parity* promotes public policies that remove the barriers to accessing participation in power and increase women's decision-making capacity at all levels of power. This line also addresses and combats various manifestations of political violence intended to hinder women's participation in elections and their ability to serve in elected positions. Since some Latin American countries perform better than some European countries in terms of political parity, Eurosocijal has become a triangular platform to promote peer learning and mobilize experts to facilitate the circulation of the best Latin American experiences. This line of action clearly reflects the guideline provided by the Santiago Declaration, in which the leaders from the EU and Latin America acknowledged "the need to increase women's empowerment by strengthening their political participation and leadership" (p. 11). It also fulfills the objective proposed by the Santiago and Brussels action plans to "promote the political and popular participation of women in terms of equality" (Section 7, para. b).

The line of action of *economic autonomy and care* aims to boost women's participation in paid employment while reducing the burdens of their invisible unpaid work. The line is

divided into two sublines: the first promotes access to quality paid jobs to decrease the feminization of poverty, while the second relates to the development of care systems that promote social co-responsibility for care activities. At the regional level, there were spaces to exchange experiences, policies and good practices between Europe and Latin America and articulate actions between the Ministries of Women and the Ministries of Labor to strengthen women's participation in the job market.

This line of action follows the guideline provided by the Santiago Declaration about the need to encourage women's economic autonomy and equal and balanced participation in the labor force. Moreover, it is aligned with the guideline provided by the Santiago and Brussels action plans about promoting "the economic empowerment of women and their participation in the economy and paid labor markets, with social security and conditions of fairness, as well as to promote policies and laws to ensure equal pay for equal work" (Section 7, para. e).

Finally, the line of action called *mainstreaming of the gender perspective, development of gender statistics and gender-sensitive budgets* promotes the integration of a "cross-gender approach" in public institutions to develop their "gender architecture", improve the use of data and gender indicators, and carry out the monitoring of public spending related to gender equality. This line of action helps institutions conduct sectoral analyses to implement mechanisms that reduce gender inequalities and discrimination. This line also promotes the design of national and local gender planning and the development of gender budgets and statistics.

Since 2017, annual regional meetings have been held to present good practices and exchange experiences between the EU and Latin America regarding gender measurements. As the previous lines of action, this line also aligns with the guidelines on gender equality provided by the summit declarations (specifically the Santiago declaration) and, particularly, reflects the summits' mandate on the need to provide a space to exchange experiences and best practices related to women's empowerment. Furthermore, it fulfills the proposal of the Santiago and Brussels action plans related to "identify areas of exchange and cooperation for the creation of synergies and mutual learning to optimize existing practices and lessons learned in the area of gender mainstreaming in all public policies" (Section 7, para. g).

Table N° 18. Correspondence between institutional reports and summit-driven guidelines in the policy area of Gender Equality

Line of Action	Corresponding Guidelines	Summit Document
<i>Physical autonomy</i>	- Gender equality, as a precondition for social cohesion and inclusion, entails the promotion of women's rights including their political participation, economic empowerment and the elimination of all forms of violence against them.	- Santiago and Brussels action plans (Section 7) and Santiago Declaration.
<i>Political autonomy and parity</i>		
<i>Economic autonomy and care</i>		
<i>Mainstreaming of the gender perspective, development of gender statistics and gender-sensitive budgets</i>	- The promotion of gender equality, as a precondition for social cohesion and inclusion, encompasses the biregional exchange of experiences and best practices.	- Santiago and Brussels action plans (Section 7).

Source: Own elaboration based on the analysis of Eurosocial's institutional reports

Policy area 3: Social Policies

This area of work is the continuation of the macro area with the same name in the previous phase of Eurosocial. Eurosocial acknowledges that social policies are the most direct way through which governments reduce inequalities and, therefore, build social cohesion and inclusion by guaranteeing equal opportunities and public services for all citizens. This aligns with the guideline provided by the summits declarations highlighting that social cohesion and inclusion are achieved through the promotion and implementation of public policies and integrated strategies to eradicate poverty and reduce inequality. This area of work comprises four lines of action, namely *policies of social inclusion and the fight against poverty, active employment policies, policies for youth, adolescence and childhood, and care policies*.

The line of action called *policies of social inclusion and the fight against poverty* revolves around the improvement and modernization of social assistance programs, with a particular focus on the consolidation and development of comprehensive social protection systems. It also encompasses initiatives to strengthen social sector institutions, enhance information systems, and implement reforms to facilitate access to healthcare and education public services. This line of action aligns with the overarching guideline articulated in all summit declarations, which emphasizes that social cohesion and inclusion are achieved through the

promotion and implementation of public policies and integrated strategies to eradicate poverty and reduce inequality and social exclusion. Moreover, it reflects the multidimensional nature of social cohesion promoted by the leaders of the EU and Latin America in the biregional summits and the explicit mandate to Eurosocial about promoting equality and access to public services.

The line of action of *active employment policies* promotes public policies that reform job markets to address challenges hindering social cohesion and inclusion, such as unemployment, precariousness and informality. Activities in this line of action include strengthening employment service systems, work formalization programs, and access to training to improve people's employability, especially the most vulnerable groups such as rural population, migrants and people with disabilities. This line of action was also inherited from the previous phase of the program. Therefore, it also follows the guidelines identified in Section 5 of all action plans regarding the promotion of initiatives on employment aimed at improving the functioning of labor markets. This line of action specifically reflects the mandate of implementing programs to foster formal employment (Section 5, para. f) and improve access to vocational education and training (Section 5, para. b).

The line of action of *policies for youth, adolescence and childhood* reflects Eurosocial's recognition of the importance of providing assistance to the youngest populations, given their inherent vulnerability. Supporting children and adolescents leads to long-lasting positive outcomes, such as human development, increased productivity and reduced poverty. Some of the most significant issues in this area are adolescent pregnancy, youth unemployment and juvenile crime. While there is no explicit mention of this kind of issues in the summit declarations and action plans, the leaders of the EU and Latin America expressed their support for the young population, highlighting the need to provide them assistance through social programs.

Finally, the line of action of *care policies* focuses on the construction of comprehensive care systems oriented to the protection of children, older adults and disabled populations. Policies that recognize the pivotal role of caregivers within these systems are also supported by granting access to social security and training programs, as well as promoting the professionalization of the care sector. This line of action includes initiatives both at the regional and the national level. At the regional level it is worth noting the creation of a

biregional care network in which Latin American and European countries exchange good practices, knowledge and experiences on the subject. This practice aligns with the guideline on the need to foster a biregional exchange of experiences and best practices to promote gender equality as a precondition for social cohesion. Considering that most caregivers are women, efforts in this line of action follow the gender approach promoted by the Santiago Declaration. However, it is important to note that this area of cooperation was not explicitly mentioned in any of the summit declarations or action plans.

Table N° 19. Correspondence between institutional reports and summit-driven guidelines in the policy area of Social Policies

Line of Action	Corresponding Guidelines	Summit Document
<i>Policies of social inclusion and the fight against poverty</i>	Social cohesion and inclusion are achieved through the promotion and implementation of public policies and integrated strategies aimed at eradicating poverty and reducing inequality.	All summits declarations.
<i>Active employment policies</i>	Social cohesion and inclusion are benefited by cooperation initiatives on employment such as fostering formal employment and exchanging experiences on labor systems.	All action plans (Section 5).
<i>Policies for youth, adolescence and childhood</i>	No corresponding guidelines found.	
<i>Care policies</i>	The promotion of gender equality, as a precondition for social cohesion and inclusion, encompasses the biregional exchange of experiences and best practices.	Santiago and Brussels action plans (Section 7).

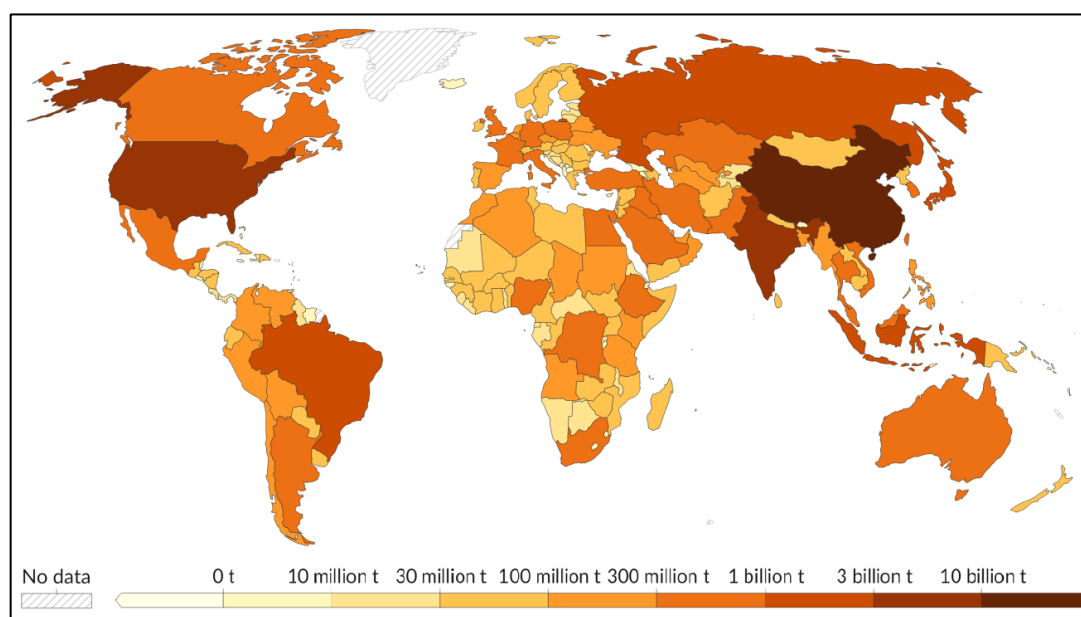
Source: Own elaboration based on the analysis of Eurosocial's institutional reports

6.2 Euroclima: Interregional cooperation program on environmental sustainability and climate change

6.2.1 Context and Background: Importance of environmental policies for the EU and Latin America

Climate change is one of the most significant and pressing challenges facing the world nowadays. It is a complex and multidimensional phenomenon that has far-reaching impacts on both human and natural systems. Greenhouse emissions are the primary drivers of climate change, causing alterations in global temperature patterns and weather phenomena (see Graph N° 6). According to the 2022 Assessment Report coordinated by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), global warming is on track to increase by 1.5 °C, which would cause an environmental disaster driving between 32 and 132 million people into extreme poverty in the next decade. The consequences of this increase in global temperature include sea level rise, more frequent and intense heatwaves, droughts, floods, and storms, loss of biodiversity, and food and water insecurity (Alimonti, Mariani, Prodi & Ricci, 2022). Global economic inequality has proven to be increased by climate change as well (Diffenbaugh & Burke, 2019). Given its broad and extreme impacts, urgent and concerted efforts from all the actors in society are critical for the sustainability of human societies and the planet as a whole.

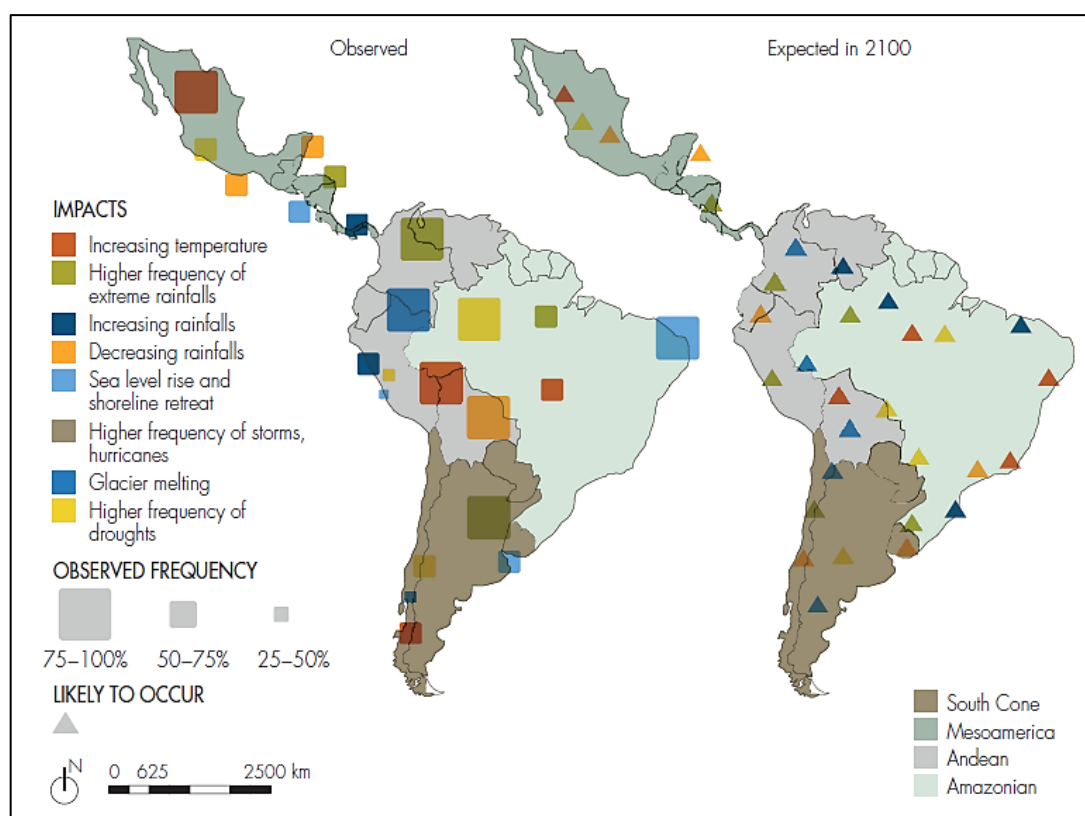
Graph N° 6. Global greenhouse gas emissions



Source: Our World in Data (2022)

In the case of Latin America, climate change poses a substantial challenge due to its multifaceted impacts on the region (see Graph N° 7). In this regard, “the LA region emits less than 10% of the world’s greenhouse gases but is disproportionately affected by the effects of climate variability and change” (European Commission, 2019a, p. 8). The effects of climate change threaten Latin America in different ways, including the destruction of critical ecosystems and biodiversity, disruptions to key economic sectors such as agriculture and tourism, exacerbation of social inequalities and vulnerabilities for indigenous and marginalized communities, and the need for adaptation measures and sustainable development strategies to mitigate its impacts. Thus, “the depletion of the natural resource base coupled with the rise in climate variability have made the region’s poorest communities, who live in high-risk areas, at growing risk from weather related natural disasters.” (European Commission, 2019a, p. 8).

Graph N° 7. Observed and expected impacts linked to climate change in Latin America



Source: Campuzano et al. (2014)

Meanwhile, climate change is also a major threat to the EU, which is already experiencing its effects such as more extreme weather events (e.g. heat waves, droughts and floods),

rising sea levels and coastal erosion, potential loss of ecosystems, and changes in agricultural yields. These effects threaten critical sectors such as water resources, infrastructure, agriculture, and public health, making it imperative for the EU to adapt and build resilience. In this sense, the EU has recognized the economic opportunities that arise from transitioning to a low-carbon economy, since investing in renewable energy, energy efficiency, and sustainable technologies not only reduces emissions but also stimulates innovation, job creation, and economic growth (Milek, Nowak & Latosinska, 2022). Moreover, “the EU has slowly emerged as a key player in the global politics of climate change and has well-known aspirations to continue leading the world towards effective governance solutions” (Jordan et. al., 2010, p. xvi). Given the EU’s ambition to be a leader in climate action, addressing this issue is essential for its credibility and influence in international climate negotiations.

The fight against climate change has become a pivotal element in the biregional agenda between the EU and Latin America. However, their interest in this matter stems from different backgrounds. While the EU is one of the world leaders in the fight against climate change, Latin America is one of the most biodiverse but also endangered regions on the planet. Despite these differing starting points, their shared concern for climate-related issues led to the inclusion of sustainable development in the biregional dialogue since the beginning of their strategic partnership in 1999. This environmental agenda has been primarily characterized by a robust multilateral approach, as evident in the summits declarations. Both the EU and Latin America have been active champions of multilateral initiatives such as the Kyoto Protocol and other UN framework initiatives. When participating in these multilateral forums, the two regions have demonstrated aligned stances on climate change matters (Sanahuja, 2009).

Their interest in environmental issues was directly reflected in the biregional summits and all the summits declarations have an environmental component to a greater or lesser extent. In particular, the Lima Summit in 2008 was the event when the Heads of State and Government from the EU and Latin America agreed on the creation of a cooperation program that would encourage knowledge sharing in terms of climate change policies, foster regular dialogue and ensure coordination of future actions on this issue (Art. 52, Lima Declaration, 2008). As a result, the Euroclima program was created in 2010 with a view to facilitating the design of adaptation and mitigation strategies and policies. In this framework, the participation of all Latin American countries was encouraged, especially in

terms of research and technological innovation policies for tackling the issue of climate change (Maihold, 2008).

6.2.2 Introducing Euroclima

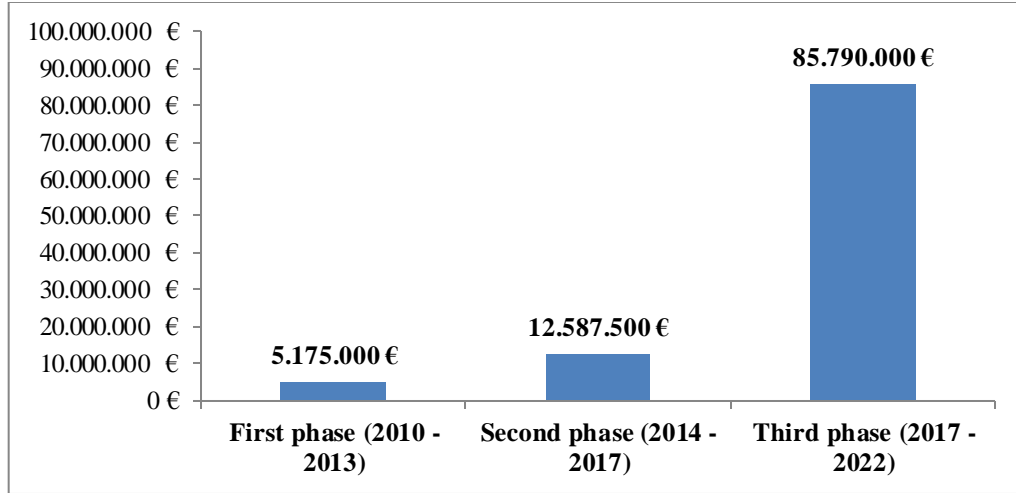
Euroclima is “the EU flagship cooperation program on environmental sustainability and climate change with the Latin American region” (Euroclima, 2020, p. 9). Its aim is to encourage sustainable practices that reduce the negative impact of climate change on the region, including measures to mitigate emissions, adapt to changing environmental conditions, build resilience, and encourage investment in sustainable development. In addition, since 2015 Euroclima has supported the Latin American countries in meeting the climate targets and actions, so-called Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs), made under the Paris Agreement.

Euroclima operates in 18 Latin American countries. Each country has a national focal point (appointed officials by their respective governments) who facilitate and guide the program’s execution and promote the application of its results in political decision-making at national and regional levels (Euroclima, 2020). As stated on its website, this program aims to address the demands of Latin American countries while encouraging dialogue and cooperation on climate-related issues within Latin America and between this region and the EU in international climate forums. The implementation of this program involves an alliance of cooperation agencies of EU Member States (such as AECID, AFD, Expertise France, FIIAPP, GIZ) and United Nations institutions (such as ECLAC and UNEP).

Since its inception in 2010, Euroclima has undergone three phases of operation. The first phase spanned from 2010 to 2013 and was allocated a budget of 5.175.000 euros (European Commission, 2014). Its aim was to enhance the understanding of the impacts and implications of climate change among political leaders and the scientific community in Latin America by facilitating the integration of climate change considerations into sustainable development strategies. The second phase, named Euroclima II, covered the period between 2014 and 2017 and had a budget of 12.587.500 euros (Euroclima, 2016). This phase aimed at increasing the resilience of Latin America to climate change and reducing the environmental and social vulnerability of the poorest population to the adverse effects of climate change. The third phase, from 2017 to 2022, received a global budget of 85.790.000 euros, a much larger amount than the previous phases, and represents

an exponential expansion of the program compared to the two precedent phases (Euroclima, 2021a).

Graph N° 8. Euroclima's budget



Source: Own elaboration based on European Commission (2014) and Euroclima (2016, 2021a)

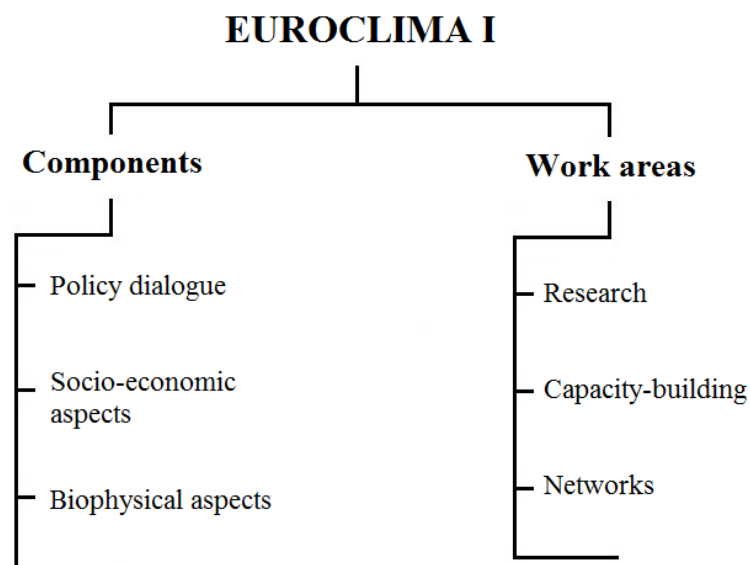
The remarkable expansion of the program in recent years can be attributed to the strong commitment demonstrated by both regions in achieving the NDCs stipulated in the Paris Agreement, and particularly the EU's interest in assisting Latin America in this endeavor. In fact, the pronounced focus on NDCs compliance constituted the central objective of Euroclima during its third phase, which consequently justified the allocation of a larger budget. This enhanced financial provision facilitated the execution of a diverse range of activities by Euroclima across multiple domains, enabling more effective interventions to pursue its mission.

Evolution of the program: Euroclima I, Euroclima II and Euroclima+

Euroclima experienced a significant evolution over the years. In its first phase, the program was structured into three components: policy dialogue, socio-economic aspects, and biophysical aspects of climate change in the Latin American region (see Diagram N° 7). Euroclima's activities were centered around three main areas of focus, including research on biophysical and socio-economic climate change issues, capacity-building through courses and publications, and the development of networks to facilitate the exchange of experiences and scientific information on climate change. Biregional exchanges were

enriched and strengthened through regional meetings, interactive debates, and the dissemination of research, training, and networking results.

Diagram N° 7. Structure of Euroclima I

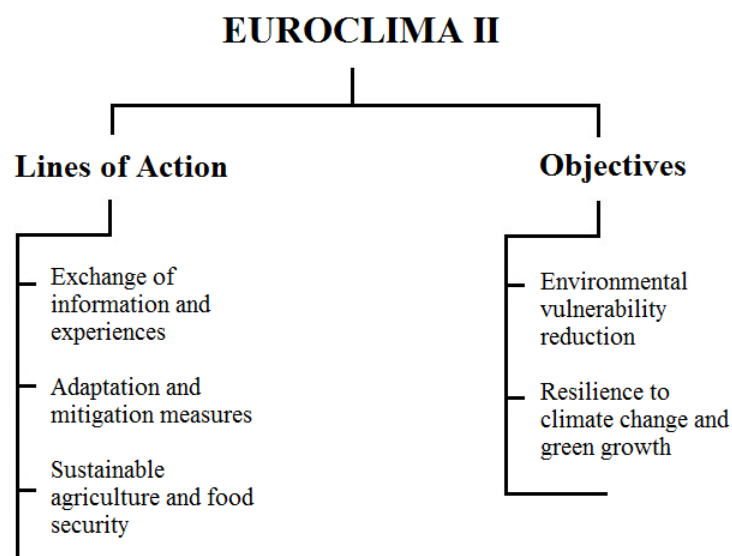


Source: Own elaboration based on Euroclima (2013)

During this initial phase, the program's execution was entrusted to several entities, namely the Joint Research Centre of the European Commission (JRC), the United Nations Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), and the Directorate-General for Development and Cooperation of the European Commission Europe-Aid (the Regional Programs for Latin America and Caribbean Unit). These organizations collaborated closely with the Technical Assistance team to ensure the successful implementation of the program (Euroclima, 2013).

In its second phase, Euroclima introduced some changes in its approach and adopted a different structure. The program centered its efforts on three main lines of action: exchange of information and experiences on climate change, identification of adaptation and mitigation measures, and promotion of sustainable agriculture and food security (see Diagram N° 8). Moreover, this phase was driven by two primary objectives: reducing the environmental and social vulnerability to climate change and reinforcing the region's resilience while promoting green growth.

Diagram N° 8. Structure of Euroclima II

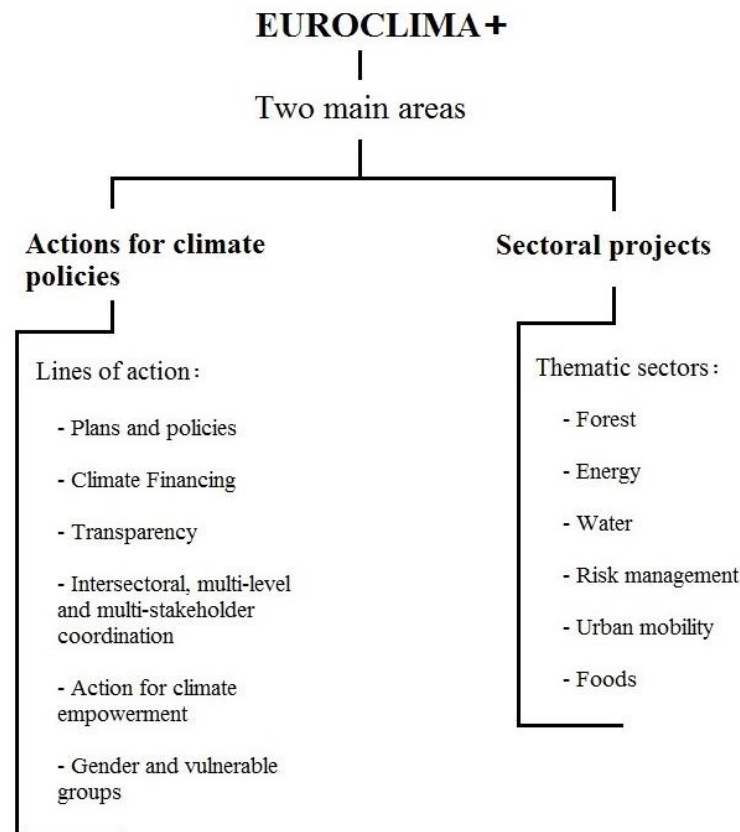


Source: Own elaboration based on Euroclima (2016)

During this phase, Euroclima continued to benefit from the contributions of the same agencies as in the previous stage. The European Commission's Technical Assistance team supported the coordination and visibility of the program. The ECLAC played a pivotal role in designing public policy measures aimed at adaptation and mitigation in Latin America. Meanwhile, the JRC focused on disseminating knowledge and applying advanced bio-physical and bio-economic models for agricultural systems and policy analysis. Finally, the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) provided a significant support, facilitating high-level policy dialogues, encouraging national climate change debates, engaging civil society, and raising public awareness throughout the region (Euroclima, 2016).

As previously mentioned, the third phase of Euroclima involved a significant expansion of the program, resulting in a new restructuring. Aligned with the Paris Agreement established during the 2015 United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP 21), and in response to the requirements outlined in the NDCs adopted by participating countries, Euroclima's orientation shifted towards aiding the fulfillment of these commitments. This shift in focus prompted a noteworthy increase in both the program's budgetary allocation and its operational scope.

Diagram N° 9. Structure of Euroclima+



Source: Own elaboration based on Euroclima (2020)

Consequently, Euroclima concentrated its efforts on delivering specialized services directed at facilitating the execution of Paris Agreement obligations, with a particular focus on climate governance, financial mechanisms, and technical assistance for project execution within sectors prioritized by the 18 participating Latin American nations (see Diagram N° 9). Guided by a participatory and demand-driven approach, Euroclima aimed to promote the development and application of national strategies concerning mitigation and adaptation while facilitating regional dialogue for climate action.

A comparison of the organizational diagrams of the three phases shows the significant transformation of Euroclima throughout its operational phases, progressing from relatively simpler structures in the first and second phases to a more developed framework in the third phase. This evolution also yielded implications for the role of summits in the development of this cooperation program, a phenomenon that is expounded upon in the subsequent sections of this chapter. As in the case of Eurosocio's examination, this

chapter is divided into three subsections reflecting the three-phase process of data collection and analysis proposed in this dissertation.

The first subsection reveals the main findings of the interviews with Euroclima's staff, providing insights on the development of Euroclima during the summits and non-summits periods as well as the role of summits in the functioning of this program. The second presents the analysis of the summit declarations and action plans as well as the identified guidelines provided by the summits. Lastly, the third subsection comprises an examination of Euroclima's institutional reports to ascertain whether the guidelines identified in summit declarations and action plans are reflected in these reports, seeking potential common patterns during both summits and non-summits periods.

6.2.3 Euroclima from the analysis of the interviews

Similarly to Eurosocietal's case, five main themes prevailed in the analysis of the interviews with Euroclima's staff: the main characteristics of the program, its major challenges (including the Covid-19 pandemic), the impact of the lack of summits on the relationship between the EU and Latin America, the impact of the lack of summits on Euroclima, and the role of summits in the functioning and evolution of this cooperation program. The interviews revealed how the increasing relevance of climate change as a key issue on the international agenda benefited Euroclima's growth despite the context of the lack of EU-Latin American summits. Another key finding refers to the importance of actors like UNEP in the functioning of the program over the years, and the role of the Forum of Ministers of Environment of Latin America and the Caribbean as a regional space of political dialogue supporting Euroclima in the non-summits period.

Main characteristics of Euroclima

During the interviews, a number of distinctive characteristics of Euroclima emerged from the insights provided by the participants. One of the most salient ones was Euroclima's close connection with the countries in which it operates. In this sense, Interviewees N° 6, N° 9 and N° 10 noted that the program works in direct response to the countries' demands, ensuring that the projects remain relevant and effective by tailoring them to the specific needs of each country. This approach makes the program more likely to continue even during the non-summits period, as Interviewee N° 9 pointed out. Likewise, Interviewee N° 8 emphasized Euroclima's commitment to assisting Latin American countries taking into

account their particular needs. A clear example of this approach was the selection of the six thematic sectors for Euroclima's third phase, as these sectors were specifically chosen by the countries themselves (represented by their national focal points) during the dialogues with delegates from Euroclima, as Interviewees N° 6 and N° 8 pointed out.

The participants also noted that to remain effective in meeting countries' needs, Euroclima implemented a working methodology inspired by Eurosociál. This methodology was denominated *Diálogos País* (so-called *Mesas País* in Eurosociál). The creation of *Diálogos País* enabled Euroclima to respond more directly and in a coordinated manner to the prioritized demands of Latin American countries. As elucidated by Interviewee N° 8, in these dialogues the national governments point out the projects wherein the EU may have the most substantial impact and add more value. Thus, this methodology ensures a match between the needs of the countries and the projects to be implemented. As a result, the participant countries have welcomed and appreciated Euroclima's efforts over the years, as Interviewee N° 8 noted. This has been a success factor for the program to work effectively despite the lack of summits, as Interviewee N° 9 argued.

The particular evolution of Euroclima also emerged as a key theme during the interviews. In this regard, Interviewee N° 7 highlighted that Euroclima was created from a participative design, aiming to engage climate change authorities from the partner countries. However, this participant also remarked the challenging context in which Euroclima emerged, noting that it was a period when climate change was still an incipient topic in the international agenda, prior to the establishment of the Paris Agreement. This context was reflected in the relatively modest resource allocation from the EU to this cooperation program at its inception. Interviewee N° 7 stated that these financial resources were channeled toward facilitating biregional information exchange and supporting technical-scientific research. During this initial phase, few targeted activities were undertaken. This fact was confirmed by Interviewee N° 8, who asserted that, in its first stage, Euroclima focused mostly on producing thematic studies and technical documents, while in subsequent phases it was able to implement specific projects.

Another pattern identified in the interviews was the pivotal role of the United Nations Environment Program (UNEP) in shaping Euroclima's functioning. While UNEP serves as one of the implementing agencies for the program, its significance transcends this function. UNEP's prominence relies on its role as organizer of the Forum of Ministers of

Environment of Latin America and the Caribbean. In this sense, Interviewee N° 7 underscored UNEP's efforts to establish a cohesive linkage between the Forum of Ministers and Euroclima, an alignment facilitated by UNEP's dual responsibility as both the Forum's organizer and implementing agency of the Euroclima program. Meanwhile, Interviewee N° 8 remarked that this Forum provides a meeting space for the Ministers to convene regularly and exchange experiences, which is very important given the shared challenges faced by the Latin American countries. Interviewee N° 8 added that UNEP provides valuable guidance to Euroclima due to its constant involvement in the international climate change agenda.

As mentioned in section 6.2.2 of this dissertation, and specially highlighted by Interviewees N° 6 and N° 8, a turning point in Euroclima's history was the signing of the Paris Agreement because, since then, the program focused on helping countries meet their NDCs commitments. According to Interviewees N° 8 and N° 10, Euroclima involved the EU delegations in the Latin American countries in order to establish a dialogue with representatives of each country and identify where the EU could make more efficient contributions to the NDC priorities. Interviewee N° 8 also noted that Euroclima has worked closely with the NDC partnership, which is an association of countries and institutions aiming to help countries comply with their commitments to the Paris Agreement. However, the participant pointed out that not all the 18 Latin American countries participating in Euroclima are members of the NDC partnership.

Another characteristic attributed to Euroclima is its dynamism. In this regard, Interviewee N° 6 highlighted that Euroclima is a very dynamic program in the sense that some priorities have been redefined over time, which is necessary considering that the topic of climate change is very dynamic as well. On the same line, Interviewee N° 8 mentioned that Euroclima is characterized by having a modular approach in which new contracts can be added to the execution of the program while the previous ones are still running. This particularity facilitated its continuity over the years. Finally, Interviewee N° 8 pointed out that Euroclima is constantly evolving, always trying to respond to the needs of the countries and follow the latest advances in the fight against climate change.

Major challenges for Euroclima

Similar to the approach used in the case of Eurosocio, interviewees were inquired about the primary challenges facing Euroclima. The aim was to ascertain whether any of the

participants would identify the absence of summits as a noteworthy obstacle to the program's operation. As was observed in Eurosocial's interviews, the Euroclima's staff did not mention the lack of summits as a remarkable problem for the continuation of the program.

Interviewees N° 9 and N° 10 pointed out that one of the biggest challenges of the program has been to coordinate all the actors that participate in the implementation of the projects. Considering that the functioning of Euroclima involves an alliance of different implementing agencies of the EU Member States, the division of tasks and the coordination of actions among them has been difficult at certain points. Moreover, Interviewee N° 6 mentioned that coordinating efforts to address people's needs was challenging for the program. This participant also noted that Euroclima's usual interlocutors are representatives of the Ministries of Environment, who often have coordination rather than execution responsibilities. Due to this situation, the program had to look for other interlocutors to support the implementation of projects in certain areas, a task that proved challenging at times.

Regarding the challenges related to the Covid-19 pandemic, Interviewees N° 7 and N° 9 mentioned that while some of Euroclima's activities, such as periodic meetings, successfully transitioned into a digital format; projects involving field-based operational components faced disruptions. This was particularly evident in certain projects within the agricultural and forestry sectors that required onsite activities. Interviewee N° 7 pointed out that this situation caused a slowdown in these projects, resulting in a delay of approximately six months compared to the expected time of execution. Meanwhile, Interviewee N° 8 asserted that, although there were delays in the implementation of some projects, Euroclima effectively sustained ongoing initiatives, ensuring that no budget was lost.

Furthermore, Interviewee N° 7 underlined a positive secondary effect of converting certain Euroclima activities, such as technical assistance and thematic studies, into a virtual format. This experience demonstrated that it is possible to avoid trips and personal meetings when it comes to intellectual activities. Consequently, Euroclima's staff reported an improvement in their digital skills to meet the program's evolving needs. Likewise, Interviewee N° 8 mentioned that, due to the pandemic, a couple of Euroclima's annual

meetings were conducted virtually and, despite the absence of in-person interaction, they were successful.

The impact of the lack of summits on the EU-Latin America relationship

The interviews provided a variety of insights into Euroclima's staff view of the biregional relationship between the EU and Latin America. On the one hand, Interviewee N° 6 emphasized the importance of recognizing that the relationship between these two regions is expressed in several ways, one of them being the summits. In this regard, the participant pointed out that summits play a crucial role in shaping the tone and intensity of the relationship. Yet, he did not provide additional information on this topic. He was reluctant to give an assessment of the general status of the EU-Latin America relations and said that he could only talk about the Euroclima program itself.

On the other hand, Interviewee N° 7 mentioned that the summits are spaces where the Heads of State and Government can discuss the content of the biregional cooperation. This participant noted that, during the first decade of the 2000s, the main cooperation topics in these meetings were social cohesion and climate change. Interviewee N° 10 pointed out that holding summits is important to revitalize the linkages between the EU and Latin America. This participant argued that the lack of summits from 2015 to 2023 created a void in the relationship.

Meanwhile, Interviewee N° 8 argued that, when assessing the impact of the lack of summits, it is important to take into account the political context during this period and the situation derived from the Covid-19 pandemic. The participant also pointed out that summit preparation is a very demanding process and it is important to be aware of many factors that may influence it, for example, the political alignment in the region. He also underlined that, in terms of budget for biregional cooperation, it is crucial to consider the impact of Brexit in the allocation of funds, as the UK was one of the most important contributors to the EU budget. Lastly, this participant noted that, while regions like Africa have historically been significant in EU cooperation efforts, Latin America has gained prominence and, recently, there is a renewed interest in the region.

The impact of the lack of summits on Euroclima's development

The lack of summits between the Heads of State and Government of the EU and Latin America was interpreted by Euroclima's staff in several ways. On the one hand,

Interviewee N° 6 pointed out that, during the non-summits period, Euroclima was “orphaned of guidance”, which was inconvenient for the program. However, he also noted that Euroclima was able to handle the situation due to its linkages with the partner countries. Interviewee N° 10 agreed with this view and remarked that the lack of summits did not paralyze the program’s functioning. On the other hand, Interviewee N° 8 asserted that Euroclima not only continued its operations seamlessly despite the absence of summits but also strengthened due to a confluence of political will and increased economic resources. This participant argued that the lack of summits did not halt Euroclima’s work as the topic of climate change remained relevant in the global agenda, as evidenced by the increasing budget allocations. Interview N° 7 endorsed this view.

Interviewees N° 6, N° 9 and N° 10 contended that Euroclima’s strong linkages with representatives of the partner countries played a crucial role in handling the absence of summits. In this sense, Interviewee N° 8 explained that Euroclima conducts annual meetings with the national focal points, which include members of the Ministries of Environment, to address topics such as how to make the NDCs more efficient. In these meetings, the big lines of Euroclima’s operation are discussed taking into account the needs of the Latin American countries, the latest developments on the climate change front and the available budget. Later, as Interviewee N° 8 described, the Euroclima team conducts internal meetings including the implementing agencies to decide on the best possible use of the budget and the projects that will be supported.

When asked about changes in terms of resource allocation, all the interviewees coincided in their assessment that Euroclima’s budget increased exponentially during the non-summits period. Interviewees N° 6 and N° 9 mentioned that the large allocation of resources reflects the growing importance of climate change and sustainable development. The participants also highlighted that this allocation depends mostly on the EU budgetary process that takes place every seven years, defining priorities based on political or technical reasons. In this regard, Interviewee N° 7 highlighted that in the last EU economic programming period (2021-2027), Euroclima received a new budgetary allocation that guaranteed the continuity of the program regardless the lack of summits. This is an important sign of the relevance of this program.

Interviewee N° 8 agreed on the importance of the EU economic programming and highlighted the role of the Multiannual Indicative Program (MIP), where the EU economic

priorities and financial instruments are presented. Moreover, Euroclima received the approval to expand its operations to include the Caribbean countries in the program, starting in 2023, as mentioned by Interviewees N° 7, N° 8 and N° 9. This was another important sign of support for the program and its expansion despite the lack of EU-Latin American summits. Interviewee N° 8 pointed out that this was possible because the legal framework for cooperation programs in Latin America and the Caribbean, which used to be separated, was unified in 2021.

As mentioned earlier, the Forum of Ministers of Environment of Latin America and the Caribbean organized by UNEP every two years have played a pivotal role in the development and continuation of Euroclima. In this regard, Interviewee N° 6 mentioned that this forum took the place of the biregional summits, providing guidance for Euroclima and serving as a platform for the visibility of its work. On the same line, Interviewee N° 7 stated that “the Forum of Ministers has recognized the activities of the [Euroclima] program and reconfirmed the interest in continuing this cooperation”. The Forum has provided guidelines that have been in line with the strategy of the program, as mentioned by Interviewees N° 7 and N° 10. When describing the relationship between Euroclima and the Forum of Ministers, Interviewee N° 7 pointed out that

Regarding the link between the [Euroclima] program and the Forum of Ministers of Environment, it must be considered that Euroclima’s interlocutors in the 19 countries that have been partners in the program are precisely the Ministries of Environment. We have a network of privileged interlocutors called national focal points, who are officials of the Ministry of Environment. So it is automatic that the highest authority of the Ministry of Environment sees favorably what one of its general directorates, which is normally the Directorate of Climate Change, is doing in an initiative like this [like Euroclima].

This participant noted that, apart from the Lima Summit when Euroclima was conceived, another pivotal moment of political concertation for Euroclima was the Forum of Ministers of Environment meeting held in 2014 in Los Cabos, Mexico. In this event, ministers asserted the need to reinforce cooperation, a resolution that coincided with the beginning of a new EU economic programming period (2014-2021). This period witnessed an increased allocation of funds dedicated to combating climate change. As a result of these circumstances, a stronger Euroclima emerged: Euroclima+, the third phase of the program.

This participant's account matches with the view of Interviewee N° 8, who remarked the exponential increase in budget allocation during the third phase of the program.

These testimonies provide insight into how political dialogue at another level, such as the Forum of Ministers of Environment, played a fundamental role in filling the void left by the lack of summits between the Heads of State and Government of the EU and Latin America. Thus, the meetings of the Forum of Ministers became the source of guidelines that supported the functioning of Euroclima during the non-summits period.

The role of summits in the development of Euroclima

Regarding the role of the summits between the Heads of State and Government in the development of Euroclima, it was revealed that, similarly to the case of Eurosocietal, Euroclima's staff identified summits as providers of guidelines for the program. In this regard, Interviewees N° 6 and N° 10 mentioned that these summits served as a guiding force for Euroclima, offering directives on how to continue its operations and determining the desired intensity of exchanges. As Interviewee N° 6 said, "we always waited for the EU-LAC summits to give us a clear indication of where to go". On the same line, Interviewee N° 7 highlighted that the summits were pivotal spaces where leaders deliberated on the priorities for biregional cooperation, such as social cohesion and climate change. During these summits, the Heads of State and Government formally requested the European Commission to design cooperation programs to address these issues, as mentioned by Interviewee N° 7.

Interviewee N° 8 highlighted the fact that cooperation programs such as Euroclima were created in the framework of the summits, so there is definitely a connection between these programs and the summits. However, this participant also mentioned the importance of considering the time lag between the summits and the execution of the projects that follow the summits' guidelines; as financial regulations must be complied with in order to implement these projects. In this sense, the interviewee emphasized that while the lack of summits may have an impact in the development of cooperation programs, the time delay in project execution is an inherent characteristic of such initiatives. Interview N° 9 also asserted that changes in Euroclima are not automatic as there is always a certain delay.

Interviewee N° 6 highlighted Euroclima's aspiration to maintain a strong connection with the political dialogue, ensuring the practical relevance of the projects led by the program.

In fact, as in the case of Eurosocioal, Euroclima's staff reported that they were asked to submit some documents and reports suggesting priorities that should be considered by the Heads of State and Government for future cooperation, as Interviewee N° 7 asserted. Therefore, it is possible to confirm the bidirectional relationship between the summits and the cooperation programs, identified previously in the case of Eurosocioal. Furthermore, as Interviewee N° 8 pointed out, Euroclima was expecting to be mentioned in the last summit held in July 2023 and hoped for acknowledgment of the need to continue and intensify the cooperation between the two regions in terms of environment and climate change.

Meanwhile, Interviewee N° 7 underlined that documents of previous summits such as the Brussels Declaration in 2015 and the Action Plans explicitly mentioned Euroclima, demonstrating the support that the leaders give to this program. Interviewee N° 8 confirmed this point by emphasizing that the guideline to cooperate in environment and climate change comes from these summits and, when reviewing the summits declarations, it is possible to find references to Euroclima and its work. In this sense, summits provide a political framework in which Euroclima operates, as Interviewee N° 8 declared.

Interviewee N° 8 also highlighted that while the political framework is crucial, the most important basis for projects' implementation is the Multiannual Indicative Program also called MIP, which was mentioned earlier. This participant pointed out that the MIP could be influenced by the summits, but it is not only influenced by them. The MIP for Latin America 2014-2020 repeatedly mentioned the importance of the biregional summits and highlighted that, besides existing agreements with individual countries, "other EU political commitments with the region also need to continue to be duly taken into account, in particular, those stemming from the EU-LAC Summit process" (European External Action Service & European Commission, 2014, p. 6).

Finally, Interviewees N° 9 and N° 10 pointed out that the biregional summit held in July 2023 marked a turning point for Euroclima due to the introduction of the Global Gateway strategy. According to the participants, this initiative aims to involve the private sector in the cooperation mechanisms and strengthen the role of investments for development in the biregional cooperation. This new approach became a "guiding star" for Euroclima since the 2023 summit, as Interviewee N° 9 remarked. This participant also mentioned that this summit put Latin America back on the EU's geopolitical board in a very solid way. Therefore, the importance of summit diplomacy between the EU and Latin America was

proven by the results of the last biregional summit and its impact on the cooperation programs, especially the functioning of Euroclima. However, Interviewee N° 10 remarked that it is important to inquire about the influence and role of the EU's internal policy on this process.

6.2.4 Euroclima from the analysis of the summit declarations and action plans: Guidelines on sustainability and climate change

In this section, six documents were analyzed: three summit declarations and three action plans corresponding to the summits held in Madrid (2010), Santiago de Chile (2013) and Brussels (2015). Following the same structure as in the case of Eurosocio, an overview of the declarations and action plans is presented as well as an analysis of the identified guidelines and themes portrayed in these documents.

Madrid Declaration (2010)

The topic of sustainable development and climate change was an important part of the debates at the Madrid Summit held in 2010. A variety of issues were discussed under this topic such as energy efficiency, biodiversity preservation, natural disaster prevention and technology transfer. The table below summarizes the mentions of sustainability and climate change in the Madrid Declaration.

Table N° 20. Articles related to sustainability and climate change in the Madrid Declaration

Article	Content
Article 13	- Sustainability should be taken into account when countries manage and regulate their natural resources. Enhancing renewable energy, regional energy interconnectivity, and access to energy services is vital for eradicating poverty and achieving the MDGs.
Articles 14, 15 and 16	- Acknowledgement of the common interest of the leaders in improving energy efficiency and reducing greenhouse gas emissions in consumption and production activities to address the economic, social, environmental and other challenges posed by climate change. - Importance of adopting sustainable development strategies in accordance with international commitments such as those made under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC).
Article 17	- Acknowledgement of the political will to intensify efforts for the preservation and sustainable use of biodiversity within the framework of the Convention on

	Biological Diversity (CBD)
Article 27	- Need to strengthen cooperation for the prevention and management of natural disasters.
Article 29	- Role of the biregional partnership in addressing environmental challenges and promoting sustainable development based on a biregional dialogue on climate change and environment.
Article 37	- In terms of sustainable development, the Madrid Action Plan included areas such as environment, climate change, biodiversity, and energy.
Article 38	- Emphasis on the crucial role of science, technology, and innovation in achieving sustainable development through knowledge sharing, capacity building, research programs and technology transfer activities.

Source: Own elaboration based on the Madrid Declaration (2010)

Although the declaration does not specifically mention the Euroclima program, it highlights key areas of interest to the leaders in terms of sustainable development and climate change, which were subsequently addressed by Euroclima. Moreover, Euroclima's approach included a strong component of science, technology and innovation, in accordance with the theme of this summit, reflected in the fact that Euroclima promoted the creation of "tools such as software, inventories of good practices and manuals to be used in applied research and in the planning of sustainable development strategies to tackle climate change" (Euroclima, 2013, p. 3).

In this declaration, a connection between sustainable development and social inclusion is outlined, as the document puts forward the idea that these two areas are mutually dependent, which is portrayed in Articles 13 and 14. This idea was further developed at the Santiago and Brussels summits. It should also be noted that, although sustainable development was one of the main agenda items of this summit, the part dedicated to addressing this topic is relatively less extensive and comprehensive compared to the Santiago Declaration and the Brussels Declaration.

Santiago Declaration (2013)

Sustainable development played a key role in the Santiago Summit. One of the main aims of this summit was to provide guidelines to achieve sustained economic growth while protecting the environment and promoting social equity and inclusion. Throughout the document, the connection between sustainable development and social inclusion is frequently highlighted and appears as a predominant pattern in the text.

Table N° 21. Articles related to sustainability and climate change in the Santiago Declaration

Article	Content
Article 10	- Commitment to adopt policies that promote trade and investment based on environmental responsibility, ensuring sustainable development.
Article 13	- Commitment to achieve sustainable development in its three dimensions: economic, social and environmental, supporting cooperation initiatives that promote the transfer of knowledge and preservation of biodiversity.
Articles 14 and 15	- Adherence to the commitments of the Rio+20 Conference, the UN Development Agenda beyond 2015 and the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). - Importance of the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions.
Article 16	- Acknowledgement of the contribution of Euroclima and support to the extension of the program into a second phase.
Article 17	- Acknowledgement of social development and inclusive growth as a condition to achieve sustainable development. - Commitment to the eradication of hunger and the need to ensure food security while promoting sustainable agriculture.
Article 28	- Importance of different modalities of cooperation to achieve sustainable development. - Expectations of the EU cooperation programming cycle (2014-2020) and its consideration of the priorities of the CELAC States.
Article 30	- Urgency to address growing migration due to climate change.
Article 39	- Investments as source of positive spill-over effects on social and environmental responsibility and development of local communities. - Sustainable development as a hallmark of the biregional strategic partnership between the EU and Latin America.
Article 40	- Recognition of different approaches, visions, models to achieve sustainable development. - Green economy as a tool to eradicate poverty, promote sustained economic growth and enhance social inclusion.
Article 41	- Sustainable development requires cooperation to take advantage of the complementarities of both regions. Commitment to promote diversified biregional investments of social and environmental quality.
Article 42	- Recognition of the rights of nature in the context of promotion of sustainable development.
Article 43	- Importance of strengthening scientific and technological capacities to move towards more sustainable patterns of consumption and production.
Article 44	- Acknowledgement of the strategic role of energy for sustainable development.

Article 45	- Importance of working together to promote investments that support sustainable use of natural resources, environmental care, and economic and social development.
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Source: Own elaboration based on the Santiago Declaration (2013)

According to this declaration, the establishment of an inclusive and equitable society is inextricably linked to the achievement of sustainable development, which was reiterated in the document on multiple occasions (Arts. 17, 39, 40, 41 and 45). This view was internalized by Euroclima and is reflected by its objective to “contribute to poverty reduction of the Latin American population by reducing their environmental and social vulnerability to climate change” (Euroclima, 2016, p. 2).

Yet, different approaches, visions and models are also important to achieve sustainable development (Art. 40). In this regard, it is worthy to note that Euroclima implemented a model in which “Latin American governments designated a national Focal Point who represents their government before the Euroclima Program and promotes the application of the results in political decision making at the national and regional levels” (European Commission, 2013, p. ix). This model respects the particularities of each country’s approach in concordance with the leaders’ perspective aforementioned.

Moreover, the declaration emphasized the role of cooperation as a means to promote sustainable development. It specially recognized the key role of regional cooperation programs that promote sustainable development and the fight against climate change, specifically mentioning Euroclima (Art. 16). This document also reflects that the Euro-Latin American efforts in terms of sustainable development and the fight against climate change are developed within the framework of various multilateral initiatives. Examples of this are the references to the Rio+20 Conference on Sustainable Development, the UN Development Agenda beyond 2015 and the UNFCCC.

In sum, this declaration is a sign of the political will of the EU and Latin American leaders to make progress in fighting climate change. Accordingly, Euroclima aimed to integrate climate considerations into national development plans and policies, promoting sustainable development across various sectors such as energy, agriculture, transport, and urban planning. The goal was to strengthen Latin America’s resilience to climate change by providing technical assistance and capacity-building support to participating countries, helping them develop mitigation and adaptation strategies effectively.

Brussels Declaration (2015)

In this summit, the leaders from the EU and Latin America put the focus on critical challenges faced by both regions and proposed joint actions to address them. Within these actions, the area of sustainable development was a crucial topic. The table below summarizes the articles related to sustainability and climate change in this declaration.

Table N° 22. Articles related to sustainability and climate change in the Brussels Declaration

Article	Content
Article 21	- Commitment to work to achieve strong, inclusive, sustainable, balanced growth, with a view to pursuing sustainable development and delivering better and more equitable living standards.
Article 25	- Commitment to eradicate poverty in all its forms and achieving sustainable development in its three dimensions (economic, social and environmental) in a balanced and integrated manner. - Adherence to the Post 2015 Development Agenda.
Article 27	- Recognition of different approaches, visions, models to achieve sustainable development.
Article 28	- Recognition of the positive contribution of migration as an enabler to sustainable development.
Articles 29, 30, 31, 32, 34 and 37	- Importance of international commitments on climate change and sustainable development. Mentions to the UNFCCC, Kyoto Protocol, the Lima Call for Climate Action, the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction and the Convention on Biological Diversity - Commitment of CELAC and the EU to work together ahead of and at the 21st Conference of Parties in Paris in December 2015 (Art. 31).
Article 33	- Importance of mobilizing financial resources to achieve the mitigation objective and to support adaptation actions.
Article 35	- Importance of addressing the mitigation and adaptation needs of Latin American and the Caribbean countries in particular those most vulnerable to climate change.
Article 36	- Commitment to strengthen biregional cooperation to tackle consequences of climate change in areas like preservation of forest resources and energy efficiency by exchanging experiences and information to facilitate the design of climate change adaptation, mitigation and recovery strategies.
Articles 38 and 39	- Importance of supporting small island developing states in their efforts against climate change, including the Caribbean countries.
Article 44	- Reaffirmation of the importance of the strategic partnership to achieve sustainable development.

Article 45	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Biregional economic links should promote the protection of the environment. - Commitment to adopt policies that promote increased trade and social and environmentally responsible investment.
Article 53	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The adoption of the EU's 2014-2020 multiannual indicative programs for Latin America and the Caribbean should give preference to projects that address the three dimensions of sustainable development. - Importance of regional cooperation programs that support sustainable development.
Article 59	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Commitment to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). - Importance of integrating lessons learned from previous successful cooperation experiences.
Article 63	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Continuation of biregional cooperation on environmental and climate change-related issues through, among others, the Euroclima program.
Article 72	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Update of the chapter on Sustainable development, Environment, Climate change, Biodiversity, Energy of the Action Plan in light of the outcome of the COP21. A chapter on food security was considered.

Source: Own elaboration based on the Brussels Declaration (2015)

This declaration has several aspects in common with the Santiago Declaration. The notion of sustainable development and its strong connection with both economic growth and social cohesion is one of them. This declaration also reaffirmed the view of sustainable development as being composed of three key dimensions (economic, social and environmental), as well as the acknowledgment of the right of each country to have its own visions and models to achieve sustainable development, recognizing, for example, the importance of the term “Mother Earth” used in some regions of Latin America (Art. 27).

Despite their aspects in common, this document is distinguished from the Santiago Declaration by incorporating a more robust environmental component, featuring a dedicated set of articles focused on climate change and sustainable development (from Article 27 to Article 39). These articles outline the goals that the leaders aimed to achieve concerning climate change adaptation and mitigation. The UNFCCC held particular significance in this matter and it is repeatedly mentioned in the declaration. Nevertheless, the importance of other multilateral initiatives was also highlighted. The inclusion of this set of articles emphasizing the importance of adaptation and mitigation actions to tackle climate change reflects a joint effort by both regions in preparation for the UN Climate Change Conference COP 21, which took place in Paris a few months after the Brussels Summit (as mentioned in Art. 31).

Notably, this declaration underlines the relevance of cooperation in the biregional relationship, particularly mentioning the role of Euroclima in the continuation of the collaborative efforts. When analyzing how this summit declaration influenced Euroclima, there are several aspects to consider. For example, article 36 of this declaration encompasses guidelines in terms of cooperation in sustainable development and climate change, which is directly related to Euroclima's mission. In this article, the leaders stated that it is crucial "to exchange experiences and information between CELAC and EU States to facilitate the design of climate change adaptation, mitigation and recovery strategies, including the possibility of developing regional projects on climate change" (Brussels Declaration, 2015, p. 8). This mandate is reflected in Euroclima's operation mode, which is based on "the exchange of experiences and information to facilitate the design of adaptation and mitigation policies, strategies and plans" (European Commission, 2015, p. viii). Moreover, the compliance with this mandate was reflected in Euroclima's results in its second phase as "the exchange of experiences and information on climate change in Latin America improved, increasing political awareness and strengthening institutional capacity, knowledge and visibility of climate change at national, sub-regional and regional levels" (Euroclima, 2016, p. 2).

Meanwhile, the priorities in terms of climate change expressed by the leaders in this declaration are clearly connected to the sectoral projects and thematic sectors of Euroclima such as preserving forest resources (Art. 36), energy efficiency (Art. 36), risk management (Art. 34), urban mobility (Art. 64), and food security (Art. 72). Furthermore, the concept of green economy is reinforced in this document (Art. 27). Accordingly, the promotion of green economy was reflected in the Euroclima program as one of its objectives at the time was to "reinforce resilience of the Latin American region to climate change and promote opportunities for green growth" (Euroclima, 2016, p. 2).

Finally, given the pivotal role played by both regions in promoting the Paris Agreement (Edwards, 2018; ECLAC, 2018) and the relevance of the UNFCCC in the EU-Latin American summit declarations, Euroclima underwent a significant transformation over the years to align with the priorities driven by these international agreements. As a result, Euroclima's primary mission shifted to "help Latin American countries to implement commitments under the UNFCCC (in particular, the Nationally Determined Contributions -NDCs-, which are at the heart of the Paris Agreement)" (Euroclima, 2017, p. 2).

Action Plans

As mentioned earlier, the action plans are documents with concrete actions and expected results that the EU and Latin American leaders set out to achieve in specific work areas. A detailed explanation of their structure was provided in section 6.1.4 of this dissertation. Therefore, this part will focus exclusively on examining these documents in terms of Euroclima's areas of interest, namely sustainable development and climate change.

Madrid Action Plan (2010)

Among the six sections included in this action plan, the most important for Euroclima is Section 2 named "Sustainable development; environment; climate change; biodiversity; energy". This section aims to establish concrete commitments based on the guidelines provided by the Madrid Declaration in terms of sustainable development and climate change. Like the other sections of the action plan, this section comprises three parts: dialogue, cooperation activities and expected results. The table below summarizes the content of these parts.

Table N° 23. Summary of Section 2 of the Madrid Action Plan

Part	Content
Dialogue	Importance of enhancing biregional exchanges and regular dialogue to advance key aspects of the agenda on sustainable development, environment, climate change and energy.
Cooperation activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Strengthen biregional cooperation in environmental and disaster risk management, focusing on climate change and biodiversity loss awareness, climate-resilient development, and sustainable development integration.- Exchange of experiences and information to facilitate the design of adaptation and mitigation strategies and policies, among others, through the Euroclima program and triangular and South-South cooperation.- Seek financial resources to promote climate change adaptation and mitigation, and support coordinated efforts to reduce deforestation and forest degradation.- Development of projects in renewable energy and energy efficiency.- Support for capacity-building on sustainable low-carbon technologies, climate change monitoring and greenhouse gas reduction.- Continuity of the biregional forum on technological cooperation and renewable energies.
Expected results	Improved knowledge of the problems and consequences of climate change, strengthened capacities to prevent and address natural disasters, improved capacity

	for promoting sustainable development, environmental and climate change-related challenges, and the promotion of the use of renewable energies and diversification of the energy matrix.
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Source: Own elaboration based on the Madrid Action Plan (2010)

Some of the listed cooperation activities in this section are examples of clear guidelines for the functioning of Euroclima. For example, the second activity mentions the program explicitly as a space for the exchange of experiences, and the fifth promotes capacity-building on sustainable low-carbon technologies and climate change monitoring, which became a key methodology in the first phase of Euroclima.

Despite the prominence of Section 2 for Euroclima, it should be mentioned that Section 1 named “Science, research, innovation and technology” also held significance in shaping the operational dynamics of this cooperation program. This section of the action plan highlighted the crucial role of science, technology and innovation in achieving sustainable development through knowledge sharing, capacity building, research programs and technology transfer activities.

One of the objectives of this section was to “boost the use of new technologies and technology transfer underpinning sustainable socio-economic development” (Madrid Action Plan, 2010, p. 2). To achieve this, the action plan proposed, among other things, to encourage mutual policy learning, establish thematic networks on agreed issues of mutual interest, and promote the creation of a comprehensive joint strategy in research, development and innovation supporting, among other things, climate change-related issues.

The importance of this section was evident in Euroclima’s functioning during its first phase from 2010 to 2013, as its work areas were research, capacity building and networks, which are three key components of the agenda of Section 1. This correspondence and its relevance are elaborated in depth in section 6.2.5 of this dissertation. Finally, it should be mentioned that the close connection between sustainable development and social inclusion that was identified in the Madrid Declaration is also reflected in the Madrid Action Plan, since the cooperation initiatives outlined in Section 3 of the action plan regarding social inclusion also promote infrastructure in energy efficiency and climate change adaptation and mitigation as key areas of work for social cohesion.

Santiago Action Plan (2013)

As mentioned in section 6.1.4, the Madrid Action Plan and the Santiago Action Plan have exactly the same content, except for the sections added in the latter related to gender and investments for sustainable development. Regarding the section on gender, it is important to highlight that, despite not explicitly mentioning Euroclima, this cooperation program has endeavored to align with several of the principles outlined within the gender perspective. For example, one of the items of this section highlighted the need to identify areas of exchange and cooperation to optimize existing practices and lessons learned in the area of gender mainstreaming. In this regard, during its third phase, Euroclima established a line of action called Gender and Vulnerable Groups with the aim of achieving gender equality and empowering women through the program's projects and actions. Moreover, "a toolkit was designed so that the project implementing organizations can identify and solve the gender gaps that are present in the scope of their actions" (Euroclima, 2018). This fact reflects how gender perspective was considered in Euroclima's structure despite not being a policy specifically directed toward this cooperation program.

On the other hand, a novel aspect of this action plan concerning sustainable development and climate change was the introduction of Section 8 called "Investments and entrepreneurship for sustainable development". As its name suggests, this section aimed to facilitate conditions that foster entrepreneurship, innovation and competitiveness while promoting biregional investments as a catalyst for economic and social development. Although most of the initiatives in this section pertained to the field of action of the LAIF cooperation program, some items are linked to Euroclima's operation. For example, one of the items stressed the need of encouraging cooperation to share information on investment opportunities and effective public policies in productive and sustainable development. In this regard, Euroclima contributed to this aim by providing technical assistance to the countries through various actions, such as training, coordination and planning meetings, exchanges of experiences, specific studies, and advisory services, among others (Karremans et. al., 2017).

Finally, it should be noted that, following the same line as the Santiago Declaration, this action plan also established a close connection between sustainable development and social inclusion. This connection was notably reflected in Section 8, which points out that one of the main objectives in this area is "to promote biregional investments of social and

environmental quality to achieve sustained economic growth while promoting social cohesion and inclusion and protecting the environment” (Santiago Action Plan, 2013, p. 12). This explicit fusion of sustainable development and social inclusion reflects a growing recognition within the biregional dialogue of the interdependence between economic progress, social equity, and environmental well-being.

Brussels Action Plan (2015)

This action plan did not introduce new items regarding sustainable development and climate change. Sections 2 and 8 concerning these topics remained unchanged. The new sections included in this action plan, namely higher education and citizen security, pertained to the fields of action of other biregional cooperation initiatives such as the Joint Initiative for Research and Innovation (JIRI) and Copolad, respectively.

However, it is worth noting that the close connection between social inclusion and sustainable development was once again highlighted, as it has been in previous summits declarations and action plans. This link was particularly noticeable in some of the changes introduced in Section 3, pertaining to regional integration and interconnectivity to promote social inclusion and cohesion. These changes emphasized the need to implement social initiatives that take into account aspects such as energy efficiency, sustainable management of natural resources, sustainable production and consumption patterns that reduce greenhouse emissions, sustainable transport, and climate change adaptation and mitigation. They reiterated the interdependence established in previous summits documents, underlining that these two dimensions are intricately linked, since sustainable development cannot be achieved without fostering social cohesion, and vice versa.

Identified guidelines in summits declarations and action plans regarding sustainability and climate change

Identified guidelines in summits declarations

1. The promotion of sustainable development and the fight against climate change should contribute to eradicating poverty, sustaining inclusive economic growth and promoting social inclusion. This guideline was identified in the Santiago and Brussels declarations.
2. Achieving sustainable development requires cooperation to take advantage of the complementarities of the EU and Latin America. Biregional cooperation programs

are crucial to promote sustainable development. This guideline was particularly mentioned in the Santiago and Brussels declarations.

3. Energy plays a strategic role for sustainable development and the fight against climate change. The EU and Latin America have a common interest in improving energy efficiency and reducing greenhouse gas emissions. Therefore, they should intensify their cooperation towards achieving these objectives. This guideline was particularly emphasized in the Madrid and Santiago declarations.
4. Biregional actions on sustainability and climate change must take into account existing international commitments and multilateral initiatives such as the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), the Kyoto Protocol, the Convention on Biological Diversity, the Rio +20 conference, the Lima Call for Climate Action, the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction, and the UN Development Agenda. This guideline was present in all the summit declarations.
5. Sustainability criteria should be taken into account by countries to manage and regulate their natural resources. This guideline was particularly mentioned in the Madrid Declaration.
6. The EU and Latin America must intensify efforts for the preservation and sustainable use of biodiversity. This guideline was specifically identified in the Madrid and Brussels declarations.
7. The EU-LAC strategic partnership should assume a key role in climate change and biodiversity negotiations in the framework of multilateral forums. This guideline was particularly mentioned in the Madrid Declaration.
8. Science, technology and innovation have a crucial role in achieving sustainable development through knowledge sharing, capacity-building, research programs and technology transfer activities. This guideline was identified in the Madrid Declaration.
9. Green economy should contribute to eradicating poverty, promoting sustained economic growth, enhancing social inclusion, increasing resource efficiency and creating opportunities for employment. This guideline was identified in the Santiago and Brussels declarations.
10. Food security for present and future generations must be guaranteed while ensuring sustainable agriculture. This statement was mentioned in the Santiago and Brussels declarations.

11. Sustainable development is composed of three dimensions: economic, social and environmental. All of them must be considered to achieve sustainable development. This guideline was identified in the Santiago and Brussels declarations.
12. The promotion of sustainable development in its three dimensions takes into account the different approaches, views, models and tools available to each country, in accordance with its national circumstances and priorities. This guideline was mentioned in the Santiago and Brussels declarations.
13. It is crucial to promote investments that support sustainable and sound use of natural resources, environmental care, and economic and social development, and to maintain a favorable investment climate, with legal certainty and respect for national and international law. This guideline was introduced by the Santiago Declaration.
14. Fundamental changes in the patterns of consumption and production are indispensable for achieving global sustainable development. This guideline was particularly mentioned in the Madrid and Santiago declarations.
15. It is crucial to address the adaptation and mitigation needs of Latin American and the Caribbean countries in particular those most vulnerable to climate change, particularly through the mobilization of financing. This guideline was mentioned in the Santiago and Brussels declarations.
16. The exchange of experiences and information between the EU and Latin America facilitates the design of climate change adaptation, mitigation and recovery strategies, including the possibility of developing regional projects on climate change. This guideline was particularly emphasized in the Brussels Declaration.

Identified guidelines in action plans

1. Social inclusion, eradication of poverty and inclusive economic growth are essential to achieve sustainable development. This guideline was particularly identified in the Santiago and Brussels action plans.
2. The promotion of environmental sustainability requires ensuring the effective implementation of international commitments such as the UNFCCC and the Kyoto Protocol, among others. This guideline was identified in Section 2 of all action plans.
3. It is crucial to develop policies and instruments for climate change adaptation and mitigation, address the adverse effects of climate change and reduce the

- vulnerability of countries to natural disasters. This guideline was found in Section 2 of all action plans.
4. Environmental sustainability implies promoting and supporting activities to reduce the intensity of greenhouse gas emissions in consumption and production processes. This guideline was identified in Section 2 of all action plans.
 5. The exchange of information, experiences and best practices is crucial to facilitate the design of adaptation and mitigation strategies and policies. This guideline was mentioned in Section 2, paragraph C of all action plans.
 6. Ensuring environmental sustainability requires improving energy efficiency, developing renewable energies, promoting energy interconnection networks and diversifying the energy matrix. This guideline was identified in Section 2 of all action plans.
 7. It is important to step up regular biregional dialogue to develop the relevant aspects of the international agenda on sustainable development, environment, climate change, energy and biodiversity in order to facilitate the proper implementation of international agreements. This statement was found in Section 2, paragraph A of all action plans.
 8. It is necessary to strengthen biregional cooperation on environment and disaster risk reduction by increasing the knowledge of the problems and consequences of climate change and biodiversity loss and the importance of climate-resilient development and adaptation, and promoting the integration of these issues into sustainable development strategies and policy design. This guideline was identified in Section 2, paragraph B of all action plans.
 9. It is crucial to seek financial resources to promote climate change adaptation and mitigation, as well as to support coordinated efforts to reduce deforestation. This guideline was found in Section 2, paragraph D of all action plans.
 10. It is necessary to support capacity-building on sustainable development and climate change issues such as low emission development strategies, climate change monitoring, greenhouse gas emission verification, and soil management, among others. This guideline was identified in Section 2, paragraph F of all action plans.
 11. An expected result of biregional cooperation on sustainable development is improved knowledge of the problems and consequences of climate change including vulnerability and risk assessment, biodiversity loss, and environment issues in their widest meaning, and integration of these issues into sustainable

development and climate adaptation strategies. This statement was found in Section 2, paragraph H of all action plans.

12. An expected outcome of biregional cooperation on sustainable development is improved capacity for promoting sustainable development, environmental and climate change-related challenges, and the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity. This statement was identified in Section 2, paragraph J of all action plans.
13. It is important to boost the use of new technologies and technology transfer underpinning sustainable socio-economic development by mutual policy learning, thematic networks on agreed issues of mutual interest, and the adoption of innovative instruments to strengthen cooperation. This guideline was identified in Section 1 of all action plans.
14. It is necessary to create a comprehensive joint strategy in research, development and innovation supporting, among other things, climate change-related issues. This guideline was identified in Section 1, paragraph M of all action plans.

6.2.5 Euroclima from the analysis of its institutional reports: Tracking summit guidelines in Euroclima's operations

Unlike Eurosocio, Euroclima's institutional reports are not classified by areas of work and lines of action but by specific time periods. For this reason, fewer institutional reports were found on Euroclima's operations. A total of six reports were analyzed: two correspond to the summits period and four to the non-summits period. These reports were examined in detail to determine whether the guidelines identified in the summits declarations and action plans were reflected in their content, assessing the influence of the summits on the functioning of Euroclima during the summits and non-summits periods.

- **Euroclima's institutional reports during the summits period**

This section encompasses an analysis of Euroclima's institutional reports covering the period from 2010 to 2016, when the program was in its first and second phases, namely Euroclima I and Euroclima II. Available institutional reports of this specific period are only two since the corpus of documents predominantly comprises technical studies. Technical studies delve into the thematic domains of Euroclima, such as soil degradation, greenhouse reduction, low-carbon growth, and risk management, among others. These

documents address technical aspects of climate change rather than providing a comprehensive assessment of the program's performance. For that reason, they were not included in the analysis.

Euroclima Program: Results of the First Phase

This institutional report presents the results of Euroclima in the period from 2010 to 2013. In the beginning, the document states that “the objective of the first phase of Euroclima has been to improve the knowledge of Latin American decision-makers and scientists regarding the problems and consequences of climate change, in order to integrate them in sustainable development strategies” (p. 2). This objective corresponds to the guideline identified in Section 2, paragraph H of all the action plans on achieving an improved knowledge of the problems and consequences of climate change as an expected result of biregional cooperation on sustainable development. In fact, this objective has the same wording as the mentioned paragraph of the action plans.

This document is divided into three parts that align with the three components of the first phase of Euroclima, namely *policy dialogue*, *socio-economic aspects* and *biophysical aspects*. In turn, these components unfolded their activities in three main areas: research, capacity-building and networks. These three areas reflect the guideline provided by the Madrid Declaration on the importance of science and innovation in achieving sustainable development through knowledge sharing, capacity building, research programs and technology transfer activities. Moreover, each of them corresponds to specific statements from the action plans.

First, the area of research corresponds to the guideline identified in Section 1, paragraph M of all action plans related to the need to create a comprehensive joint strategy in research, development and innovation supporting climate change-related issues. Furthermore, research contributes to increasing knowledge about the problems and consequences of climate change, which was the main objective of this phase of Euroclima. Efforts in this area were reflected in the creation of “tools such as software, inventories of good practices and manuals to be used in applied research and in the planning of sustainable development strategies to tackle climate change” (p. 3).

Secondly, the area of capacity-building reflects the guidelines proposed in paragraphs F and J of Section 2 of all the action plans, which mention the need to support capacity-

building on sustainable development and climate change issues and the expected result of improved capacity to tackle environmental challenges. According to the institutional report, activities in this area were carried out “through courses and by means of publications on specific topics according to the needs identified in the region, and strengthened technical capacity in research and policy-making” (p. 3).

Third, the area of networks encourages the exchange of information, experiences and best practices as required by the Brussels Declaration and specified in Section 2, paragraph C of all action plans. Networks congregate members of academia, governmental organizations and the private sector as well as from civil society. Events occurring in the framework of networks contribute to the main objective of knowledge improvement in all the involved sectors. Moreover, networks facilitated “access to key data for research and the design of strategic actions” (p. 3).

Regarding the components mentioned above, firstly, the *policy dialogue* component aimed to encourage “active participation and commitment of the countries in the program and ensure the integration of the acquired knowledge and skills in public policies” (p. 4). In this component, several summit-driven guidelines were followed. Regional coordination through regular meetings in combination with international events fulfilled the guideline outlined in Section 2, paragraph A of all action plans on stepping up biregional dialogue to develop the relevant aspects of the international agenda on sustainable development, environment and climate change. In particular, “side events were organized at the COP of the UNFCCC in Cancun, Durban and Doha in order to present the program’s objectives and achievements” (p. 5). These events follow the guideline stating that the EU-LAC strategic partnership should assume a key role in climate change negotiations within the framework of multilateral forums.

The component of *policy dialogue* also involves the planning, monitoring and evaluation of adaptation efforts as well as the design of mitigation actions, adhering to the guideline identified in Section 2 of all action plans on the need to develop policies and instruments for climate change adaptation and mitigation, address the adverse effects of climate change and reduce the vulnerability of countries to natural disasters. Moreover, capacity-building activities in this component address the topics of climate change monitoring and soil management, which are proposed in paragraph F of Section 2 of the action plans.

Secondly, the component of *socio-economic aspects* provides key inputs for the formulation of public policies by increasing knowledge about the social and economic impacts of climate change. This component proposes measures for the region to progress towards socially inclusive and sustainable growth, which reflects the guideline identified in the Santiago and Brussels declarations indicating that social inclusion, eradication of poverty and inclusive economic growth are essential to achieve sustainable development. Activities in this component focus on greenhouse gas emissions, low-carbon strategies, mitigation and adaptation processes, and environmental finances, which are included in several paragraphs of Section 2 of the action plans. Furthermore, strengthening networks allows for the exchange of information between key institutions and the dissemination of research results on these topics.

Finally, the component of *biophysical aspects* focuses on providing “tools and scientific information on climate change to Latin American governments and scientific and technical institutions” (p. 9). This component is closely connected with the guidelines on the role of science, technology and innovation in promoting sustainable development. Activities in this component boosted the use of new technologies and scientific advances to address the effects of climate change. These activities included the development of software to process climate information, the creation of a geographic information system, the enrichment of databases on weather issues, the development of a data modeling platform for agricultural production and the creation of a soil atlas of Latin America. Thus, this component reflects the guidelines identified in Section 1 of all action plans on the need to boost the use of new technologies and technology transfer underpinning development and promote the adoption of innovative instruments to strengthen biregional cooperation.

It is important to highlight that the three components of Euroclima’s first phase strongly reinforced the exchange of information, experiences and best practices through seminars, workshops, publications and meetings, adhering to the guidelines proposed by the Brussels Declaration and the action plans on the need to exchange experiences and information to design climate change adaptation, mitigation and recovery strategies. Activities in the areas of research and networking particularly encouraged knowledge transfer in both the public and private sectors between Latin America and the EU.

Table N° 24. Correspondence between the institutional report on the results of Euroclima’s first phase and summit-driven guidelines

Section of the Institutional Report	Corresponding Guidelines	Summit Document
Objective	An expected result of biregional cooperation on sustainable development is improved knowledge of the problems and consequences of climate change.	All action plans (Section 2).
Areas: - Research - Capacity-building - Networks	- Need to create a comprehensive joint strategy in research, development and innovation supporting, among other things, climate change-related issues. - Need to support capacity-building on sustainable development and climate change issues. - The exchange of information, experiences and best practices is crucial to facilitate the design of adaptation and mitigation strategies and policies.	- All action plans (Section 1). - All action plans (Section 2). - All action plans (Section 2).
<i>Policy dialogue</i>	- Importance of stepping up regular biregional dialogue to develop the relevant aspects of the international agenda on sustainable development, environment and climate change. - Need to develop policies and instruments for climate change adaptation and mitigation, address the adverse effects of climate change and reduce the vulnerability of countries to natural disasters.	- All action plans (Section 2). - All action plans (Section 2).
<i>Socio-economic aspects</i>	The promotion of sustainable development and the fight against climate change should contribute to eradicating poverty, sustaining inclusive economic growth and promoting social inclusion.	Santiago and Brussels declarations.
<i>Biophysical aspects</i>	Importance of the use of new technologies and technology transfer underpinning sustainable socio-economic.	All action plans (Section 1).

Source: Own elaboration based on the analysis of the institutional report on the results of Euroclima’s first phase

Euroclima Program: Second Phase 2014 – 2016

This report presents a brief overview of Euroclima’s activities and objectives from 2014 to 2016. It starts by introducing Euroclima’s mission of facilitating “the integration of climate change mitigation and adaptation strategies and measures into Latin American public

development policies and plans” (p. 1). This mission coincides with the guidelines mentioned in the Santiago and Brussels declarations as well as Section 2 of action plans regarding the importance of developing policies and instruments for climate change adaptation and mitigation in the Latin American countries.

The objectives of Euroclima in this phase were twofold: 1) “contribute to poverty reduction of the Latin American population by reducing their environmental and social vulnerability to climate change”, and 2) “reinforce the resilience of the Latin American region to climate change and promote opportunities for green growth” (p. 2). These objectives are connected to the view of social inclusion and inclusive economic growth as essential conditions to achieve sustainable development, underlined in the Santiago and Brussels declarations.

In terms of the expected results of this phase, the first pertains to the exchange of experiences and information on climate change in Latin America, “increasing political awareness and strengthening institutional capacity, knowledge and visibility of climate change at national, sub-regional and regional levels” (p. 2). This expected result is the continuation of the work of the previous phase and reinforces the importance of knowledge transfer for enhancing capacity-building and mutual policy learning in the framework of biregional cooperation.

The second expected result concerns the formulation of adaptation and mitigation measures and their implementation through pilot cases. This is also a remnant from the previous phase and fully aligns with the mission of the program mentioned above. The prevalence of this focus in the two first phases of Euroclima reflects the internalization of the ideas articulated by EU-Latin American leaders during summits on the importance of addressing the root causes of climate change, coping with its inevitable impacts, protecting vulnerable communities, and enhancing overall resilience.

The third and final expected result refers to the reinforcement of food security “contributing to a sustainable agriculture with a higher capacity to mitigate the effects and adapt to climate change, including desertification and soil degradation measures” (p. 2). This expected result reflects the commitment reiterated by the leaders of the EU and Latin America at the Santiago summit (held the year before the start of this phase of Euroclima) to the eradication of hunger and the need to guarantee food security for present and future generations while promoting sustainable agriculture. This commitment emerged in the

framework of the Millennium Development Goals and the Rio+20 Conference, mentioned in the Santiago and Brussels declarations.

This institutional report highlights the efforts of the focal points designated by Latin American governments to “facilitate and guide the implementation of the program and promote the application of the results generated in the context of Euroclima in decision-making at the national and regional level” (p. 3). In this regard, Euroclima aims to address the demands of Latin American countries while encouraging dialogue and cooperation on climate-related issues within Latin America and between this region and the EU. Moreover, the document points out that “actions are defined in a participatory manner based on the needs of the region, identified through the National Focal Points” (p. 4). This approach is compatible with the guideline of the Santiago and Brussels declarations recognizing the diversity of models, needs and tools available to each country, in accordance with its national circumstances and priorities, to achieve sustainable development.

Finally, it is worth noting that this institutional report mentions both the Lima Summit held in 2008, when the creation of Euroclima was proposed, and the Santiago Summit held in 2013, which reiterated the importance of implementing actions to fight climate change and recognized the contribution of Euroclima to facilitate the design of adaptation and mitigation strategies and policies.

Table N° 25. Correspondence between the institutional report of Euroclima’s second phase and summit-driven guidelines

Section of the Institutional Report	Corresponding Guidelines	Summit Document
Mission	Importance of developing policies and instruments for climate change adaptation and mitigation.	All action plans (Section 2).
Objectives	Social inclusion, eradication of poverty and inclusive economic growth are essential to achieve sustainable development.	Santiago and Brussels declarations.
Expected Results: - Exchange of experiences and information on climate change	- The exchange of experiences and information facilitates the design of climate change adaptation, mitigation and recovery strategies.	- Brussels Declaration.

- Formulation of adaptation and mitigation measures	- Importance of developing policies and instruments for climate change adaptation and mitigation.	- All action plans (Section 2).
- Reinforcement of food security contributing to a sustainable agriculture.	- Food security for present and future generations must be guaranteed while ensuring sustainable agriculture.	- Santiago and Brussels declarations.

Source: Own elaboration based on the analysis of the institutional report of Euroclima's second phase

- **Euroclima's institutional reports during the non-summits period**

This section accounts for the analysis of Euroclima's institutional reports covering the period from 2017 to 2020, when the program entered its third phase and was called Euroclima+. In this period, the institutional reports were published on an annual basis. Thus, four documents were found, namely the consolidated reports for the years 2017, 2018, 2019 and 2020.

The third phase of Euroclima involved a significant expansion of the program, resulting in a restructuring. Aligned with the Paris Agreement established during the 2015 United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP 21) and in response to the requirements outlined in the NDCs adopted by participating countries, Euroclima's orientation shifted towards fulfilling these commitments. Consequently, new lines of action and thematic sectors were added to the structure of the program (see Diagram N° 9 in section 6.2.2).

Euroclima's consolidated report 2017

This report describes Euroclima's institutional processes during 2017, the definition of its thematic sectors, the activities in each of them and the results of the year. The document starts by introducing Euroclima, describing its background and the work of the previous phases and highlighting the changes introduced in the third phase. It is clear from the beginning that the changes in the program pertain to its orientation towards compliance with the NDCs proposed at COP 21, since the objective in this phase is to help Latin American countries implement the commitments assumed under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). This aim aligns with the guidelines of the summits declarations and action plans asserting that the promotion of

environmental sustainability requires ensuring the effective implementation of international commitments such as the UNFCCC.

According to the report, activities in 2017 focused mainly on defining sectors, priorities and implementation mechanisms. The document introduces Euroclima's thematic sectors during this phase, highlighting that the program aimed to include the main development areas of the climate change agenda. The document also remarks that the selection of sectors entailed a participatory decision-making process involving representatives from partner countries and implementing agencies. In the end, six sectors were selected: *forests and ecosystems*, *food and sustainable agriculture*, *risk management*, *urban mobility*, *energy* and *water*. They remain Euroclima's thematic sectors to this day.

The sector of *forests and ecosystems* aims to strengthen the resilience of forests, ecosystems and local communities within the framework of the NDCs contributions and national action plans on climate change. Work topics included “intercultural territorial management, inclusive development and governance, water resources management, participatory research, value chains, concerted management of protected areas, illegal mining and conflict management” (p. 19). The report's analysis reveals that these topics do not correspond to guidelines provided by the summits but to proposals from actors such as NGOs, public institutions, indigenous associations, researchers and the private sector. However, there is a prevailing focus on implementing mitigation and adaptation actions in the context of these topics, which is aligned with the guidelines on the need to design adaptation, mitigation and recovery strategies to address the adverse effects of climate change and reduce the vulnerability of countries to natural disasters.

The sector of *food and sustainable agriculture* aims to strengthen food production capacities at local, national and regional levels to “increase resilience to climate change, the efficiency of agricultural and livestock production systems with respect to carbon and water use, as well as interconnected value chains food and agriculture” (p. 6). This sector aligns with the guideline proposed in the Santiago and Brussels declarations about the need to guarantee food security while ensuring sustainable agriculture. The report mentions that this sector maintains a special focus on the achievement of the NDCs but also consider relevant national strategies.

The sector of *risk management*, as its name suggests, aims to implement plans to reduce and manage risks, especially related to flood and drought, in Latin American countries.

The actions in this sector are oriented towards “governance, planning and development of regulatory frameworks; to information, communication and early warning; and investment in disaster resilience” (p. 13). This sector addresses the need to strengthen biregional cooperation on environment and disaster risk reduction stated in all the action plans. According to the report, this sector follows the Sendai Framework for Action 2015-2030 as a reference. The Sendai Framework was mentioned in Article 34 of the Brussels Declaration since the leaders of the EU and Latin America urged to commit to its implementation and strengthen cooperation to achieve its goals.

The sector of *urban mobility* supports the development of “policies and programs at the national and municipal level, as well as multimodal and integrated participatory planning at the city level, to accelerate the transition of Latin American cities towards sustainable urban mobility with low carbon emissions” (p. 6). Besides, this sector promotes the development of a regional community of practice for urban mobility. While this sector does not correspond to the guidelines proposed in the summits declarations and action plans, its activities involve the cooperation approach to the exchange of knowledge and experiences proposed in the summits.

The sector of *energy* focuses on “strengthening institutional, legal and regulatory frameworks through instruments, mechanisms, methodologies and tools, as well as the development of capacities that allow the adequate implementation and promotion of energy efficiency and renewable energies under a regional perspective” (p. 6). This report does not present activities or results in this sector because it was still under development at the time of the publication. However, it is important to highlight that the Madrid and Santiago declarations, as well as the Section 2 of the action plans, pointed out that energy plays a strategic role in sustainable development. Thus, the EU and Latin America should intensify their cooperation towards improving energy efficiency, developing renewable energies, promoting energy interconnection networks and diversifying the energy matrix.

The sector of *water* aims to improve the resilience of urban zones through better water management practices, increase accessibility to drinking water for the most vulnerable communities and ensure the quality of water resources. Like the *energy* sector, activities and results of the *water* sector were not included in the report, as they were the last sectors to be developed in Euroclima+. It should be noted that the issue of water was not addressed in any of the summits declarations and action plans. None of these summits documents

mentions this topic. Therefore, this sector does not follow the guidelines established by the summits and is rather aligned with the demands of the Latin American countries expressed in the Euroclima+ meetings.

Finally, the results presented in the report highlight that the activities of 2017 were primarily focused on planning and building implementation mechanisms of the program. First, the implementation structure of the program was established to coordinate activities between participating actors. Second, a wide range of consultations and meetings were conducted with stakeholders to identify their demands, receive support requests, define priorities jointly and exchange information and experiences. Third, potential actions and projects were identified, specifically focusing on those that would contribute to strengthening the countries' climate policies in terms of mitigation and adaptation. These results align with the guidelines provided by the action plans related to stepping up regular biregional dialogue on relevant aspects of sustainable development, encouraging the exchange of information, experiences and best practices between the two regions, and designing strategies for climate change adaptation and mitigation.

Table N° 26. Correspondence between Euroclima's consolidated report 2017 and summit-driven guidelines

Topics in the Institutional Report	Corresponding Guidelines	Summit Document
<i>Forests and ecosystems</i>	No summit-driven guidelines related to this topic.	
<i>Food and sustainable agriculture</i>	Food security for present and future generations must be guaranteed while ensuring sustainable agriculture.	Santiago and Brussels declarations.
<i>Risk management</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Need to strengthen biregional cooperation on environment and disaster risk reduction. - Biregional actions on sustainability and climate change must take into account existing international commitments, such as the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - All action plans (Section 2). - Brussels Declaration.
<i>Urban mobility</i>	No summit-driven guidelines related to this topic.	
<i>Energy</i>	Environmental sustainability requires improving energy efficiency, developing renewable energies, promoting energy interconnection networks and diversifying the energy matrix.	All action plans (Section 2).
<i>Water</i>	No summit-driven guidelines related to this topic.	

Source: Own elaboration based on the analysis of Euroclima's consolidated report 2017

Euroclima's consolidated report 2018

This institutional report differs from the previous one because it portrays Euroclima's results in a more direct, organized and extensive way, including more figures. This report introduced the lines of action (see the fourth result below) which meant a structural change in the program as these lines of action became integral components alongside the six thematic sectors. This report presents eight main results of Euroclima in 2018, namely *efficient cooperation, engagement of diverse actors, implementation of projects, identification of lines of action for the NDCs implementation, direct support to countries on climate change-related needs, coherence with the priorities of the region, establishment of the basis for cooperation, and activation of an efficient coordination mechanism.*

The section on *efficient cooperation* highlights three main processes. The first is the participatory prioritization of Euroclima's actions, which are achieved in periodic meetings with representatives of all partner countries and reinforced in sectoral workshops. The second is the strategic allocation of program resources, according to which 51 million euros correspond to project grants, 17 million euros to technical assistance, 3 million euros to program coordination, and 17 million euros to other climate actions. The third is the participation of representatives from the partner countries, which has encouraged the exchange of knowledge and good practices on common topics as well as mutual policy learning. The first process aligns with the guideline on consolidation of a regular biregional dialogue, while the third follows the guideline on the exchange of information, experiences and best practices to facilitate the design of climate change-related strategies.

The section on *engagement of diverse actors* points out that Euroclima+ raised awareness among various actors about climate change, encouraging links between organizations from different countries. According to the report, around 2000 organizations were involved in the call for proposals for Euroclima's projects. The group of actors that participated in the program included state, academic and civil society organizations, as well as regional organizations. It was expected to "reach 56 awarded initiatives in the six prioritized sectors, distributed in 18 countries and with interventions in more than 100 locations throughout the region" (p. 10). The organizations need to "demonstrate concrete responses to mitigate and increase resilience to climate change" (p. 10), which goes in line with the focus on exchanging experiences on mitigation and adaptation championed by the summits declarations.

The section on *implementation of projects* remarks that, out of the 56 awarded initiatives, 41 projects were already underway, having a budget of 32.5 million euros. These projects corresponded to four sectors: forests and ecosystems, food and sustainable agriculture, risk management and urban mobility. The projects were implemented in more than one country; hence, the total number of Euroclima's interventions amounted to more than 80. The projects' implementation in multiple countries allowed for regional cooperation and exchange of experiences between countries, which is one of the main approaches proposed by the EU- Latin American leaders during the summits.

The section on *identification of lines of action for the NDCs implementation* accounts for the introduction of lines of action in Euroclima aiming to provide a framework for the program's actions in Latin America. These lines of action were introduced in consideration of the NDCs implementation and the specific demands of the countries. Six lines of action were identified: strengthening of plans and policies, instruments for climate financing, transparency and accountability, intersectoral coordination, education and actions for climate empowerment, and gender and vulnerable groups. While some of these lines align with summits guidelines, their introduction stemmed from an internal process of Euroclima in response to the NDCs and the dialogue with the Latin American countries.

The section on *direct support to countries on climate change-related needs* outlines Euroclima's efforts to provide direct support to countries based on their expressed needs in regular meetings with representatives of the program. Euroclima identified the need to improve public policies and institutions. A total of 30 actions were implemented through "transfer of European experiences or South-South exchanges" (p. 14). More than 40 activities were carried out to accompany these actions, including specialized consultancies, in-person meetings and training. Moreover, a regional work network was established to monitor and evaluate climate policies and share good practices and lessons from Latin America and Europe. These activities align with the focus of the summits declarations and action plans on the exchange of experiences and best practices between the two regions.

The section on *coherence with the priorities of the region* highlights Euroclima's endeavors to ensure coherence between biregional cooperation and Latin America's priorities on climate change. This section introduces initiatives carried out by some implementing agencies of the program in the framework of regional priorities. The German agency GIZ promoted initiatives such as the regional peer-to-peer dialogue to strengthen

the implementation of NDCs, the community of practice on private sector engagement in climate policy processes, and the financial advisory mechanism of the NDCs. UNEP promoted the regional dialogue on electric mobility within the framework of the Forum of Ministers of the Environment of Latin America and the Caribbean, the implementation of the strategic agenda for adaptation to climate change in the Andes and the integration of Ecosystem-Based Adaptation into urban planning. ECLAC led the regional work on social carbon pricing, a working group on the Carbon Price Platform in the Americas and the regional work on green tax policy. These initiatives followed their own dynamics based on the criteria of the implementing agencies.

The section on *establishment of the basis for cooperation* presents Euroclima's approach for its continuation in the following years, which was agreed at the regional meeting held in Buenos Aires in October 2018. Euroclima decided to continue its actions in the six thematic sectors while working on initiatives of direct support to countries on climate change-related needs. According to the report, this approach aligns with the Regional Climate Change Platform created within the framework of the Forum of Ministers of the Environment of Latin America and the Caribbean. This statement marks a turning point as it explicitly recognizes the role of the guidelines provided by the Forum of Ministers, downplaying the importance of the guidelines provided by the summits. This is evidence of the incorporation of guidelines from instances other than the summits.

Finally, the section on *activation of an efficient coordination mechanism* points out that the secretariat of Euroclima is responsible for ensuring the coordination and coherence of the program, monitoring activities carried out by the implementing agencies, and producing the respective consolidated information (p. 25). Activities in this framework included strategic support to Euroclima in close collaboration with the Directorate-General for International Cooperation and Development of the European Commission, regular meetings of Euroclima's Steering Committee and Management Committee, publication of information about Euroclima's achievements, design of the EUCLIDES platform to follow up activities, preparation of Euroclima's participation in international events such as the COP, and organization of Euroclima's annual meeting in parallel with the Forum of Ministers of the Environment of Latin America and the Caribbean, which "facilitated dialogue between participants of both meetings and ensured great visibility of the program" (p. 25). Once again, the importance of the Forum of Ministers is highlighted, confirming its pivotal role in this phase of Euroclima.

Table N° 27. Correspondence between Euroclima’s consolidated report 2018 and summit-driven guidelines

Topics in the Institutional Report	Corresponding Guidelines	Summit Document
<i>Efficient cooperation</i>	- Importance of stepping up regular biregional dialogue to develop the relevant aspects of the international agenda on sustainable development, environment and climate change. - The exchange of experiences and information facilitates the design of climate change adaptation, mitigation and recovery strategies.	- All action plans (Section 2). - Brussels Declaration.
<i>Engagement of diverse actors</i>	The exchange of experiences and information facilitates the design of climate change adaptation, mitigation and recovery strategies.	Brussels Declaration.
<i>Implementation of projects</i>	The exchange of experiences and information facilitates the design of climate change adaptation, mitigation and recovery strategies.	Brussels Declaration.
<i>Identification of lines of action for the NDCs implementation</i>	No summit-driven guidelines related to this topic.	
<i>Direct support to countries on climate change-related needs</i>	The exchange of experiences and information facilitates the design of climate change adaptation, mitigation and recovery strategies.	Brussels Declaration.
<i>Coherence with the priorities of the region</i>	No summit-driven guidelines related to this topic.	
<i>Establishment of the basis for cooperation</i>	No summit-driven guidelines related to this topic.	
<i>Activation of an efficient coordination mechanism</i>	No summit-driven guidelines related to this topic.	

Source: Own elaboration based on the analysis of Euroclima’s consolidated report 2018

Euroclima’s consolidated report 2019

This report closely resembles the one from the preceding year. It contains the same information but with updated figures. Even the wording of most of the sections is largely unchanged. The same results sections remained except for the one called *coherence with the priorities of the region*, which was removed. The only difference in the structure of the 2019 report is the addition of a section on activities pertaining to the lines of action

identified in the previous year. Since the results sections were already scrutinized under the light of the summits guidelines, the newly added section on activities related to the lines of action will be the focus of this document's analysis. The six lines of action are: *strengthening plans and policies, instruments for climate financing, transparency and accountability, intersectoral coordination, education and actions for climate empowerment, and gender and vulnerable groups.*

The line of action of *strengthening plans and policies* encompassed activities in three main areas: institutionalism and climate governance, commitments under the UNFCCC, and development of climate policies and plans. The first included activities of “strengthening climate coordination bodies and actors that implement climate policy at the national, subnational and sectoral levels” (p. 20). The second comprised actions linked to the NDCs review and update process, as well as the formulation of long-term strategies in line with them. The third provided “assistance for the creation of climate laws and other regulatory instruments, including support for the formulation and implementation of national, subnational policies and sectoral plans” (p. 21). Notably, the second area aligns with the guideline on the implementation of international commitments such as the UNFCCC.

The line of action of *instruments for climate financing* covered activities in three primary topics: strengthening enabling conditions to receive funding, improving access to climate finance, and developing economic and financial instruments. The first encompassed the formulation of financial strategies that allow mobilizing public and private capital to meet climate goals. The second one pertained to overcoming barriers to better access to international and domestic sources of climate finance. The third promoted the “development of collection mechanisms such as royalties, carbon taxes and ‘green’ taxes, among others; and non-traditional financial instruments, including alternative approaches to the carbon market” (p. 24). Activities in this line of action align with the guidelines identified in Section 2, paragraph D of all the action plans related to the importance of seeking financial resources to promote climate change adaptation and mitigation, as well as the guideline of the Santiago Declaration highlighting that sustainable development requires the promotion of investments of social and environmental quality.

The line of action of *transparency and accountability* includes initiatives in two areas: developing integrated systems for monitoring and evaluating climate change policies, and projecting climate scenarios. In terms of the first area, Euroclima organized several onsite

and online workshops and provided technical assistance in four countries: Costa Rica, El Salvador, Uruguay and Chile. In addition, a community of practice was created to promote exchange sessions among Latin American officials. Regarding the second area, Euroclima organized workshops and courses to develop regionalized scenarios of future climate conditions that allow evaluating the impact of climate change on the productive sectors, civil defense and infrastructure and planning the corresponding adaptation measures. These events favored the exchange of information, experiences and best practices between the EU and Latin American institutions, which aligns with one of the most important guidelines provided by the summits declarations and action plans.

The line of action of *intersectoral coordination* promoted the articulation of actions between different government levels, involvement of the private sector in actions to tackle climate change, and participation of academia and civil society in decision-making. In this framework, diverse initiatives were supported such as the “Dialogue between peers to enhance the implementation of NDC in Latin America” and the “Community of Practices for the involvement of the private sector in climate policy processes” (p. 31). Specific activities were carried out, such as regional workshops, training, conferences, and consultancies in more than ten Latin American countries, with special participation of Spanish institutions. These activities aimed to encourage the exchange of experiences and capacity building to improve existing climate change management systems and facilitate compliance with NDCs. As in the previous line of action, these activities go in line with the guidelines of the summits declarations and action plans regarding the importance of exchanging knowledge and experiences in the realm of climate change.

The line of action of *education and actions for climate empowerment* aimed to increase awareness and dissemination of information about climate change among the public. Euroclima supports formal education on climate change by strengthening climate educational policies and creating environmental education tools. Likewise, the program promoted “participatory processes with civil society, academia and the private sector that generate or strengthen multisector participatory platforms and the enabling conditions for the application of the Escazú Agreement on climate change” (p. 33). This line of action does not explicitly correspond to any guidelines provided by the summits. Although one of the expected results outlined in the action plans was an improved knowledge of the problems and consequences of climate change, there was no specification about whether it referred to knowledge at the governmental level or that of the general public.

Lastly, the line of action of *gender and vulnerable groups* aimed to incorporate a gender approach and integrate the perspectives of vulnerable groups, such as the indigenous population, minorities and people living in extreme poverty, within the framework of compliance with the commitments assumed in the UNFCCC. Activities in this line of action encompassed the development of gender-based regulatory frameworks, the incorporation of the gender approach in climate change mitigation and adaptation measures, and the integration of the perspective of indigenous peoples in climate policies and plans. Guidelines on climate change provided by the summits declarations and action plans do not mention the gender approach or the minorities' perspective. Therefore, this line of action does not explicitly correspond to any guidelines provided by the summits.

Table N° 28. Correspondence between Euroclima's consolidated report 2019 and summit-driven guidelines

Section of the Institutional Report	Corresponding Guidelines	Summit Document
<i>Strengthening plans and policies</i>	Environmental sustainability requires ensuring the effective implementation of international commitments such as the UNFCCC.	All action plans (Section 2).
<i>Instruments for climate financing</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Importance of seeking financial resources to promote climate change adaptation and mitigation. - Importance of promoting investments that support sustainable development. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - All action plans (Section 2). - Santiago Declaration.
<i>Transparency and accountability</i>	The exchange of experiences and information facilitates the design of climate change adaptation, mitigation and recovery strategies.	Brussels Declaration.
<i>Intersectoral coordination</i>	The exchange of experiences and information facilitates the design of climate change adaptation, mitigation and recovery strategies.	Brussels Declaration.
<i>Education and actions for climate empowerment</i>	No summit-driven guidelines related to this topic.	
<i>Gender and vulnerable groups</i>	No summit-driven guidelines related to this topic.	

Source: Own elaboration based on the analysis of Euroclima's consolidated report 2019

Euroclima's consolidated report 2020

Among the analyzed reports, this is the most extensive and comprehensive. In addition to providing a detailed description of Euroclima's results during 2020, this report delves into the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on the program, emphasizing the critical role of international cooperation in addressing both climate and health crises. Despite recognizing the urgency of responding promptly to avoid a severe economic downturn resulting from the pandemic, the report acknowledges the potential risk of ignoring climate considerations during this process. In this regard, the document remarks that "it was necessary to quickly develop strategies to prevent the pandemic recovery effort from hindering progress in compliance with the NDCs" (p. 14).

In 2020, Euroclima aimed at embracing green recovery as the main approach of the program, "following the demands for support arising from the XXII Meeting of the Forum of Ministers of the Environment of Latin America and the Caribbean" (p. 15). This is evidence of the role of this forum as a guideline provider in the absence of biregional summits. However, it is noteworthy that this was the only mention of the Forum of Ministers in this document, in contrast to previous reports. The NDCs stood out as the main focus of the program. The report presents Euroclima's results along the lines of action and thematic sectors, following the program's structure. To revisit this structure, see Diagram N° 9 introduced in section 6.2.2.

Regarding the results of the lines of action, the line of *strengthening plans and policies* promoted nine specific processes: 1) the increase of NDCs reach, 2) long-term strategies towards net zero emissions by 2050, 3) transparent and effective legislative/regulatory instruments, 4) mitigation and adaptation strategies, programs and plans in specific sectors and territories, 5) instruments, tools and technical mechanisms for the implementation of climate policy, 6) capacity-building processes to reinforce climate-related policies and plans, 7) pilot projects and innovative initiatives, 8) systematization, dissemination and replication of good practices, and 9) spaces for the exchange of knowledge and experiences on issues related to the strengthening of climate-related policies and plans. In these results, diverse summits guidelines are reflected, such as the importance of knowledge sharing and capacity building, the need to design climate change adaptation, mitigation and recovery strategies, and the relevance of the exchange of information, experiences and best practices.

The line of action of *instruments for climate financing* supported the development of six types of initiatives: 1) climate finance strategies and plans, 2) financial economic instruments, 3) bankable climate projects, 4) capacity building for climate finance, 5) shared and replicated good practices in climate finance, and 6) active exchange spaces. As in the 2019 report, the results in this line of action align with the guidelines identified in Section 2, paragraph D of all the action plans related to the importance of seeking financial resources to promote climate change adaptation and mitigation, and the guideline of the Santiago Declaration regarding the promotion of investments of social and environmental quality.

The line of action of *transparency and accountability* promoted initiatives such as monitoring and evaluation systems, climate information platforms on mitigation and adaptation, greenhouse gases inventories, data and metrics on adaptation processes, regionalized climate change scenarios, institutional training on climate services, good practices on monitoring and evaluation, and exchange spaces and multi-country initiatives. The results in this line of action match the guideline identified in Section 2, paragraph F of all action plans regarding the need to support capacity-building on climate change monitoring and greenhouse gas emission reporting and verification. Moreover, like others, this line of action supported the development of mitigation and adaptation strategies and the exchange of knowledge and good practices, crucial elements according to the summits action plans.

The line of action of *intersectoral coordination* developed mechanisms for intersectoral and multilevel articulation, research initiatives in the scientific and academic sectors, capacity-building processes for intersectoral, multilevel and multi-stakeholder articulation, best practices on climate policy issues and sustainable, resilient and inclusive recovery, and exchange processes targeting actors from different levels. These initiatives facilitated the formulation and implementation of climate policies and increased the outreach of the climate agenda to various levels of government. They also encouraged more significant involvement of the private sector, civil society and academia in the decision making, implementation and monitoring of NDCs. This line of action supports and highlights the role of the capacity-building processes and intersectoral exchanges, just as the summits documents do.

The line of work on *action for climate empowerment* promoted different types of initiatives to stimulate society's involvement in activities addressing climate change. In fact, "Action for Climate Empowerment" (ACE) is a term coined by the UNFCCC, and it aims to empower all members of society to engage in climate action. This line of action promoted ACE through strategies for climate empowerment, pilot activities, institutional strengthening processes, good practices, resources facilitating the implementation of ACE, and participatory and consultative multi-stakeholder processes. As mentioned in the examination of the previous report, this line of action does not follow any specific guidelines from the summits. Instead, it aligns with the UNFCCC and its criteria.

Finally, the line of action of *gender and vulnerable groups* supported the development of initiatives such as instruments for the integration of the gender approach in climate policies, activities to promote the participation of vulnerable and indigenous groups in climate change governance bodies, institutional strengthening processes on gender, inclusion of vulnerable groups and just transition, best practices in terms of gender mainstreaming, and exchange spaces for the participation of vulnerable groups and indigenous populations. As mentioned in the analysis of the previous report, this line of action does not explicitly correspond to any guidelines provided by the summits since the climate change-related guidelines in the summits declarations and action plans do not mention the gender approach or the inclusion of minorities.

Concerning the results of the thematic sectors, the sector of *forests and ecosystems* supported twelve projects to help Latin American countries achieve sustainable management of their natural resources while ensuring ecosystems' resilience. These projects involved activities on forests management and restoration, land use management, administration of protected areas, and forestry value chains, among others. Thanks to the *Diálogos País*, Euroclima helped countries meet deforestation control targets and promote sustainable business models and production chains that support the transition to a low-carbon economy. As in previous reports, this line of action does not explicitly correspond to any summit-driven guideline.

The sector of *energy* encompassed eight projects aimed at increasing energy efficiency, reducing greenhouse gas emissions and promoting renewable energies, in line with the NDCs compliance. The results of these projects include the implementation of mechanisms for monitoring energy efficiency, the creation of databases on energy consumption, the

formulation of energy cost diagnostics, the organization of training in energy efficiency measures, the development of energy consumption reduction systems, and the conduction of energy audits. This sector reflects the strategic role of energy for sustainable development emphasized by the summits documents and the common interest of the EU and Latin America in improving energy efficiency and reducing greenhouse gas emissions.

The sector of *water* supported seven projects related to the strategic management of watersheds and aquifers, technological development and innovation in water resources management, institutional strengthening and community development to enhance water accessibility, and the formulation of policies and regulatory frameworks on urban resilience. Activities of these projects included the conduction of technical studies, preparation of online courses, establishment of work groups, creation of information and monitoring systems, and development of infrastructure. As mentioned in the analysis of a previous report, none of the summits declarations and action plans addresses the issue of water. However, projects in this sector follow the same summits-driven approach as other sectors, incorporating knowledge exchange and mutual policy learning as key components of their processes.

The sector of *risk management* developed seven projects that improved monitoring and early warning systems for droughts and floods and reduced the impact of existing risks, “taking as reference the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030, the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the commitments assumed by countries in their fight against climate change (NDCs)” (p. 73). These projects included the strengthening of national and regional systems of monitoring and risk management, actions to reduce the population’s vulnerability to droughts and floods, initiatives for climate risk management, and the development of information systems on climatic conditions. This sector directly relates to the guideline provided in Section 2, paragraph B of the action plans regarding the need to strengthen biregional cooperation in disaster risk reduction and management by increasing the knowledge of the problems and consequences of climate change. Moreover, it aligns with the guideline of the summits declarations stating that biregional actions on sustainability and climate change must take into account existing international commitments and multilateral initiatives such as the Sendai Framework.

The sector of *urban mobility* promoted a total of eighteen projects related to the formulation of national programs, local plans and pilot projects in the areas of sustainable

mobility, urban transport logistics, urban cycling, public bicycle systems, and recovery of public space. Furthermore, since 2017, this sector has supported the development of a regional community of practice that encourages the exchange of experiences and lessons in sustainable urban mobility. This sector was not included in the summits declarations and action plans; however, its activities involve technology transfer, mutual policy learning and thematic networks, which are key components of the cooperative approach proposed in the summits action plans, as well as the exchange of information, knowledge and experiences championed by the summits.

The sector of *food and sustainable agriculture* developed ten projects aimed at promoting resilient food production and inclusive agri-food value chains in alignment with each country's NDCs. The results of these projects were reflected in the areas of institutional capacity-building, policy design, regulatory frameworks, access to financing, production processes, and business innovations. Activities of these projects included the preparation of policy documents and funding proposals, organization of onsite and online seminars, training and courses, provision of technical assistance, and the exchange of experiences and innovative practices. This sector matches the guideline proposed in the Santiago and Brussels declarations on the need to guarantee food security while ensuring sustainable agriculture. Furthermore, activities in this sector align with the guidelines on the importance of the exchange of experiences and best practices, as well as mutual policy learning.

Finally, while the summits are not explicitly mentioned in this institutional report, there is a notable influence of summit-driven guidelines such as the need to exchange information, experiences and good practices in climate change-related solutions and the importance of developing public policies and instruments for climate change adaptation and mitigation. These summit-driven guidelines were internalized by Euroclima and became persistent features of the program despite the lack of summits. This report also reflected the role of the *Diálogos País* in fostering a closer relationship between the program and its Latin American partner countries, a critical factor that shaped new initiatives and projects implemented in 2020. This engagement with partner countries contributed to Euroclima's increased actorness, evident in certain activities and projects not aligning strictly with summit-driven guidelines but responding to specific agreements between the program and the local governments.

Furthermore, the report points out the challenges posed by the Covid-19 pandemic, including the delay of projects, the interruption of some activities and the shift to online platforms, among others. However, the report also highlights that, despite these hurdles, Euroclima adapted to the new reality and demonstrated resilience. In this sense, tailored measures were implemented to overcome the crisis and mitigate the effects of the pandemic on the achievement of the projects' goals.

Table N° 29. Correspondence between Euroclima's consolidated report 2020 and summit-driven guidelines

Section of the Institutional Report	Corresponding Guidelines	Summit Document
<i>Strengthening plans and policies</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Need to support capacity-building on sustainable development and climate change issues. - Importance of developing policies and instruments for climate change adaptation and mitigation - The exchange of information, experiences and best practices is crucial to facilitate the design of adaptation and mitigation strategies and policies. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - All action plans (Section 2). - All action plans (Section 2). - All action plans (Section 2).
<i>Instruments for climate financing</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Importance of seeking financial resources to promote climate change adaptation and mitigation. - Importance of promoting investments that support sustainable development. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - All action plans (Section 2). - Santiago Declaration.
<i>Transparency and accountability</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Need to support capacity-building on sustainable development and climate change issues. - Importance of developing policies and instruments for climate change adaptation and mitigation - The exchange of information, experiences and best practices is crucial to facilitate the design of adaptation and mitigation strategies and policies. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - All action plans (Section 2). - All action plans (Section 2). - All action plans (Section 2).
<i>Intersectoral coordination</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The exchange of experiences and information facilitates the design of climate change adaptation, mitigation and recovery strategies. - Need to support capacity-building on sustainable development and climate change issues. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Brussels Declaration. - All action plans (Section 2).
<i>Actions for climate empowerment</i>	No summit-driven guidelines related to this topic.	
<i>Gender and vulnerable groups</i>	No summit-driven guidelines related to this topic.	

<i>Forests and ecosystems</i>	No summit-driven guidelines related to this topic.	
<i>Energy</i>	Environmental sustainability requires improving energy efficiency, developing renewable energies, promoting energy interconnection networks and diversifying the energy matrix.	All action plans (Section 2).
<i>Water</i>	No summit-driven guidelines related to this topic.	
<i>Risk management</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Need to strengthen biregional cooperation on environment and disaster risk reduction. - Biregional actions on sustainability and climate change must take into account existing international commitments, such as the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - All action plans (Section 2). - Brussels Declaration.
<i>Urban mobility</i>	No summit-driven guidelines related to this topic.	
<i>Food and sustainable agriculture</i>	Food security for present and future generations must be guaranteed while ensuring sustainable agriculture.	Santiago and Brussels declarations.

Source: Own elaboration based on the analysis of Euroclima's consolidated report 2020

7. ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

This research employed a three-phase process of data collection and analysis focusing on the case studies of Eurosocial and Euroclima in order to provide answers to four research questions regarding the role of summits in the development of interregional cooperation programs between the EU and Latin America. This section aims to explain in detail the answers to these questions based on the findings from the collected empirical evidence and in light of the conceptual framework and the academic debate on the field.

Regarding the question “*What is the role of summits between Heads of State and Government of the EU and Latin America in the development of interregional cooperation programs?*” the analysis indicates that summits set biregional priorities based on the consensus reached by the leaders in those meetings. The declarations and action plans delineate these priorities as guidelines that provide a framework for the functioning of cooperation programs. Thus, besides being the primary space in which most of the cooperation programs were created, summits assumed the role of guideline providers. Guidelines are designed to give instructions, recommendations, and advice on how to accomplish certain task or goal.

Considering the contextual framework of this dissertation, the role of summits as guideline providers is intrinsically connected to the agenda-setting function of summits highlighted by Dune (1996), Feinberg (2013), Mace et al. (2016) and Obinna (2018). Meetings between leaders at the highest level are the opportunity to delineate priorities, identify key areas of collaboration, and formulate policy directions. By establishing a coherent framework for cooperation, summits offer a structured approach to addressing shared challenges and seizing mutual opportunities. This agenda-setting process is instrumental in aligning the interests of the participating states, ensuring that cooperation programs, such as Eurosocial and Euroclima, are effectively targeted and coordinated to address shared challenges and objectives. This dynamic underscores the importance of summits not only in shaping general diplomatic agendas but also in providing strategic direction for cooperation.

In this research, the guidelines identified in the summits declarations and action plans emphasized the importance of particular issues, provided recommendations for addressing

specific areas, and prescribed approaches to certain topics. Evidence of the influence of the summits-driven guidelines in the functioning of the cooperation programs was consistently identified throughout the documentary analysis. In the case of Eurosocioal:

1. Eurosocioal is aligned with the overall concept of social inclusion and cohesion outlined in the summits declarations, promoting the implementation of projects aimed at strengthening public policies and integrated strategies to reduce inequality and social exclusion, as recommended by the EU-Latin American leaders in the summits. The commitment of the leaders to social-oriented development strategies is reflected in Eurosocioal's working methodology.
2. The issues related to social inclusion and cohesion in the Madrid and Santiago declarations were reflected in the areas of work that Eurosocioal II addressed, including education, health and social security, justice administration, taxation, and employment.
3. The emphasis on the importance of promoting decent work and education portrayed in the summit declarations and Section 5 of the action plans was reflected in the creation of the areas of Employment and Education in Eurosocioal II.
4. The recognition of the need to promote gender equality and women's empowerment made in the Santiago Declaration and in Section 7 of the Santiago and Brussels action plans was manifested in the reconfiguration of Eurosocioal in its third phase, which included a policy area of Gender Equality.
5. The importance of territorial development and regional integration highlighted in the Brussels Declaration and Section 3 of all action plans was reflected in the creation of the line of action on regional development introduced in Eurosocioal in 2016.
6. The commitment of the EU-Latin American leaders to democratic governance, transparency and accountability in public finances was reflected in Eurosocioal and its transformation over time, as the third phase of the program included a policy area focused on democratic governance policies, which in turn incorporated a line of action on public finances.
7. Eurosocioal acknowledged the need for the establishment of partnerships between public administrations of the EU and Latin America to support social cohesion and inclusion efforts, as delineated in Section 3 of all action plans. This emphasis on

public administration partnerships became a key aspect of Eurosocietal's *modus operandi*.

8. The focus on disadvantaged populations such as people with disabilities, youth, and the elderly, as proposed in the Brussels Action Plan, was manifested in the creation of the lines of action called *policies for youth, adolescence and childhood* and *policies of social inclusion and the fight against poverty* included in the restructuring of Eurosocietal in 2016.
9. The emphasis on the exchange of information, experiences and best practices in social inclusion areas, as outlined in all the action plans, was implemented by all the lines of action of Eurosocietal. This approach was incorporated in various projects and activities across the region during both the summits and non-summits period, ultimately becoming a structural characteristic of the program.
10. The importance given to the MDGs, and later the SDGs, in all the summits declarations, especially in the Brussels Declaration and Action Plan, was reflected in the inclusion of a section detailing the specific SDGs associated with each respective line of action in all the institutional reports of Eurosocietal from 2016.

In the case of Euroclima:

1. Euroclima acknowledged that the promotion of sustainable development and the fight against climate change should contribute to eradicating poverty, sustaining inclusive economic growth and promoting social inclusion, as stated in all the summits declarations. In this regard, one of Euroclima's main objectives was to contribute to poverty reduction of the Latin American population by reducing their environmental and social vulnerability to climate change.
2. Euroclima's mode of operation aligns with the guideline that promotes the exchange of experiences, information and best practices between the EU and Latin America to facilitate the design of climate change adaptation, mitigation and recovery strategies, as mentioned in the summits declarations and action plans. This was evident in both the summits and non-summits period and, as in the case of Eurosocietal, it became a structural characteristic of the program.
3. Euroclima's focus on including adaptation and mitigation actions across all its projects is in line with the guidelines of the Brussels Declaration and the action plans on the importance of designing and implementing adaptation and mitigation strategies and policies to tackle climate change.

4. Euroclima integrated the principle that the promotion of sustainable development should take into account diverse approaches, views, models and tools available to each country, as mentioned in the Santiago and Brussels declarations. The program operationalized this principle by working with national focal points that represent each Latin American country and articulate their views, opinions and demands.
5. The priorities in terms of climate change articulated by the leaders in the Brussels Declaration are clearly reflected in the sectoral projects and thematic sectors of Euroclima, such as preserving forest resources, energy efficiency, risk management, urban mobility and food security.
6. In line with the significance of the effective implementation of the UNFCCC emphasized by the summits declarations, Euroclima's current primary mission is to assist Latin American countries in complying with their commitments under the UNFCCC (in particular, the NDCs).
7. Euroclima recognized that biregional actions in terms of sustainability and climate change must take into account existing international commitments and multilateral initiatives, as stated by all the summits declarations. In this regard, Euroclima fostered the implementation of the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction and the UN Development Agenda.
8. The need to support capacity-building on sustainable development and climate change issues, emphasized by Section 2 of all action plans, was addressed by Euroclima by incorporating capacity-building as a structural approach in many of its projects.
9. According to the Madrid Declaration, science, technology and innovation have a crucial role in achieving sustainable development through knowledge sharing, capacity-building, research programs and technology transfer activities. Euroclima included these components during its first phase from 2010 to 2013, focusing on the areas of research, capacity-building and networks.
10. Euroclima included food and sustainable agriculture as one of its thematic sectors in line with the guidelines of the Santiago and Brussels declarations stating that food security must be guaranteed while ensuring sustainable agriculture.
11. Efforts to improve energy efficiency and reduce greenhouse gas emissions promoted by the summits declarations were endorsed by Euroclima, reflected in the inclusion of energy as one of its thematic sectors.

12. Euroclima implemented projects to promote changes in production processes in line with the guidelines provided by the Madrid and Santiago declarations stating that fundamental changes in the patterns of consumption and production are crucial for achieving global sustainable development.
13. Euroclima included risk management as one of its thematic sectors in line with the need to strengthen biregional cooperation in the field of environment and disaster risk reduction emphasized by Section 2 of all action plans.

While these examples offer comprehensive evidence of the alignment between the summit-driven guidelines and the functioning of Eurosocial and Euroclima, the examination of the institutional reports in sections 6.1.5 and 6.2.5 of this dissertation provided a larger number of specific examples demonstrating how guidelines provided by the summits are reflected in the lines of action of each cooperation program.

It is important to note that Eurosocial and Euroclima did not follow all the summits-driven guidelines in social cohesion and sustainable development. The analysis of the summits declarations unveiled that guidelines related to financial investments in social development and climate change were particularly promoted by the leaders of the EU and Latin America but they were not addressed by Eurosocial and Euroclima. However, it is noteworthy that the cooperation mechanism known as LAIF undertook that endeavor. Furthermore, the guideline concerning the implementation of macroeconomic policies designed to foster inclusive growth and prevent the social consequences of economic crises was beyond the scope of Eurosocial.

Regarding the characteristics of the summits-driven guidelines, the analysis revealed that these guidelines are very broad, offering overarching principles and recommendations rather than detailed, measurable instructions. They provide a framework for the programs' development rather than prescribing exact steps to follow. While action plans provided certain details concerning some of the guidelines, most of the proposed activities lacked precision as they were often formulated as objectives rather than delineated as specific, actionable steps. In general, these guidelines do not define the precise means of implementation, the responsible institutions (specified only in exceptional cases), or the expected timeframe for completion.

In this context, Eurosocial and Euroclima have tailored the summits-driven guidelines to suit their specific needs. This adaptation process was facilitated by two key features of

these cooperation programs: their flexibility and demand-driven approach, as highlighted by their staff in the interviews. On the one hand, their flexibility allowed these programs to incorporate the guidelines in their operating mechanisms and implementation processes in a smooth and dynamic way. On the other hand, their demand-driven approach allowed them to adapt the guidelines, making them compatible with the demands of the local governments they work with.

One of the clearest examples of the adaptation of a summits-driven guideline was observed in Eurosocietal's approach to the exchange of experiences and good practices. Exchange of experiences is a broad and generic term used by the leaders at EU-Latin American summits, which Eurosocietal aimed to translate into technical cooperation formulas. The result was the Methodological Guide for the Exchange of Experiences, a document that defined how to conduct the process of transferring good practices and lessons learned between public administrations on the design, implementation and management of public policies with repercussions on social cohesion (Eurosocietal, 2013).

The vagueness and ambiguity inherent in summits-driven guidelines can be interpreted in different ways. On the one hand, it might be perceived as a lack of political will to make specific commitments that would entail accountability in the future. In this view, providing broad guidelines without specifying measurable progress indicators could be a strategy to avoid explicit commitments. On the other hand, the vagueness of these guidelines may be a consequence of the inherent nature of documents originated from summits. In this regard, there is a debate in the literature about whether the summits declarations genuinely provide a contribution and added value or if they are just documents full of common places and repetitions of previous agreements (Maihold, 2010). On this topic, Ruano (2017) stated that

The declarations suffer from what could be called the 'Christmas tree effect', typical of multilateralism, since each participant wants to 'hang' its favorite topic in the final declaration. With so many participating States, they turn out to be long, with more than fifty points, but without many concrete commitments, since the coincidences tend to be superficial and the language general (p. 146).

The analysis of summits declarations conducted in this dissertation confirms this argument, revealing that the EU-Latin American summits declarations usually include a wide range of points (spanning from 43 to 78 items in the case of the Madrid, Santiago and Brussels

declarations), encompass a large number of topics, using language that tends to be very general. Furthermore, the commitments articulated within these declarations are notably broad, which matches with the lack of specificity of the summits-driven guidelines.

However, Ruano (2017) also rightly stated that

This does not mean that they have no value. The repetition of a speech can shape political interests and legitimize actions. These statements therefore fulfill a political function; and as a good exercise in rhetoric, making them shorter would be ideal to give them greater force (p. 146-147).

The results of this research coincide with this argument because, despite the vagueness of the summits declarations, they provided orientations that helped the cooperation programs to articulate their structure and pursue certain aims. As Von Furstenberg and Daniels (1992) contend, “summits can be useful even if they do not lead to [specific] policy commitments” (p. 3).

Furthermore, summits foster the common construction of concepts, instruments and strategies, as well as the interconnection between them, reflected in the summit declarations. Notably, the three summits held during the study period of this dissertation (Madrid 2010, Santiago 2013, Brussels 2015) promoted the topics of social inclusion and sustainable development, the work areas of Eurosocial and Euroclima respectively. The analysis of the summits declarations reflected how the EU and Latin American leaders actively championed these topics, highlighting their interconnection. In fact, the themes/slogans of the three analyzed summits reflect the relationship between social inclusion and sustainable development, as well as the relevance of both topics in the biregional partnership (see Table N° 30).

Table N° 30. Themes of the summits declarations in 2010, 2013 and 2015

Summit Declaration	Theme/ Slogan
Madrid Declaration (2010)	“Towards a new stage in the bi-regional partnership: Innovation and technology for sustainable development and social inclusion”
Santiago Declaration (2013)	“Alliance for Sustainable Development: Promoting Investments of Social and Environmental Quality”
Brussels Declaration (2015)	“Shaping our common future: Working together for prosperous, cohesive and sustainable societies for our citizens”

Source: Own elaboration based on the summit declarations.

This observation reveals the similarities and interrelations between these summits declarations, particularly how they intertwine the social aspect with concerns about sustainable development and environmental protection. Moreover, it portrays the shared commitment of the EU and Latin America to advocate for these topics, which confirms the importance of studying them in detail, as undertaken in this dissertation.

It is important to highlight that this research also revealed the bidirectionality of the relationship between the summits and the cooperation programs. While summits provided guidelines for the cooperation programs; these programs, in turn, provided feedback to the political dialogue developed in the summits. This particularity was portrayed mainly in the insights gathered from interviews with both Eurosocietal's and Euroclima's staff. The interviewees stated that they were asked to submit reports and other documents related to the topics and areas they were working on, as these inputs facilitate the organization of summits and shape their agendas. As mentioned by one of the participants, it is crucial that the cooperation programs "nurture" the high-level political dialogue.

In this regard, while summits are the most important channel of the EU-Latin American *political dialogue*, cooperation programs became a vehicle for *policy dialogue* between the two regions. As Jung (2022) points out, feedback between both dialogues can provide a more strategic orientation to the cooperation programs, strengthening them and increasing their scope. The lack of summits and its impact on the continuity of biregional *political dialogue* meant that the contributions generated in terms of *policy dialogue* by the cooperation programs were reflected only in smaller-scope instances, such as regional networks and local communities. This situation affected the convergence of biregional agendas at the highest level.

Concerning the research question "*To what extent did the lack of summits between Heads of State and Government of the EU and Latin America affect the functioning of interregional cooperation programs?*" the empirical evidence provided by the case studies of Eurosocietal and Euroclima revealed that the functioning of cooperation programs was affected only to a limited degree by the lack of summits. Specifically, insights from the analysis of interviews and institutional reports evidenced that Eurosocietal and Euroclima successfully sustained ongoing activities and transitioned into new operational phases during the non-summits period. The main negative consequence of the interruption of summits was the void created by the lack of new summits-driven guidelines. However, this

situation did not entail a crisis or stagnation of these programs' operations. They developed a certain degree of actorness and resilience in the face of a challenging period in the biregional relationship, such as the non-summits period.

According to the examined literature, some authors argue that interregionalism is primarily based on a summitry exercise that provides spaces for dialogue and frameworks for enhancing cooperation (Gardini & Malamud, 2016; 2018). Therefore, the lack of summits could be considered a challenging period in an interregional relationship, with potential repercussions on the development of interregional cooperation programs. The findings of this research demonstrate that cooperation programs can build resilience to face a non-summits period when certain factors come together.

In this sense, regarding “*What factors contributed to the level of impact of the lack of summits on interregional cooperation programs?*”, the explanatory factors vary in each case study. In the case of Eurosocial, the interviews revealed that alternative mechanisms served as valuable sources of guidance in the context of the lack of summits-driven guidelines. International frameworks such as the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) provided guiding principles for Eurosocial's most recent phase to continue its operations. Notably, the summits declarations frequently mentioned the MDGs (later known as the SDGs) and their importance. SDGs became a key instrument for measuring Eurosocial's progress, which was evident in the institutional reports of its last phase. Meanwhile, in the case of the Gender Equality area, the agenda created in the framework of the Regional Conference on Women in Latin America and the Caribbean provided guidelines and established priorities to follow in the absence of other guiding mechanisms such as the biregional summits.

Another key finding from the interviews was the relevance of networks created by Eurosocial with institutions and actors in Latin America over the years. Eurosocial promoted the establishment of so-called “communities of practice” to find common ground and areas of collaboration among diverse institutions, facilitating the insertion of social cohesion projects in their agendas. These networks favored the emergence of what the interviewees called “relational capital”. The participants asserted that relational capital has played a pivotal role in the continuity of Eurosocial's operations, even in the absence of summits, as it has provided it with resilience and support. Relational capital, as described by the interviewees, involves establishing trust and sharing knowledge among the partner

institutions. This practice is evidence of the interconnectedness forged at the technical/execution level of the relationship, creating a separate dynamic that does not depend on the high-level dialogue. Moreover, relational capital nurtured a “bottom-up process” that persisted during the non-summits period. As Selleslachs (2019) pointed out, the establishment of horizontal (regional) networks of experts leads to further “bottom-up” policy coordination and harmonization. The empirical evidence from the interviews endorses this argument.

Meanwhile, the analysis of Eurosocial’s institutional reports revealed that the lack of summits affected Eurosocial only to a limited degree because some of the summits-driven guidelines evolved into integral components of the program, facilitating its continuation over the years. Some of these internalized guidelines are: the promotion and implementation of public policies as a means to achieve social cohesion and inclusion, the relevance of the exchange of experiences and best practices to develop policies on social cohesion and inclusion, and the connection between Eurosocial and the commitment of the EU-Latin American leaders to the achievement of higher levels of social inclusion, economic and territorial cohesion, equality and access to public services. These guidelines were evident in institutional reports and the functioning of Eurosocial both in the summits and non-summits period.

It should be noted that while Eurosocial’s areas of work during the summits period largely adhered to summits-driven guidelines, some areas of the program also incorporated insights derived from the previous phase of the program (2005-2010). This was particularly evident in the area of Justice, which featured more lines of action and received greater attention in Eurosocial II despite being minimally mentioned in summit declarations and action plans. This example illustrates how Eurosocial, while still adhering to the summits-driven guidelines, attained a certain degree of autonomy from the summits. This autonomy stemmed from its accumulated experience, consistent work and extensive engagement in Latin America, which in turn increased its actorness as a program.

In the case of Euroclima, the interviews portrayed that, while this cooperation program was “orphaned of guidance” because of the lack of summits, it was able to handle this situation due to its strong linkages with partner countries. These linkages resulted from Euroclima’s demand-driven approach, which guarantees the relevance and effectiveness of projects to meet the specific needs of each country, as the interviewees pointed out. As happened in

the case of Eurosocioal, the closeness with partners in Latin America made the program more likely to continue. Notably, Euroclima implemented a working methodology inspired by Eurosocioal and denominated *Diálogos País* (so-called *Mesas País* in Eurosocioal) to respond directly and coordinately to the prioritized demands of Latin American countries. The implementation of this methodology had the same results as in Eurosocioal, fostering the creation of networks with local institutions.

The analysis of the interviews also revealed that, during the non-summits period, Euroclima established a close relationship with the Forum of Ministers of Environment of Latin America and the Caribbean. This forum assumed the role that the EU-Latin American summits used to have, providing guidance for Euroclima and serving as a platform for the visibility of its work. This fact portrays how political dialogue at the regional level can fill the void left by the lack of summits at the interregional level. In this context, the United Nations Environment Program (UNEP) was a crucial actor, serving not only as one of the implementing agencies for Euroclima but also as the organizer of the Forum of Ministers. Moreover, UNEP also provided valuable guidance to the program due to its constant involvement in the international climate change agenda, as stated by the interviewees.

The interviews also highlighted the signing of the Paris Agreement and its relevance for Euroclima's evolution. Following the Agreement, the program redirected its efforts towards helping Latin American countries meet their National Determined Contributions (NDCs). The interviewees noted that Euroclima involved the EU delegations in Latin America to facilitate dialogue with representatives of each country and identify where the EU could make more efficient contributions to the NDC priorities. This is another example of Euroclima's demand-driven approach.

The sustained operation of Euroclima during the non-summits period was also attributed to the continuity and increase of the funding allocated to the program. Some interviewees underscored that the international relevance of sustainable development and the fight against climate change played a pivotal role in securing ongoing financial support and increasing resource allocation for Euroclima. There was a confluence of political will and increased economic resources to promote climate change mitigation and adaptation actions. The participants highlighted that the EU, through the European Commission, took the lead in ensuring the program's continuity, as resource allocation primarily depended on

the EU's budgetary process. Euroclima's modular approach was also crucial, as it allowed for the incorporation of new contracts and budgets while existing ones were still in progress, facilitating the program's sustained implementation over the years. This reflected the flexibility and adaptability of Euroclima, which are key characteristics of the program.

On the other hand, the analysis of institutional reports demonstrated that, as in the case of Eurosocietal, summits-driven guidelines were still followed by Euroclima during the non-summits period. Some of these guidelines are the implementation of international commitments such as the UNFCCC, the development of policies and instruments for climate change adaptation and mitigation, the importance of exchanging information, experiences and best practices between countries, and the need to support capacity-building on sustainable development and climate change issues. Over time, these guidelines became structural aspects of the program and remained in place despite the lack of summits. An internalization process of the summits-driven guidelines is evident in the case of Euroclima, as in the case of Eurosocietal.

The institutional reports, like the interviews, reflected the growing importance of the Forum of Ministers of Environment of Latin America and the Caribbean for Euroclima. This forum was repeatedly mentioned in the reports during the non-summits period, while references to the biregional summits decreased and, eventually, disappeared. The Forum assumed the role of providing guidelines to Euroclima in the absence of summits between Heads of State and Government of the EU and Latin America. However, this forum was not the only source of new guidelines during the non-summits period. International commitments such as the NDCs also offered guidance for Euroclima's operations. Over time, compliance with the NDCs evolved into the program's cornerstone, becoming its primary focus. It is noteworthy that there were no references to the summits in the last institutional report of the study period, only one mention of the Forum of Ministers and numerous allusions to the NDCs.

Finally, regarding the question "*What are the similarities and differences in the strategies of the cooperation programs to address the non-summits period?*" the paired comparison between Eurosocietal and Euroclima reflected more common points than differences. First of all, both cooperation programs relied on their linkages with partners in Latin America to continue operating. However, the process was more consolidated in the case of Eurosocietal—probably due to its longevity— involving the creation of "communities of practices" and

leading to the emergence of relational capital based on a solid sense of trust and knowledge sharing. In the case of Euroclima, there was no mention of relational capital in the interviews, only recognition of strong ties with Latin American countries in general. Notably, Euroclima replicated a work methodology of Eurosocietal (*mesas país*), which helped the program to stay closer to partner institutions, reflecting a learning process from one cooperation process to another.

Second, Eurosocietal and Euroclima adopted distinct alternative sources of guidance to cope with the lack of summit-driven guidelines. Eurosocietal primarily aligned with global frameworks such as the SDGs to sustain its operations, while its Gender Equality area followed the Regional Conference on Women in Latin America and the Caribbean to set priorities. In contrast, Euroclima forged a close relationship with the Forum of Ministers of Environment of Latin America and the Caribbean, which provided strategic guidance and visibility alongside the UNEP. This collaboration was further enhanced by the Paris Agreement, which significantly influenced Euroclima's focus on assisting Latin American countries in achieving their NDCs.

Third, Eurosocietal and Euroclima experienced differing financial dynamics during the non-summits period, impacting their operations and sustainability. On the one hand, Eurosocietal kept receiving funding from the EU, albeit at a reduced level, which nonetheless ensured its continuity. On the other hand, Euroclima benefited from the continuity and increase in its budget driven by the prioritization of sustainable development in the global agenda and leveraged by its modular approach, which allowed for the incorporation of new contracts and funds while existing ones were still in progress. Consequently, this approach facilitated the expansion and intensification of the program's activities.

Lastly, regarding the management of summit-driven guidelines during the non-summits period, both programs incorporated some of them as integral components of their structure and operations, which ratified the continuity of the summit's influence even in the context of a lack of political dialogue at the highest level. This internalization process not only ensured the persistent application of summit outcomes but also fostered institutional resilience by embedding these guidelines into the activities and processes of the programs. The following table summarizes the comparison between Eurosocietal and Euroclima in terms of strategies to address the non-summits period.

Table N° 31. Comparison of Eurosocial’s and Euroclima’s strategies during the non-summits period

	Eurosocial	Euroclima
Linkages with partner institutions in Latin America	Creation of “communities of practice” that built relational capital, establishing a strong sense of trust.	Strong ties with partner countries. Incorporation of a work methodology (<i>diálogos país</i>) learned from Eurosocial (<i>mesas país</i>).
Alternative source of guidelines in the non-summits period	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - SDGs as guiding principles. - In the case of the Gender Equality area, adoption of guidelines from the Regional Conference on Women in Latin America and the Caribbean. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The Forum of Ministers of Environment of Latin America and the Caribbean as source of guidelines. - Crucial role of UNEP. - Paris Agreement and the NDCs.
Budget allocation and funding structure	Less allocation of budget during the non-summits period.	Received increasing allocation of budget due to the relevance of sustainable development, which was leveraged by the program’s modular approach.
Incorporation of summit-driven guidelines	Summits-driven guidelines evolved into integral components of the program.	Summits-driven guidelines evolved into integral components of the program.

Source: Own elaboration based on the analysis of interviews, summit declarations, action plans and institutional reports

Concerning the hypotheses formulated at the beginning of the research, the first proposed that summits between Heads of State and Government of the EU and Latin America play the role of establishing priorities to be followed by interregional cooperation programs, facilitating the alignment of policy agendas and evaluating the progress of these programs over the years. While it was demonstrated that summits set the biregional priorities that are delineated as guidelines for cooperation programs, summits do not play the role of monitoring the progress of these programs. They are rather accountable to the European Commission and their results are barely reviewed at the biregional summits. Moreover, the alignment of policy agendas for cooperation is not an exclusive prerogative of the summits. As proven in this research, policy dialogue and coordination during the non-summits period was driven by a “bottom-up” process led by partner institutions of the cooperation programs.

The second hypothesis stated that the functioning of interregional cooperation programs was affected only to a limited extent by the lack of summits, as they were able to continue their ongoing projects and even launch new operational phases during the non-summits period without encountering significant obstacles. This hypothesis was validated, as the dissertation evidenced that interregional cooperation programs continued to function effectively without facing major difficulties.

The third hypothesis argued that the level of impact of the lack of summits on interregional cooperation programs was limited because they have achieved a certain degree of autonomy from the high-level dialogue based on their institutional strength and the support received from partner governments in both regions. The research partially proved this hypothesis since the evidence showed that the absence of summits did not hinder the continuity of the programs, but the explanatory factors include more specific and detailed aspects than those proposed by the hypothesis. The reasons behind this continuity are the adaptation of old and new guidelines, the building of relational capital and the uninterrupted budget allocation from the EU. Hence, the explanatory factors proposed by the hypothesis do not fully account for the functioning of cooperation programs during the non-summits period.

Finally, the fourth hypothesis stated that the strategies employed by the cooperation programs to address the non-summits period shared similarities such as the reinforcement of existing partnerships, the continuation of previously agreed projects, and the reliance on established institutional frameworks to maintain momentum, although there were differences in the level of engagement with partners and the funding structure of each program. This research demonstrated that Eurosocio and Euroclima shared more similarities than differences in their strategies during the non-summits period. Both relied on strong linkages with Latin American partners, with Eurosocio developing relational capital through communities of practice and Euroclima replicating Eurosocio's successful methodologies. Eurosocio aligned with global frameworks like the SDGs, while Euroclima followed guidance from the Forum of Ministers of Environment and the Paris Agreement. Financially, Eurosocio continued with reduced EU funding, whereas Euroclima received increased funding leveraged by its modular approach. Both programs internalized summit-driven guidelines, fostering institutional resilience despite the absence of high-level political dialogue.

8. CONCLUSIONS

This dissertation inquired about the role of summits in the development of interregional cooperation programs between the EU and Latin America, the impact of the lack of summits on their functioning, and their strategies to address the non-summits period. A comprehensive research was conducted by analyzing two case studies, namely Eurosocial and Euroclima, in a timeframe of ten years, from 2010 to 2020. Two consecutive five-year periods were examined: from 2010 to 2015, denominated as the summits period, and from 2016 to 2020, referred to as the non-summits period. A multi-method qualitative study was implemented following a three-phase research process, including data collection and analysis from interviews, summit declarations, action plans, and institutional reports of the cooperation programs.

The findings of this research revealed that summits set biregional priorities based on the consensus reached by the leaders, which are subsequently delineated as guidelines that provide a framework for the functioning of cooperation programs. Thus, summits play the role of “guideline providers” for these programs. Substantial evidence from the analysis of interviews and institutional reports demonstrated that summits-driven guidelines shape the operating mechanisms and implementation processes in the cases of Eurosocial and Euroclima. The influence of these guidelines extended beyond the summits periods, permeating the operations of the cooperation programs in the non-summits period as well. This fact reflects the relevance of summits-driven guidelines in steering the course of the cooperation programs over time.

However, the documentary analysis of declarations and action plans unveiled that while summits provide general guidelines for the development of cooperation programs, they fall short of proposing specific pathways for implementation. The summits declarations and action plans provide only general principles and objectives without delineating a precise roadmap to achieve them. Consequently, Eurosocial and Euroclima had to give concrete form to many of the concepts and proposals appearing in these documents. In this sense, the cooperation programs had a broad margin of maneuver to adapt the summits-driven guidelines according to their specific needs.

Furthermore, this research demonstrated that the lack of summits did not imply stagnation in the development of Eurosocial and Euroclima. In other words, the absence of summits did not cause any noticeable disruptions or hinder the continuity of these cooperation programs. As the analysis revealed, the lack of summits affected their functioning only to a limited extent. The main negative consequence of the interruption of summits was the void created by the lack of new summits-driven guidelines. However, both programs, regardless of their structural differences, were able to continue their operations during the non-summits period due to several reasons.

First, the void created by the lack of new summits-driven guidelines was mitigated in several ways. For instance, the cooperation programs continued to follow most of the summit-driven guidelines during the non-summits period. Some of these guidelines evolved into structural characteristics of the cooperation programs and became part of their institutional protocols. Moreover, regional forums and international practices became guideline providers in the absence of interregional summits. In this regard, it is important to remark on the role of the Forum of Ministers of Environment of Latin America and the Caribbean in the case of Euroclima, and the importance of international orientations such as the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in the case of Eurosocial, which provided new guidelines facilitating the continuation of these programs. This fact also reflected the inherent flexibility of Eurosocial and Euroclima to adapt to evolving circumstances and be resilient in challenging contexts.

Second, the functioning of the cooperation programs was bolstered by the building of networks and communities of practice that remained in place regardless of the lack of high-level dialogue. These networks constitute what the staff of Eurosocial identified as relational capital. Relational capital enhanced trust and knowledge sharing between people and institutions in both regions. This particularity brings to light the interconnectedness forged at the technical/execution level of the relationship. According to the evidence collected, this level has created a separate dynamic that does not depend on the continuity of summits to function. In this sense, it is important to highlight the institutional commitment emerging from technical assistance actions conducted within the framework of Eurosocial and Euroclima. Collaboration between institutions created strong networks whose relationship went beyond the absence of political dialogue, facilitating the continuity of cooperation activities. Thus, the resilience of cooperation programs such as

Eurosocial is driven by a “bottom-up pressure” exerted by the institutions and actors involved in these programs.

Third, the financial support from the EU channeled through the European Commission was crucial for the continuity of cooperation programs, and especially important for the remarkable growth of Euroclima. The development of programs such as Eurosocial and Euroclima during the non-summits period was possible because the European Commission consistently allocated funds to these programs despite the lack of biregional summits. This evidence aligns with the argument of Maihold (2010), who pointed out that only the European Commission has functioned as an implementation body of the summits-driven commitments, reflecting the unilateral character of this process. While these cooperation programs have sought to engage the Latin American counterparts as much as possible, the continuity of the programs depends mostly on the EU budget. This fact reflects the asymmetry of the EU-Latin America relationship, which is widely documented by the literature.

In sum, the adaptation of old and new guidelines, the building of relational capital and the EU budget allocation guaranteed the continuity of Eurosocial and Euroclima during the non-summits period. These conditions ensured the independence of these cooperation programs from the summitry process. In this context, they developed a certain degree of actorness as the commitment of the partner institutions promoted “bottom-up” policy coordination and harmonization independent of the high-level dialogue. This evidence aligns with the argument of Ayuso and Foglia (2010), who claim that a network of interrelations between several actors from Latin America and the EU has filled the relationship with “real content” beyond political dialogue.

These findings also demonstrated the importance of cooperation as a fundamental pillar underpinning the EU-Latin American relationship in challenging periods, particularly in the absence of political dialogue. Thus, when the summitry process stagnated, the cooperation programs were spaces of continuity and resilience of the biregional relationship. These programs served as the binding force that propelled the relationship forward by fostering a policy dialogue among institutions from both regions. However, it is important to highlight that the policy dialogue established by the cooperation programs and the political dialogue held at the summits should provide feedback to each other in order to create a virtuous circle that strengthens the biregional relationship as a whole.

In the process of strengthening the cooperation programs, special mention should be made to the importance of Spain as a bridge country between the EU and Latin America. As one of the interviewees explained, in the case of Eurosocial some of the networks that supported the program's operations were based on existing Ibero-American networks fostered mainly by Spain. Moreover, the interviewing process of this research proved the importance of Spain, as most of the workers of the examined cooperation programs are Spanish, and some of the institutions that support these programs, such as FIIAPP, are based in that country. While other countries have also contributed to the functioning of the cooperation programs, such as France, Italy and Germany, the commitment of Spain stands out among them. This finding aligns with the academic literature that highlights Spain's role in the EU-Latin America relationship.

However, as Jung (2022) pointed out, the challenge of the biregional cooperation programs is to achieve real, representative and substantive participation of all EU Member States. Most cooperation programs receive support mainly from countries with stronger ties to Latin America, while the other EU countries tend to be less involved in these initiatives. As some interviewees argued, the mobilization of experts from Central and Eastern Europe in the technical assistance actions posed difficulties due to their limited familiarity with Latin America. Therefore, to strengthen biregional cooperation, the participation of a large majority of EU member states is crucial. This is also imperative for Latin America, as not all the countries of the region have agreed to participate in the cooperation programs.

It is important to highlight that, while the cooperation programs proved resilient during the non-summits period, summits remain the most important venue for political dialogue and should not be neglected. Summits were the space where most cooperation programs were created, and as this research has demonstrated, they provide general guidelines for the functioning of cooperation programs. In fact, the interviews revealed that the staff of Eurosocial and Euroclima expected the results of the summit held in July 2023 to receive new guidelines for the functioning of the programs. In particular, this last summit led to the introduction of the Global Gateway approach promoted by the EU and welcomed by Latin American leaders in this high-level meeting, which had an impact on the functioning of the cooperation programs.

Moreover, resuming summits may help Latin America occupy a higher position on the list of EU's priority partners. In this regard, while there was continuous financial support from

the European Commission to the cooperation programs during the non-summits period, it should be noted that the amount of budget allocated to cooperation with Latin America in the last multi-annual budget of the EU (2021-2027) decreased. Although there is no evidence of a causal relationship between the lack of biregional summits and the decrease in this budget, it is clear that Latin America is not a priority for the EU.

Concerning the conceptual framework, the role of summits as guideline providers is intrinsically connected to the agenda-setting function of summits highlighted by authors such as Dune (1996), Feinberg (2013), Mace et al. (2016) and Obinna (2018). These high-level meetings offer a platform for leaders to discuss shared goals, address pressing issues, and agree on coordinated actions, thereby establishing a clear and coherent direction for the functioning of cooperation programs. Moreover, as Melissen (2003) argues, summits help strengthen alliances and maintain momentum in a relationship. In the case of the EU-Latin American relationship, the continuity and momentum of exchanges were lost due to the lack of summits. However, it should be noted that, at a certain point of the relationship, the frequency of biregional summits made it challenging to maintain their quality, leading to a decline in their credibility and effectiveness, a phenomenon identified in summit diplomacy by authors such as Melissen (2003) and Gardini & Malamud (2016).

Regarding its academic contribution, this dissertation sheds light on the usefulness of summitry by providing empirical evidence on the role of summits as guideline providers for interregional cooperation programs. Moreover, the findings of this research suggest that despite the resilience and continuity of cooperation programs during the non-summits period, the existence of summits is necessary. As mentioned earlier, summits offer crucial guidance by reflecting the priorities and needs of leaders from both regions. Thus, this dissertation aligns with the views of Dunn (1996), Berridge (2010), and Obinna (2018), who argue that summits, when judiciously employed and meticulously prepared, hold significant value. This research also endorses the idea that there is potential to further enhance the value derived from summits, as proposed by Feinberg (2013).

This research also contributed to the literature on interregionalism, particularly the study of the relationship between the EU and Latin America, by providing a complex assessment of the role of summits between Heads of State and Government in the development of interregional cooperation programs. Summits represent the highest level of political dialogue and, in the case of the EU-Latin American relationship, are the space to formulate

guidelines for the functioning of cooperation programs. Moreover, the examination of the Eurosocial and Euroclima case studies during the non-summits period revealed how these cooperation programs achieved a certain degree of independence from the summity process, demonstrated by the continuity of their operations despite the lack of summits. This finding provides a concrete ground for future research on the resilience and actorness of these cooperation programs.

Additionally, this dissertation brought to the forefront the importance of relational capital and networks for the continuity and strengthening of cooperation programs in the absence of summits. This result has important implications for policymakers, as this research demonstrated that it is crucial to maintain the relational capital accumulated over the years and encourage the creation of networks to build resilience for cooperation programs in the face of stagnation of the high-level dialogue. Notably, the institutional commitment that emerged from technical assistance actions evolved into a valuable “bottom-up process” of policy formulation that underpinned the EU-Latin American relationship in a challenging period, such as the lack of summits.

As a suggestion for policymakers, enhancing and broadening the participation of all countries of the EU and Latin America in the cooperation programs is crucial to strengthen the biregional relationship and make it more resilient to face a non-summits period. Recognizing Spain’s pivotal role as a bridge country, it is recommended to build on the established Ibero-American networks and integrate more diverse contributions from other EU member states. This can be achieved through targeted initiatives that foster familiarity and expertise in Latin American affairs among Central and Eastern European countries. Programs such as specialized training sessions, academic exchanges, and collaborative research projects can help bridge the knowledge gap and stimulate interest and participation. Similarly, efforts should be made to ensure that all Latin American countries feel properly represented and motivated to participate. This can be achieved by addressing specific regional needs and priorities, fostering a sense of ownership and commitment. By adopting a more inclusive and representative approach, both regions can benefit from a richer and more effective cooperative relationship.

As mentioned at the beginning of the dissertation, this research has several limitations. In terms of scope, this study focused exclusively on the region-to-region cooperation programs between the EU and Latin America, which means that cooperation initiatives

from and to individual countries or subregions were not included. Moreover, cooperation between the EU and the Caribbean countries is not addressed in this research because it operated under a different legal framework; therefore, these countries were not part of the cooperation programs analyzed in this dissertation during the timeframe of the research (2010-2020). Lastly, the impact of the lack of summits on biregional trade and investments is also beyond the scope of this dissertation.

In terms of methodology, the documentary analysis encountered several challenges due to limited access to documents related to the activities of Eurosocial and Euroclima in the earliest years. In addition, some of the available reports contained references pointing to internal documents that were not accessible to the public, creating a barrier to conducting more profound research. The analysis of reports was challenging because they lacked specific and quantifiable data, offering only general information and large descriptions of the activities of the programs. Several difficulties also emerged in the process of conducting the interviews. While thirty employees from Eurosocial and Euroclima were contacted by email, only ten agreed to participate in the study, resulting in fewer interviews than initially planned.

Finally, concerning the paths for further research on the role of summits in the development of cooperation programs between the EU and Latin America, an analysis of the impact of the most recent EU-CELAC Summit, held in Brussels in July 2023, can help to shed light on the effects of a summit after a non-summits period, identify the new dynamics of the relationship, the new guidelines for the cooperation programs and analyze how they respond to these guidelines after their demonstrated increase of independency and actorness. In order to complement and test the arguments presented in this research, other studies should analyze the effects of the lack of summits in interregional cooperation programs such as AL-Invest, Copolad, El PAcCTO and BELLA. Other cooperation mechanisms such as the facilities also deserve deeper exploration following similar premises to those applied in this study.

Further research should also explore the effects of the lack of summits on the other levels of the political dialogue, such as the linkages of the EU with subregions and individual countries in Latin America, as well as other areas of the biregional relationship such as trade and investments. Studies addressing the role of key institutions such as the European Commission and the influence of other actors, such as external powers, in the development

of interregional cooperation between the EU and Latin America are necessary as well. The complex nature of the relationship between the EU and Latin America makes it a fertile ground to conduct analyses that provide valuable contributions to the fields of interregionalism and summit diplomacy.

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APPENDICES

Appendix N° 1. Profile of interviewees

In compliance with the official provisions of the European Union on data protection, as well as the ethical considerations of doctoral research, each interviewee received an informed consent form before the conduction of the interview. The document presented the purpose of the research and the rights of the interviewees, guaranteeing the privacy, confidentiality and anonymity of the information generated during the interview. The participants expressed greater comfort in the assurance of their anonymity by the researcher, which facilitated the sharing of more comprehensive information that significantly enhanced the research findings.

Therefore, only a general profile of the interviewees is provided in this appendix in order to ensure accountability for the veracity of the research while protecting the interviewees' anonymity.

- *Interviewees from Eurosocial*

Interviewee N° 1: Member of the Gender Equality Policies Area of Eurosocial. This participant has worked for the program since 2018. Date of the interview: November 3rd, 2022.

Interviewee N° 2: Former member of the Democratic Governance Policies Area of Eurosocial. This participant worked in different positions at the program from 2005 to 2022. Date of the interview: September 5th, 2022.

Interviewee N° 3: Former member of Eurosocial's management board. This participant worked in different positions at the program from 2008 to 2016. Date of the interview: September 14th, 2022.

Interviewee N° 4: Member of the Social Policies Area of Eurosocial. This participant has worked for the program since 2011. Date of the interview: October 19th, 2022.

Interviewee N° 5: Member of Eurosocial's management board. This participant has worked for the program since 2016. Date of the interview: October 3rd, 2022.

- *Interviewees from Euroclima*

Interviewee N° 6: Senior specialist in Euroclima. This participant has worked in different positions at the program since 2015. Date of the interview: May 18th, 2022.

Interviewee N° 7: Former member of the technical assistance team of Euroclima. This participant worked for the program from 2017 to 2022. Date of the interview: October 26th, 2022.

Interviewee N° 8: Member of the Directorate General for International Partnerships, working with Euroclima from 2015. Date of the interview: May 11th, 2023.

Interviewee N° 9: Member of an implementing agency for Euroclima. This participant has worked with the program since 2019. Date of the interview: April 5th, 2024.

Interviewee N° 10: Member of the Commission's Directorate General for International Partnerships, working with Euroclima from 2016. Date of the interview: May 2nd, 2024.

Appendix N° 2. List of questions of the semi-structured interviews

In order to fulfill the purposes of this research, the interviews conducted were semi-structured. Thus, while there was a prepared questionnaire, other spontaneous questions were raised following the course of each interview. The aim of conducting this type of interview was to give freedom to the interviewees to add topics that would provide information to have a deeper understanding of the role of summits in the development of the cooperation programs they work for (either Eurosocietal or Euroclima).

The prepared questionnaire included open-ended and follow-up questions. These questions were designed to elicit qualitative data responses from the interviewees. The same set of questions was asked of all respondents to facilitate comparative data analysis, alongside the spontaneous questions that arose during each interview. It should be noted that most of the interviews were conducted in Spanish since this is the mother tongue of the majority of the participants working for these cooperation programs (most of them are from Spain and Latin America).

The set of questions included in the prepared questionnaire are listed below.

1. In what year did you start working with Eurosocietal/Euroclima and what position did you hold at first?
2. From that first experience working with Eurosocietal/Euroclima, how has the program evolved until today?
3. From your perspective and taking into account your work experience in Eurosocietal/Euroclima, what do you consider to have been the most important challenges that the program has faced during the time you have worked with it?
4. Regarding the bi-regional summits that were held every two years between Heads of State and Government of the EU and Latin America, what importance and impact did these summits have for Eurosocietal/Euroclima?
5. Do you think that the lack of summits meant a stagnation of the EU-Latin America relationship in general?
6. From your perspective, do you think that the lack of summits affected the development and functioning of Eurosocietal/Euroclima? If so, in what way has this been reflected?
7. Did the lack of summits affect the budget allocation to the Eurosocietal/Euroclima program?

8. In your opinion, what are the reasons why Eurosocial/Euroclima continued to function during the non-summits period?
9. How did the Covid-19 pandemic affect the operation of Eurosocial/Euroclima?
10. What are the future prospects of the Eurosocial/Euroclima program?

Appendix N° 3. Codebook of thematic analysis of interviews

Theme	Sub-Theme	Description	Examples
Main Characteristics of the Cooperation Programs	Demand-Driven Approach	Programs respond to the specific needs of Latin American countries.	Eurosocial's ability to engage in reform processes of public institutions in Latin America.
			Euroclima's thematic sectors chosen by the countries themselves.
	Flexibility	Ability to adapt to changing circumstances and needs.	Eurosocial's response to the Covid-19 pandemic.
			Euroclima's modular approach that allows adding new contracts while previous ones are still running.
	Horizontal Dialogue and Policy Promotion	Cooperation programs promote dialogue and policy changes at national and regional levels.	Establishment of <i>Mesas País</i> in Eurosocial.
			Establishment of <i>Diálogos País</i> in Euroclima.
	Interinstitutional Collaboration	Emphasis on coordination and trust-building among multiple institutions.	Eurosocial's focus on collaboration with partner institutions.
			Euroclima's coordination with UNEP and the Forum of Ministers of Environment.
	Evolution and Adaptability	Cooperation programs evolve based on previous phases and external contexts.	Eurosocial's phases transitioning from broad scopes to focused areas for better coordination and coherence.
			Gradual resource allocation to Euroclima according to the international agenda on climate change.
Major Challenges	Coordination and Implementation	Difficulty in coordinating among multiple actors and ensuring effective implementation	Eurosocial's initial phases being led by multiple institutions and entailing difficulties in project implementation.
			Coordination challenges in Euroclima involving various implementing agencies.
	Adaptation to Political and Social Changes	Adjusting to political changes and crises such as the Covid-19 pandemic.	Eurosocial's shift to virtual activities during the pandemic.
			Euroclima's adaptation of

			operational components due to the pandemic.
	Resource Mobilization	Challenges in mobilizing necessary resources and expertise.	Mobilization of experts in Eurosocio's initial phases.
			Euroclima's challenge in coordinating efforts to address people's needs, particularly with its focal points at the national level.
Impact of the lack of summits on the EU-Latin America Relationship	Stagnation and loss of momentum	Perception of a weakened and stagnant relationship.	Loss of biregional cooperation momentum as discussed by Eurosocio staff.
			Euroclima staff mentioning a void in the relationship due to the lack of summits.
	Increased influence of other actors	Growing influence of other global actors like China and Russia.	China filling the void left by the EU in Latin America, as mentioned by Eurosocio staff.
Impact of the lack of summits on the cooperation programs functioning	Lack of guidelines	The absence of summits leading to a lack of clear directives and priorities for the cooperation programs.	Euroclima was "orphaned of guidance" during the non-summits period.
	Continuity and Resilience	Cooperation programs continued to operate effectively despite the lack of summits.	Eurosocio's successful establishment of subsequent operational phases without significant issues.
			Euroclima's continued operation and budget increase despite the absence of summits.
	Alternative Guidance Mechanisms	Reliance on other mechanisms and networks for guidance and support.	Eurosocio's reliance on international protocols such as the MDGs (SDGs).
Role of UNEP and the Forum of Ministers of Environment in supporting and guiding Euroclima.			
Role of summits in the functioning and evolution of cooperation programs	Provision of guidelines	Summits provide critical guidelines and priorities for the cooperation programs' activities.	Summits as agenda-setting instruments for Eurosocio.
			Summits served as a guiding force for Euroclima, offering directives on how to continue its operations.

	Bidirectional Influence	Cooperation programs influence summit agendas through feedback and reporting.	Eurosocial and Euroclima providing reports to shape summit agendas.
Networks and relational capital	Trust and Knowledge Sharing	Building trust and facilitating knowledge exchange among participating institutions.	Eurosocial's development of relational capital through extensive networks.
			Euroclima's national focal points and their role in ensuring program relevance and success.
	Networks and Communities of Practice	Formation and expansion of networks to support program goals.	Eurosocial's creation of communities of practice and bottom-up networks through collective engagement.
			Establishment of networks within Euroclima by attending the countries' demands.

Appendix N° 4. Codebook of thematic analysis of summit declarations, action plans and institutional reports

Theme	Sub-theme	Description
1. Social cohesion and inclusion	1.1 Eradication of Poverty and Reduction of Inequality	Promotion and implementation of public policies and integrated strategies aimed at eradicating poverty and reducing inequality and social exclusion. Achievement of MDGs (and SDGs).
	1.2 Democratic Governance and Transparency	Commitment to transparency and accountability in public finances. Strengthening the fight against corruption. Promoting democratic governance through citizen participation, access to information, and effective public management. Establishment of partnerships between public administrations.
	1.3 Regional Integration and Territorial Cohesion	Regional integration and interconnectivity to promote territorial cohesion and social development.
	1.4 Investments and Infrastructure	Investments in infrastructures favoring interconnectivity, economic networks, and entrepreneurial projects. Positive spill-over effects on several economic sectors.
	1.5 Education	Promoting access to higher education, lifelong learning, and vocational training. Promoting mobility and exchanges between institutions from the EU and Latin American countries.
	1.6 Employment	Creation of dignified work with social inclusion and reducing discrimination at work. Fostering formal employment and exchanging experiences and knowledge on labor systems.
	1.7 Macroeconomic Policies	Implementation of macroeconomic policies designed to promote inclusive growth and prevent social consequences of economic crises.
	1.8 Women's Empowerment and Gender Equality	Increasing women's empowerment by strengthening their political participation, economic autonomy, and equal participation in the labor force. Eradicating all forms of violence and discrimination against women. Gender equality as a precondition for social cohesion and inclusion.
	1.9 Millennium Development Goals (MDGs)	Achievement of MDGs, and later the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), build more inclusive societies and eradicate poverty.

	1.10 Citizen Security	Sharing experiences in social policies for law enforcement, rehabilitation, social reintegration, restorative justice, and criminal justice system strengthening
2. Sustainability and Climate Change	2.1 Sustainable Development	Promotion of sustainable development contributing to eradicating poverty, sustaining inclusive economic growth, and promoting social inclusion. Consideration of economic, social, and environmental dimensions in sustainable development.
	2.2 Climate Change Adaptation and Mitigation	Development of policies and instruments for climate change adaptation and mitigation. Addressing adverse effects of climate change and reducing vulnerability to natural disasters.
	2.3 Energy	Improving energy efficiency, developing renewable energies, promoting energy interconnection networks, and diversifying the energy matrix.
	2.4 Biodiversity Preservation	Efforts for the preservation and sustainable use of biodiversity. Recognition of the right of countries to manage and regulate their natural resources and biodiversity.
	2.5 Green Economy	Green economy contributing to eradicating poverty, promoting economic growth, enhancing social inclusion, increasing resource efficiency and creating employment opportunities.
	2.6 Food Security	Guaranteeing food security while ensuring sustainable agriculture.
	2.7 Consumption and Production Patterns	Changes in consumption and production patterns for global sustainable development.
	2.8 Science, Technology and Innovation	Role of science, technology and innovation in achieving sustainable development through research programs and technology transfer activities.
	2.9 Disaster Risk Reduction	Strengthening biregional cooperation on environment and disaster risk reduction by increasing the knowledge of the problems and consequences of climate change and biodiversity loss, as well as the importance of climate-resilient development and adaptation.
	2.10 Knowledge Sharing and Capacity Building	Exchange of information, experiences, and best practices to facilitate adaptation and mitigation strategies. Capacity-building on sustainable development and climate change issues.

	2.11 International Commitments	Effective implementation of international commitments and multilateral initiatives on sustainable development and climate change such as the UNFCCC and Kyoto Protocol, among others.
	2.12 Investments and Financial Resources for Climate Action	Seeking investments and financial resources to promote climate change adaptation and mitigation, support sustainable and sound use of natural resources, environmental care, and economic and social development.

Appendix N° 5. List of the author's publications on the topic

Peer-reviewed articles

Ayala Castiblanco, L. V. (2022). Addressing Multilateralism in Interregional Forums: Evidence from the Dialogue between the European Union and Latin America. *Academic and Applied Research in Military and Public Management Science*, 21(1), 61-77. DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.32565/aarms.2022.1.5>

Ayala Castiblanco, L. V. (2020). Diplomacia de cumbres a nivel interregional: Un análisis desde la relación entre la Unión Europea y Latinoamérica. *Acta Hispánica*, 25, 9-22. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.14232/actahisp.2020.25.9-22>

Abstracts in conference proceedings

Ayala Castiblanco, L. V. (2023). Cooperation on social cohesion between the EU and Latin America: An analysis of Eurosocietal. In Kiss, R. (ed.), *Critical Rethinking of Public Administration 2023 – Book of Abstracts*. Budapest: Ludovika University of Public Service. Available at: <https://tudasportal.uni-nke.hu/xmlui/handle/20.500.12944/20519>

Ayala Castiblanco, L. V. (2022). Addressing sustainable development in interregional forums: Evidence from the summits between the European Union and Latin America. In Kiss, R. (ed.), *Critical Rethinking of Public Administration 2022 – Book of Abstracts*. Budapest: Ludovika University of Public Service. Available at: https://ludevent.uni-nke.hu/event/1756/attachments/370/711/Book_of_Abstracts_CROPA2022.pdf

Ayala Castiblanco, L. V. (2022). The Importance of Summit Diplomacy for Interregional Cooperation between the European Union and Latin America. In Thomázy, G. (ed.), *II South America, South Europe International Conference 2022 – Book of Abstracts*. Budapest: Ludovika University of Public Service. Available at: <https://ludevent.uni-nke.hu/event/1457/book-of-abstracts.pdf>

Ayala Castiblanco, L. V. (2020). Summit diplomacy at the interregional level: Evidence from the relationship between the European Union and Latin America. In Csiszár, B., Hankó, C., Kajos, L. F., Kovács, O. B., Mezo, E., Szabó, R. & Szabó-Guth, K. (eds.), *9th Interdisciplinary Doctoral Conference 2020 – Book of Abstracts*. Pécs: Doctoral Student Association of the University of Pécs. Available at: <https://docslib.org/doc/2834666/book-of-abstracts-absztraktk%C3%B6tet>