



Erasmus+

Capacity Building in Higher Education (CBHE) action

Regional Report Latin America



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Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union, 2020

PDF ISBN: 978-92-9484-364-7

doi: 10.2797/631791

EC-02-20-937-EN-N

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Erasmus+
**Capacity Building in
Higher Education (CBHE) action**

**Regional Report
Latin America¹**

¹ Defined as 'Region 8' in the Erasmus+ Programme Guide and covering Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Cuba, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Uruguay and Venezuela

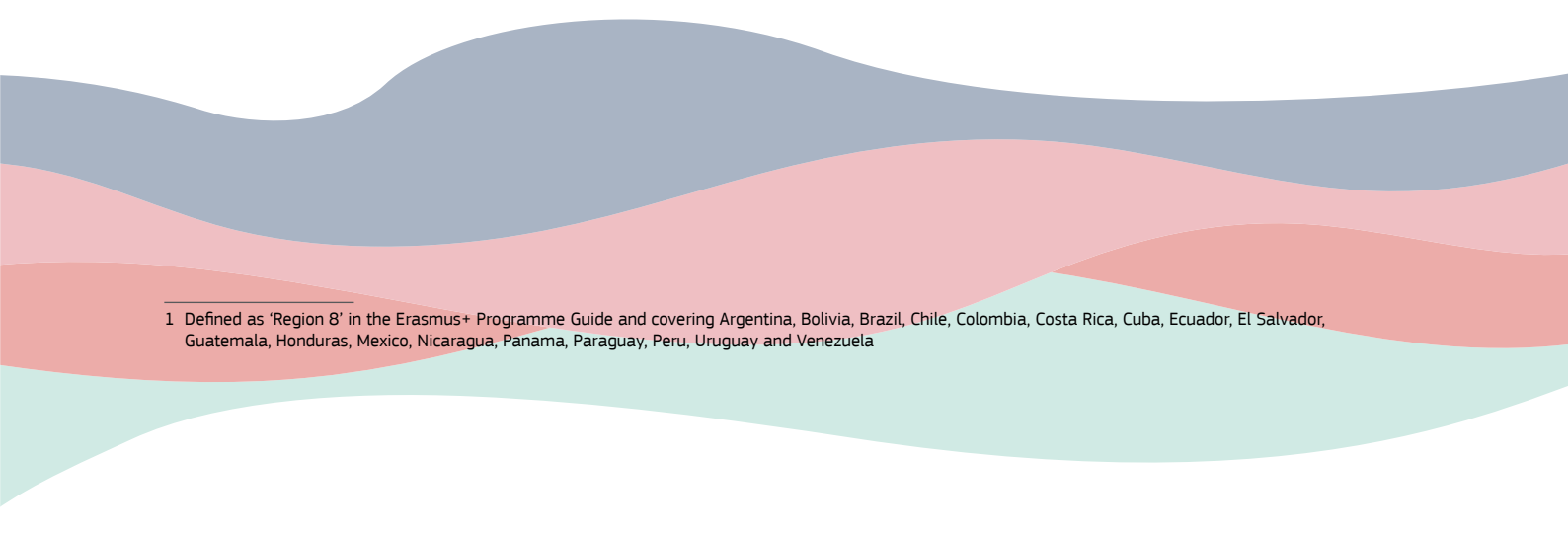




TABLE OF CONTENTS

1. AIMS AND OBJECTIVES OF THE REPORT	4
2. INTRODUCTION	5
3. CBHE IMPACT AND SUSTAINABILITY	6-20
3.1. Institutional Development	7-14
3.1.1. Curricula Reform	7-9
3.1.2. Technological Upgrade	9-11
3.1.3. Governance and Management Reform	11-12
3.1.4. HEI's International strategies	12-14
3.2. Broadening Horizons for Individuals	14-20
3.2.1. Academics	14-16
3.2.2. Students	16-18
3.2.3. Administrative Staff	18-19
3.2.4. Entrepreneurs/Employers	19-20
4. REGIONAL COOPERATION AND POLICY DEVELOPMENT	21-24
4.1. Regional Cooperation	21-23
4.2. National Education Reforms	23-24
5. INCLUSIVENESS	25-27
5.1. People with Fewer Opportunities	25
5.2. Institutions Located in less developed regions	26-27
6. CONCLUSIONS - CHALLENGES AND RECOMMENDATIONS	28-32
6.1. Challenges	28-30
6.2. Recommendations	30-32

1. AIMS AND OBJECTIVES OF THE REPORT

This report is based on the Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency's evaluation of the first final project reports of the first generation of CBHE projects selected for funding in 2015. Altogether 138 projects were funded in 2015² and 88 finalised projects submitted their final reports in 2019, of which 18 were implemented in Latin America.

The report's results are therefore based on a relatively small sample of finalised CBHE projects³ and are to be considered as preliminary and to be reviewed at a later stage. The analysis also takes into account the institutional monitoring visits and cluster meetings that were organised by the Agency as part of its monitoring strategy.

The report analyses the role of the CBHE action as regards the **impact and sustainability of the funded projects** together with their **inclusiveness** (participants with disadvantaged backgrounds and fewer opportunities compared to their peers). More specifically, the report will look into the institutional development of Higher Education Institutions (HEIs), the modernisation of their study programmes and teaching and learning methodologies, structural reforms and the strengthening of HEIs' technical capacities. It will examine **opportunities created for individuals** (students, academic and administrative staff) and third parties such as enterprises, chambers of commerce, etc.

The report will also examine how the EU projects have influenced **national policy developments in the education sector**, mainly but not exclusively through 'Structural Projects'. Special attention is given to the strengthening of regional cooperation through CBHE projects that include two or more countries from the same Region.

Finally, the analysis will be used to identify **challenges** and provide a **set of recommendations** for future reference.

2 CBHE projects receive between 500,000 and 1 million euros in funding and normally last 3 years; with very small number of shorter projects lasting 2 years. A high percentage of projects asked for a contract extension to catch up with implementation delays and will last between 3-4 years.

3 There are about 700 running projects supported via 5 annual calls (1 per year), starting in 2014.

2. INTRODUCTION

The CBHE action of the Erasmus+ Programme supports the modernisation and development of HEIs and educational systems in the Partner Countries. Capacity Building projects are expected to have a long-term structural impact and their direct influence is on institutions and educational systems rather than on individuals.

European HEIs have a key role to play in supporting the modernisation efforts of emerging and developing parts of the world. Via the development of the educational systems of Partner Countries, they contribute to the sustainable development of the economies and societies as a whole, and allow challenges to be addressed at national, regional or even global level (e.g. climate change). In this context, the involvement of national authorities (Ministries of Education) plays a critical role.

International consortia of HEIs (including private businesses) strengthen the quality of Higher Education in the Partner Countries by providing students with new and upgraded skills that they need for the labour market, introducing innovative approaches in teaching and learning and encouraging entrepreneurial skills.

The CBHE action is implemented through two types of projects, which aim to have an impact on HEIs or on the educational system as a whole. **‘Joint projects’** are aimed at the development of HEIs (e.g. curriculum development, governance of institutions, etc.), while **‘Structural projects’** address important challenges for the educational systems of the Partner Countries (accreditation, quality assurance in education, PhD education, etc.).

Both project types address one of the following **three pillars**

1. Curricula Reform
2. Modernising university governance and management
3. Strengthening of relations between HEIs and the wider economic and social environment

based on *pre-established national⁴ and/or regional priorities*.

The countries of the **Latin America Region** have been involved in the CBHE action from 2015, a year after the launching of the Erasmus+ programme.



⁴ For the ex-Tempus countries defined by the Ministries of Educations of the Partner Countries.

3. CBHE IMPACT AND SUSTAINABILITY

Higher education systems in Latin America are facing a number of challenges. Growing levels of student enrolment throughout the Region are straining the limited resources of public universities. At the same time, the number of private institutions has increased rapidly.

Despite the relative increase in enrolment in higher education and efforts carried out by institutions, international organisations and countries to support mobility of students and staff, the rate of mobility in Latin America remains comparatively low. While the expansion of enrolment is a prominent feature of Latin America, so are processes of “privatisation” of higher education and increases in tuition fees: 50% of university enrolments in the Region are for private universities, in contrast to developments prior to the 1980s, when enrolment in the public higher education system was significantly higher.

Internationalisation and subsequent attention to mobility policies and programmes are on the rise in both the public and private sectors. The process of internationalisation in the Region has progressed in recent years, and among its achievements is the growing importance of the internationalisation of institutional agendas and priorities. There has been increasing re-assessment of the management structures in the institutional hierarchy, a significant increase in the number of internationalisation programmes and activities (especially in the field of international training of human resources at postgraduate level), an increase in the mobility of academics and undergraduate students, as well as in the participation in international research networks and in intra-regional cooperation programmes.

One issue in higher education in Latin America is the high drop-out rate, due in part to low-quality education received in high school, and to a lack of financial means among low-income students. Additionally, the long duration of some degree programmes contributes to this problem⁵.

The CBHE action targets the above-mentioned challenges through the implementation of international cooperation projects. The achieved results have influenced the modernisation and reform of higher education in Latin America. HEIs and individuals (staff and students) have benefited from institutional and study programme reforms by using and mainstreaming the results of CBHE projects, primarily related to creating new curricula, modernisation of university structures

and updating educational processes. In some cases, the CBHE project outputs also triggered changes at a national level through directly or indirectly influencing the structure and legislative framework of higher education.

The CBHE action applies both a bottom-up and a top-down strategy to align national decision-making with the priorities of university development and internationalisation.

The achievements obtained through CBHE projects, in particular the introduction of quality assurance procedures and new and



⁵ World Bank Group (2017): *At a Crossroads: Higher Education in Latin America and the Caribbean*. <https://openknowledge.worldbank.org>

updated degree programmes, have provided students in the Region with opportunities that would not have been available without the input of the European partner institutions. Tangible results become highly visible through the setting-up/improvement of laboratories, library systems and other student-oriented structures and services at university level. This has had an effect on the educational excellence and distinction of the participating HEIs in the Partner Countries and hence on the quality of training offered to their students.

The support of the management bodies of HEIs and of national authorities is pivotal in this context and vital for the sustainability of the achieved project results. The CBHE action has considerably enhanced the capacities of universities in the Region to manage international cooperation projects.

- ▶ In the last five calls for proposals, 21% of the funded projects are managed by Latin American higher education institutions. The Partner Countries coordinating more CBHE projects are Colombia (5), Argentina (3), followed by Mexico (2) and Chile (2). It is worth mentioning that since the third call for proposals new Latin America Partner Countries have started coordinating at least one CBHE project, such as El Salvador, Costa Rica and Brazil.

Thanks to CBHE projects with European partners, **bridges** have been built for **intra-regional or cross-regional** cooperation that otherwise are unlikely to have been created due to the national/regional/cultural and sometimes academic disconnection across the Region. It has to be underlined that the Region of Latin America includes 18 Partner Countries with different socio-cultural realities and higher education systems. However, a division can be done between three main sub-regions: Central America, the Andean Community (Colombia, Ecuador, Peru, Bolivia and Venezuela) and MERCOSUR (Argentina, Brazil, Chile and Uruguay). It is also worth mentioning that Caribbean countries belong to Region 11 (ACP). Given the common challenges and realities, there is nonetheless a large number of cross-regional projects involving the Region of Latin America and the Region of ACP (4 CBHE projects financed in three calls for proposals from 2017 until 2019).

3.1. Institutional Development

3.1.1. Curricula Reform

One of the main objectives of the CBHE action is curricula reform. Partner Country HEIs work together in high quality international consortia to revise study programmes or to develop new ones, to engage in new learning and teaching methods, and to provide students with new and better skills for a changing job market and a developing economy.

- ▶ Almost 32% of all CBHE projects in the Region selected for funding focus on curriculum reform. Of the projects from 2015, based on the information available in the final reports, 76 courses were newly developed/updated. Out of seven curriculum development projects from the 2015 generation, one has developed courses taught in a foreign language (English).

The modernisation and launching of new study programmes and the introduction of innovative learning and teaching methods have significantly changed the landscape of the university sector. Curricula reform projects have been highly sustainable, since all newly created study programmes at graduate and postgraduate level have become an integral part of regular degree programs taught at the HEIs:

EU Quality Standards Aligned Modernisation of Renewable Energy Engineering Curriculum for Bachelor and Master students and Improving Skills Development of PhD students in Universities of Latin America (CRUX) (561807-EPP-1-2015-1-UK-EPPKA2-CBHE-JP)

This project resulted in the modernisation of the core modules (40 modernised and newly developed modules) and teaching methods in renewable energy engineering (REE) in six partner institutions from Brazil, Colombia and Cuba answering to the growing demand for a new type of qualified graduate in the sector. Through the CRUX project, the quality relevance, equity of access and delivery of modern teaching materials inspired by the European example were introduced to partner institutions.

Construction of Management Capacities of MOOCs in Higher Education (MOOC-Maker) (561533-EPP-1-2015-1-ES-EPPKA2-CBHE-JP)

This project has contributed to the development of new technologies for education and the update of Latin American universities' teaching and learning tools and methodologies, increasing their international cooperation within the region and with Europe, as well as contributing to tackling inequalities in access to education.

For many Partner Country HEIs, cooperation with European universities on curricula development in some projects led to an exposure to the **Bologna Process methodology**, even though the Region of Latin America is not directly involved in this process. Hence, when developing new curricula and considering student mobility opportunities, some aspects of the Bologna Process methodology were introduced as pilots, such as ECTS in some of the courses developed, as well as the student-centred learning approaches (learning outcomes):

Citylabs: Engaging Students with Sustainable Cities in Latin-America (CITYLAB) (561836-EPP-1-2015-1-BE-EPPKA2-CBHE-JP)

The CITYLABS project aimed to enhance the quality of HEIs in Latin America through Problem-Based Learning (PBL) in order to foster active learning. The projects sought to increase the social relevance of the education provided in partner universities, as well as the value of the competences taught to students, by introducing innovative teaching tools focused in the student-centred learning approach.

Specific remarks

CBHE Curriculum projects in Latin America have established new study programmes or updated existing ones enhancing the **diversity of the curricula** within the partner universities and also **increasing the visibility** of the institutions internationally.

Moreover, it should also be pointed out that numerous **documents and new mechanisms** were created and adopted at institutional level as a result of CBHE projects, and are currently being used at the partner universities (for instance guidelines for learning outcomes, systems for monitoring the quality of education process, regulations for monitoring, etc.).

In the Latin American Region, the main challenge in higher education is related to the **recognition of programmes and transferability** given that the Region has not introduced higher education laws and strategies for the adoption of the Bologna principles. It is worth noting that some CBHE projects selected in the calls for proposals from 2016–2018 have addressed this issue in order to propose a consensus on the standards related to some of the Bologna principles such as learning outcomes, competences and credits⁶.

Furthermore, not all study programmes started during the CBHE projects' implementation periods or immediately after the projects' completion. This is because of the long time required for study programme accreditation and the reform of the education system. Therefore, some study programmes could only be launched after the end (eligibility period) of the project. Furthermore, curricula development projects often **lack guidelines for students and a proper information policy about the new possibilities**, which is a clear drawback for this type of project. In general, the **involvement of students** as end beneficiaries is not always sufficiently considered. In most cases, student involvement in curriculum development takes place only at the end for testing purposes and on an individual bases.

3.1.2. Technological Upgrade

The provision of funds to improve the technical structure of Partner Country HEIs is an important element of CBHE and the provision of **equipment** plays an important role (often almost one third of the total grant). It is an attractive prospect for universities, which often lack modern and labour market-oriented training facilities.

- ▶ Approximately EUR 3 million were invested in equipment for the 18 projects implemented in Latin America.

Adequate provision of equipment in laboratories and centres is vital for supporting practical coursework, especially in the natural and hard sciences. Provision of equipment allows the establishment of facilities like career advice centres, innovation and start-up centres. The new facilities are frequently used to train private or public employees, who otherwise would not have access to such important support structures. Sometimes this even happens on a fee-paying basis, thus contributing to the project's impact and financial sustainability:

Adopción de enfoques de calidad, accesibilidad e innovación en la educación superior de Latinoamérica (ALCAI-LA) (561997-EPP-1-2015-1-ES-EPPKA2-CBHE-JP)

With the aim of modernising the technological resources used to implement the virtual education programmes, the equipment was purchased to fit laboratories with desktop computers intended to be used by students, training was provided for teachers, and MOOCs were organised. A total of 280,000 students, teachers, managers and administrative staff have benefited from the technological laboratories.

The strengthening of HEI technical capacities by opening new laboratories for teaching is an obvious measure for CBHE projects. Additionally these labs are often used to conduct research and thus create a vital bridge between teaching and research.

⁶ Credential evaluation and recognition procedures in Latin American countries (RECOLATIN) (574182-EPP-1-2016-1-IT-EPPKA2-CBHE-SP); Latin American Consensus for the Internationalisation in Postgraduate Education (CONSENS) (598682-EPP-1-2018-1-AR-EPPKA2-CBHE-SP)

CBHE projects also strengthened the digitalisation of education by using various IT tools in the teaching process and by creating online learning platforms:

Professionalisation on Result-based Healthcare Management through Distance Education and Simulation-Based Training (LASALUS) (561854-EPP-1-2015-1-AR-EPPKA2-CBHE-JP)

The main outcome of the project, coordinated by the Argentinian University ISALUD, has been the development and implementation of a new collaborative Latin-American curriculum in health care management using e-learning components and simulation-based training. In particular, the project has developed a Health Management Training Simulator ("virtual hospital"), aimed not only at teaching healthcare management, but also at developing different scenarios for strategic planning and daily management of financing, regulatory and healthcare organisations. Thanks to the successful achievement of these outcomes, the project has improved the management skills of health workers through distance learning and simulation-based training and the teaching/management capacities of the Latin American partner institutions involved.

Educational Modules for Electric and Electronic Circuits Theory and Practice following an Enquiry-based Teaching and Learning Methodology supported by "VISIR" (VISIR) (561735-EPP-1-2015-1-PT-EPPKA2-CBHE-JP)

The project has successfully achieved its aim of defining and developing a set of educational modules in the field of Electrical and Electronics Engineering in the partner institutions in Argentina and in Brazil, and of establishing a remote lab named "Virtual Instruments Systems in Reality" (VISIR), which will enhance remote experiments in this field. In particular, the VISIR remote laboratory has been successfully purchased and installed in the five partner institutions in Brazil and Argentina and 1561 students have used the VISIR remote lab in teaching and learning activities related to electrical and electronic circuit analysis.

Specific remarks

Though the possibility of buying project specific equipment is important, there are a number of projects in which equipment was used for general purposes like the provision of laptops to students and teachers. Overall, the equipment has been used by the direct beneficiaries of the projects, but in some cases it was accessible to more students and teachers in the partner institutions.

Many HEIs reported challenges in the handling of the tendering procedures, which were very long and cumbersome in many Partner Countries because of the complex administrative procedures to follow. In some cases, this could lead to delays in the purchasing process and consequently in the implementation of the project activities.

Moreover, some partner institutions faced difficulties when the equipment was not available in their country and had to be imported. In fact, in some projects, the equipment was blocked at the customs for a long time, causing delays in the activities.

It is worth mentioning that in some Partner Countries such as in Argentina, the financial crisis (high inflation rate, depreciation of the Argentinian currency and economic recession) meant that the prices of the equipment were much higher than initially planned. Consequently, in some cases, Argentinian HEIs had to review the equipment to be purchased according to their needs.

3.1.3. Governance and Management Reform

Latin American universities' governance/management bodies still require institutional strengthening to be able to compete with European and worldwide universities. HEIs in the Partner Countries need to improve the efficiency of their governance processes and their structures to make them grow internationally and offer study programmes of high quality, which attract the interest of academics, students and the society at large. This means among other things: sustainable strategies and regulations, efficient international relations offices, quality assurance units endorsing international and European standards, financial autonomy, structures for cooperating with the labour market, and strong alumni associations.

CBHE projects have clearly contributed to the creation or reinforcement of university bodies and changes at institutional level. Overall, the new structural units created in the framework of the projects have been recognised at university level, ensuring their sustainability after the end of the project.

Examples include the strengthening of international relations offices, and the creation of new units focused on Social Innovation or Support to vulnerable students:

Latin American Social Innovation Network (LASIN) (561610-EPP-1-2015-1-UK-EPPKA2-CBHE-JP)

The main success of the project is that each of the Latin American partner universities in Colombia, Chile, Panama and Brazil has established a Social Innovation Support Unit that is fully staffed and institutionally recognised within the university structure. In addition to staffing, the universities have all invested significant funding into the design, construction and furnishing of the Units. In most cases, the establishment of the Unit has led to the creation of a new governance structure, or a new combination of existing structures.

Centros de cooperación para el fomento, fortalecimiento y transferencia de buenas prácticas que Apoyan, Cultivan, Adaptan, Comunican, Innovan y Acogen a la Comunidad Universitaria” (ACACIA) (561754-EPP-1-2015-1-CO-EPPKA2-CBHE-JP)

The main output of the project has been the creation of 5 Educational Centres for Support and Development (CADEP) for vulnerable students in 5 partner universities in Nicaragua, Colombia, Peru and Chile. The Units established have been attached to the Academic Vice Rectorates of the partner universities which ensure their sustainability.

Internationalization of Latin American peripheral Universities through sustainable integration and inclusive implementation of International Relations Offices (PONCHO) (561843-EPP-1-2015-1-ES-EPPKA2-CBHE-JP)

The project aimed at encouraging the internationalisation of Latin American partner universities, especially those working in peripheral regions. At institutional level, internationalisation strategies have been improved and International Relations Offices have been created or consolidated and included in the HEIs' structures.

Although CBHE projects have significantly contributed to reinforcing university bodies, there are still areas that could be reinforced in the field of quality assurance, involvement of alumni, mechanisms to trace the employability of graduates, etc. Possibly new CBHE projects could support the efficiency of the structures in place or create new ones.

Moreover, even if some of the closed CBHE projects had an important impact in some partner institutions by strengthening the International Relations Offices and creating units to support vulnerable students, there are still many HEIs located in remote areas which require reinforcement of their current structures or the support to create new ones.

3.1.4. HEI's International strategies

The internationalisation of higher education in Latin America is high on the political agenda of governments and HEIs. Moreover, internationalisation offers a chance to get involved gradually and to improve and develop through cooperation with established European partner institutions.

Individual academics remain the most important driver of international cooperation in the Region. It is through bottom-up initiatives led by academics that short-term mobility, research cooperation, development of joint-study programmes, and other activities are being developed. While there is a high level of commitment to internationalisation almost everywhere, these academics often do not receive sufficient support to enact their cooperative ventures. University practices and support services are not sufficiently adapted to serve this goal. Internationalisation efforts are hampered by certain shortcomings throughout the Region, such as weak International Relations Offices (IROs), an insufficient number of courses offered in foreign languages, relatively poor foreign language skills among students and academics in some countries, and weak support for finding and managing research funding. However, the intensity of these shortcomings varies significantly across the countries.

Numerous strategic and procedural documents were created and adopted to support internationalisation and modernisation at the institutional level, such as guidelines for learning outcomes at HEIs, strategies for university internationalisation, and systems for monitoring the quality of the education process, adoption of protocols and procedures, all of which help improve the service provided by the international relations offices.

Moreover, CBHE projects have **increased the visibility** of the HEIs involved, through their strong outward orientation and focus on international cooperation.

In Latin America substantial results have been accomplished in terms of university internationalisation. In particular, a significant contribution has been made in opening the universities towards other universities in the region and the EU, and establishing strong cooperation with project partner institutions.

Programa para la Internacionalización en las Universidades de Chile y Perú (INCHIPE) (561816-EPP-1-2015-1-ES-EPPKA2-CBHE-JP)

All Chilean and Peruvian partner universities improved the structure of their International Relations Offices (IROs) and prepared or revised their Strategic Plans for Internationalisation. International Relations Offices were enhanced thanks to the renovation of their structures, facilitating a more effective functioning and more efficient results.

Internationalization of Latin American peripheral Universities through sustainable integration and inclusive implementation of International Relations Offices (PONCHO) (561843-EPP-1-2015-1-ES-EPPKA2-CBHE-JP)

In order to encourage the internationalisation of Latin American partner universities, an online platform was created to increase networking and the international reach of the partners. Enhancing networking and exchange of best practices amongst Latin American countries has been a fundamental step to improve the quality of education and strengthen the education system.

Via the CBHE projects, Latin American HEIs also managed to carry out activities in relation with the third mission of higher education. They established **cooperation with non-academic sectors**, which increases the impact of the projects:

Transforming higher education to strengthen links between universities and the livestock sector in Argentina and Peru (EDULIVE) (561541-EPP-1-2015-1-AT-EPPKA2-CBHE-JP)

The aim of EDULIVE was to strengthen the cooperation between Latin American universities and all relevant livestock sector stakeholders to ensure they offer demand-driven higher education programmes and to increase their capacity in responding to the innovation needs of this sector. The project made significant efforts to involve stakeholders in the project activities, in particular with companies working in the field of Animal Science. This collaboration has been reinforced thanks to the organisation of a series of workshops with private companies, farmers' associations, research organisations and NGOs in order to discuss and develop possible cooperation mechanisms in teaching, research and extension services.

Latin American Social Innovation Network (LASIN) (561610-EPP-1-2015-1-UK-EPPKA2-CBHE-JP)

The main outcome of the project has been the establishment of Social Innovation Support Units in eight partner institutions, in order to promote university/social enterprise cooperation, social entrepreneurship and graduate employability in the field of Social Innovation. In particular, Social Innovation Support Units (SISU) were opened in each partner university in Colombia, Chile, Panama and Brazil, in order to promote and support university-social enterprise cooperation, social entrepreneurship and graduate employability with a particular emphasis on social innovation projects, incubation and training.

Additionally, CBHE projects have helped the institutions to adopt a more multi-disciplinary approach to curricula development in line with the Bologna principles.

- ▶ For the 2015 generation of projects implemented in Latin America, out of seven Curriculum Development CBHE projects, one covers Interdisciplinary study programmes.

Lastly, the participation of the Partner Country institutions in CBHE projects has strengthened the integrative function of most public universities vis-à-vis the faculties that are their constitutive elements in relation to international cooperation.

The performance of HEIs is often measured on the basis of their research output and quality. Opening HEIs up to global standards and benchmarks has motivated them to work on the continuous improvement of their systems and processes:

Professionalisation on Result-based Healthcare Management through Distance Education and Simulation-Based Training (LASALUS) (561854-EPP-1-2015-1-AR-EPPKA2-CBHE-JP)

The project has developed a Health Management Training Simulator ("virtual hospital"), aimed not only at teaching healthcare management, but also at developing different scenarios for strategic planning and daily management of financing, regulatory and healthcare organisations. This innovative component has enhanced the research capacities of the partner institutions.

The process of internationalisation has however not yet shown a significant impact on the rankings for HEIs. Within the top 500 higher education institutions in the world, only about 10 are located in Latin America⁷.

3.2. Broadening Horizons for Individuals

3.2.1. Academic staff

The CBHE action has given professors from Partner Countries the opportunity to meet their peers in different countries. By working together in international consortia, professors have become aware of different perspectives, gained new insights into their academic field and familiarised themselves with international quality standards in education. The CBHE projects have allowed them to work with other experts in their area, leading to direct peer-to-peer knowledge transfers from Europe to the Partner Countries. They have also gained valuable work experience through teaching students in a different country and from different countries (sometimes in a foreign language).

Citylabs: Engaging Students with Sustainable Cities in Latin-America (CITYLAB) (561836-EPP-1-2015-1-BE-EPPKA2-CBHE-JP)

The new approach introduced of Problem-Based Learning (PBL) has enhanced academic staff's skills at stimulating students in critical thinking and problem solving, creating active learning environments and working with interdisciplinary teams. Overall, 185 academics from the partner universities took part in the training courses organised to guide them in applying the PBL methodologies to their modules.

⁷ World Bank Group (2017): At a Crossroads: Higher Education in Latin America and the Caribbean

TEU Quality Standards Aligned Modernisation of Renewable Energy Engineering Curriculum for Bachelor and Master students and Improving Skills Development of PhD students in Universities of Latin America” (CRUX) (561807-EPP-1-2015-1-UK-EPPKA2-CBHE-JP)

Skills development of PhD students in Latin America Universities were improved via one-to-one supervision sessions with academic staff in EU Universities via teleconferences, emails or personal meetings when the EU staff visit the partner Universities. Mentoring programmes given to 27 PhD students: considered as relevant for future graduates students, and by extension, for the labour market needs of this sector.

In general, training courses and workshops organised within the CBHE projects allowed academics to gain new skills and knowledge in various disciplines:

Latin American University Research and Doctoral Support (LAURDS) (561844-EPP-1-2015-1-UK-EPPKA2-CBHE-JP)

This project has increased the quality of PhD supervision and doctoral students of the Latin American partner universities involved by developing tools/techniques to help supervisors manage doctoral students and guarantee the quality and capacity of supervision. The project has developed a doctoral network accessible via the website, and a discussion forum to support doctoral students where EU and LA partners work together. Innovation and academic freedom was developed thanks to the different ways of thinking and new tools and techniques provided by the LAURDS project.

- ▶ In the 18 Latin American projects 2888 instances of training of academic staff were reported, which mostly took place at Programme Country institutions. The new skills and knowledge also strengthen the home HEIs and improve education standards.

The CBHE action allowed academics to overcome national boundaries and also to link with other disciplines within their HEI. EU countries have been experimenting with multi-disciplinary courses for some time and most academics recognise the benefits. Therefore, this concept was also introduced in certain Partner Countries and helped to promote innovation and synergies between departments, and broaden the academics/institutions in their ways of thinking.

Working with the private sector within a CBHE project has been a new experience for many professors. They have gained greater insights into business realities and were able to make the study programmes more relevant to business needs:

Spin Off Lean Acceleration (SOLA) (561897-EPP-1-2015-1-ES-EPPKA2-CBHE-JP)

The project has successfully implemented a common training itinerary aimed at the staff of the universities that have business incubators, allowing the entrepreneurship technicians to transmit a more defined knowledge to their start-ups and spin-offs. External stakeholders such as Chambers of Commerce, enterprises, representatives from local authorities, have been highly involved in the project activities.

Furthermore, CBHE projects opened the door for academics to university management. This was observed especially during the Agency's monitoring visits, which took place in the presence of the university management.

It was also observed that that professors working on CBHE projects in different departments were often not aware that other colleagues in their HEI were also working on CBHE projects. Hence, it was through the Agency's monitoring visits and the organisation of Cluster Meetings that a connection between different CBHE projects was established. By the same token it also became clear that some HEI managers were unaware of the activities taking place on the ground, which shows that proper monitoring is missing and sufficient attention is often not yet paid to 'internationalisation' in a strategic manner.

The CBHE action gave staff from the Region the opportunity to develop their intercultural skills, by working together with colleagues in a multi-country consortium. Academic and administrative staff gained intercultural experience of working with EU countries and with their neighbouring countries. Often only within an EU-funded international consortium does it become possible to receive endorsement by both the HEI and the national authorities to work together with HEIs from neighbouring countries.

Many stakeholders complain about the lack of job-readiness of HE graduates, while others report graduates' lack of interactive skills, IT skills, organisational skills, and ability to work in teams. HEIs are seen as focusing on theoretical knowledge to the detriment of providing graduates with practical knowledge and experience, which is a key concern of employers. In addition, the curricula of many study programmes fail to reflect the combination of skills that employers seek.

3.2.2. Students

One of the main drivers of internationalisation has been the need for universities to attract better students and professors, to raise the level of education offered, and to become more competitive in the global education market. The CBHE action has helped HEIs to set up high-level study programmes, which increased the visibility and attractiveness of the HEI nationally.

- ▶ Within the 18 Latin American CBHE projects, 9,113 students were enrolled in new or upgraded courses and 39,467 students received training or took part in a mobility activity.

The impact of the CBHE projects on students has been manifold. They have been beneficiaries of modernised or new study programmes and have been opened to innovative teaching and learning methods and motivational approaches. The work with new or improved equipment/infrastructure, interchanging with foreign academics, using new methodologies and short and long-term mobility (available to all three cycles) have

enhanced both the academic and practical competences of students.

There are numerous examples of **joint research projects and joint publications** initiated after successful cooperation within CBHE projects. In fact, this research work takes place in parallel to the CBHE project. The mobility of staff and students has allowed the **supervision of doctoral candidates by staff from international partners**, improving the quality of research and enhancing the reputation of the associated HEI.

Graduate **entry to the labour market** in Latin America is often **precarious** and they often experience shorter or longer periods of unemployment before they find stable employment. This is why a large number of CBHE projects in Latin America encourage **cooperation between HEIs and the labour market**. As a result, in a large number of CBHE projects carried out in the Region, private sector representatives are involved in designing new curricula that are more appealing and relevant for the business world. Professors who internalise this entrepreneurial and long-term perspective have been the standard-bearers of this type of cooperation, which has led to internships for students and, in some cases, job offers after graduation. Evidence shows that curriculum development projects working closely with private sector partners and including internships within university education have a higher graduate employability rate and are therefore much more attractive to national and international students.

**Transforming higher education to strengthen links between universities and the livestock sector in Argentina and Peru” (EDULIVE)
(561541-EPP-1-2015-1-AT-EPPKA2-CBHE-JP)**

The project made significant efforts to involve stakeholders in the project activities, in particular with companies working in the field of Animal Science. This cooperation was supported by a series of workshops with private companies, farmers’ associations, research organisations and NGOs in order to discuss and develop possible cooperation mechanisms in teaching, research and extension services.

Programa para la Internacionalización en las Universidades de Chile y Perú (INCHIPE) (561816-EPP-1-2015-1-ES-EPPKA2-CBHE-JP)

A total of 21 bilateral agreements for international student mobility have been signed among participating Latin American universities to maintain links and continue working together.

- Overall **11%** of the 2015 generation of CBHE projects include placements and internships for students. Thanks to CBHE projects, many students established their first contacts with the private sector and this interaction increased their employability.

Some CBHE projects include career centres, incubators or student support services, which have developed **strategic and sustainable links with the labour market and provide training in soft and transversal skills**:

**EU Quality Standards Aligned Modernisation of Renewable Energy Engineering Curriculum for Bachelor and Master students and Improving Skills Development of PhD students in Universities of Latin America (CRUX)
(561807-EPP-1-2015-1-UK-EPPKA2-CBHE-JP)**

Within the CRUX project, 61 students from partner universities received internships in industrial companies in order to widen the employability opportunities of students and the skills development of PhD students, and thereby to achieve better integration into the field of international research.

Citylabs: Engaging Students with Sustainable Cities in Latin-America (CITYLAB) (561836-EPP-1-2015-1-BE-EPPKA2-CBHE-JP)

The project has achieved its main aim of addressing teaching and learning methods for urban sustainability in Latin America, in which innovative transdisciplinary teaching approaches are necessary, namely through Problem Based Learning (PBL). In order to achieve this goal, 37 Citylab modules have been developed at 12 universities in Latin America, reaching a total of 1441 students. As opposed to traditional teaching methods, the pedagogical approach of PBL is a learner-centred approach starting from a complex problem instead of existing knowledge.

A number of the HEIs are involved in projects to set up **language-learning centres** or to improve the **language skills** of students, who enjoyed this linguistic training by attending newly developed English courses, joining mobility opportunities and accessing research material in foreign languages.

Although students are the main end-beneficiaries of the CBHE projects, it has been noted in many projects that they could be further involved in the project activities. The development and modernisation of curricula and therefore the identification of student needs for their future, is seen as the domain of the HEI and their academic staff. Therefore, CBHE projects have not yet reached the point where students can participate in building their future.

3.2.3. Administrative staff

CBHE projects also have an impact on administrative staff. This relates particularly to staff from the **offices for International Affairs and staff responsible for project financial management**, who have to be well acquainted with the regulations and procedures relating to project implementation.

Although administrative and financial staff are key persons in international cooperation, their role is less visible in the project activities. Moreover, given the nature of their work, they are rarely the first to participate in mobility opportunities. However, regular interaction via email and Skype with their counterparts in other countries has brought learning opportunities and given them insights into best practices in financial and grant management. Sometimes they have been able to **introduce new practices in their own HEI systems**. By dealing with international projects, they have to work in English and in this way they considerably improve their language skills. The equipment budget has allowed administrative staff to purchase new technology and to use their newly-acquired skills for the benefit of their home HEI.

- ▶ In total, 815 administrative staff members at Latin American universities were trained within the 18 CBHE projects.

Internationalization of Latin American peripheral Universities through sustainable integration and inclusive implementation of International Relations Offices (PONCHO) (561843-EPP-1-2015-1-ES-EPPKA2-CBHE-JP)

The project aimed at encouraging the internationalisation of Latin American partner universities, especially those working in peripheral regions. Staff from more than 148 International Relation Offices improved their capacities in the fields of internationalisation management, ICTs and English skills. Through training and transfer of knowledge, technical

staff improved the capacity of their institution to participate in international projects, to raise the number of mobility activities (outgoing and ingoing) and to participate in regional and international networks.

Programa para la Internacionalización en las Universidades de Chile y Perú (INCHIPE) (561816-EPP-1-2015-1-ES-EPPKA2-CBHE-JP)

This project contributed to the professionalisation of staff working in International Relation Offices and to improving the services they offer. This will positively impact their universities' quality. More than 170 administrative staff members were directly involved in training and mobility activities

3.2.4. Entrepreneurs/Employers

Overall, in most of the CBHE projects, Latin American partner institutions have established strong cooperative links with the labour market, enabling companies to participate in the design or revision of the study programmes by outlining the graduates' competences and learning outcomes.

In some cases, projects also carried out industry surveys to establish the precise needs of the labour market.

Furthermore, CBHE projects have given companies access to experts in specific fields, as well as to research laboratories and specialised equipment. Businesses have benefitted from this partnership to develop new products and to find students to work on new processes and working tools.

HEIs are a rich recruitment ground for businesses, which wish to test potential future staff during internships.

Is important to note that the labour market includes not only the private sector, but also NGOs and the public sector.

In Latin America exist a significant number of projects directly aiming to enhance links with the labour market:

**Latin American Social Innovation Network (LASIN)
(561610-EPP-1-2015-1-UK-EPPKA2-CBHE-JP)**

The project has promoted university-social enterprise cooperation, social entrepreneurship and graduate employability with a particular emphasis on social innovation projects, incubation and training. This has been possible thanks to the establishment of Social Innovation Support Units in the Latin American partner institutions.

EU Quality Standards Aligned Modernisation of Renewable Energy Engineering Curriculum for Bachelor and Master students and Improving Skills Development of PhD students in Universities of Latin America (CRUX)
(561807-EPP-1-2015-1-UK-EPPKA2-CBHE-JP)

Modern EU-level engineering education methodologies with extensive exploitation of e-Learning technology were deployed during the CRUX Project. The courses were run in close cooperation with a large number of national, regional and international industry stakeholders from the beginning of the project activities. The 60 companies involved in the project contributed to greater cooperation between HEIs and the industrial sector.

Spin Off Lean Acceleration (SOLA)
(561897-EPP-1-2015-1-ES-EPPKA2-CBHE-JP)

The project has successfully established a common training itinerary aimed at the technical staff of the universities that have a business incubator. This will help to improve the competence of the business incubators that are part of the universities, and enable the entrepreneurship technicians to pass on relevant knowledge to their start-ups and spin-offs. Entrepreneurial skills were also developed to enhance the employability of young people and support new business creation.

In addition, training courses for practitioners were introduced, sometimes on a fee-paying basis, which contributes to the financial sustainability of the activities:

Professionalisation on Result-based Healthcare Management through Distance Education and Simulation-Based Training (LASALUS)
(561854-EPP-1-2015-1-AR-EPPKA2-CBHE-JP)

The main aim of the project was to launch a new e-learning course with a duration of 9 months. The "International Diploma in Administration of Hospitals and Health Centers" provided the possibility of using a new simulator (virtual hospital) serving as a tool to complement training. The course was opened to HEI staff and also to professionals who hold managerial positions in healthcare organisations from Partner Countries.

- ▶ In total 3043 individuals active in the private sector, including NGOs and civil servants, were trained as part of the 18 CBHE projects.

4. REGIONAL COOPERATION AND NATIONAL POLICY DEVELOPMENT

4.1. Regional Cooperation

The Erasmus+ CBHE action for Latin America requires all projects to include two participating Latin America countries within their partnerships – a unique rule which does not exist for the other Regions. This creates many opportunities for regional cooperation in higher education, even if this regional dimension has been reduced since the previous programmes (ALFA III and Erasmus Mundus Action II⁸).

In addition to supporting cooperation between HEIs, the CBHE action encouraged and contributed to the creation and expansion of university networks within Latin America:

**Programa para la Internacionalización en las Universidades de Chile y Perú” (INCHIPE)
(561816-EPP-1-2015-1-ES-EPPKA2-CBHE-JP)**

A clear example of this regional cooperation can be seen in the development of the INCHIPE network, conceived as a supporting platform for the internationalisation of HEIs from Chile and Peru, to generate synergies between national education policies and provide cooperation opportunities for its members.

**Centros de cooperación para el fomento, fortalecimiento y transferencia de buenas prácticas que Apoyan, Cultivan, Adaptan, Comunican, Innovan y Acogen a la Comunidad Universitaria (ACACIA)
(561754-EPP-1-2015-1-CO-EPPKA2-CBHE-JP)**

The project has promoted regional cooperation among the Partner Countries in Nicaragua, Colombia, Peru and Chile thanks to the creation of a Network of Educational Centers for Support and Development (CADEP), created in order to consolidate the regional desertion observatory in Latin America. The aim of these Centers is to provide students, especially the most vulnerable, with integrated support using a differential approach.

The CBHE action contributed to regional exchanges and reflections on quality assurance and the mutual recognition of degrees. Even if an intra-region-wide harmonisation of degree programmes among all Latin American countries remains an ambitious goal for the long-term, there are some CBHE projects that have made efforts to take on this challenge:

⁸ At least twice the number of HEIs from Latin America partners and at least four HEIs must be located in the Least Developed Countries

Harmonization and Innovation in Central American Higher Education Curricula: Enhancing and Implementing the Regional Quality Framework (HICA) (561531-EPP-1-2015-1-ES-EPPKA2-CBHE-SP)

As part of the project, Central American universities networked and reinforced their regional cooperation capacity. Moreover, associations and the Ministries of Education will benefit from a regionally-agreed tool that they can use for quality assurance and teaching reforms for their own systems as well as for the recognition of studies abroad.

The sharing of resources within the CBHE projects led to greater interaction between professors and more intensive sharing of ideas:

EU Quality Standards Aligned Modernisation of Renewable Energy Engineering Curriculum for Bachelor and Master students and Improving Skills Development of PhD students in Universities of Latin America (CRUX) (561807-EPP-1-2015-1-UK-EPPKA2-CBHE-JP)

The Crux project allows students from different countries to familiarise themselves with the latest trends in the subject field and industry, not only in Latin American countries but also in the EU. This was achieved through the creation of the shared e-learning web platform, organising workshops, and mutual academic visits. In these visits, professors from Latin American Universities provided short courses in their subject area, and shared state-of-the-art information from the field in their own countries and in broader regions.

The CBHE action has contributed significantly to better cooperation in the region and to the creation of a common EU-Latin America higher education area. This has opened the door to improved staff and student mobility, networking, and bilateral agreements. It provides a means by which HEIs can work together on themes of mutual interest across national and ethnic boundaries and it promotes people-to-people contacts, which help to change mentalities and diminish prejudices.

Construction of Management Capacities of MOOCs in Higher Education (MOOC-Maker) (561533-EPP-1-2015-1-ES-EPPKA2-CBHE-JP)

One of the main results of the MOOC-Maker project was the creation of an intercontinental network, between Europe and Latin America, which aims to promote research and the exchange of knowledge about the creation, development and management of MOOCs. Many examples of cooperation on MOOC-related topics were developed thanks to this CBHE project. The main examples include: 15 joint publications at international conferences; 15 research stays/visits to project partners; 8 training workshops organised between partners; and 5 joint projects of national or international nature granted.

This regional cooperation promoted a range of opportunities in Latin American countries. This included leading CBHE international projects, enlarging their international visibility, exchanging good practices, knowledge transfer and peer learning, as well as promoting higher education exchanges and academic cooperation between the EU and Latin America.

Disability and modernity: Ensuring quality education of disabled students (MUSE) (561745-EPP-1-2015-1-CL-EPPKA2-CBHE-JP)

The MUSE International Network supports regional cooperation, and is active in the international, Inter-Latin-American framework on disability issues. The network promotes and supports all kinds of initiatives aimed at establishing public policy for the inclusion of students with disabilities in HEIs, and at promoting employment. The fact that institutions from other countries can join the network and broaden the exchange of good practices added value to this cooperation. In particular, the role of Chile (the coordinating institution is from Chile) in the development of the region is essential, because its economic and political stability could contribute to development in other neighbouring countries.

It is also interesting to note that, thanks to cross-regional projects, there is cooperation with several countries in various other world regions:

The international Learning Network of networks on Sustainability (LENSIN) (561927-EPP-1-2015-1-IT-EPPKA2-CBHE-JP)

The LeNSin project supports the internationalisation, intercultural cross-fertilisation and accessibility of higher education by consolidating and empowering a global network called the Learning Network on Sustainability. This network is composed of six existing, functioning regional networks (14 HEIs in five partner countries and four European HEIs): LeNS_Brazil, LeNS_Mexico; LeNS_South Africa, LeNS_China, LeNS_India and LeNS_Europe.

4.2. National Education Reforms

Structural projects are of particular importance for triggering and supporting developments and reforms in the national education systems of the Partner Countries.

It should be noted that the requirement for Education Ministries to participate in structural projects significantly limits the structural type of projects in Latin America. This is because in Latin American countries higher education is not always the responsibility of the Higher Education Ministry. This explains the low and unbalanced number of structural projects⁹ compared to joint projects, and compared to other regions.

Analysis has shown that successful CBHE projects sparked national debates and highlighted policy gaps, which led to **policy and legislative reforms**. Since the participation of Education Ministries in structural projects is obligatory, the CBHE action laid the basis for cooperation between HEIs and national authorities:

⁹ 72 Joint Projects and 4 Structural Projects have been selected in the Latin American Region in the period 2015-2019.

Harmonization and Innovation in Central American Higher Education Curricula: Enhancing and Implementing the Regional Quality Framework (HICA) (561531-EPP-1-2015-1-ES-EPPKA2-CBHE-SP)

This Structural Project was driven by university associations, universities and Ministries of Education in six Central American countries (Costa Rica, Panama, Nicaragua, Guatemala, El Salvador and Honduras), and was intended to support the reform, innovation and harmonisation of Higher Education curricula by developing a Central American Qualifications Framework for Higher Education ("MCESCA"). This Qualifications Framework defines what a student should know, understand and be able to do after each Higher Education cycle.

Thanks to the development of a MCESCA, the project has defined learning outcomes for pre-bachelor and short-cycle programmes. The Central American Qualifications Framework has been piloted in Central American Partner Universities, with the aim of revising and reforming the learning programmes selected by each University, and of defining workload-based learning outcomes aligned with the MCESCA. The pilot outcomes and the MCESCA itself were promoted widely among regional and national political bodies, employers and accreditation agencies.



5. INCLUSIVENESS

Challenges remain in the areas of gender inequality, access to higher education and inclusion. In Latin America, the percentage of young people enrolled in higher education is rising among low and middle-income countries¹⁰ (40% in 2010). On average, the poorest 50% of the population only represented 16% of higher education students in 2000, rising to 25% in 2013¹¹.

5.1. People with Fewer Opportunities

- ▶ Around 50% of the CBHE projects in the Latin American region prioritise the involvement of people with fewer opportunities. Projects concentrate on students with disabilities (visual disability, hearing disability, physical disability), vulnerable and socio-economically disadvantaged groups.

Given the socio-economic difficulties in Latin American countries, activities focusing on people with disabilities are especially dependent on funding mechanisms like the CBHE action:

Disability and modernity: Ensuring quality education of disabled students (MUSE) (561745-EPP-1-2015-1-CL-EPPKA2-CBHE-JP)

By creating a disabled students' support structure in each partner higher education institution, and by building up staff's capacity for dealing with inclusive education, the MUSE project has contributed to the modernisation of the universities concerned. MUSE has made the universities more inclusive and better aware of their social responsibilities towards students with disabilities.

Centros de cooperación para el fomento, fortalecimiento y transferencia de buenas prácticas que Apoyan, Cultivan, Adaptan, Comunican, Innovan y Acogen a la Comunidad Universitaria (ACACIA) (561754-EPP-1-2015-1-CO-EPPKA2-CBHE-JP)

The project has enabled the creation of five Educational Centres for Support and Development (CADEP) in Colombia, Peru, Nicaragua and Chile, in order to reduce the student drop-out rate and to contribute to the eradication of all forms of exclusion, discrimination and marginalisation, which is one of the main challenges in Latin America. The structure of these centres represents an innovative and replicable tool for HEIs to provide students, especially the most vulnerable, with integrated support using a differential approach. Moreover, these Centres will support and monitor students at risk, carry out training sessions for staff at HEIs, explore new strategies for teaching, and improve the use of ICTs in educational practices.

¹⁰ Lower and middle-income countries in Latin America are Bolivia, Guatemala, Honduras, El Salvador and Nicaragua.

¹¹ World Bank Group (2017) : At a Crossroads : Higher Education in Latin America and the Caribbean.

5.2. Institutions Located in less developed regions

Cooperation among/with HEIs from remote areas is especially important for the Latin American Region in order to reach vulnerable people located in these areas. Latin American countries tend to be strongly centralised and to accumulate the resources and opportunities in their capitals, which underlines the need to promote and encouraging the participation of underrepresented universities underrepresented located in remote areas or in vulnerable zones.

Centros de cooperación para el fomento, fortalecimiento y transferencia de buenas prácticas que Apoyan, Cultivan, Adaptan, Comunican, Innovan y Acogen a la Comunidad Universitaria (ACACIA) (561754-EPP-1-2015-1-CO-EPPKA2-CBHE-JP)

The project included partner universities in the rural regions of New Guinea in Nicaragua such as URACCAN (Universidad de las Regiones Autónomas de la Costa Caribe Nicaragüense) and in the mining and indigenous regions of the Atacama desert in Chile (Universidad de Antofagasta).

Internationalization of Latin American peripheral Universities through sustainable integration and inclusive implementation of International Relations Offices (PONCHO) (561843-EPP-1-2015-1-ES-EPPKA2-CBHE-JP)

The project aimed at encouraging the internationalisation of Latin American partner universities, especially those working in peripheral regions in Brazil, Uruguay, Colombia, Bolivia, Paraguay, Ecuador, Peru and Argentina, whose geographical position or number of students have not enabled them to develop their internationalisation.

According to the criteria established by the European Commission, which is based on the income level and size of economy, upper-middle income countries (UMICs) on the OECD/DAC¹² list and countries with more than 1% of the world's gross domestic product (GPD) are set to “graduate” out of the Development Cooperation Instrument (DCI). This is the case of Chile and Uruguay who fully graduated in 2018. In addition, Colombia, Cuba, Ecuador, Peru, Paraguay, Mexico, Brazil, Panama, Costa Rica and Venezuela are approaching the graduation criteria for being considered upper middle-income countries (UMC). The countries that are still a bit behind and considered as lower middle income countries (LMC) are Bolivia, Guatemala, Honduras, El Salvador and Nicaragua.

Although all Latin American countries were encouraged to participate in the CBHE action, LMC countries participated less. More promotion and investment in these countries is needed to reach a higher level of participation and impact on the HE systems and societies of LMCs.

¹² Development Assistance Committee of the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development

Nonetheless, out of the few CBHE projects in LMCs, there were good examples in which the LMCs saw a positive impact and innovated their institutions and HE system:

**Adopción de enfoques de calidad, accesibilidad e innovación en la educación superior de Latinoamérica (ALCAI-LA)
(561997-EPP-1-2015-1-ES-EPPKA2-CBHE-JP)**

Among the middle lower income countries in this region, a positive example of capacity building was seen at the Universidad Americana (Nicaragua) which launched its first virtual Master with an international dimension. With the support of the project partners, the university prepared an interesting curriculum that meets identified needs and prioritizes innovative, high-quality and accessible training.



6. CONCLUSIONS

The EU's cooperation with Latin America¹³ aims primarily to reduce poverty in the Region. It also contributes, in accordance with the UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, to other international priorities such as sustainable economic, social and environmental development, respect for human rights, promotion of democracy, rule of law and good governance.

Within this context, the CBHE 2015 projects have promoted higher education exchanges and cooperation between the EU and Latin America, contributing to the establishment of several bi-regional university partnerships and collaborative networks, as well as mutually-beneficial linkages in learning and teaching and, by extension, making a strong contribution to the evolution of the bi-regional higher education area.

A first analysis of a smaller sample of 2015 final project reports has shown that CBHE projects play an important role in the support and development of education systems in Partner Countries. The higher education sector is a driving force for the economy and society as a whole, and the role of the CBHE action is important as it has a long-term structural effect on these countries. A number of best-practice examples show the impressive benefits that CBHE projects can have on educational systems, HEIs and individuals (academics, administrative university staff, and students).

However, the impact of the CBHE action can be further improved by looking at the challenges that were identified via the sample of final project reports and the monitoring activities (desk monitoring, monitoring missions, cluster meetings) conducted by the Agency. Some of the challenges refer to the CBHE action as a whole, others specifically to the Latin American Region.

6.1. Challenges

- Given that in many Latin American countries the Ministries of Education are not responsible for Higher Education, there are very **few Structural projects** running in the Region. This fact has prevented many HEIs from considering submitting a Structural proposal and has led to the implementation of mainly Joint projects. However, it has to be noted that some Joint projects managed to have a structural impact on the higher education systems as well because the consortium included the entities responsible for Higher Education.
- Although **internationalisation** has become a priority in many Latin American HEIs, there are still many HEIs across the Region, which need greater support in this field. Given that in the 4th call for proposals (EAC/A05/2017) the regional priority of internationalisation has been removed from the list of priorities, there is no longer any possibility for HEIs to tackle this priority directly despite the urgent need.
- An important challenge observed in the CBHE projects implemented in the Region was the **management of funds by the Latin American HEIs**. Most of the HEIs cannot manage the funds received from abroad, which explains why in almost all countries of the Region the universities are working with foundations linked to them, and these foundations manage the funds received by universities. In the 2015 generation of projects this initially created difficulties for projects at the financial level. However, ad-hoc solutions have been found, such as including these foundations in the consortia as partner institutions. This has been especially important for

¹³ 2014-2020 Multiannual Indicative Programme

projects coordinated by Latin American HEIs. It has to be underlined that since the 2018 call for proposals, the projects can include Affiliated Entities in the consortia, which can fulfil this specific role.

- Most of the CBHE projects selected in 2015 had significant **difficulties in terms of travelling** because the unit costs foreseen for long distances were not sufficiently high to cover the expenses. This has been taken into account in the last calls for proposals, in which the amount was significantly increased.
- Acquiring **equipment** was a big challenge for the 2015 projects in Latin America, due mainly to national bureaucratic delays including the time taken to identify the necessary equipment and/or the complex process of acquiring specific equipment. In addition, for some cases the purchase of equipment had to be done nationally and could not be done from abroad or from a foreign company. The process used to be too long and inefficient.
- Concerning **language skills**, most of the staff and students in the HEIs of the Region face difficulties with English, given that Spanish is the main language used at all levels. This prevents the institutions from being more active at international level and can make communication between the project partners more difficult.
- Since 2015, some countries in the Region have experienced significant **difficulties at economic and political level**, which had an impact on the implementation of the CBHE projects. This includes political and social crises such as those in Venezuela, Nicaragua, Bolivia, Chile, during which universities were closed for some time. Moreover, a deep financial crisis has affected countries such as Argentina, where the high inflation rate, the depreciation of the Argentinian currency and the economic recession have made it very difficult to purchase equipment. It has to be noted that despite these significant challenges, the institutions have managed to find ad-hoc solutions and adapt some of the activities in order to achieve all the CBHE projects' aims.
- Concerning the **dissemination and visibility of projects** within the institutions, the fact that an HEI is participating in Erasmus+ projects is not always well known inside the institution. It has been noted that there is no systematic communication between contact persons of different projects, and there is a lack of exchange of experience gained in the project implementation. It can be concluded that the project multiplier effects within the universities are sometimes limited.
- A large number of CBHE projects selected in 2015 include **very large partnerships**. This has been a challenge for the coordinating institutions in terms of managing the grant. However, the size of the partnerships decreased in the following calls for proposals, in which the number of partner institutions included in the consortium was considerably lower.
- The CBHE action has a large number of **recurrent beneficiaries**, both institutions and individuals. In the long term, this leads to a **lack of innovative and creative project ideas** (and few new collaborations) and diminishes the impact of the CBHE action in the Region.
- In particular, regarding EU countries, **Spain is over-represented** in the EU partner universities, to the detriment of other universities located in other countries. This is due to the close links and long-term cultural similarities that exist between Spain and the Latin American countries. Moreover, Spanish universities' experience and international networking in the Region make them in a better position to participate than other EU universities.

- Given that the same university can be the coordinating institution three times per call it is harder to ensure diversity. Getting a wider range of EU countries involved in HEI cooperation with Latin America represents a challenge and should be a matter for reflection for the future.
- Overall, there is an **underrepresentation** of small and **remote universities** located in the rural and vulnerable regions of the Latin American countries. Some of them have tried without success, mainly due to the high competitiveness, to submit a CBHE proposal. Others could not participate at all, simply because the information about this action did not reach them. Even though the **inclusion** of individuals and less-experienced organisations is a priority for the Latin America Region, only half of the 2015 CBHE projects have taking it into account. In many of these cases, the impact could not be measured due to the lack of indicators and precise data.
- CBHE projects have contributed to the exchange of good practices about the processes and tools they can use for **quality assurance** and teaching reforms for their own systems, as well as for the recognition of studies abroad. However, agreements covering all countries in Latin America are not yet in place. Harmonisation of the HE systems in Latin America is still in progress and national accreditation agencies are missing in many countries. The **accreditation process** varies from one country to another and in most cases it is a long and complex process that is difficult to accomplish within the eligibility period of a CBHE project.
- The **sustainability of project results** is often not sufficiently addressed. In most of the cases there is no guarantee that the action will be maintained in the long term as it may depend, among other factors, on the institutions involved and their priorities and the resources available.
- **Students** are not participating in the project conception, design and implementation in the majority of cases. They are mainly integrated at the end of the CBHE project in its testing phase if at all. If the expectations and needs of students or student associations (which could be part of project consortia) are not sufficiently taken into account, this lowers the relevance of their studies for the labour market and the sustainability of the funded degree programmes.

6.2. Recommendations

The analyses of the 2015 CBHE projects together with the challenges identified give rise to the following recommendations for changes and improvements:

- In most of the Latin American countries, Higher Education is not the responsibility of Ministries of Education. As a consequence, the mandatory rule of having Ministries of Education in the consortia of Structural projects should be revised. Including the entities which actually deal with Higher Education in the country (such as the Conference of Rectors or others) will help to increase the number of **Structural projects** in the Region.
- Given the need and the importance of developing and enhancing **internationalisation** in the Region, it is recommended that the regional priority of “Internationalisation” be included as a specific priority for the Region. This priority was removed in the 4th call for proposals because it could be seen as a transversal priority in all the projects. However, it has been demonstrated that there are many HEIs across Latin America which are in urgent need of developing this area specifically.
- Working with **foundations** for the **management of the EU funding** is an institutional and structural matter established in the Region in order to achieve better transparency, efficiency

and security. This explains why most of the Latin American partners work with the support of the foundations that have a solely intermediary financial role. Many Latin American partners were not aware of the need to include them in the consortium (as affiliated entities or as full partners), which has led to a large number of amendments to the partnerships, delays in the signatures of the Partnership Agreements, delays in the purchase of equipment, etc. This should be more visible at the publication call stage in order that the applicants are already aware of this situation and can take the appropriate measures in advance (for instance, to include the affiliated entities already in the consortium).

- The **unit costs for travelling** should be revised in order to be closer to the real costs of travel. In particular, in Central America, the flight ticket prices are very high despite the short distances, which has created difficulties in many projects.
- In order to make the **equipment purchase** process more efficient, it is important to enhance the cooperation with the national governments and EU Delegations. Knowing the procedures and internal policies in advance will reduce the time spent on them, and will have a positive impact on the quality of the project results.
- In order to improve the **language skills** of the staff in Latin American HEIs, especially for English, it is recommended that further training or specific priorities that target language learning should be encouraged. This will enable HEIs in the Region to develop their internationalisation and networking with institutions worldwide.
- There is a **need to enhance mechanisms for knowledge sharing and knowledge management** amongst Erasmus+ projects within the institutions. A greater level of synergy between the project partners would help avoid duplication of projects, enhance the exchange of experiences and/or increase the value added to the institution and should be promoted by the partner institutions.
- **Databases for international projects** could be established by the beneficiaries to make it easier for them to follow up past projects and to capitalise on their results for the benefit of new projects. It is therefore recommended that all the results, materials and academic publications at university level are documented and made available. An improved information structure and better use of the universities' websites and/or social media would certainly enhance the visibility of the projects.
- The **number of partner institutions in the consortia** should be reduced so that all of them can play an active role in the project activities.
- It is essential to reinforce **cooperation with the EU Delegations** in the Partner countries of the Region since they are the only local representatives of the EU and of the E+ programme in the field. Their support for promoting the programme and for assisting the partners in case of difficulties (such as for the purchase of equipment) is of high importance.
- In order to increase the impact of CBHE projects in Latin America, further action should be taken to reinforce the **participation of unrepresented, remote Latin American HEIs** located in peripheral areas with vulnerable populations. It should therefore be proposed that the EU Delegations promote further the funding opportunities offered by the CBHE action among the HEIs, through the organisation of information campaigns, cluster meetings together with the experimented HEIs in the country, and carry out if feasible the follow-up of the projects' CBHE results.

- If detailed measures for **sustainability** were a requirement at the proposal design stage, this could have a positive impact on a project's continuation beyond the contract period. The commitment of the authorities in the institutions is also required in order to reinforce the impact of the projects in which the institutions are participating. Moreover, the institutions should keep on supporting the projects with human and financial resources in order to ensure the sustainability of the outcomes achieved. This is particularly necessary for the sustainability of the structures and centres created during the projects.
- In line with the EU-LA policy objective of creating a **Latin America HE Area**, the following should be taken into account as key priorities:
 - (i) stimulating the **intra-regional mobility** of students and staff should make significant improvements to the academic recognition process in Latin America;
 - (ii) promoting the creation of **Quality Assurance Agencies** across the Region in the countries where they do not exist, and the creation of regional mechanisms for regulating and evaluating accreditation/QA agencies to ensure that they apply international criteria;
 - (iii) streamlining mechanisms for automatic **recognition** of short periods of study abroad and diploma recognition/ recognition of qualifications.
- More HEIs should adopt a **strategic approach** and focus their participation in the CBHE action on projects that are in line with their medium and long-term priorities and development goals. This orientation towards 'strategic interest' will then lead to better support for the CBHE projects (e.g. by the international office and finance department), the exploitation of synergies between projects implemented at the same HEI, and above all the sustainability of the projects after the end of their funding period.
- The **institutional capacity of partner country HEIs** to manage international projects needs to be further developed. Although more and more institutions are taking over the coordination of CBHE projects, the partner country HEIs need more training and support to develop innovative project ideas, to submit competitive proposals and to ensure high quality in the implementation and management of international projects.
- The **diversity of HEIs** and individuals in the CBHE action needs to increase. The CBHE action focuses on high value projects and this favours larger and more experienced (often recurrent) HEIs. The 'entry barriers' for smaller institutions and newcomers are high. One way to counterbalance this challenge would be to dedicate a share of the budget to smaller projects covering certain types of activities only (i.e. staff training activities, exchange of university professors, updating small numbers of modules, summer schools, etc.). However, such an approach is more labour-intensive to manage from EACEA, and would require a simpler funding procedure (e.g. lump sums) and simplified or external monitoring of project activities.
- **Students and student associations** should take part in CBHE projects (where relevant) from the very beginning. This would enrich project development and implementation and lead to a better match between project outcomes and the expectations and interests of the students. This would also contribute to guaranteeing the sustainability of the projects, particularly for curriculum development projects.





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Erasmus+

Capacity Building in Higher Education (CBHE) action

Regional Report Latin America

Resume

This report is based on the Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency's evaluation of the first final project reports of the first generation of CBHE projects selected for funding in 2015. Altogether 138 projects were funded in 2015 and 88 finalised projects submitted their final reports in 2019, of which 18 were implemented in Latin America.