

**Fourth Meeting of the European Higher Education Area Advisory Group on EHEA
International Cooperation**

Alcalá de Henares (Madrid, Spain), 30 January 2017

***Enhancing international cooperation between regional higher education areas. Building
Regional Dialogues***

1.- General Outline

The Organization of Ibero-American States for Education, Science and Culture (OEI) is a specialized public policy intergovernmental organization promoting technical cooperation in the field of education, science and culture. OEI has 67 years of experience with 17 national offices all around the region.

OEI is recognised as an institution that has had a substantial impact in the field of non-university education and, to a lesser extent, in the field of higher education and scientific research. In the field of higher education, the Centre of Higher Education Studies (CAEU) is in charge of creating alliances with Ibero-american universities. Regarding scientific research, OEI works alongside with the Ibero-american laboratories which allow interdisciplinary training in high level centres. Since 2015, higher education plays a vital role regarding the central cooperation strategies of the Organization.

OEI is also a major driver of the Ibero-American Knowledge Area(EIC) alongside with SEGIB and CUIB. EIC is a confluent space of policies and instruments and its also a confluence of science and higher education actors in the Ibero-american region. It is geared to the necessary transformation of higher educations and based around research, development and innovation.

The primary strategy of OEI is the project Metas 2021 (which is under review and analysis in order to articulate it with the Development Agenda 2030). It was adopted by the Heads of State and Government from Latin-America, Spain, Portugal and Andorra. It was conceived as an strategy to contribute towards the educational development at the Ibero-american region during the 2011-2021 decade, on the conviction that education is a main strategy of making progress on the basis of inclusion and cohesion.

2._ Three main subjects for strengthening international cooperation.

In the Euro-Latin American area there is a scientific and academic community with longstanding ties that secure full commitment towards bi-regional cooperation on higher education.

There are many and varied aspects that can contribute to strengthen international cooperation between Latin-America and EHEA. If there were a few key actions to mention, we could appoint the the following ones:

1.- Enhance policy dialogue at the Euro-Latin American region between the principal actors, who develop higher education public policies. In this regard we should mention public administrations (both central and decentralized) and universities.

Policy dialogue, in the world of international cooperation, is a privileged way of high level exchange among decision-makers who interact to obtain ideas for new initiatives and solutions to a wide range of practical problems in the implementation of its programs or develop mutually beneficial concerted initiatives. The distinctive element of policy dialogue is to allow a direct transfer of relevant information about policy management.

2.- Strengthen capacities for training researchers.

Public policies involving training researchers in Latin America are causing an increasing imbalance on capacity building of research and development in the countries. It is important to reduce these asymmetries through bi-regional cooperation.

3.- Academic mobility, in its various forms, is one of the more solvent and notable actions that can be performed in the Ibero-american region, in terms of technical cooperation.

OEI has also contributed to build a courageous dialogue and boosting bi-regional cooperation. The Latin-American region is, at this moment, further behind in terms of academic mobility in comparison to other regions. There is also an unequal participation between the countries and the higher education institutions.

OEI has built, during the last years, significative experiences in terms of academic mobility. It is probably among the entities with a greater “know how” on this matter in the Ibero-american region. OEI is clearly the reference between the cooperation agencies which work at the region. We also build relationships with governments, universities, networks as well as creating alliances between all of them. We are now also launching a mobility alliance named as “Campus Iberoamerica” in the same field as the Ibero-american Knowledge Area (EIC).

3.- Three main activities to implement regional cooperation. Good practices and recommendations.

According to the three main topics previously mentioned, we suggest three possible guidelines to reinforce bi-regional cooperation

1.- Setting up a Bi-regional Cooperation Network for Policy Dialogue on Higher Education, to improve the quality and impact of these policies through a recurrent knowledge exchange and good practices between those who design and execute them.

2.- Establish and implement a Bi-regional Program for Training Young Researchers, especially targeted to those countries with fewer resources for training. Any action of this kind requires a strong element of university cooperation as well as a stable partnership between public entities and international organizations from both regions.

3.- Develop a Bi-regional Program on Academic Mobility for Future Teachers. OEI has been promoting at the Ibero-american region the Paulo Freire Program, which is an academic mobility program for graduate and postgraduate students in schools, faculties, centers, and

teacher training programs. Its main objective is to facilitate the mobility of university students (graduate and postgraduate students) entailing the exercise of teaching profession. Therefore, the principal audience are the future teachers of secondary schools and Technical and Occupational Education centres. It may be interesting to promote a similar initiative with a bi-regional focus which would allow us to establish cooperation and innovation networks in order to allow future teachers to know the experiences in other countries. Especially, it is important for them to know their good practices and participate in formative meetings, seminars and think tanks.

4.- Challenges, benefits and risks

With regard to future challenges, it is important to establish the following ones (among others):

- There is a need for better coordination/harmonization between the agencies and institutions in order to minimise the dispersion of inter-university actions for cooperation.
- A strong ownership of cooperation policies taken by individual countries: both governments and higher education institutions (Paris Declaration on aid effectiveness)

In respect of risks, we can indicate the following ones:

- A certain fatigue of the instruments for supporting university cooperation, arising from a technical and financial intermittent cooperation as well as weaknesses in the management program schemes.
- The resources of Ibero-american universities, generally speaking, are being cut. This limits their opportunity to finance with their own resources the cooperation activities that do not have external support.