



Press release: May 16th 2011

23 national and international university associations join forces in project to boost regional development of higher education in Latin America

A consortium of 23 national and international university associations from across Latin America and Europe have joined forces to launch a major three-year project designed to improve mechanisms for modernisation, reform and harmonisation of education systems in Latin America and to enhance Europe-Latin America university partnership.

*ALFA PUENTES: Building Capacity of University Associations in fostering Latin-American regional integration – co-funded by the European Commission ALFA programme – **will be launched today (16 May)** in Bogota, Colombia at the first meeting of the project partners. The meeting will be opened by the Colombian Minister of Education, María Fernanda Campo, as well as leading project partners the European University Association (EUA), the Observatorio de las Relaciones Unión Europea - América Latina (OBREAL) and host ASCUN - the Asociación Colombiana de Universidades.*

In Latin America (LA), there have been a number of initiatives in the last decade that have aimed at higher education integration, harmonisation, and enhancing cooperation and exchange with Europe. ALFA PUENTES differs in that it focuses on national and regional collective stakeholders, and their role in the politically driven EU-LAC Common Higher Education and Knowledge Area (ALCUE), particularly as interlocutors between their member universities and governments.

The project will build upon existing sub-regional convergence processes in LA, articulated by the Andean Community, the Mercosur region and Central America/Mexico. Mutual learning initiatives between LA and European associations and their members will target quality assurance reform, enhancing recognition of degrees, building qualifications frameworks and increasing academic mobility. The project will look to build wider regional convergence from the bottom up, utilising the sub-regional experience as a building block. It will simultaneously aim to generate stronger working relationships between European and LA associations.

Developed over three years, the project will consist of a region wide survey of university leadership and faculty in LA that will provide comparable data on how universities are currently tackling issues related to learning and teaching, research, mobility and internationalisation, quality assurance, and governance/management. In the second phase of the project, sub-regional initiatives will be taken-up: a quality assurance and recognition framework for the Andean Community; an internationalisation and mobility strategy for the 'Mercosur' region; a qualifications framework for Central America/Mexico. European partners will support the initiatives, and share their respective experience under the European Bologna Process where appropriate. Transversal activities, such as two major Europe-LA university association conferences and bi-lateral networking activities for European and LA associations, will also be incorporated throughout the project.

ALFA PUENTES brings together six associations from Europe (led by EUA, and including national associations from France (CPU), Germany (HRK), Spain (CRUE), Poland (CRASP) and Portugal (CRUP)) together with partners across LA, as well as OBREAL and the Asociación Grupo Santander (AGS). Each association has a respective

history of cooperation with Latin America, and will utilise the project to deepen and broaden higher education internationalisation and bi-regional dialogue.

The project management team consists of EUA, OBREAL, AGS, ASCUN, Montevideo Group (AGUM, Uruguay), CSUCA (Central America) and the OUI (Organización Universitaria Interamericana, represented by the University Veracruzana, Mexico).

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Notes for editors

List of all partners in the project:

Europe

European University Association (EUA- Belgium- www.eua.be)
Observatorio de las Relaciones Unión Europea - América Latina (OBREAL- Spain- www.obreal.org)
Conferencia de Rectores de las Universidades Españolas (CRUE- Spain- www.crue.org)
Hochschulrektorenkonferenz- German Rectors' Conference (HRK- Germany- www.hrk.de)
Conference of University Presidents (CPU- France- www.cpu.fr)
Conference of Rectors of Academic Schools in Poland (CRASP- www.krasp.org.pl/en)
Conselho de Reitores das Universidades Portuguesas (CRUP- www.crup.pt)
Asociación Grupo Santander (AGS- www.sgroup.be)

Central America/Mexico

Consejo Superior Universitario Centroamericano (CSUCA- www.csuca.org/)
Universidad Veracruzana, Mexico (representing the Inter-American Organisation for Higher Education - www.uv.mx)
Consejo Nacional de Rectores- Costa Rica (CONARE- www.conare.ac.cr)
Consejo de Rectores de Panamá (CRP - www.pa/consejo)
Universidad Nacional Autónoma de Honduras (UNAH- www.unah.edu.hn)
Asociación Nacional de Universidades y de Instituciones de Educación Superior - Mexico (ANUIES- www.anuies.mx)

Mercosur

Asociación de Universidades "Grupo Montevideo" (www.grupomontevideo.edu.uy)
Conselho de Reitores das Universidades Brasileiras (CRUB – www.crub.org.br)
Consejo Interuniversitario Nacional - Argentina (CIN - www.cin.edu.ar)
Universidad Nacional de Asunción – Paraguay (www.una.py)
Universidad de la República – Uruguay – associated partner (www.universidad.edu.uy)

Andean Community

Asociación Colombiana de Universidades (ASCUN - www.ascun.org)

Universidad de Guayaquil (Consejo Nacional de Educación Superior de Ecuador- CONESUP- www.ug.edu.ec)
Consejo de Rectores de las Universidades Chilenas (CRUCH- www.cruch.cl)
Comité Ejecutivo de la Universidad Boliviana (CEUB- www.ceub.edu.bo)
Asamblea Nacional de Rectores del Perú (ANR- www.anr.edu.pe)