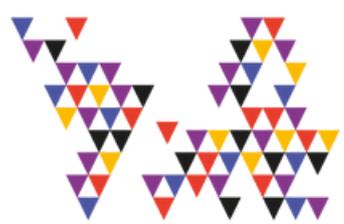




# STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK

2023-2028

"THE REFERENCE POINT NETWORK FOR  
EUROPEAN CIVIL SOCIETY ON HUMAN RIGHTS IN  
LATIN AMERICA"



**EU-LAT**

Advocacy Network  
Red de Incidencia

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# INTRODUCTION

The Strategic Framework (SF) 2023–2028 is the network’s guiding document on our joint work together, and reflects our identity, who we are, what we will do and how we intend to achieve it. This document is the result of six exciting months of work by a section of the membership, involving processes of consultation, joint reflection and in-depth discussion on several of the most relevant current topics for our work.

This framework is based on the accumulated knowledge of the member organisations and recent changes, to define a profile for the network with its own added value. This framework is therefore an invitation to all members to benefit from mutual learning, the development of shared skills and closer coordinated action to achieve impact.

This is the EU-LAT Network (the network)’s second strategic plan. The previous plan was agreed when the network was first founded in 2017, and its aims were to increase the visibility and reporting of human rights violations, to monitor and influence European Union policies related to these violations and to strengthen alliances with civil society organisations in the two regions. The network’s added value is its specialism in advocacy work and its recognition as a trusted source of information by EU decision-makers.

The network is not starting from scratch. We aim consolidate the advocacy work we have undertaken in recent years, so that the network is the reference point on Latin America before the European authorities in Brussels. This work will continue, based on what has worked so far, namely the significant involvement of the members as part of the network’s identity, a continued focus on the thematic priorities that unite the members and which we have been working on for several years, and the expansion of our advocacy strategies before the EU.

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*This new framework continues along the path we embarked on in 2017, but with a firmer step, strengthening our ties and our relationships with our allies and expanding our strategies to contribute to the guarantee of rights in Latin America.*

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Equally, the network will adapt innovatively to changing contexts so that we can continue to build legitimacy, influence and future sustainability. We will do this by working towards the following goals:



1. Strengthening the strategic relationship with social organisations in Latin America, moving from coordination to co-construction in our common working agenda before the EU.



2. Consolidating our strategic advocacy work and expanding knowledge and learning among network members and social organisations in Latin America.



3. Ensuring financial sustainability with new fundraising and financing strategies.

The context for the coming years has as many positives as negatives, and we face both unpredictability and the possibility of far-reaching changes. However, the opportunities heralded by the new correlation of forces in Latin America, offer hope for the construction of a common agenda for social and economic transformation. Given this, the network will maintain a balance between working on systemic and specific change.



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# DEVELOPMENT PROCESS

The document was written between March and November 2022. It is the result of a participatory process involving consultation and reflection processes and discussion of the most relevant issues, to agree the main elements of the framework. The starting points for the development of the document were as follows:

**All members have an equal voice.**

This means that during the whole process consultation must be ensured and different needs taken into account, using specific methodologies.

**We are not starting from scratch.**

While the SF needs to introduce thematic developments related to opportunities for change in the coming period, the areas where results have been achieved and require the network to continue current work will remain in the framework.

**Flexibility.**

Given the volatility of the context and the high probability of not being able to predict exactly what it will bring; it will be necessary to work on different scenarios so that strategies can be adapted.

**Prioritisation.**

One of the main messages of the evaluation was the need to prioritise in order to avoid diluting efforts so that greater impacts can be achieved.

**Time to consult and time to make decisions.**

Both will be required equally, the former will be more important at the beginning of the process and the latter at the end.

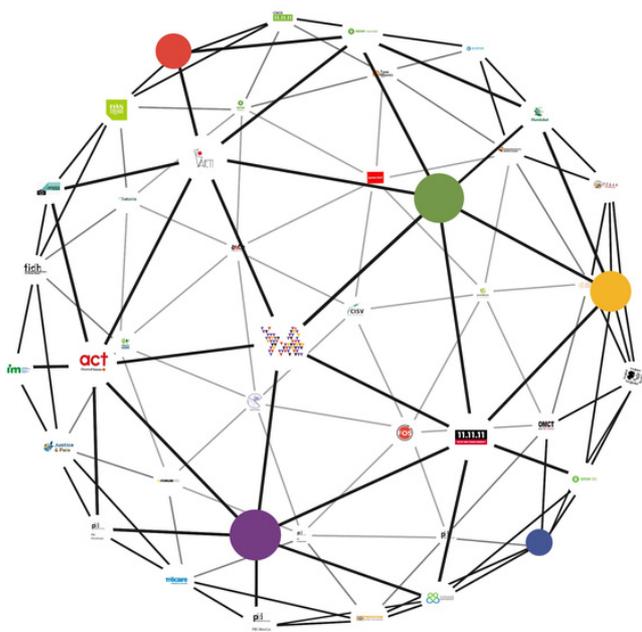
More than 20 working sessions, external consultations, over 50 documents and in-depth discussions, were used to consider eight main questions and reach the strategies defined in the current document. These questions include whether we should contribute to systemic or more specific changes, whether we should work horizontally with social organisations or in a unilateral way, how flexible we should be about our priorities, what powers we want to give to the Secretariat, whether our work should be focused on the countries with the most needs or the most geopolitically relevant, and what weight we should give to learning.

The network's Board of Directors has been involved throughout the development process, as well as a support team made up of six members and the secretariat. This has ensured that a significant part of the network's different visions have been reflected in the document.

## Idealism vs Realism

*The SF needs the optimism of our ideals, but it must also be useful for the causes we seek to influence.*

*The success of the process will depend on the balance we find.*



The EU-LAT Network is a pluralistic network of European organisations promoting solidarity between the peoples of Latin America and Europe. The network is composed of 43 European organisations from 11 European countries, some with offices in the Latin American region. The network members, who are present in both regions, actively participate in the different structures of the network and in its decision-making processes.

The network was founded in 2018 to promote participatory European policies, with a gender perspective, that contribute to the comprehensive respect of human rights, democracy and sustainable development in Latin America. The network is currently one of the main political civil society actors working on Latin America in Brussels. Despite its short existence, it has achieved a political maturity that forms the foundations to build continued influence on Europe policies for the reduction of inequality and the guarantee of rights in Latin America. We aspire to be the reference point network in the European Union on Latin America before the European authorities.

## MISSION

The mission of the EU-LAT Network is to promote the transformation of European policies with Latin America so that human rights are respected, protected and promoted in the areas of political dialogue, development cooperation and trade and investment. The EU-LAT Network carries out its reflection, learning and political action within the framework of relations between the EU and Latin America, promoting strategic alliances with other key actors in the EU, in Latin America and globally.

## VISION

The EU-LAT Network aims to be an active, relevant, influential, robust and inclusive network, which acts as a reference point network for both civil society and political decision-makers in Europe for advocacy and dialogue, with robust alliances with other social actors, to transform EU-Latin America relations.

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*We are the most connected network with civil society and movements in Latin America, with whom we co-build our agenda of influence before the EU and share knowledge and learning on our common priority issues.*

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**WHO WE ARE**

# KEY CONTEXTUAL ELEMENTS

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There is a growing consensus on the need for inclusive policies, especially fiscal and social protection. The level of unanimity on this point has not been seen in Latin America in the last 20 years. This provides an opportunity to make progress on guaranteeing basic rights such as health, education, pensions and housing.

The coronavirus pandemic has exacerbated the already wide inequality gaps in the region. The main international organisations consider the current crisis to be extremely serious, one of the greatest that the region remembers, with record poverty data and a new increase in inequality. Extreme poverty is at levels not seen in 30 years, according to the UN, rising from 81 million to 86 million during 2021.

In contrast to recent years, the main governments of Latin America are interested in building a common agenda led by Brazil. All of these governments, however, exist in contexts of great internal polarization and with high risks of conflict.

The main message of the moment is that, in addition to mitigating the damage caused by the pandemic, which is already very serious, and reactivating the economy, Latin America must currently make progress on larger transformations. ECLAC, together with the EU, seeks to promote a triple transition, that is to say digital, ecological and socio-economic.

The gap between the scenario in South and Central America is widening. The latter is home to several non-liberal governments, democratic setbacks and fewer capacities for transformation. There is a marked trend towards increased human rights violations and loss of freedoms. Central America is the scene of both resistance to and protection of this agenda. South America, however, shows more possibilities for the expansion of rights, at least in some areas such as the protection of natural assets, energy transition and social protection

The EU is placing greater emphasis in its discourse on regulations, social affairs, and environmental protection. In relation to these issues and the promotion of peace, it is the preferred partner in Latin American public opinion, but its investment is perceived as less relevant than that of China or the United States.

There is a weakening of democratic structures and the separation of powers, including the persecution of those fighting against state corruption, especially judges and prosecutors, as well as journalists and defenders. At the same time, there is a proliferation of legislation aimed at consolidating the closure of civil society spaces, criminalizing the exercise of fundamental freedoms, and any questioning of the exercise of power.

Latin America and the Caribbean is the most violent region in the world. With 8% of the world's population, it accounts for 37% of homicides. This violence has several roots, but it is also connected to the development of extractive industries and in general to the exploitation of natural resources, affecting neighbouring communities and especially human and environmental rights defenders, as well as the workforce in these companies. The European Union must therefore prioritize the application of rules for prevention, monitoring, consultation and reparation, for damages caused by certain European investments to populations –indigenous communities in particular – and to the environment in the continent.



# STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

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*The network's objective is to promote participatory European policies, with a gender perspective, which contribute to the comprehensive respect of human rights, democracy and sustainable development in Latin America.*

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## **The network has used the following criteria to decide its thematic issues:**

- Priorities of the network's member organisations based on their strategic plans,
- Priorities of the EU with respect to the region,
- Priorities of strategic alliances,
- Reading the context and identifying opportunities for change. The orientation of “we are not starting from scratch” issued by the Assembly for the development of this plan has also been taken into account, which means that we will continue doing what is already working.

Latin America is facing a moment of profound changes, and the network will contribute to systemic approaches from the areas in which it has experience and based on the four previous criteria. It will do so by prioritizing specific objectives with a focus on “strategic litigation”, “emblematic cases” or the “butterfly effect”. All this will be carried out according to the idea of digital, ecological and socio-economic transitions.

*Based on the above, the strategic priorities will be as follows:*



## HUMAN RIGHTS, TRADE AND BUSINESSES

Goal: To regulate EU business and trade with Latin America, to strengthen human rights obligations in trade agreements with the LA region while limiting the power of multinationals to influence public policy.

We will do this through the due diligence process, seeking the compliance of European companies and their suppliers with the highest human rights standards in Latin America.

## OPENING UP SPACES FOR CIVIL SOCIETY

Goal: To consolidate and expand participative and enabling space for civil society in Latin America.

We will advocate for the European Union to increase its pressure on national authorities in Latin America, demanding that they respect civic-political rights, democracy, civil society and that they protect human rights defenders, and that external European policies incorporate new and better leverage tools.

We will urge the EU to use its external policy instruments to protect human rights defenders and promote their work.

## LIFE FREE FROM VIOLENCE

Goal: To make violence against women visible in Europe and Latin America, helping to ensure that its eradication is included as a priority in the EU's external policy and in bi-regional relations.

## ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE

Goal: There will be more European policies and binding mechanisms related to environmental and climate justice in EU external relations, linking human rights with environmental protection, with a gender perspective.

More authorities and decision-makers in the European institutions and in EU Member States will be faced with contradictions between their discourse and practice, especially in the area of trade and investment promotion, in relations with Latin America.

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The four points above define our strategic direction, we will also develop strategic advocacy plans for each of the themes and annual plans with objectives for change, expected results and indicators. The degree of volatility in the current context does not allow for greater predictions.

In view of our previous plans and based on our reading of the situation, the network will work using a methodology allowing for different scenarios and prospective analysis, thereby enabling different possibilities for action depending on the evolution of the context. Flexibility and adaptability will be of utmost importance.

Finally, the network has decided to prioritize its working focus. There are undoubtedly relevant issues that will not be worked on; therefore, the network will complement efforts with others who do work on these issues, and with whom we can jointly contribute to more comprehensive change. The network will deepen its focus, rather than spreading ourselves too thinly, depending on the context.





# WORK FOCUSES

## HUMAN RIGHTS

We are committed to the universality and indivisibility of human rights. We understand rights as a social achievement resulting from the struggle of individuals, communities and peoples against oppression, exploitation, discrimination and the abuse of power by governments and other powerful economic and political sectors. We will defend these rights across the board. We believe that rights are evolving and must be interpreted progressively to respond to pressing challenges.

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## DEVELOPMENT

We work using a comprehensive approach to reduce economic, social, cultural and political poverty and inequalities. The network will balance its work between a development agenda and a human rights agenda for the reduction of inequalities.

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## SYSTEMIC

We seek sustainable change over time that get to the root of the problems of poverty, inequality and discrimination in the region. This includes taking part in some of the discussions taking place in Latin America and in the world which are questioning the policies promoted by the EU in Latin America. However, our actions and strategies will sometimes also be based on concrete actions, which can be catalysts for wider change.

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## FEMINIST

We base our actions on feminist principles by understanding and acting on inequality between men and women. There is no change possible without a gender perspective and we accept that there is still more to do, both within the social organisations of Latin America and within our own organisations. We have a pluralistic understanding of feminisms and are aware of different reflections and currents.

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## DECOLONIAL

We believe that cooperation must take steps to reverse the colonial imprint that has characterized it since its origins. We will be attentive to the use of our power, relationships, the management of funds and communications.

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## INEQUALITIES

Extreme inequality in Latin America is one of the main causes of poverty and exclusion today. This inequality is not only economic, but is also related to opportunities, access to basic services and to racism. The network will use a multidimensional approach to inequalities but will focus its actions where it can add greater value.

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## REALISM

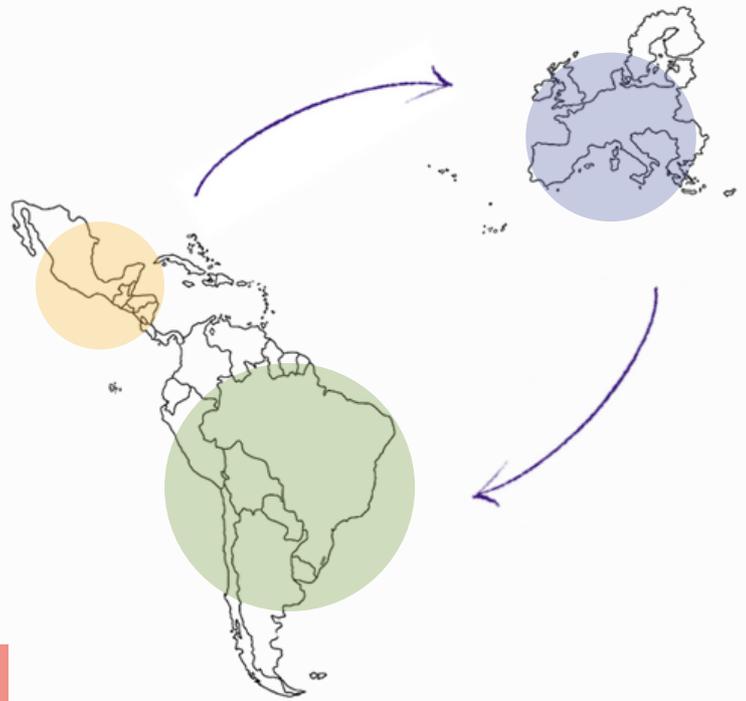
We think with idealism, but we act based on realism, focusing on the possibilities of generating change at all times and the role we can play in this. Above all, the network must be useful for the generation of changes agreed with Latin American social organisations.

# STRATEGIES FOR CHANGE

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*We will go from being an advocacy network to one of learning and knowledge. Our added value to all our different members will be differential and we will take advantage of our accumulated knowledge to carry out more comprehensive work to influence with greater impact through complementary efforts. We will also increase our ambition to strengthen partnerships, going beyond coordination relationships to co-building strategies.*

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## 1. INFLUENCE

This will remain the network's main focus, particularly in Brussels, the EU's main centre of power. We will also expand our coordinated advocacy with EU Member States and bodies present in Latin America. We will rely on the three-pronged strategy currently applied by the network as a model of influence.

We will expand our strategies towards more holistic and innovative approaches. We will add weight to our work on emblematic cases, by harnessing extra capacity to work on new narratives and campaigns. We will constantly analyse the capacities of the network and especially of the secretariat for this work.

The network will deepen its communications strategy, reporting on narratives and issues, using data, stories, interviews or audio-visual materials. We will go beyond issuing press releases. The network will not react to all the different relevant events in Latin America; it will instead establish a series of criteria to define which to focus on.

There may be a campaign once a year that enables greater visibility, brings new allies closer, unites the members of the network and enables positioning in Brussels. It will depend on the capacity of the Secretariat.

**Research** is considered important in terms of influence and to generate change. Our work will be based on research carried out by the members themselves, making use of their evidence and policy findings.

The network will hold meetings on Latin America in Brussels where it will convene the main authorities, social organisations and members of the network. This will be a space for influence, sharing information and weaving relationships, where the joint work of the network members can also be presented. These meetings will depend on the capacity of the Secretariat.

We will expand our political voice in Brussels to channel different advocacy messages and thereby achieve impact and presence.

The secretariat and the working groups will have autonomy according to their results and established strategies, which will give them the speed and flexibility necessary for influence.

Our joint work with Latin American social organisations will include space for reflection, agreement and action. This work will be horizontal, but equally clear about the legitimacy that a European network has to influence its authorities. This work with social organisations will enable us to gain even greater legitimacy and impact and will be a dialogue based on mutual knowledge.

## 2. LEARNING

The network will take advantage of the members' knowledge and work to join efforts. This will be an important strategic area because it will enable greater sustainability through the interdependence between the different members. Tools and methodologies will be used to encourage this common learning.

Contributions can be diverse, from thematic experiences to strategies for generating change. The network will thus become a network of exchange, solidarity among its members, complementary in its knowledge, and using joint efforts for our different common causes.

This will enable us to gain political weight, taking advantage of the network as a whole and not only what the secretariat can provide.

This will be a slow and progressive maturation process, which will affect elements of our organisational culture, as part of a cumulative process.

This process will cover not only knowledge on priority issues, but also operational and other aspects such as security, strategies for working in complex contexts and experiences in the development of partnerships.

As part of this decolonization process, the network will be a channel of knowledge about the functioning of the EU and will use this to contribute to the work of allied social organisations in Latin America through learning processes.

## 4. ALLIANCES

We will move from coordinating to co-building strategies and approaches with other organisations, together with allies in Latin America. This will be one of our main sources of legitimacy alongside our members and our knowledge. This is part of the decolonization of our working practices.

The network will have an annual meeting (virtual or face-to-face) where together with our allies, we will plan common priorities and strategies for the coming year. We will also report on our work and jointly evaluate our achievements. This will be part of our annual work cycle.

We will have strategic allies, with whom we share values, themes, approaches and trust accumulated over the years. We will also have other more tactical allies in order to achieve specific results. We will include the former in particular, in our planning.

## 3. KNOWLEDGE

Knowledge will be one of the main values of the network and this must be ordered and managed. Our network will be the most knowledgeable network on the issues we prioritize for Latin America and we will have tools to communicate this knowledge both inside and outside the network.

There will be greater spaces for analysis, and to develop our own positions on the priority issues, with better mechanisms to be able to agree on them quickly.

The network will become a source of consultation for

other organisations that are interested in the same issues in Latin America.

Knowledge will be obtained collectively, among the different members and together with social organisations in Latin America, using tools that enable this.

The network will have its own plan for knowledge management and will develop ways to involve its different members in this.



We will expand our range of relationships, in particular in countries where the network members have less work, but which play geopolitically relevant roles, such as Brazil, Chile and Argentina. Our work in these countries will be achieved through the allies we establish there.

We will have an alliance strategy for Latin America agreed by all the members of the network, in which we will define the type of relationship that we will establish with each organisation.

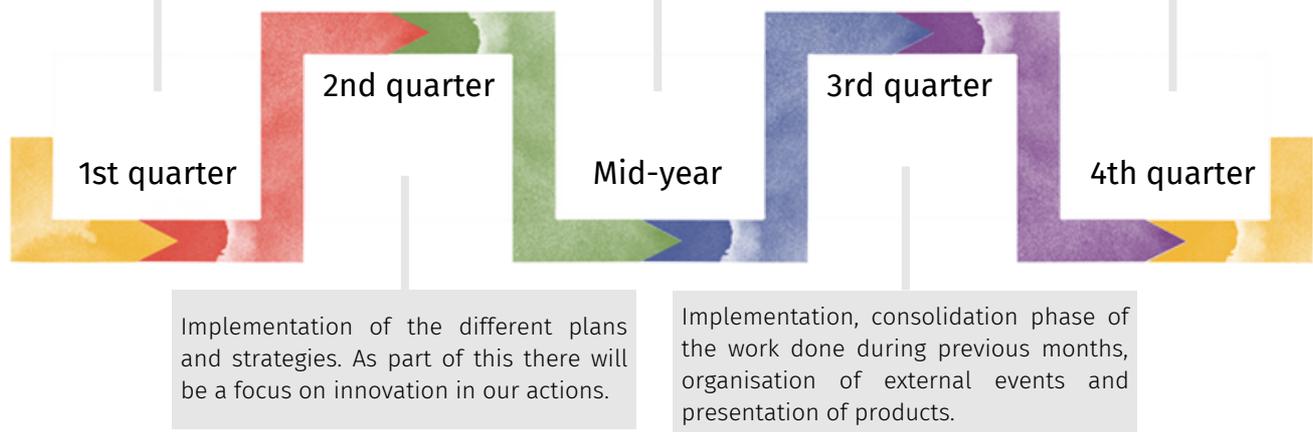
The network will establish alliances with thematic specialisms in Europe and other parts of the world. We will always learn from others; we will share and join forces. We will look to both at our members and outwardly.

# IMPLEMENTATION AND MEASUREMENT CYCLE

This will include time to plan, learn and approve annual plans, including a more reflective phase and exchange with strategic allies and other organisations. There will be planning both by theme and by strategy, to ensure comprehensive approaches with a focus on our influence.

Mid-term review of work plans in the first six months of implementation.

Annual assessment and learning. A reflective phase will begin, lasting three months, leading to the final approval of the following year's planning.



## PLANNING ELEMENTS

**Strategic direction:** The main annual strategies will be agreed at the Annual Assembly. The working groups will issue guidelines, plans may be corrected based on changes in context or progress and there will be a cross-learning process between different groups.

**Approaches:** The annual work plans will take into account the different approaches (human rights, development, systemic, feminist ...), thus ensuring this consistency throughout the whole of the work undertaken.

**Format:** Specific questions will be added to the basic planning format to ensure answers can be adapted to the context at different times.

**Building with strategic allies:** There will be a process of accountability and joint planning with strategic allies. This will be carried out via a virtual meeting between December and January. An intermediate meeting in the middle of each year can also be organized to review the strategy depending on changes in the situation.

**Scenarios and adaptation of plans:** In the case of high volatility in the theme being worked on, the work will be planned taking different scenarios into account. There will be specific formats to be able to plan for this.

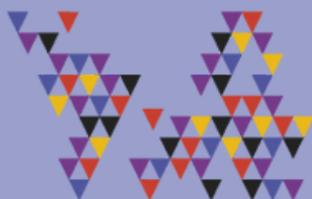
# OUR NETWORK MODEL



© We Effect

Five years after the merger of Grupo Sur and CIFCA, the EU-LAT network is already consolidated, is recognized and aspires to be the reference point network in Europe on Latin America. The main elements that will characterize the network are as follows:

- We are a **geographical** network that works on the continent as a whole together with civil society organisations and on a series of limited topics. Our main added values are our deep knowledge of the region and prioritized issues, the allies we work with and our representation of the main European NGOs working in Latin America.
- The work of our members with counterparts and allies around the world is a fundamental pillar of our work and enables us to be close to **social movements and organisations**.
- We have a solid, operational structure which is continuously reviewed in the interest of the SF (General Assembly, Presidency, Board of Directors, working groups, secretariat).
- **All members of the network have an equal voice** and contribute to our objectives. We complement efforts, we work together on common causes, we learn together. The network is therefore much more than the sum of our members. The integration and cohesion of our members is a priority of its own.
- Our working model is based on **thematic groups**, there is one for each priority, they establish links between them and coordinate their efforts with NGO networks in the countries, with whom they always seek to avoid overlaps (e.g., Peru).
- In countries where the members of the network do not have direct work, the network coordinates our actions and strategies through **strategic allies**, this is the case of Brazil, Argentina, Chile or work on the Amazon.
- The network balances our work between **proactive influence** (promoting agendas, alternatives and stories of change) and **reactive influence** (immediate lobbying actions, press releases, media...).



While the network has a tradition of working in Central America, there will be a balance with work in South America, albeit with differentiated models. Where there is no work through member organisations, strategic alliances will be sought.

The network will maintain a balance between its work on the most vulnerable countries, on which it will issue a greater number of press releases and carry out specific actions, and its work on the most geopolitically relevant countries, with whom it will coordinate actions with its strategic allies and will seek support from them.

# GEOGRAPHICAL PRESENCE



## SECRETARIAT

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*The membership places trust in the secretariat. It needs to play a role to coordinate, implement advocacy and represent the network. It is a fundamental player in the network's operation and the objectives established in this strategic framework.*

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- The secretariat needs to be empowered, with autonomy to enable quick advocacy and necessary decision-making at key moments.
- A healthy network is a network with participating member organisations. Therefore, the secretariat will be responsible for inclusion and the correct balance of member involvement in the achievement of common objectives to ensure representation and collective political intelligence.
- The secretariat will be accountable, and this will be addressed every six months, based on established tools, as well as during planning processes. It will work in close coordination with the Board of Directors, who will give strategic direction on the role of the network.
- It will ensure progress and provide frameworks for advocacy, learning, knowledge management and relationship with partners. It will not have to implement all these areas, but it will help with the guidelines to move forward with the common objectives set.

Over the next five years, we aim to expand the size of the secretariat to promote the set of actions we have established, by between two or three more people, for advocacy, learning and knowledge management and fundraising. This point is linked to the next one on financial sustainability.

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*The long-term sustainability of the network will be a strategic priority in current planning. We aspire to achieve loyalty among the current membership, a strategy to attract new members and the search for funds through philanthropy. We will innovate and establish a pilot project for one year that enables us to diversify strategies.*

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To do this, we need to diversify funding sources, strengthen fundraising capacities and strengthen financial management capacity. The proposed funding channels are membership fees, projects with the members and external projects to increase the administrative capacities of the secretariat.

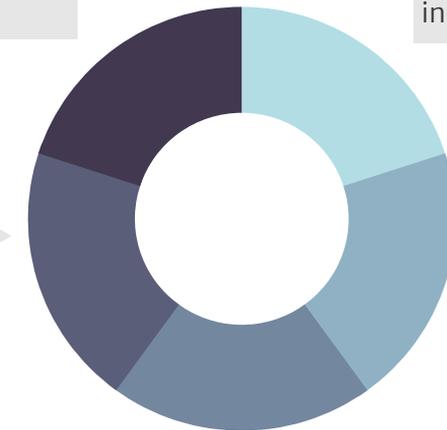
Today, the main source of funding is membership, but this does not ensure long-term sustainability or the fulfilment of collective aspirations. To this end, the following strategic direction will be considered:

The network aspires to achieve a multi-year funding agreement that can finance part of the advocacy work that the secretariat currently carries out. There are experiences of this in other equivalent networks that will be used as a reference.

The network will expand the services it provides to its members and will then conduct a review of fees. Learning and knowledge management will be two strategic areas that aim to attract new organisations and enable an increase in current fees.

It will be possible to provide knowledge to other organisations with an interest in training in the areas of the network's specialization such as due diligence and advocacy before the EU. This will be a strategy in itself for fundraising and gaining influence

The network will aim to broaden its membership, especially to European feminist organisations that can boost work on violence and services for women.



The network will consider a temporary or permanent fundraising position to carry out the above strategies. It will do so initially as part of a pilot project, for one year.

# FINANCIAL SUSTAINABILITY

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- Analysis of internal interviews ([here](#))
- Analysis of key external reports ([here](#))
- Strategy phase 1 ([here](#))
- Strategy phase 2 and proposed dichotomies. Strategic Framework
- Report Closure of Spaces in Central America. EU-LAT Network
- Strategic Framework Meta-analysis ([here](#))
- Starting points for the development of a Strategic Framework ([here](#))
- Summary of Dichotomies and main messages for the development of the EU-LAT Network Strategic Framework.
- ToR development of the strategic plan ([here](#))



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