



Fourth meeting of the Conference on Science, Innovation and Information and Communications Technologies of the Economic Commission for Latin American and Caribbean

Bogotá, 4 and 5 April 2024

BACKGROUND

Latin America and the Caribbean faces a structural problem of weak growth, largely explained by productivity that has remained stagnant, and even declined, in recent decades.¹ To overcome the low productivity trap and move towards more diversified and complex productive structures, the countries of the region must scale up and improve their productive development policies, in which science, technology and innovation efforts will be vital. This will entail fostering a pro-investment agenda that will boost existing productive sectors and stimulate the development of new ones.² In particular, science, technology and innovation efforts should involve stronger investment by countries in this area as well as more effective use of these resources.

Science, technology and innovation policies play a central role on this new stronger and more sustainable development trajectory, both for their effect on bolstering productivity in existing activities, through incremental or radical improvements in processes and forms of organization, and for their effect on the creation of new sectors or the expansion of existing ones through innovation and technology-based entrepreneurship in new products and services. In this regard, improving science, technology and innovation efforts will be fundamental, boosting value added and generating good quality job opportunities, with a smaller environmental impact, and facilitating the move towards a more sustainable and inclusive development model.

Against this backdrop, the Conference on Science, Innovation and Information and Communications Technologies, a subsidiary body of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) created in 2012, is the ideal space to discuss and drive this type of initiative. The Conference is a permanent forum for policy and technical dialogue that convenes high-level authorities responsible for science, technology and innovation policies in Latin America and the Caribbean to share knowledge and coordinate action on issues of mutual interest and to improve the quality and effectiveness of such policies.

At the fourth meeting of the Conference, participants will define the areas of cooperation of a regional agenda for 2024–2025, centred around science, technology and innovation for productive development, and will consider four priority workstreams: (i) science, technology and innovation instruments for sustainable and inclusive productive development; (ii) science, technology and innovation

¹ Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), *Halfway to 2030 in Latin America and the Caribbean: progress and recommendations for acceleration*, 2023 (LC/FDS.6/3/Rev.1), Santiago, 2023.

² Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) and others, *Latin American Economic Outlook 2023: Investing in Sustainable Development*, 2023.

governance; (iii) science, technology and innovation with a territorial approach and (iv) strategic sectoral and technological agendas.

Panel 1: Channelling science, technology and innovation to solve strategic problems (strategic sectoral and technological agendas)

Science, technology and innovation policies must play a central role not only in building national capacities in research and development, but also with regard to solving problems and overcoming national challenges, particularly within the framework of the productive development policies of countries and their territories.

Addressing many challenges facing the region requires a scientific and technical approach as the problems in question are becoming increasingly complex. Realizing the potential of science, technology and innovation implies not only an increase in investment in this area, but also directing public support in this field, or at least some of it, towards areas of knowledge, sectors and technologies related to the main challenges facing each country.

Guiding questions:

-
- **How can countries or territories design and implement science, technology and innovation strategies linked to productive development agendas in priority areas, sectors and technologies?**
 - **What are the main barriers faced in the region in specific areas, sectors or technologies, or in relation to specific challenges, and how could these be addressed through science, technology and innovation, and productive development efforts?**
 - **Which themes of these agendas should be addressed at the local, national and regional levels?**
 - **What policy instruments are available for this purpose?**
 - **Which of the main public, academic or productive stakeholders should participate in creating and implementing strategic agendas at the different levels?**
 - **How can regional coordination and cooperation to advance regional agendas relating to these specific areas, sectors, technologies and challenges be improved?**
 - **What are some possible sources for funding greater science, technology and innovation efforts linked to these sectoral and technology agendas?**
-

- Moderator's opening remarks
- Presentations by panellists
- Discussion and statements by delegations

Panel 2: The challenge of public-public and public-private coordination: recent experiences (science, technology and innovation governance)

Science, technology and innovation and productive development policies generally require a significant amount of coordination. Implementation often involves different types of coordination, for example between public and private stakeholders, among public stakeholders, among private stakeholders, and between national and local stakeholders, in addition to the relationship with civil society and international cooperation. Therefore, governance —broadly understood as the institutional arrangements, mechanisms, forces, rules of the game and incentive modalities that allow the coordination of efforts, stakeholders and resources based on strategic agendas— plays a central role.

Although the institutional framework for science, technology and innovation policies in the region has improved significantly in recent years, it is essential to establish or strengthen institutional arrangements

that facilitate the coordination of efforts, resources and stakeholders at different levels around the strategic priorities defined by the countries and their territories.

Guiding questions:

-
- **What institutional arrangements contribute to better governance of the national innovation system?**
 - **How can a more productive relationship between the institutions supporting science and basic research and those supporting business innovation and productive development be developed?**
 - **How can the coordination of efforts in science, technology and innovation with other productive development efforts be improved?**
 - **What can be done to ensure that the triple (or quadruple) helix model actually works in the region?**
 - **How can better policy continuity be achieved?**
 - **How can the effectiveness of international cooperation agendas relating to science, technology and innovation be improved?**
-

- Moderator's opening remarks
- Presentations by panellists
- Discussion and statements by delegations

Panel 3: Design and implementation of science, technology and innovation policies with a territorial approach (science, technology and innovation with a territorial approach)

In the region's countries, the capacities for designing and implementing initiatives in science, technology and innovation in particular, and productive development in general, are considerably mixed. The development of a strong scientific, technological and productive base is key to reducing these disparities and addressing specific development needs at the local level. It will be necessary to offer guidelines for strengthening subnational innovation and productive development ecosystems and agendas, while coordinating national and local efforts.

Much of the work relating to science, technology and innovation policies and productive development should be carried out at the local level, with local stakeholders, seeking to reduce the considerably mixed productivity trends of the territories within the region's countries.

Guiding questions:

-
- **How can national efforts be coordinated with subnational efforts in science, technology and innovation for productive development? How can multilevel governance modalities that allow alignment between national and subnational priorities be developed?**
 - **How can the capacities of the territories that are lagging be strengthened? How can the capacities of territories be strengthened in general?**
 - **How can local strategies in this area (e.g. smart specialization strategies) be designed and implemented?**
 - **How should science, technology and innovation agendas be developed within the framework of cluster initiatives and other local productive coordination initiatives?**
-

- Moderator's opening remarks
- Presentations by panellists

- Discussion and statements by delegations

Special session: presentation of the publication *Latin American Economic Outlook 2023: Investing in Sustainable Development*

The *Latin American Economic Outlook* is prepared annually by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) Development Centre, ECLAC, the Development Bank of Latin America and the Caribbean, and the European Commission. Each edition presents a structural analysis of the socioeconomic situation of the region and takes into account its challenges and opportunities for better development.

To achieve more sustainable development, Latin American and Caribbean countries must increase both the levels and the quality of investment. The sixteenth edition, which examines investment in sustainable development, urges the countries of the region to adopt a new investment agenda, with a focus on innovation and productive transformation to boost growth, create more formal jobs and advance towards more sustainable development. To this end, the report identifies key strategic sectors which represent significant opportunities for growth and job creation, including sectors linked to sustainable agriculture and food systems, digital transformation, renewable energies and health care.

Panel 4: Innovative instruments for strengthening science, technology and innovation (science, technology and innovation instruments for sustainable and inclusive productive development)

The combination of science, technology and innovation policy instruments in the region seems incomplete and insufficient. Governments channel a significant portion of public spending on research and development to universities and research institutes, mainly in the form of scholarships to pursue higher education and project subsidies, which are generally allocated under a competitive funding model. The flip side is the relative stagnation of business participation in the financing and execution of research and development activities in the region, with the consequent lack of linkages between stakeholders.

While there are factors specific to the economic environment that may inhibit business innovation, the lack of support, such as credit for innovation and innovative public procurement, available in many developed countries, limits the possibilities for companies to take on innovative projects.

Innovative alternatives and instruments should be sought, as well as combinations of such instruments within the framework of missions, clusters or strategic programmes that meet the needs of the region and each of its countries.

Guiding questions:

-
- **How can the impact on productivity of resources allocated to science, technology and innovation for sustainable and inclusive productive development be increased?**
 - **What kind of support instruments are the most effective and feasible to implement, depending on the different contexts?**
 - **How can investment in research and development be optimized to ensure greater commercial leveraging of outcomes, while giving priority to strategic areas or resolving the most pressing challenges?**
-

-
- **What amount of resources should be allocated to basic science, applied science and technology diffusion (technology extension services) to foster science, technology and innovation for productive development?**
 - **How can instruments that allow efforts and resources to be directed towards strategic areas or challenges (e.g. through missions) be designed and implemented?**
 - **How can the capacity to monitor and evaluate science, technology and innovation policies, and the capacity to learn from such monitoring and evaluation, be increased?**
 - **How can resources for investment in science, technology and innovation be scaled up?**
 - **How can the gender perspective be incorporated into the design and implementation of science, technology and innovation policies and instruments for productive development that is actually inclusive?**
-