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THE MULTILEVEL ARCHITECTURE OF EU-CELAC POLITICAL DIALOGUE: INSTRUMENTS OF INTERACTION IN THE LATIN AMERICAN DIMENSION

БАГАТОРІВНЕВА АРХІТЕКТУРА ПОЛІТИЧНОГО ДІАЛОГУ ЄС-CELAC: ІНСТРУМЕНТИ ВЗАЄМОДІЇ НА ЛАТИНОАМЕРИКАНСЬКОМУ НАПРЯМІ

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Abstract. *Background. Interregional cooperation has become an increasingly important mechanism for political coordination, policy alignment and the articulation of shared interests in a more fragmented international environment. The EU-CELAC framework is a particularly illustrative case because it combines summit diplomacy, intergovernmental coordination, parliamentary interaction, expert support and the engagement of EU member states. Purpose. The article examines the multilevel architecture of political dialogue between the European Union and CELAC and identifies the principal instruments through which the EU advances its Latin American policy. Methods. The study combines institutional, structural-functional and comparative analysis with qualitative content analysis of official EU-CELAC documents, EU policy papers and relevant academic literature. Results. EU-CELAC dialogue is shown to operate through interregional, intergovernmental, supranational, parliamentary and expert-platform levels whose functions are mutually reinforcing. Summits, joint declarations, roadmaps, ministerial consultations, EuroLat, the EU-LAC Foundation, Global Gateway and Team Europe are systematised according to their political functions. The analysis also demonstrates that Spain, Portugal, France and Germany shape the intensity and thematic priorities of the partnership. Conclusions. EU-CELAC should be understood as a flexible multilevel model in which strategic framing, institutional continuity, representative legitimization and analytical support interact. Its durability depends less on any single institution than on coordination across levels and on the capacity to link political declarations with operational instruments.*

Keywords: *interregionalism; political coordination; interparliamentary interaction; EU foreign policy; Latin America; Global South; strategic partnership.*

Анотація. Вступ (Background). Міжрегіональні формати співпраці набувають дедалі більшого значення як механізми політичної координації, узгодження позицій і просування спільних інтересів у дедалі більш фрагментованому міжнародному середовищі. Показовим прикладом є формат ЄС-CELAC, який поєднує самітну дипломатію, міжурядову координацію, парламентську взаємодію, експертний супровід та участь держав-членів ЄС. Мета (Purpose). Статтю присвячено аналізу багаторівневої архітектури політичного діалогу між Європейським Союзом і CELAC та визначенню основних інструментів реалізації латиноамериканського напрямку політики ЄС. Методи (Methods). Поєднано інституційний, структурно-функціональний і порівняльний методи з якісним контент-аналізом офіційних документів ЄС-CELAC, матеріалів інституцій ЄС та наукової літератури. Результати (Results). Встановлено, що діалог ЄС-CELAC функціонує через міжрегіональний, міжурядовий, наднаціональний, парламентський та експертно-платформний рівні, функції яких взаємно доповнюються. Систематизовано саміти, спільні декларації, дорожні карти, міністерські консультації, EuroLat, EU-LAC Foundation, Global Gateway і Team Europe за їхнім політичним призначенням. Показано, що Іспанія, Португалія, Франція та Німеччина впливають на інтенсивність і тематичні пріоритети партнерства. Висновки (Conclusions). Формат ЄС-CELAC доцільно розглядати як гнучку багаторівневу модель, у якій взаємодіють стратегічне рамкування, інституційна тяглість, представницька легітимація та аналітичний супровід. Його стійкість залежить передусім від узгодженості між рівнями та здатності пов'язувати політичні декларації з операційними інструментами.

Ключові слова: інтеррегіоналізм; політична координація; міжпарламентська взаємодія; зовнішня політика ЄС; Латинська Америка; Глобальний Південь; стратегічне партнерство.

Introduction. In contemporary international relations, interregional cooperation has become increasingly prominent because it enables political dialogue, the coordination of interests and the development of common approaches to global and regional challenges. Its significance is growing as the international environment becomes more complex and traditional bilateral mechanisms are often no longer sufficient to sustain stable interaction between states and integration groupings. Interregional ties are therefore increasingly regarded not merely as an auxiliary diplomatic instrument but as a distinct level of political communication in which intergovernmental, supranational, parliamentary and expert mechanisms interact (Lavenex & Schimmelfennig, 2009).

One of the clearest examples of such a format is the political dialogue between the European Union and the countries of Latin America and the Caribbean. Its present configuration emerged gradually through a long evolution of interregional contacts, from general political interest to a more structured partnership. The establishment of CELAC was an important stage in this process, making it possible to present Latin American and Caribbean interests in a more consolidated manner in relations with the European Union (Gardini & Ayuso, 2015; Sanahuja, 2015). Since then, EU-CELAC has developed into a political platform that brings together summits, ministerial consultations, interparliamentary mechanisms, sectoral dialogues and expert forums.

The relevance of this issue has increased markedly in recent years. Intensifying global competition for influence in the Global South, the European Union's search for new models of external positioning, and changes in energy, trade and technological interdependence have renewed interest in Latin America as an important political and strategic partner. The new agenda for EU relations with Latin America and the Caribbean emphasises not only economic cooperation but also the need to deepen political dialogue, strengthen institutional coherence and consolidate long-term mechanisms of interregional interaction (European Commission, 2023). The resumption of EU-CELAC summitry in 2023 and the adoption of the 2023–2025 Roadmap demonstrated that this dimension had regained practical importance in the European Union's external strategy (Council of the European Union, 2023a, 2023b).

The purpose of the study. This article analyses the multilevel architecture of political dialogue between the European Union and CELAC and identifies the principal instruments of interaction within the Latin American dimension of EU policy.

To achieve this purpose, the study pursues four objectives: to clarify theoretical and conceptual

approaches to interregional political interaction; to identify the principal levels of institutional organisation of EU-CELAC dialogue; to systematise the key instruments of political interaction within this framework; and to assess the role of individual EU member states in shaping the Latin American dimension of the Union's foreign policy.

Literature review. EU relations with Latin America have been studied extensively, but the literature tends to approach them either through the general theory of interregionalism or through specific dimensions of cooperation, including trade, normative influence, institutions and geoeconomics. A substantial body of research addresses the strategic partnership between the two regions, the evolution of their relations and the place of Latin America in EU foreign policy (Müller et al., 2017; Ayuso & Gratius, 2015). Other studies focus on the EU's normative influence, the balance between value-based and pragmatic foundations of its policy, and the transformation of political cooperation formats with countries of the region (Schwarzkopf, 2017). Yet the multilevel architecture of EU-CELAC political dialogue itself—that is, the system of interconnected levels, mechanisms and instruments through which the partnership operates—has not received sufficiently integrated treatment.

The research problem therefore lies in the fact that political dialogue between the European Union and CELAC is most often analysed through individual institutions, events or policy documents, while its internal architecture as an integrated multilevel system remains insufficiently systematised. This leaves several questions underexplored: how the different levels of political interaction relate to one another; what functional roles specific instruments of dialogue perform; and how supranational and intergovernmental elements are combined within a common partnership model. The role of individual EU member states is equally important: they operate within the Union's common external policy while retaining their own historical, political and economic interests in Latin America.

A theoretically grounded analysis of the multilevel architecture of EU-CELAC political dialogue is therefore relevant in both conceptual and applied terms. It helps to explain the mechanisms of contemporary interregionalism, reveal the organisational logic of interregional interaction, and assess how political dialogue can become an instrument for the long-term advancement of European Union interests in Latin America.

Research methods. The methodological framework combines institutional, structural-functional and comparative methods with qualitative content analysis. Applied together, these methods make it possible to examine EU-CELAC political dialogue not as a set of isolated diplomatic practices but as an integrated multilevel system comprising distinct formats of political coordination, institutional mechanisms and instruments of interaction. This methodological choice reflects the subject of the study, because the architecture of interregional dialogue requires analysis not only of individual political events and official documents but also of the relationships among levels, actors and mechanisms of cooperation.

The institutional approach provides the analytical foundation of the study. It was used to identify the organisational and political mechanisms through which interaction between the European Union and CELAC is conducted. This enabled the principal structural elements of the system to be distinguished, including EU-CELAC summits, ministerial meetings, interparliamentary mechanisms, EuroLat, the EU-LAC Foundation, and sectoral and expert formats. The approach was used not merely to describe these elements but to determine their place and function within the broader architecture of political dialogue.

The structural-functional method was applied to identify the internal configuration of the EU-CELAC multilevel model and the functional responsibilities of its individual components. It made it possible to trace how the strategic level of political agreements is connected with intergovernmental coordination, parliamentary dialogue, sectoral mechanisms and expert-analytical support. The method therefore shifts the analysis from a description of separate elements to an explanation of the principles governing their interaction within a single model of interregional partnership.

The comparative method was employed in two dimensions. First, it was used to compare the levels of political dialogue within the EU-CELAC framework and thereby identify differences in their operation and degrees of interdependence. Second, it supported an assessment of the role of individual EU member states in shaping the Latin American dimension of EU foreign policy. This comparison shows that the multilevel architecture of dialogue is formed not only by the Union's supranational

structures but also by the foreign-policy priorities of particular member states, especially Spain, Portugal, France and Germany.

Qualitative content analysis of official documents and analytical materials served as the principal empirical method. The source base includes joint declarations of EU-CELAC summits, the 2023–2025 Roadmap, European Commission communications, conclusions of the Council of the EU, European Parliament documents, and academic studies of interregionalism and contemporary EU-Latin America relations. Analysis of this corpus was used to identify the main instruments of political interaction, determine their functional purposes and trace changes in the substantive content of interregional partnership at the current stage.

At the final stage, a method of synthesis and generalisation was used to formulate conclusions regarding the structure of EU-CELAC political dialogue, the specific features of its organisation and the tendencies of its further development. Taken together, the selected methods link theoretical analysis of interregional interaction with the examination of current documentary evidence and provide an integrated understanding of the multilevel architecture of political dialogue between the European Union and CELAC.

Main results of the research. Under contemporary conditions, EU-CELAC political dialogue can be interpreted as a multilevel process of policy alignment in which several formats of interregional communication operate simultaneously. Its distinguishing feature is that interaction is not confined to periodic high-level diplomatic contacts but unfolds across several interrelated arenas. This configuration gives the EU-CELAC framework a degree of resilience and allows political engagement to continue even when summit diplomacy loses intensity or the international environment makes agreement more difficult.

Unlike bilateral models of cooperation, in which political dialogue is usually concentrated in governmental channels, EU-CELAC interaction has a broader institutional scope. Summit-level engagement, intergovernmental coordination, supranational support from EU institutions, interparliamentary interaction and continuing expert communication coexist within the same framework. The result is not an occasional venue for political consultation but a relatively integrated system in which different levels perform distinct yet complementary functions.

The interregional level occupies a leading position because it establishes the political framework for relations between the two regions. EU-CELAC summits, joint declarations and agreed roadmaps do more than signal political affinity; they also define the direction of subsequent cooperation. At this level, common approaches to major international issues are articulated, areas of cooperation are identified and the overall partnership agenda is set. Its primary function is therefore strategic orientation, while the practical content of the dialogue is supplied by other mechanisms.

The intergovernmental level performs the function of ongoing political coordination. Through ministerial meetings, diplomatic consultations and other working formats, the parties specify agreements reached at higher levels and adapt them to the current international environment. If summits provide the broad vision of the partnership, intergovernmental interaction supplies its operational continuity. In this way, EU-CELAC dialogue remains continuous rather than being reduced to declaratory statements.

The supranational level of the European Union also plays a substantial role in sustaining the model. EU institutions provide continuity in the Latin American dimension even where member states have different national priorities. Through policy communications, coordination procedures and strategic documents, the supranational level maintains the consistency of the dialogue and links it to the Union's wider foreign-policy priorities. Multilevel interaction is thus reinforced by institutional continuity.

The parliamentary level performs a distinct function by broadening the political content of interregional interaction. The involvement of the European Parliament and the Euro-Latin American Parliamentary Assembly (EuroLat) brings issues of democracy, human rights, social development, environmental policy and institutional accountability onto the agenda alongside interstate coordination. This makes the dialogue more representative and provides additional political legitimacy. In this sense, the parliamentary dimension does not duplicate executive diplomacy; it complements it by widening the political reach of the partnership.

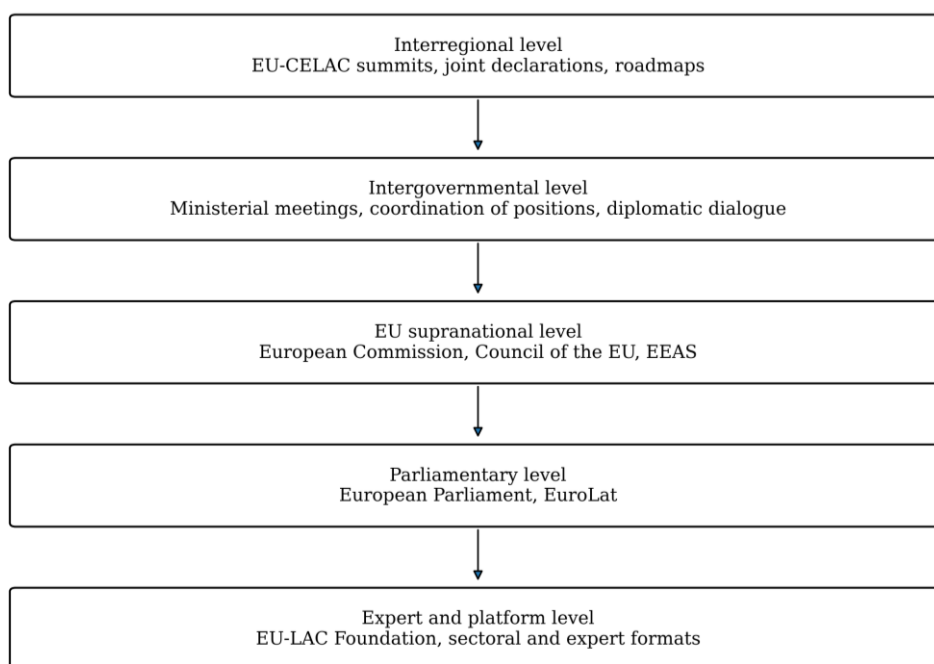
The expert and platform level is equally significant because it provides the intellectual,

analytical and communicative basis for interregional dialogue. The EU-LAC Foundation, thematic platforms and expert forums facilitate continuous exchange of assessments, the preparation of analytical materials and conceptual support for the political process. This level helps preserve substantive continuity across political cycles and gives interregional interaction a more durable character.

EU-CELAC political dialogue therefore operates as a system in which strategic framing, ongoing coordination, institutional continuity, parliamentary representation and expert-analytical support are not isolated from one another but interact. Their combined operation gives the partnership structural coherence and turns it into a relatively stable mechanism of political interaction. The overall architecture is presented in Figure 1.

Figure 1

Multilevel architecture of EU-CELAC political dialogue



The multilevel model shown in Figure 1 acquires practical content through a system of institutional mechanisms that ensure continuity, coherence and political effectiveness in interaction between the European Union and CELAC. This involves more than individual EU bodies or formal channels of cooperation. Rather, it is a functionally connected set of mechanisms through which strategic orientations are developed, positions are coordinated, interregional communication is maintained, and representative and analytical support is provided.

The first functional contour concerns the strategic orientation of policy. It involves defining the general framework of EU relations with Latin America and the Caribbean, locating this dimension within the Union's broader system of foreign-policy priorities, and politically affirming a willingness to deepen interregional interaction. At this level, the Latin American dimension is integrated into the wider logic of EU external action, including relations with countries of the Global South, strategic autonomy, the energy transition and global governance. The institutions operating within this contour set the general political direction and the overarching vision of partnership development.

The second contour comprises mechanisms of political coordination through which the approaches of member states and EU supranational institutions are aligned. Their importance is heightened by the uneven distribution of interest in Latin America within the Union. For some member states, the region is traditionally close for historical, linguistic, economic or political reasons; for others, it is a lower priority. Under these conditions, coordination mechanisms perform not only a technical but also a political function by reconciling different national interests with a common EU line within the EU-CELAC framework.

The third contour concerns programmatic and diplomatic support. It encompasses the institutional capacities through which the EU formalises regional priorities, translates political agreements into programme documents, maintains continuous dialogue with partners and preserves continuity between summits. This prevents EU-CELAC dialogue from remaining at the level of general declarations and gives it procedural, substantive and diplomatic follow-through. Particularly important within this contour is the link between EU strategic initiatives, day-to-day foreign-policy coordination and sustained communication with countries of the region.

A separate contour is the representative and legitimising dimension of the dialogue. It is formed by parliamentary mechanisms that broaden political representation, extend interregional interaction beyond executive diplomacy, and bring democratic development, human rights, social policy, environmental responsibility and institutional accountability into the agenda. The participation of the European Parliament and EuroLat strengthens the public and political character of interaction and contributes to the legitimacy of the interregional partnership.

Another important dimension consists of analytical and platform mechanisms that sustain political dialogue beyond summit and intergovernmental formats. Through the EU-LAC Foundation, expert forums, thematic platforms and analytical initiatives, the partnership receives intellectual support, substantive proposals and a permanent channel of communication between the regions. This contour allows common experience to accumulate, long-term approaches to be developed and strategic continuity to be preserved even during periods of political turbulence.

Accordingly, the institutional mechanisms supporting EU-CELAC political dialogue can be understood as an interconnected system of strategic orientation, political coordination, programmatic and diplomatic support, representative legitimation and analytical support. Together, these contours give coherence to interregional interaction and help explain why the EU-CELAC framework retains political viability in a changing international environment. The main institutional mechanisms are summarised in Table 1.

Table 1

Institutional mechanisms supporting EU-CELAC political dialogue

Institutional mechanism	Main role	Functional dimension	Significance for EU-CELAC dialogue
European Council	Defines the general political orientations of EU foreign policy	Strategic orientation	Establishes the overarching framework for EU relations with Latin America and the Caribbean
Council of the European Union	Coordinates member-state positions and develops a common political line	Political coordination	Aligns national interests with common EU policy within the EU-CELAC framework
European Commission	Develops strategic initiatives, communications and cooperation programmes	Programmatic and policy support	Gives the Latin American dimension substantive direction and operational content
European External Action Service	Maintains diplomatic interaction and day-to-day foreign-policy coordination	Diplomatic support	Ensures continuity of political dialogue between the EU and CELAC
European Parliament	Provides political representation and parliamentary scrutiny	Representative and legitimising	Strengthens the public and political legitimacy of the interregional partnership

Institutional mechanism	Main role	Functional dimension	Significance for EU-CELAC dialogue
EuroLat	Provides interparliamentary discussion of shared political and societal issues	Representative and legitimising	Broadens the political content of dialogue and maintains a permanent interparliamentary channel
EU-LAC Foundation	Provides analytical, communication and expert support for cooperation	Analytical and platform support	Preserves substantive continuity and provides an intellectual foundation for dialogue

Within this system of institutional support, EU-CELAC political dialogue is implemented through a set of specific instruments that differ in level, content and functional purpose. Whereas institutional mechanisms provide continuity and organisational structure to the interregional partnership, the instruments of political interaction determine the concrete forms through which positions are coordinated, a common agenda is developed and the political priorities of the parties are advanced. It is through these instruments that the multilevel EU-CELAC framework acquires practical expression.

EU-CELAC summits occupy the central place in this system because they define the overall political horizon of the interregional partnership. Within the summit format, the parties not only demonstrate their willingness to cooperate but also articulate common approaches to key international issues, identify priority areas of interaction and establish a strategic vision for the future of the relationship. Summits perform a political-framing function by setting the general direction of the partnership, but their significance extends beyond symbolism: they create the political basis for subsequent coordination mechanisms.

Joint declarations are the next major instrument. They consolidate agreements reached by the parties and reflect the degree of political consensus between the European Union and CELAC countries. Their importance lies in their simultaneous political, normative and communicative functions. Declarations give interregional dialogue an officially recorded substantive basis and turn agreed positions into publicly articulated reference points. In this sense, they contribute to the stability of the partnership by maintaining continuity between different stages of political interaction.

Roadmaps are more operational in character. They translate broad political agreements into more specific mechanisms for subsequent interaction. Their core function is to operationalise the interregional agenda by specifying events, areas of activity and forms of coordination that sustain dialogue between summits. Roadmaps therefore create procedural continuity and reduce the risk that interregional commitments will remain at the level of declaratory intent.

Ministerial meetings and diplomatic consultations play an important role in maintaining day-to-day dialogue. Unlike summit-level interaction, which sets the strategic framework, these formats provide regular political contact, the alignment of approaches to international and regional issues, and adaptation of the partnership to changes in the external environment. They give interregional interaction an operational dimension and ensure continuity of political dialogue outside high-level meetings.

Interparliamentary interaction, particularly through EuroLat, adds a distinct instrumental dimension. Its importance lies not only in broadening the representative component of the partnership but also in incorporating a wider range of political and societal issues into the interregional agenda. Parliamentary dialogue gives EU-CELAC interaction additional legitimacy and moves the partnership beyond purely governmental coordination. In this way, the parliamentary instrument strengthens the public dimension of interregional dialogue.

Expert-analytical and platform instruments, especially those associated with the EU-LAC Foundation, are equally important. They help preserve substantive continuity in the partnership, develop analytical approaches, accumulate expert knowledge and create a communication environment for regular exchange of assessments. These instruments support the strategic continuity

of dialogue and provide an intellectual basis for subsequent political decisions.

Under contemporary conditions, the EU's toolkit in Latin America is also complemented by broader strategic initiatives, notably Global Gateway and Team Europe. Although neither is confined to the EU-CELAC framework, in practice they reinforce interregional interaction by linking political dialogue with programmatic, investment and infrastructure cooperation. They should therefore be regarded as part of the contemporary instrumental environment in which political coordination is increasingly connected to long-term practical projects.

Taken together, EU-CELAC instruments of political interaction form a multicomponent system in which strategic framing, normative consolidation of agreements, ongoing diplomatic coordination, parliamentary representation and expert-platform support are mutually reinforcing. This functional differentiation allows the partnership to combine political visibility, procedural continuity and substantive depth. The principal instruments and their functions are summarised in Table 2.

Table 2

Instruments of EU-CELAC political interaction and their functions

Instrument of interaction	Political content	Primary function	Significance within EU-CELAC
EU-CELAC summits	Articulate shared political priorities and strategic orientations	Strategic framing of interregional dialogue	Set the overall direction of relations between the two regions
Joint declarations	Provide normative and political consolidation of agreed positions	Formalisation of agreements	Reflect the level of political consensus and the priorities of cooperation
Cooperation roadmaps	Specify subsequent steps, events and thematic areas of interaction	Operationalisation of the interregional agenda	Ensure procedural continuity of political dialogue between summits
Ministerial meetings and diplomatic consultations	Coordinate current approaches to international and regional issues	Maintenance of continuous political coordination	Enable the partnership to adapt to changes in the international environment
EuroLat	Provides interparliamentary discussion of political, social and societal issues	Representative broadening of political dialogue	Gives the partnership additional political legitimacy
EU-LAC Foundation	Provides expert-analytical and communication support for interregional interaction	Intellectual and platform support for the partnership	Promotes substantive continuity and the development of common approaches
Global Gateway	Connects the EU's political, economic and infrastructure initiatives towards the region	Strategic renewal of EU engagement instruments in Latin America	Strengthens the practical dimension of cooperation and links dialogue to long-term projects
Team Europe	Coordinates the resources of EU institutions and member states in external action	Greater coherence of joint action	Links political dialogue with programme and investment cooperation

An important element of the multilevel architecture of EU-CELAC political dialogue is the role of individual EU member states. This dimension demonstrates that the Latin American strand of EU policy is shaped not only by supranational institutions and interregional mechanisms but also by the national priorities, historical ties and foreign-policy strategies of individual European states. Multilevel dialogue therefore refers not only to the coexistence of different institutional levels but also to the interaction between common EU policy and the national diplomatic, economic and political agendas of its members (Müller et al., 2017; Sanahuja, 2015).

Spain has traditionally played the most visible role in developing the Latin American dimension. This reflects not only its historical, cultural and linguistic ties with most countries in the region but also Madrid's long-standing ambition to act as one of the principal intermediaries between Latin America and European institutions. Spain has for many years been among the strongest advocates of a more intensive interregional dialogue, thereby giving the Latin American dimension of EU policy additional political weight. Within EU-CELAC, its role is particularly evident in sustaining the political visibility of the partnership, keeping Latin America on the EU-wide agenda and promoting interregional formats of cooperation (Gardini & Ayuso, 2015; Ayuso & Gratius, 2015).

Portugal also makes a significant contribution, although of a somewhat different character. Whereas Spain's engagement rests on broad historical and cultural ties with the region as a whole, Portugal attaches particular importance to Brazil and to maintaining political and economic links across the Portuguese-speaking world. Portuguese participation in the Latin American dimension of EU policy is therefore often more selective but remains strategically important. It strengthens intra-European support for interregional dialogue and helps maintain EU interest in cooperation with key Latin American actors (Sanahuja, 2015).

France occupies a distinct position by linking its interest in Latin America to a broader conception of its global role. French policy in the region does not possess the same historical depth as that of Spain or Portugal, but it is informed by a strategic understanding of Latin America's relevance to multipolarity, climate policy, security and cooperation with countries of the Global South. France's presence in the Caribbean constitutes an additional factor shaping this interest. As a result, Paris tends to view EU-CELAC dialogue not merely as a regional policy track but as part of a wider strategy for Europe's external positioning (Müller et al., 2017; European Commission, 2023).

Germany follows a more pragmatic approach. Its interest in Latin America is associated primarily with economic cooperation, technological modernisation, access to raw materials, the energy transition and prospects for partnership in the green economy and digital transformation. German engagement does not always carry the same political symbolism as Spain's, yet it has an important influence on the substantive agenda of contemporary EU-CELAC dialogue. Through Germany's priorities, interregional interaction is increasingly connected with investment, technology, energy and strategic economic interdependence (European Commission, 2023; Heldt, 2023).

Other EU member states also contribute to the Latin American dimension, although their roles are generally less system-shaping. They support particular areas of bilateral or sectoral cooperation and participate in parliamentary, economic or thematic formats without setting the overall political tone of the partnership. This uneven pattern of engagement is characteristic of EU policy towards the region: Latin America is not equally important to all member states, and the development of the interregional relationship therefore depends to a considerable extent on actors with a direct interest in sustaining it (Müller et al., 2017; European Parliamentary Research Service, 2025).

The interaction between national and supranational dimensions is therefore of particular significance. Member states do more than complement EU policy with their own initiatives; they influence the dynamics of interregional dialogue by promoting specific issues, sustaining the political relevance of Latin America within the Union and bringing concrete foreign-policy interests into the common framework. At the same time, supranational institutions provide a degree of coherence to this plurality of interests by incorporating them into a common EU policy towards Latin America. The multilevel architecture of EU-CELAC dialogue is thus sustained not only by vertical interaction among levels of governance but also by the horizontal combination of member states' national foreign-policy trajectories (Lavenex & Schimmelfennig, 2009; Müller et al., 2017).

Accordingly, the role of EU member states in the Latin American dimension is not limited to

participation in the Union's common policy; they also shape its political dynamics, thematic priorities and intensity. The activism of individual states provides additional momentum to EU-CELAC relations and makes the multilevel architecture more flexible and adaptive. Member states should therefore be regarded not as peripheral actors but as one of the system-forming elements of contemporary political dialogue between the European Union and CELAC.

The role of selected EU member states in developing the Latin American dimension of Union policy is summarised in Table 3.

The analysis as a whole supports the conclusion that EU-CELAC political dialogue functions as a multilevel system whose durability depends not on a single instrument or institution but on their combination. Interaction among strategic direction, ongoing political coordination, programmatic and diplomatic support, the parliamentary dimension and expert-analytical platforms creates a model of interregional partnership capable of maintaining its viability in a changing international environment (Gardini & Ayuso, 2015; Müller et al., 2017).

Table 3

Role of selected EU member states in developing the Latin American dimension of EU policy

EU member state	Main vector of engagement	Key political priorities	Significance for EU-CELAC
Spain	Political mediation between the EU and Latin American countries	Maintaining high political visibility of the region on the EU agenda and deepening interregional dialogue	Acts as one of the principal advocates of the Latin American dimension within the European Union
Portugal	Cooperation with Brazil and the Portuguese-speaking world	Sustaining strategic EU interest in key regional actors and supporting political and economic interaction	Strengthens intra-European support for the interregional partnership
France	Links regional interest to a broader global strategy	Climate policy, security, cooperation with the Global South and the Caribbean dimension	Treats EU-CELAC as part of a broader strategy of European external positioning
Germany	Pragmatic engagement focused on economic and technological issues	Investment, energy transition, green economy, digital transformation and access to raw materials	Provides the EU-CELAC dialogue with economic and technological substance
Other EU member states	Sectoral or episodic participation in bilateral and thematic formats	Support for selected political, parliamentary, economic or thematic areas of cooperation	Complement common EU policy but do not determine the overall dynamics of the interregional framework

A distinctive feature of EU-CELAC is that it cannot be reduced to classical intergovernmental diplomacy. In contrast to narrower models of foreign-policy interaction, the political process unfolds simultaneously along vertical and horizontal dimensions. The vertical dimension encompasses interaction among summit, intergovernmental, supranational, parliamentary and expert levels. The horizontal dimension arises from the interaction between common EU policy and the national foreign-policy interests of member states, which assign different levels of importance to Latin America in their own international strategies (Lavenex & Schimmelfennig, 2009; Sanahuja, 2015).

The multilevel architecture consequently displays several defining characteristics. First, it is functionally differentiated: different levels and instruments perform distinct tasks and complement rather than duplicate one another. Second, it combines institutional continuity with political flexibility, allowing the partnership to adapt to changing international circumstances. Third, it rests on the interaction of supranational and national dimensions, which preserves not only the formal structure but also the political dynamism of EU-CELAC relations. These features distinguish it from less structured forms of interregional interaction.

At the same time, the analysis shows that the effectiveness of this architecture depends on the parties' ability to maintain connections among the different levels of dialogue. Where strategic decisions are not followed by coordination, parliamentary, sectoral and expert mechanisms, the partnership risks remaining largely declaratory. By contrast, institutional continuity, sustained member-state interest and substantive follow-through allow EU-CELAC to function both as an instrument for advancing EU interests in Latin America and as a platform for developing common responses to global challenges (European Commission, 2023; Council of the European Union, 2023a, 2023b).

The findings therefore support an understanding of EU-CELAC political dialogue as an integrated multilevel structure combining strategic framing, institutional provision, instrumental diversity and the political involvement of member states. Together, these factors shape the contemporary model of interregional interaction between the European Union and the countries of Latin America and the Caribbean and influence its prospects for further development.

Conclusions. The study demonstrates that, under contemporary conditions, political dialogue between the European Union and CELAC extends beyond traditional intergovernmental diplomacy and operates as a complex multilevel model of interregional interaction. Whereas much of the literature examines EU-Latin America relations through individual institutions, foreign-policy documents or specific political initiatives, the present analysis shows the value of treating EU-CELAC as a system that combines strategic framing, political coordination, parliamentary representation, expert-analytical support and member-state participation in a common political process. In this respect, the findings are consistent with broader theoretical approaches to interregionalism and external governance while refining them through the analysis of a specific interregional framework (Lavenex & Schimmelfennig, 2009; Gardini & Ayuso, 2015).

One issue remains open to debate: the extent to which the multilevel architecture of EU-CELAC dialogue is a source of strength and the extent to which it complicates interregional interaction. On the one hand, several interconnected levels provide resilience during periods of political turbulence. If one level temporarily loses intensity, other mechanisms can preserve continuity of communication; this helps explain the relative viability of EU-CELAC even during periods when summit diplomacy was less active. On the other hand, multilevel interaction creates greater dependence on coherence among the components of the system. If strategic commitments, intergovernmental coordination, parliamentary dialogue and practical instruments become disconnected, the partnership may acquire a predominantly declaratory character (Müller et al., 2017; Council of the European Union, 2023a).

The findings also clarify the role of institutional mechanisms in the operation of the framework. These mechanisms should not be viewed merely as a collection of structures engaged in political interaction but as a functionally differentiated system in which each contour performs a distinct task. This is one of the defining characteristics of EU-CELAC dialogue: it is sustained not by a single centre of decision-making but by a network of interconnected mechanisms. Such a model enhances adaptability but simultaneously raises the requirements for political coordination and substantive follow-through. This is particularly important as EU-Latin American relations increasingly encompass not only political dialogue in a narrow sense but also energy, digital transformation, infrastructure, climate policy and global governance (European Commission, 2023; Heldt, 2023).

The role of EU member states also deserves particular attention. EU policy is often conceptualised primarily as a supranational process, yet EU-CELAC shows that national foreign-policy strategies continue to matter. Spain, Portugal, France and Germany not only attach different degrees of importance to Latin America but also contribute different political content to the interregional partnership. The architecture is therefore formed simultaneously from above, through EU institutions, and from below, through member-state activism. This dual logic is a major source of

the framework's flexibility (Sanahuja, 2015; European Parliamentary Research Service, 2025).

The analysis further supports a broader conclusion: EU-CELAC retains strategic value for both sides because it combines symbolic and practical dimensions. The symbolic dimension is expressed through summits, declarations and public reaffirmations of partnership. The practical dimension is sustained by roadmaps, ministerial formats, parliamentary mechanisms, expert platforms and strategic initiatives that connect political coordination with investment and programme cooperation. When these dimensions become disconnected, the interregional format loses part of its political effectiveness; when they remain linked, the partnership can serve not only as a venue for diplomatic dialogue but also as an instrument of long-term EU foreign-policy positioning in the region (Council of the European Union, 2023b; European Commission, 2023).

The study therefore establishes that EU-CELAC political dialogue is best understood as a multilevel system in which interregional, intergovernmental, supranational, parliamentary and expert-platform levels interact. Their combination creates an integrated model of political interaction that gives the partnership between the European Union and the countries of Latin America and the Caribbean a degree of continuity and stability.

The institutional mechanisms that support this dialogue perform complementary rather than isolated functions. Some provide strategic direction; others coordinate positions, ensure diplomatic continuity, contribute political legitimation or supply analytical support. The effectiveness of EU-CELAC therefore depends less on the activity of any single institution than on the coherence among different elements of the system.

The instruments of political interaction within EU-CELAC are also functionally differentiated. Summits, declarations, roadmaps, ministerial consultations, EuroLat, the EU-LAC Foundation, and contemporary initiatives such as Global Gateway and Team Europe create a complex instrumental environment combining symbolic, normative, coordination and practical dimensions of cooperation.

EU member states remain one of the system-forming factors in the development of the Union's Latin American policy. Their involvement goes beyond formal participation in the common foreign policy and affects the intensity, thematic priorities and political dynamics of the interregional partnership. EU-CELAC can therefore be understood as a model in which supranational and national dimensions do not oppose one another but jointly shape the architecture of dialogue.

The practical significance of the findings lies in the systematisation of contemporary mechanisms of EU political interaction with the countries of Latin America and the Caribbean. They can inform further research on interregionalism, EU foreign policy and the transformation of the Union's relations with the Global South. A promising direction for future research is the assessment of the effectiveness of individual EU-CELAC instruments in specific sectors of cooperation, particularly energy, digital policy, the climate agenda and investment.

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