



... connecting Research on the Knowledge Society  
in the European Union and Latin America



Newsletter #1

May 2009

## Welcome to the first electronic newsletter of the EULAKS project!

The EULAKS newsletter, published twice a year, aims to disseminate information on current trends and analyses that concern the emergence and evolution of knowledge societies in the countries of the European Union and Latin America and the Caribbean. The EULAKS project, which fosters a shared understanding of the challenges in the construction of knowledge societies in Europe and Latin America, shall become a platform for networking across disciplinary boundaries among social science research communities of both regions. This newsletter will include regular features, such as updates on project and partner activities (upcoming events or analytical results) and short articles on overarching themes relevant to the evolution of knowledge societies in both regions. Contributions from social scientists working on issues related to the evolution of knowledge societies in both regions are welcome. Please contact us at [office@eulaks.eu](mailto:office@eulaks.eu).

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**SUMMER SCHOOL**

August 17 - 30, 2009 at the campus of FLACSO Mexico

THE ROLE OF THE SOCIAL SCIENCES IN THE CONSTRUCTION OF THE KNOWLEDGE-BASED SOCIETY: EUROPEAN AND LATIN AMERICAN PERSPECTIVES

### Announcement:

The Centre for Social Innovation (ZSI) Austria in conjunction with the Latin American Faculty for the Social Sciences (FLACSO) campus Mexico invites Latin American and European master and doctoral students in the Social Sciences and young researchers with a multidisciplinary research focus on the dynamics of the knowledge society to participate in a Summer School on "The Role of the Social Sciences in the Construction of the Knowledge-based Society: Latin American and European Perspectives".

**Online application until 31 May 31 2009:**

<http://www.eulaks.eu/summerschool.html>

## 1. About the EULAKS project

The EULAKS project was launched in March 2008 (for a period of 30 months) as one of the first Social Science and Humanities (SSH) projects funded under the European Community's Cooperation Programme under the Seventh Framework Programme for Research and Technological Development. As a horizontal support action, EULAKS connects socio-economic research on the dynamics of the knowledge society in the European Union and Latin American and Caribbean Countries. EULAKS is committed to making the EU-LAC Knowledge Area a reality through the support for networks and partnerships between SSH research communities with a focus on science, technology and innovation (STI) policies. The creation and consolidation of a EU-LAC Knowledge Area, which according to the Guadalajara Declaration (2004) "should be built on the results of the successful science and technology bi-regional dialogue and include reinforcement of co-operation in science and technology, higher education, innovation and information and communication technologies", is an important pillar for the strategy to deepen the S&T policy dialogue between the European Union and the countries of Latin America and the Caribbean.

EULAKS is co-ordinated by the Vienna-based Centre for Social Innovation (ZSI) and involves research teams from the Institut de Recherche pour le Développement (IRD), the Latin American Faculty of Social Sciences (FLACSO Mexico), the National University of General Sarmiento (UNGS), the London School of Economics and Political Science (LSE), the Autonomous Metropolitan University (UAM Xochimilco), and the University of the Republic (Uruguay).

## 1.1 Milestones

Since March 2008, two milestones of the project have already been implemented:

- 1) The kick-off meeting in Mexico in March 2008.
- 2) A policy workshop on EU-LAC co-operation in foresight at FLACSO Mexico in October 2008.



Kick-off meeting: EULAKS consortium members

The workshop was hosted by the Latin-American Faculty for Social Sciences (FLACSO) and brought together European and Latin American foresight experts with the purpose to present and discuss best practices in the use of foresight as a strategic instrument. A central objective of this workshop was to assess the link between existing research capacities in foresight and public policy design in the area of science, technology and innovation in Latin America, as well as the role of EU-LAC co-operation for the generation of research capacities in foresight.

**2009** is an important year for EULAKS, with two upcoming events:

- 1) A conference on the current and future challenges for the knowledge society in Europe and Latin America. The conference, which is organized by the Centre for Social Innovation (ZSI), is titled "Latin American and European Perspectives on the Social Science - Policymaking Nexus in the Evolving Knowledge Society". The event takes

place in Vienna from **June 8 – 9, 2009**. Panellists from academia, governmental and inter-governmental organisations, engaged in the support for policy learning processes have been invited. The conference will be concluded by a plenary debate on **what the social sciences and humanities can offer to policymakers in the knowledge society**. The target audience of this event are social science research communities as well as governmental and non-governmental stakeholders interested in a multidisciplinary understanding of the key dynamics of knowledge societies in a European – Latin American perspective.

The conference programme and the online registration form are available on the EULAKS website:

[www.eulaks.eu/conference.html](http://www.eulaks.eu/conference.html)

**Please register until  
3<sup>rd</sup> June, 2009 !**



- 2) EULAKS organizes a joint Summer School on "The Role of the Social Sciences in the Construction of the Knowledge-based Society: European and Latin American Perspectives". FLACSO Mexico will be the host of this event. The central aim of the Summer School is the creation of a face-to-face linkage between young European and

Latin American researchers and senior scholars in the social sciences and humanities with a focus on the design and implementation of public science, technology and innovation (STI) policies. The Summer School will consist of seminars and workshops that are aimed at stimulating the discussion among students and provide them the theoretical and conceptual fundamentals for the formulation and elaboration of specific problems related to the dynamics of the evolving knowledge society in a comparative European – Latin American perspective. A central purpose of the Summer School is to make a contribution to enhance the future participation of young Latin American and Caribbean social scientists in collaborative research projects in the European Community's Framework Programme for Research and Technological Development.

The Summer School will be open to 15 researchers from European countries and 15 researchers from Latin American and Caribbean countries. Applications will be accepted exclusively online through the application form that is available on the EULAKS website.

**The deadline for the submission of applications is May 31, 2009.** The results of the evaluation and selection of candidates will be published on the EULAKS website by mid-June.

<http://www.eulaks.eu/summerschool.html>

## 2. Focus: Foresight

### 2.1 Foresight – What for?

The general objective of foresight is to systematically incorporate longer term visions in decision making and planning and thus contribute to shaping future social and economic development. Foresight is about visualizing and shaping the future through forecasting and forward thinking.

Foresight encompasses a range of approaches and can be applied to a variety of issues, such as for example the longer-term forecasting of socio-economic trends or the building of visions about the future technological innovations and the way in which “critical” scientific and technological changes affect the economic, social, cultural, and ecological development of societies.

A main challenge for foresight is to close the gap between what society in general expects and what science can provide. Departing from the *probable future*, we can build a vision of our *desirable future* and foresight may be a tool for policy formulation.

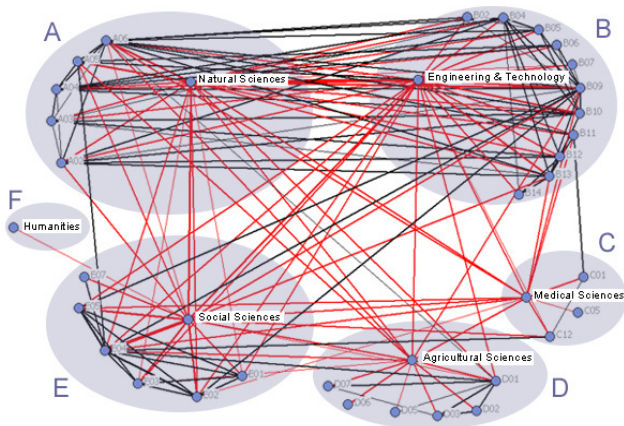
Over the last years, foresight exercises have expanded, both in terms of participation and in scope. At the early days, foresight served mostly national policy formulation processes. In most countries, technology policy had been very elitist and many countries have started to use foresight to gather widely distributed intelligence for long-range strategic planning and priority setting in policymaking. Several countries have already made experiences with several cycles of national foresight programmes.

A valuable source of information on general trends of foresight activities is the **European Foresight Monitoring Network (EFMN)**, which has been collating data on foresight activities around the world. The EFMN is an EU funded project aimed at exchanging and better understanding foresight related activities worldwide.

The principal activity of the EFMN has been to map foresight exercises worldwide. The recently published Global Foresight Outlook provides information about who are the main sponsors and target audiences of foresight, what are the typical time horizons, what are the main differences in territorial scope, what are the main outputs, and what are the most frequently used foresight methods in different regions of the world.

The latest Mapping Report of 2009 “Revealing How Europe and Other World Regions Navigate Into the Future” (Popper, R., EFMN, Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union, European Commission, 126pp. ISBN 978-92-79-13110-3. Available at: [http://ec.europa.eu/research/social-sciences/pdf/efmn-mapping-foresight\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/research/social-sciences/pdf/efmn-mapping-foresight_en.pdf)) outlines trends concluded from the mapping of over 2.000 foresight initiatives, of which 133 have been realized in Latin America (and 1.470 in Europe). The mapping gives clear evidence that the “foresight wave” is rising and that foresight has become an international activity.

Most foresight exercises are embedded in an inter-disciplinary practice. This means that foresight exercises can often be regarded as “knowledge brokers” between different research areas creating “triangulation effects”. For example, one such triangle describes the interconnection between the biological sciences, social sciences and natural sciences. Another triangle describes the linkage between engineering and technology, social sciences and communication technologies. Most interestingly, research in the social sciences can be considered as the “binder” of all disciplinary fields in foresight exercises. Almost all social science areas seem to be interrelated with most other areas. This is illustrated in the graph below (the red lines show linkages between the six main areas, and the black lines show linkages between sub-areas):



Popper, R. (2009), "Mapping Foresight: Revealing how Europe and other world regions navigate into the future", EFMN, Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union, European Commission, p.83

Concerning the main trends of foresight in Latin America, the EFMN report reveals that the most common research areas in foresight initiatives are social sciences, engineering and technology and agricultural sciences. The sponsors of foresight initiatives are mainly governments, and the outputs are analyses of trends and drivers of foresight and policy recommendations. Apart from expert panels, literature reviews and scenarios, the Delphi method is the most popular technique used in Latin American foresight initiatives.

On balance, Latin America shows the highest level of stakeholder participation in foresight exercises, as compared to other regions of the world. In contrast, Europe, North America and Oceania have a more strategic approach towards the long-range future than most Latin American countries.

More detailed information you may find, for example, on the Foresight weblog of Rafeal Popper:

<http://rafaelpopper.wordpress.com/mapping-foresight/>

## 2.2. The practice of foresight in Latin America

Latin American countries have been among the forerunners in the use of prospective methods for S&T policy development in the past (from the 1950s onwards), but find themselves today as "followers" or "late followers" of future oriented technology analyses. Only Brazil may be included in the

group of the early followers of the global foresight movement.

Three phases in the evolution of foresight practice in Latin America can be distinguished:

1. Diffusion and popularization of foresight
2. Application of foresight in the design of policies (often R&D policy)
3. Wide use of foresight for innovation development in industrial sectors

The first foresight studies were intended to understand and predict the structures and dynamics of the processes of global transformation. The idea to develop a model to predict the global transformative processes from a Latin American perspective emerged first as a counter project to the research initiated by the Club of Rome, and carried under the direction of Dennis L. Meadows at MIT. Although the purpose of their famous study "The Limits to Growth" (1972), which modelled the consequences of an exponentially growing world population confronted with the planet's finite resource supplies, was not to make specific predictions, it had become the first simple world model.

The idea of a Latin American world model came up for the first time as a counter project to the "Limits of Growth". The **Bariloche Model**, published by the Bariloche Foundation in the early 1970s under the title "*Catástrofe o Nueva Sociedad*", argued that the most pressing problems of the modern world are not physical but socio-political, such as the unequal distribution of power. Comprising a period up to the year 2060 the authors attempted to answer the question of the extent to which the four world regions of the model can, under the conditions of the New Society, satisfy the population's basic needs, making the basic needs concept the heart of the model.

As a spin-off of the Bariloche Model the **Technological Outlook for Latin America (PTAL)** project emerged in 1983, at a moment when the impact of the new technologies spreading across the world was threatening to change existing patterns of production and theories of technical change. The project analyzed these trends and existing future-oriented studies. The final report of the PTAL, based on collaborations with the European Union and the Economic Commission for Latin America (ECLAC), was published under the title "New Technologies and the Future of Latin America – Risks and Opportunities" in 1994.

In Latin America, the majority of national foresight programmes are somehow the fruit of the UNIDO foresight initiative which was a big incentive for many Latin American governments to assume an active role in this field. In 1999, UNIDO launched the **Technology Foresight Initiative for Latin America (TFLAC)** which led Argentina, Brazil, Colombia, Mexico, Uruguay and Venezuela to initiate preparatory activities for setting up national programmes. Yet, only some of these countries managed to institutionalize later a technology foresight programme.

Generally speaking, the impact of foresight studies on public policies and on the development of national S&T strategies has been low. Nevertheless, in some cases countries of the region have managed to adapt concepts and techniques from international foresight exercises and put them into practice for the design of national foresight programmes.

Unlike Europe, Latin America does not have regional instruments (e.g. EU Framework Programmes for RTD) to support research on strategic sectors and thematic areas. National and international foresight programmes with Brazil, Chile, Colombia and Venezuela established the first national foresight programmes in the region. UNIDO, the CAB

and ECLAC have also launched major foresight initiatives in the region.

The Delphi technique has become the most popular method for the analysis of possible futures in Latin America. Recent initiatives in the region have been confined to a series of Delphi studies oriented towards improving centralized strategic planning.

In some Latin American countries exist research programmes in foresight with postgraduate courses within the human and administrative sciences, but only Mexico and Colombia offer advanced training in this discipline. Colombia provides an advanced capacity building programme in foresight, the specialization in "Strategic Thinking and Prospective" of the *Universidad Externado de Colombia*.

The countries of the region took steps in different directions to step up their foresight capacities: Argentina established an Observatory for Scientific and Technological Foresight (OPCyT); Cuban foresight practices haven been focused on the integration of S&T issues with economic, political, social and environmental drivers, thus making them highly interdisciplinary. Brazil launched two important governmental foresight initiatives in 2000, the "Prospectar Programme" and the "Brazilian Technology Foresight Programme" (BTFP). Brazil also created an additional institution advancing Brazil's foresight capacities in 2001, the Centre for Management and Strategic Studies (CGEE). Venezuela has mainly focused on the energy sector and Venezuela's technology foresight is driven by the social model that promotes social inclusion through endogenous development programmes.

Colombia is maybe the most interesting case because it has a strong tradition in the practice of foresight and in promoting a foresight culture in society. Colombia's National Foresight Program was the first in Latin America to be subject to an international evaluation process. The Colombian Foresight

Program has reached a high level of maturity, with some activities supported by the programme even starting to evolve their own dynamics (e.g. the consolidation of networks). COLCIENCIAS decided to finance a systematic evaluation of the National Foresight Programme in order to assess and improve ongoing and future activities.

The evaluation was carried out by a panel of international experts from the United Kingdom, Malta, Russia, Spain, and Hungary that shared insights from other national and international foresight programmes. The results of the evaluation enriched all players of the Colombian S&T System with recommendations and lessons learned and may serve as a reference example for other National Foresight Programs in Latin America and the world.

On balance, Latin American countries find themselves today in a following and not in a leading position as regards future-oriented technology analyses. A significant barrier for the development of foresight initiatives in Latin America is the paucity of available data, as well as the high level of uncertainty as a result of socio-economic and political instability.

Reference: Popper, R. and Medina, J. (2008), Foresight in Latin America, in Georghiou, L., Cassingena H., J., Keenan, M., Miles, I., and Popper, R., *The Handbook of Technology Foresight: Concepts and Practice*, Edward Elgar, Cheltenham

### 2.3. Foresight initiatives in Latin America

#### The UNIDO foresight programme:

UNIDO assumed a key role in the promotion of foresight practice in Latin America. Currently, UNIDO is carrying out regional initiatives in Asia, Latin America, Central and Eastern Europe and the Newly Independent States. The results of these initiatives are policies and programmes that deal with innovation, industrial growth and competitiveness. Two large projects have

been carried out in Latin America so far: The "Future of Andean Products" project and a foresight study on "Fishery Industry on the Pacific Coast of the South America".

See also: [www.unido.org/index.php?id=o5216](http://www.unido.org/index.php?id=o5216)

#### The Ibero-American Network of Technological Prospective:

The Ibero-American Network of Technological Prospective, which belongs to the Ibero-American Programme of Science and Technology for Development (CYTED), began to operate in 2003 and was created with the purpose to promote regional capacities in technology forecasting and to serve as an instrument for formulating government policies and institutional and company strategies. The network is composed of experts from Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Colombia, Cuba, Spain, Uruguay, and Venezuela.

See: [www.cyted.org](http://www.cyted.org)

#### The Technology Foresight Programme of the *Convenio Andrés Bello*:

The **Convenio Andrés Bello (CAB)** is an international non-governmental institution that promotes regional integration in the area of education, science, technology and culture in its member countries Argentina, Bolivia, Chile, Cuba, Colombia, Ecuador, Spain, Mexico, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Dominican Republic, and Venezuela.

Within its common "Action Plan in Science and Technology" for the period 2003-2010 the CAB launched a Science and Technology Foresight Programme, which is a joint initiative of the main S&T governmental agencies of the member countries. In the framework of this programme a "Foresight Study 2020 on Higher Education for the Social and Productive Transformation of the CAB Member Countries" is foreseen.

In November 2008, the first international meeting for the development of a Strategic Foresight Plan 2020 (PPE) in higher education

for the social and productive transformation of the CAB member countries was organized in Santo Domingo.

See also: [www.convenioandresbello.info](http://www.convenioandresbello.info)

## The SELF-RULE network:

SELF-RULE (Strategic European and Latin-American Foresight Research and University Learning Exchange) is a concluded project that was partly financed by the European Commission's ALFA Programme under the Co-operation for the Scientific and Technical Training Programme. The overall mission of SELF-RULE has been to foster co-operation, integration, innovation and exchange of foresight experiences between Latin America and Europe. In doing so, the network aimed at promoting a joint and self-sustained long-term co-operation agenda through academic research, training and mobility programmes.

SELF-RULE operated in eight countries: Brazil, Colombia, Peru, Venezuela, Finland, Hungary, Spain and the United Kingdom. The network was coordinated by PREST (University of Manchester) in co-operation with Dr. Villarroel from Venezuela.

The three primary objectives of the SELF RULE network have been:

- 1) To exchange foresight knowledge, tools and experiences
- 2) To build sustainable foresight capacities in Europe and Latin America
- 3) To articulate academic institutions with other stakeholders of the regional S&T systems

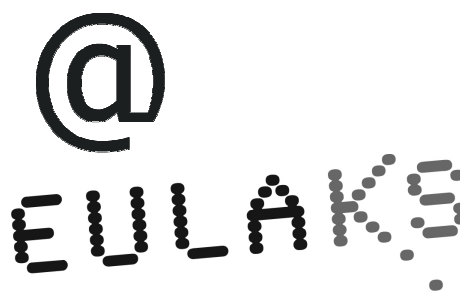
See also: [www.self-rule.org](http://www.self-rule.org)

## The 4-SIGHT-GROUP:

The 4-Sight-Group is a virtual think tank based in South America and linked to Europe. It was created with the aim of raising the

profile of Latin American foresight in the world. Its mission is to contribute to the successful transformation of developing and emerging economies to knowledge societies. The research and academic circle of the 4-Sight-Group provides training courses related to foresight and futures research.

See also: [www.4-sight-group.org](http://www.4-sight-group.org)



The EULAKS project is implemented by a consortium of 7 European and Latin American institutions:

- 1) Centre for Social Innovation (ZSI), Austria  
[www.zsi.at](http://www.zsi.at)
- 2) Facultad Latinoamericana de Ciencias Sociales (FLACSO México), Mexico  
[www.flacso.edu.mx](http://www.flacso.edu.mx)
- 3) L'Institut de Recherche pour le Développement (IRD), Francia  
[www.ird.fr](http://www.ird.fr)
- 4) London School of Economics and Political Science (LSE), United Kingdom  
[www.lse.ac.uk](http://www.lse.ac.uk)
- 5) Universidad Autónoma Metropolitana (UAM), Mexico  
[www.xoc.uam.mx](http://www.xoc.uam.mx)
- 6) Universidad de la República (UdelaR), Uruguay  
[www.universidad.edu.uy](http://www.universidad.edu.uy)
- 7) Universidad Nacional de General Sarmiento (UNGS), Argentina  
[www.ungs.edu.ar](http://www.ungs.edu.ar)

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