

EDITORIAL

Marco Llinás

Director of the Division of Productive and Business Development
Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC)



At ECLAC, we have consistently emphasised that Latin America and the Caribbean face a low-growth trap associated with stagnant productivity. Overcoming this requires deliberate transformation of our productive structures: incorporating technology, moving towards more sophisticated production, and strengthening the capacities of businesses, territories and institutions. Science, technology and innovation (STI) are essential to achieving this.

However, the challenge is not only to invest more in research and development (R&D) or generate more knowledge, but also to turn these investments into productive transformation and productivity gains. ECLAC's Productive Development Policies Outlook 2025 highlights significant gaps between policy formulation and implementation in this area: only 16 of 33 countries have a specific STI strategy; among the strategies analysed, 37% do not identify implementation responsibilities, 56% do not establish links with other policies, 63% do not include monitoring mechanisms, and 88% lack explicit budget provisions.

This is why institutional capacities matter as much as policy instruments. At ECLAC, we classify these capacities as technical, operational, political and prospective — the TOPP capacities — to assess how prepared institutions are to design, implement, coordinate and anticipate. The institutions analysed across the region show strengths in planning and targeting, but face limitations in evaluation, user profiling, organisational learning and the use of foresight. A good strategy without the capacities to implement it is unlikely to transform realities.

In this context, Research and Technology Organisations (RTOs) and other intermediary institutions play a decisive role. They can connect scientific capabilities with business needs, support technology adoption and transfer processes, and bring universities, businesses, governments and territories closer together. Networks such as WAITRO amplify this potential by connecting capabilities across countries and turning them into projects, solutions and shared learning. This was the starting point for the regional webinar on RTOs organised by ECLAC on 23 July, with the participation of WAITRO, the International Association of Science Parks and Areas of Innovation (IASP) and the Inter-American University Organisation (CINDA). The discussion brought together more than 2,200 participants from 25 countries and generated concrete proposals: mapping capabilities, building communities of practice, mobilising talent, promoting joint consortia and projects, identifying funding opportunities, and moving towards a true “network of networks” for the region.

At ECLAC, we want to help translate these ideas into action. One of our main instruments is the Conference on Science, Innovation and ICTs, a subsidiary body of ECLAC that brings together senior officials responsible for STI policies across Latin America and the Caribbean to agree on regional priorities and develop studies, peer exchanges, workshops, technical assistance and cooperation projects.

On 24 and 25 November, in Brasília, we will once again bring together these senior officials. We invite the WAITRO community to join us and contribute to a regional agenda in which science and technology can effectively translate into productive transformation and greater well-being.

ABOUT US

International Cooperation: Connecting Capacities to Strengthen Regional Innovation

How can Research and Technology Organisations (RTOs) contribute to strengthening innovation and sustainable development in Latin America and the Caribbean?

How can Research and Technology Organisations (RTOs) contribute to strengthening innovation and sustainable development in Latin America and the Caribbean?

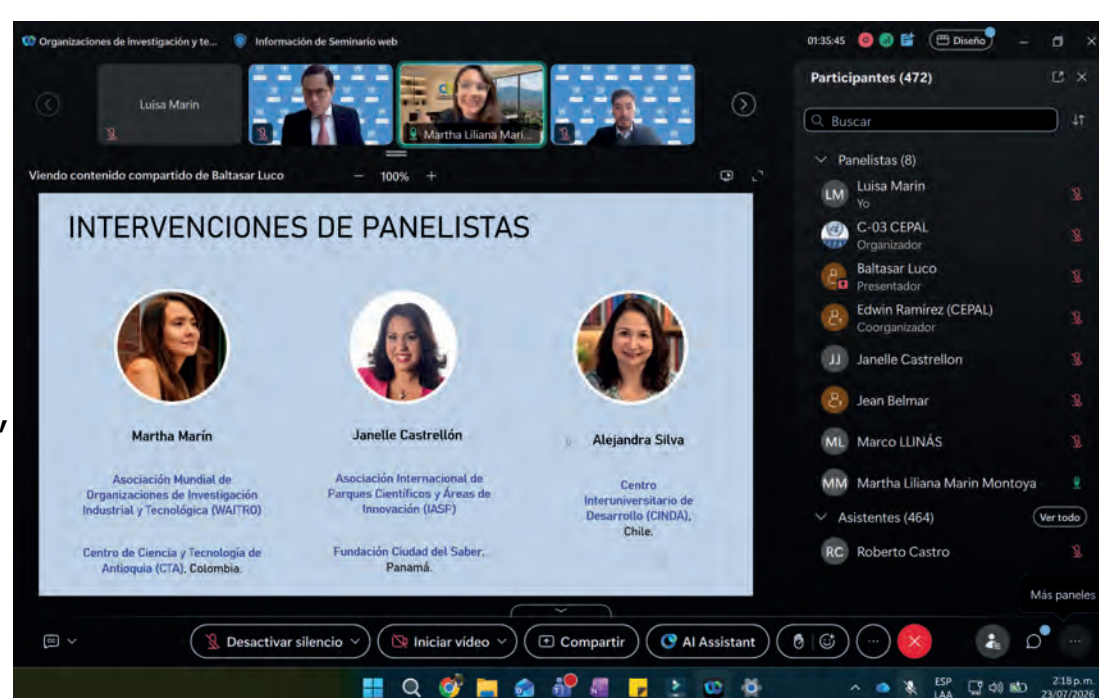
This was one of the central questions addressed during the webinar “RTOs in Latin America and the Caribbean: Capacities, Challenges and Opportunities for Regional Cooperation,” held on 23 July and led by ECLAC. The event brought together representatives from organisations across the region to share experiences and reflect on the role of RTOs as connectors between academia, industry, governments and public policy.

During the panel, Martha Liliana Marín, Innovation and International Cooperation Lead at the Centro de Ciencia y Tecnología de Antioquia (CTA) and WAITRO Regional Focal Point for Latin America and the Caribbean, presented WAITRO as a global platform for connecting capacities, promoting international cooperation and facilitating the exchange of knowledge and solutions to shared challenges.

The experiences shared by WAITRO, IASP and CINDA showed that partnerships and networking are essential to expanding the region's innovation capacities. International cooperation helps connect organisations, share knowledge and create new opportunities for research, technology transfer and sustainable development.

This regional dialogue reaffirmed the potential of RTOs to act as bridges between knowledge, technology and territories, connecting the capacities of Latin America and the Caribbean with international science, technology and innovation networks.

Relive the webinar by scanning the QR code:



WAITRO Summit 2026: From Ideas to Action

WAITRO | 20
SUMMIT | 26
■ ISTANBUL ■

From **26 to 28 October 2026**, the global WAITRO community will gather in Istanbul, Türkiye, for the WAITRO Summit 2026, under the theme **“From Ideas to Impact”**.

The Summit will bring together representatives from research and technology organisations, universities, industry, funding organisations and international institutions to **strengthen collaboration and accelerate the implementation of research-driven solutions**.

Over three days, the Summit will feature member- and partner-led sessions, co-creation spaces and the WAITRO General Assembly. One of its key components will be the Co-Creation Workshops, where interdisciplinary teams will work on shared challenges to turn innovative ideas into project concepts and roadmaps for joint action.

The discussions will focus on three key areas: **climate resilience and the water-food-energy nexus; decarbonising industry and the circular economy; and climate-responsive societies and a just transition**.

More than a space for knowledge exchange, the Summit aims to connect capacities, build partnerships and turn ideas into concrete initiatives, reaffirming WAITRO’s role as a global network committed to bringing research and innovation towards greater impact.



RTO Radar: A Regional Picture of RTOs in Latin America and the Caribbean Coming Soon

Over the past few weeks, RTOs across Latin America and the Caribbean participated in the RTO Radar, an initiative led by WAITRO LAC to understand how these organisations engage with their innovation ecosystems, identify strengths, and recognise opportunities to address gaps and strengthen their capacities.

With the survey now closed, a new stage begins: analysing the information collected. In the coming days, we will share the first results of the Radar, providing a regional perspective on the capacities and practices of participating RTOs.

Beyond generating insights for individual organisations, the results will help identify patterns, opportunities for collaboration and good practices that can be shared across the network. The findings will also contribute to a regional policy brief to be presented at the WAITRO Summit 2026.



The RTO Radar therefore aims to go beyond a diagnostic exercise: turning information into shared knowledge, connecting capacities and opening new opportunities for collaboration among RTOs across Latin America and the Caribbean.

The results will be shared soon.

WAITRO welcomes two new members from Latin America

WAITRO continues to grow its global network with the addition of two new members from Latin America: ESPOL – Escuela Superior Politécnica del Litoral, from Ecuador, and the Universidad Pedagógica y Tecnológica de Colombia (UPTC).

Their incorporation strengthens WAITRO’s presence in the region and brings new capacities, knowledge and opportunities for collaboration to the network.

We warmly welcome ESPOL and UPTC to the WAITRO community and look forward to connecting their expertise with partners around the world.



NEWS IN THE NETWORK

30 Years of the Water Chair: Knowledge and Partnerships for Sustainable Development



Since 1996, the **Water Chair** has created spaces for institutions, experts and territories to come together to generate, share and apply knowledge on water and the environment, contributing to territorial sustainability.

Through **technical discussion sessions, webinars, committees and working groups**, the initiative has promoted dialogue, research and the development of projects and proposals that contribute to integrated water management and its protection.

Throughout its 30-year journey, the Water Chair has reaffirmed the importance of **connecting knowledge, institutions and citizens** to address the challenges surrounding this essential resource and build collective solutions.

On 30 September, we celebrated three decades of this journey at the Aula Magna of Universidad Pontificia Bolivariana, guided by a message that captures its spirit:

A history that unites us, a future we build together.

Aapresid: International Exchange to Drive Agricultural Innovation

The **6th Aapresid International Technical Tour** brought together farmers, researchers, companies and sector representatives from different countries to explore first-hand experiences in agricultural innovation and management in Argentina.

As part of the 34th Aapresid Congress, participants **visited farms, agricultural technology companies and research facilities, gaining insights into no-till farming, crop diversification, efficient resource management and the development of technologies for the agricultural sector.**



Beyond the technical experiences, the tour highlighted the value of connecting knowledge, research, technology and production to address shared challenges and generate learning that can transcend borders.

Initiatives like this demonstrate how international collaboration can turn local experiences into opportunities for knowledge exchange and contribute to building more resilient and sustainable agriculture.

UNAD Advances Research and Innovation Projects with Territorial Impact

The Universidad Nacional Abierta y a Distancia (UNAD) continues to develop projects that connect research, innovation and education to address challenges across different territories.

At the CIP Dosquebradas, researchers and students are working on applied biotechnology initiatives, including the use of cocoa by-products to develop functional ingredients, biogums and technofunctional flours through a circular bioeconomy approach.

These efforts combine practical training in bioprocesses, analysis and characterisation with engagement with cocoa-growing families in municipalities across Risaralda and Caldas. At the same time, the projects are progressing from laboratory prototypes towards the validation of foods and smart ingredients, with the aim of generating agro-industrial applications and contributing to regional sustainable

development and food security.

Through initiatives such as this, UNAD is strengthening the connection between knowledge, education, innovation and territory, promoting solutions with the potential to generate practical applications and regional transformation.



Environmental Complexities:

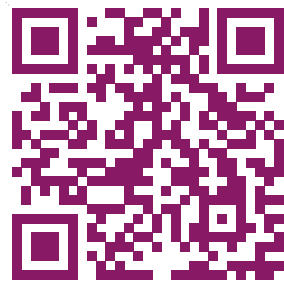
A Perspective on Territory and the Environmental Crisis

In *Environmental Complexities*, anthropologist Felipe Cárdenas Támara of UPTC brings together more than three decades of reflection on the environmental crisis and its connections with culture, territory, politics and the sacred.

The book challenges reductionist approaches and proposes a dialogue between Indigenous knowledge, political ecology and different ways of understanding territory, including a reflection on the Thomas van der Hammen Forest Reserve.

Rather than offering formulas, the book invites readers to inhabit the planet with greater rigour and understand environmental challenges through the complexity of territories and the relationships that shape them.

Available in paperback and eBook on Amazon.



DO YOU HAVE SOMETHING TO SHARE WITH THE WAITRO NETWORK?

Send us your events, news, courses, certifications, or updates on joint projects with other members.

Be part of our upcoming newsletter — we'd love to hear from you!



WAITRO Secretariat

211800, No.7 Huafu Road, R&D Park, Jiangbei New District
Nanjing, Jiangsu, China
info@waitro.org

