# BELLA II Strategic Dialogues Workshop Outcomes Report - Panama, November 15, 2023

**Date**: 2023-11-15

**Location**: Panama City, Panama

## Executive Summary

The BELLA II Strategic Dialogues, held in El Salvador and Panama in late 2023, aimed to enhance the digital ecosystem in Central America through collaborative discussions among stakeholders from academia, government, and industry. The workshops focused on addressing challenges in digital transformation, fostering innovation, and developing a strategic vision for the role of universities and National Research and Education Networks (NRENs) in the digital economy. Key outcomes included the identification of public policy needs, funding strategies, and the importance of human talent development. The dialogues emphasized the necessity of ongoing collaboration and the establishment of a robust digital infrastructure to bridge the digital divide in the region. The BELLA II project, part of the EU-LAC Digital Alliance, seeks to create a sustainable, interconnected digital ecosystem that drives socioeconomic growth and innovation across Latin America and the Caribbean.

## Characteristics

* The BELLA II project aims to enhance the digital ecosystem in Latin America and the Caribbean through strategic dialogues, focusing on collaboration among academia, industry, and government.
* Workshops in El Salvador and Panama emphasize co-designing national digital ecosystems for education, research, and innovation, fostering meaningful connectivity.
* The dialogues address challenges in digital transformation, including public policy, funding access, human talent development, and innovation.
* Participants include diverse stakeholders, such as universities, research centers, and financial organizations, promoting interdisciplinary collaboration.
* The outcomes aim to create a strategic vision and roadmap for sustainable socio-economic development through digital transformation initiatives.

## Actors

| Category | Actor |
| --- | --- |
| Political Actors | European Union; EU Delegations |
| Research and Innovation Actors | RedCLARA; National Research and Education Networks; Universities; EU-LAC Digital Alliance |
| Economic Actors | Inter-American Development Bank; World Bank |

## Main Themes

| Category | Subcategory |
| --- | --- |
| Digital Transformation & Strategy | Digital Ecosystem; Digital Skills Development |
| Regional & International Cooperation | EU-LAC Digital Alliance; Digital & Technological Partnerships |

## Practical Applications

* **BELLA II Open Strategic Dialogues**: Ongoing dialogues in El Salvador and Panama aimed at consolidating the digital ecosystem and promoting meaningful connectivity among stakeholders in education, research, and innovation.
* **Workshop on National Digital Ecosystem**: Conducted in El Salvador on October 9-10, 2023, focusing on co-designing the national digital ecosystem with participation from academia, industry, government, and civil society.
* **TICAL2023 Conference**: Hosted in Panama on November 15, 2023, as part of the BELLA II project, bringing together representatives from Central America to discuss the regional digital ecosystem and digital transformation.
* **Funding Mechanism**: BELLA II project is co-funded by the European Union through the Neighbourhood Development and International Cooperation Instrument (NDICI), with an agreement signed in December 2022.
* **Development of Digital Skills Strategic Axis**: Aimed at training human talent and fostering research and innovation within the BELLA II project framework.
* **Working Groups from Strategic Dialogues**: Five working groups were established during the Panama workshop to address public policies, access to funding sources, human talent development, public and private innovation, and the digital ecosystem.
* **Creation of a Roadmap**: A roadmap was developed during the strategic dialogues to operationalize the strategic vision for universities and National Research and Education Networks (NRENs) in the digital economy.
* **Collaboration with RedCLARA**: The BELLA II project is coordinated by RedCLARA, which plays a crucial role in connecting universities and research centers across Latin America and the Caribbean.
* **Pilot Projects**: Initiatives for pilot projects were discussed, focusing on leveraging regional resources and capabilities to address specific challenges in the digital landscape.
* **Networking Initiatives**: Promotion of ideathons and hackathons to generate innovative ideas and solutions for the digital economy, fostering collaboration between universities, NRENs, and the private sector.

## Commitments

* The BELLA II project is set to be implemented over a period of 48 months, starting from December 2022.
* A workshop titled “Strategic dialogues for the co-design and co-construction of the national digital ecosystem for education, research, and innovation” will be held in El Salvador on October 9 and 10, 2023.
* Another Strategic Dialogue will take place in Panama City on November 15, 2023, as part of the TICAL2023 conference.
* The strategic vision aims to produce a roadmap that will allow universities and NRENs to make substantial contributions to sustainable development in the digital economy.