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The role of civil society in democratic resilience:

Contributions from the EU-LAC Perspective

Participants' Short Bios



Alberto Brunori (Italy)

He is Executive Director of the EU-LAC International Foundation. Throughout his career, he has held several positions within the United Nations, including Regional Representative of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) for Central America and the Caribbean, and Representative in Colombia, Guatemala and Mexico. He also served as Coordinator of the Office of the Commissioner of the International Commission against Impunity in Guatemala (CICIG), and as Special Assistant to the Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General in Afghanistan (UNAMA). He holds a degree from the University of Pisa (Università degli Studi di Pisa) and a Master's degree from the National Autonomous University of Mexico (UNAM).



Alejandro Chanona (Mexico)

He is a Senior Full-Time Research Professor (Level C) at the Centre for International Relations of the Faculty of Political and Social Sciences at the National Autonomous University of Mexico (UNAM), where he currently serves as Dean. A pioneer in the study of comparative regionalism and the European Union in Mexico, he founded the Faculty's Centre for European Studies. In 2021, he received the National University Award for Teaching in Social Sciences and is a Level II member of Mexico's National System of Researchers. He has authored, co-authored and edited numerous books, book chapters and academic articles, delivered more than 300 lectures and regularly contributes as an analyst to national and international media. His most recent publication is Historia de la Construcción de la Unión Europea (2026).



Armando García (Mexico)

He holds a degree in International Relations from the National Autonomous University of Mexico (UNAM) and a Master's degree in International Relations from the Autonomous University of Barcelona, specialising in European integration. He also holds a specialisation in Europe–Latin America Decentralised Cooperation, awarded by the Barcelona Provincial Council and the Open University of Catalonia. He is a faculty member at UNAM's Faculty of Political and Social Sciences, where he currently serves as Coordinator of the Centre for European Studies.



Andrea Bolaños (Colombia)

She is the current United Nations Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders. She holds a degree in Political Science and a Master's degree in Interdisciplinary Intervention in Gender-Based Violence from Spain. She specialises in international human rights law and has completed postgraduate studies in International Humanitarian Law (Colombia), Human Rights and Transitional Justice (Chile), and Advanced Studies in Advocacy and International Affairs (Switzerland), as well as further training in Human Rights, Gender and Otherness (Switzerland). She has 20 years of experience in social research and the investigation of human rights violations. For over 15 years, she has worked alongside human rights defenders, women's organisations and Indigenous women's organisations across Latin America, supporting their work and political advocacy efforts.



Beata Wojna (Poland)

She is an Ambassador, an international relations specialist and a professor of International Relations at Tecnológico de Monterrey. She is actively engaged in public debate as an analyst and commentator on international affairs. She is a columnist for El Heraldo de México and co-host of the podcast *Con su permiso.* Her areas of expertise include European regional affairs, geopolitics, foreign policy, conflict and international security, drawing on her diplomatic experience, research and participation in international forums and projects.



Dejan Mihailovic (Serbia / Mexico)

He is a Professor and Researcher in the Department of Political Science and International Relations at Tecnológico de Monterrey, State of Mexico campus. He holds a PhD in Latin American Studies, specialising in Political Philosophy, from the National Autonomous University of Mexico (UNAM). He is the author of La Democracia como utopía (2003), Pulsos de la modernidad (2005) and Desarrollo e integración: la nueva geopolítica de la economía global (2007). He regularly comments on international affairs in Mexican and international media. He has also been a Visiting Professor at the State University of Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, and is a member of the Mexican Philosophy Association and Mexico's National System of Researchers (SNI).



Frank La Rue (Guatemala)

He is a lawyer and human rights defender. He served as the United Nations Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of the right to freedom of opinion and expression from 2008 to 2014. He is the founder of the Centre for Legal Action in Human Rights (CALDH) and has dedicated his career to defending fundamental rights, protecting freedom of expression and strengthening democracy. He has played a prominent role in advancing human rights at the international level.



Gerard Karlshausen (Belgium)

He is a sociologist who has spent 40 years supporting numerous civil society initiatives across Latin America. He has served as a lecturer in European political communication on a Master's programme organised by the Institute for Advanced Studies in Social Communication in Brussels, Political Secretary of Belgium's National Centre for Development Cooperation, and President of the Belgian NGO Platform. He is currently a member of the EU-LAT Network, which brings together around 40 European organisations working on EU–Latin America relations. His work focuses on EU–CELAC relations and the association agreements between the two regions, with a view to strengthening civil society participation in the promotion of all human rights and a fair and sustainable development model. He is also a member of the bi-regional civil society group monitoring EU–CELAC summits and forums.



Gisela de León (Panama)

She is the Legal Director of the Center for Justice and International Law (CEJIL), where she leads the organisation's legal strategies. She has held several positions within CEJIL, litigating numerous cases involving human rights violations across the Americas and representing beneficiaries of protective measures before the Inter-American Commission and the Inter-American Court of Human Rights. She holds a Bachelor's degree in Law and Political Science and a Master's degree in International Human Rights Law from the University of Notre Dame. She has authored several publications and has spoken at conferences and participated in seminars and workshops on human rights.



Josefina Cortés (Mexico)

She holds a PhD in Law, awarded cum laude, from the Universidad Carlos III de Madrid and a Law degree from the Autonomous Technological Institute of Mexico (ITAM). She has an extensive academic and professional background in administrative law, regulation, competition policy and the energy sector. She has worked with institutions including Mexico's Supreme Court of Justice, the Senate of the Republic and the Federal Economic Competition Commission. She has held various senior management and academic positions at ITAM and Tecnológico de Monterrey. Until August 2025, she served as Director of the Federal School of Judicial Training. She is currently Regional Dean of the School of Social Sciences and Government at Tecnológico de Monterrey for the Mexico City region.



María Claudia Pulido (Colombia)

She is a lawyer specialising in international law and human rights, with a Master's degree from American University's Washington College of Law. Since September 2017, she has served as Executive Secretary for Human Rights Monitoring, Promotion and Technical Cooperation at the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR). She has been with the Commission since 2001, holding various coordination and senior positions. Prior to that, she worked as a lawyer at the Centre for Justice and International Law (CEJIL) and held positions at Colombia's Office of the Attorney General and Inspector General's Office. She has extensive experience in the monitoring, promotion and protection of human rights at the regional and international levels.



Márton Gergely (Hungary)

He has been Editor-in-Chief of HVG, Hungary's leading current affairs weekly, since 2021. That same year, he was elected to the Executive Board of the International Press Institute (IPI), which he has chaired since 2024. Gergely studied History and Journalism in Budapest and Hamburg. He began his career contributing to the Hungarian weekly Magyar Narancs and, after completing an internship at taz, die tageszeitung, regularly reported from Hungary for the Berlin-based newspaper. In 2003, he joined the editorial team of Népszabadság, Hungary's most widely read daily newspaper, and was appointed Deputy Editor-in-Chief in 2014. He held this position until the newspaper ceased publication following a politically motivated hostile takeover in October 2016.



Olga Montufar (Mexico)

She is an engineer and lawyer, a human rights defender and an advocate for the effective participation of Indigenous and Afro-descendant persons with disabilities. She is President of the Network of Indigenous and Afro-descendant Women with Disabilities of Latin America and the Caribbean and Co-Chair of the Global Network of Indigenous Persons with Disabilities. She is a member of the EU–CELAC Civil Society Task Force and the Advisory Council of the Ibero-American Programme on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. She also serves as an advisory member of the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) and is part of the Global Alliance for Care. Her work focuses on promoting human rights and substantive equality, as well as strengthening the participation and advocacy of Indigenous and Afro-descendant women with disabilities in decision-making processes.



Rodrigo Peña (Mexico)

He holds a PhD in Social Sciences and Humanities from Leiden University in the Netherlands and is a member of Mexico's National System of Researchers. His research focuses on criminal governance and peacebuilding processes. He holds a Master's degree in Political and Social Studies and a Bachelor's degree in International Relations, both from the National Autonomous University of Mexico (UNAM), where he graduated with honours. He completed a postdoctoral fellowship at El Colegio de México, where he subsequently worked as a researcher and Executive Director of the Seminar on Violence and Peace. He has also served as a consultant for organisations including the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC). Since 2026, he has been a full-time professor at Tecnológico de Monterrey, where he serves as Regional Director of the Department of International Relations and Political Science.



Victoria Ubierna (Argentina)

She is Research Programmes Officer at CIVICUS, a global alliance of civil society organisations and activists with more than 17,000 members across over 175 countries. She contributes to the production of the State of Civil Society Report, CIVICUS's flagship annual publication examining key trends in civil society action worldwide. She also works on CIVICUS Lens, an ongoing analysis initiative exploring civil society action and the challenges it faces, while amplifying the voices of activists, leaders and experts through interviews, articles and reports. She holds a Bachelor's degree and a Master's degree in International Studies from Torcuato Di Tella University.

Relatoras



Alma Rosa Amador (Mexico)

She holds a Bachelor's degree in International Relations and has completed postgraduate studies in International Relations at the National Autonomous University of Mexico (UNAM). Since 2001, she has been a lecturer at the Centre for International Relations of UNAM's Faculty of Political and Social Sciences, where she teaches courses on Europe, Latin American International Thought and International Relations Seminars. She is also Editor of UNAM's Revista de Relaciones Internacionales and contributes to the "Nota Internacional" segment of Primer Movimiento, Radio UNAM's morning news programme.



Yadira Gálvez (Mexico)

She is a Full-Time Professor and Researcher at the Centre for International Relations of the Faculty of Political and Social Sciences at the National Autonomous University of Mexico (UNAM), where she coordinates the Permanent Seminar on Strategic Studies, Security and Defence. She has completed specialised courses at the William J. Perry Center for Hemispheric Defense Studies and served as a Visiting Professor at the US National Defense University. She is Co-Chair of the Latin American Studies Association's Section on Defence, Public Security and Democracy and Vice-Presidente of the Mexican Association of International Studies. In 2024, she received UNAM's University Teaching Award. She is a member of Mexico's National System of Researchers and an author and commentator on international affairs.