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Still time for love between Europe and Brazil

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As all sorts of crises seems to loom over Brazil, and while Europe is focused on finding ways to solve its own ones, cooperation initiatives between the two seems to fade away, in contrast with the enthusiasm of few years ago. Yet, Latin America has become an indispensable interlocutor and partner in facing all major international challenges, and the role of Brazil cannot be set aside.

In the last few months Brazil has been facing a extraordinary combination of negative events; from the official entering into a financial depression, to the political crisis that digs back to Lula's presidential mandate, up to the shocking human and environmental catastrophe of Mina Gerais and then, the sanitarian emergency of mosquito-carried Zika-virus.

Meanwhile, the European Union, apparently in a path of recovery from the economical crisis, suddenly faces a strong identity crisis that flared up with the LEAVE result of the UK "Brexit" referendum. This unedited situation for the EU (unforeseen by many analysts) opens to new political settings for the EU at internal and international level. The global environment seems therefore so different from early century when Brazil listed among the emerging economies of the future, within the group of the BRICS and the EU seemed well underway in a path of constant enlargement. Yet, over-enthusiasm of the beginning of the century should be balanced by a realistic view rather than an over-criticism wave

In the perspective of a long term cooperation, ENEA is working to increase and strengthen its scientific relations with Brazil, by defining bilateral agreements that should legitimate and facilitate scientific collaborations, by joining research programme and by actually implementing shared research. This included e.g. the signature of a MoU between ENEA and the Pontifical Catholic University of Rio de Janeiro (PUC-Rio) that was eventually first implemented by sharing personell, under the auspices of the EU-BICE+ programme[i], joining the Brazilian mobility programme "Ciência sem Fronteiras – CSF"ⁱⁱ, participating with its experts at the ongoing EU-Brasil dialogue on Climate Changesⁱⁱⁱ, holding dedicated lectures in Brazil^{iv}, holding dedicated workshops in Italy^v.

In a recent paper^{vi} published in collaboration with researchers of the Federal University of Pará, the State University of Amazonas, the Brazilian National Council of State Funding Agencies and the and the Rutgers University, we made some policy considerations about the role that Europe (EU) and Brazil science policies could have on nation development and how investment in science and cooperation could affect educational , technological and commercial , in short societal, progresses in both the Brazil and Europe.

The role of Brazil in the global challenges

The new conditions, from both sides, may find the two sub-continent on a different pace and with different needs, with detrimental effect on cooperation. Yet, Latin America has become an indispensable interlocutor and partner in facing all major international challenges. In the recent COP 21 Brazil took a major commitment , embracing greenhouse gas cuts, and being defined a "game changer" by the EU

Commissioner for Climate Action and Energy Miguel Arias Cañete. Thus, the global role of the subcontinent is definitely legitimized, and a sudden exclusion of Brazil from the global picture, despite all current odds, is unlikely to happen.

Relations among sub-continent

Today the relationship between the EU and Brazil works along different guidelines: the European Union policy, the bilateral state-to-area policy (e.g. Italy to Latin America), and the bilateral state-to-state policy. The two subcontinents therefore have several different modalities of collaboration, and EU single member states still foster their own policies towards Brazil. Yet we should frame them in terms of size and role at a global level; Brazil is a Federation of 26 states itself, while the European Union, consists of 28 states (including UK). Thus, the comparison of any state of the Union should be with a member state of the Federation and not with the whole of Brazil, to get the right proportions of capacity, challenges and needs.

A resilient approach

The potential chaos that may arise to the complex type of interactions that may occur, in terms of type (scientific, technological, commercial), number (26 vs 28 states) and hierarchy (state to state, state to Federation/Union) may be paradoxically a source of opportunities; in the pipeline of the incoming crisis Brazil is currently experiencing a growing trend of dialogues and agreements between the EU and Brazilian single States. That can overcome the obstacles of the schemes that were built in previous years and that now may limit EU-Brazil scientific cooperation, so, as the dialogue at Federal level is still possible, single Brazilian states too are now active toward the Union as the EU member states has always been towards Brazil as a whole.

Still time for love with Europe

Thus, despite several economic and policy difficulties that may hamper future scientific collaborations, the Union and the Federation demonstrate to be resilient and to be able to find a common ground of both goals and policies, by making available different modalities of collaboration.

In terms of Science, Technology and Education, Brazil has achieved in the last two decades to reduce inequality, by implementing its policies towards education rather than subsidies, this is such an important results that would be tremendous to loose, while. With different needs but with a similar awareness, the European Union started specific work program dedicated to “responsible research and innovation”, to build effective cooperation between science and society, to recruit new talents for science and to pair scientific excellence with social awareness and responsibility.

A common path is necessary to face global sustainable development, and this requires intense research efforts, and interdisciplinary approaches that can't be undertaken as single but can only be addressed when global and national efforts are coordinated on an equitable basis rather than on competition.

Surely, the great ongoing commitment and the new scenario from both sides, go even beyond politics and regulations, and will involve the business world, the scientific community and civil society. This should take the form of investments, knowledge exchanges, and common projects which will commit Brazil and EU to keep consolidating their relationship.

<http://www.enea.it/en/news/still-time-for-love-between-europe-and-brazil>

References

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- [v] ENEA 4 Amazon about Climate Changes, Biodiversity, Agrosystem and Renewable Energies
- [vi] De Martinis *et al.* “Policy Considerations on EU-Brazil Future Scientific Cooperation” American Journal of Economics, Finance and Management, 14-21, Vol. 2, No. 2, April 2016.