



Analysis of participation and incidence in the eLAC process

Produced by the Third World Institute (ITeM)

in collaboration with

the Association for Progressive Communications (APC)

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1. Introduction.....	3
The eLAC process.....	3
The exercise and its objectives.....	5
Methodology.....	5
2. Results of the exercise	8
Analysis of actors.....	8
<i>Index of relevance.....</i>	<i>8</i>
<i>Index of collaboration.....</i>	<i>11</i>
<i>Participation in networks.....</i>	<i>15</i>
The eLAC process in the regional context of ICT policies.....	16
<i>Relationship of interviewees to ICT policies.....</i>	<i>16</i>
<i>Priority issues for interviewees.....</i>	<i>17</i>
<i>Interest and participation in eLAC by regional actors.....</i>	<i>18</i>
<i>Relevance of eLAC.....</i>	<i>20</i>
<i>Obstacles and challenges for participation.....</i>	<i>21</i>
Participation and incidence of civil society in eLAC.....	23
<i>Perception of relevance of civil society participation in eLAC.....</i>	<i>23</i>
<i>Incidence of civil society in eLAC.....</i>	<i>25</i>
<i>Future participation of civil society in eLAC.....</i>	<i>26</i>
Participation and incidence of APC.....	33
<i>APC regional level work.....</i>	<i>33</i>
<i>Participation and incidence of APC in eLAC.....</i>	<i>35</i>
Conclusions.....	38
Appendix 1 – Text of survey.....	39

1. Introduction

The eLAC process

In its two phases (Geneva, 2003 and Tunis, 2005), the World Summit on the Information Society¹ (WSIS) set off an international process of definition of international policies focused on development in the context of the new social and economic paradigms based on information and communication technologies.

Parallel to the preparatory process of the two WSIS phases, regional level processes were carried out where, on one hand, inputs were prepared for the global negotiations in the context of the summit and, on the other, priorities and political agendas were established for the development of the information society and knowledge in the various regions. In the case of Latin America and the Caribbean, this process was called eLAC.² The Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) is implementing the technical secretariat of the process, coordinating the various activities, providing the necessary technical resources, monitoring progress, and exchanging information between the different organisations. For these activities, ECLAC has received financing from the European Commission, through the @LIS (Alliance for the Information Society)³ cooperation programme.

According to ECLAC,⁴ eLAC aims to:

1. Form a metaplatform of public-private action to coordinate the efforts of several sectors, in order to create synergies, avoid duplication of efforts, and to empower regional projects, through cooperation and exchange of better practices at the regional level.
2. Promote strategies and national initiatives in specific areas, establishing lines of action and defining indicators that show the degree of progress in the development of the information society.
3. Deepen knowledge in crucial issues in order to support the definition, design, implementation and evaluation of policies.
4. Serve as an intermediary between the needs of countries in the region and the pace of global development, considering regional characteristics in the framework of global community goals.

In the first phase of eLAC, eLAC2007 (whose principle gathering was a ministerial meeting in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil from 8-10 June 2005), a series of political commitments and goals were established that the governments of the region committed to achieving around the year 2007. The degree of progress towards those objectives was evaluated in 2007. A new process was also begun that year (eLAC2010), with the purpose of establishing new regional goals around the year 2010. In eLAC's second ministerial meeting (held in San Salvador, El Salvador, from 6-8 February 2008) a new Regional

¹ <http://www.itu.int/ws/is/index-es.html>

² <http://www.eclac.org/socinfo/elac/>

³ http://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/where/latin-america/regional-cooperation/alis/index_es.htm

⁴ <http://www.eclac.org/socinfo/elac/>

Plan of Action (San Salvador Commitment-*Compromiso de San Salvador*)⁵ was defined with a set of goals organized into six thematic areas:

1. Education and training
2. Access and infrastructure
3. Health
4. Public administration and electronic government
5. Productive sector and electronic businesses
6. Policy and strategy tools

In San Salvador, the governments of the region also agreed on a new operating structure (“Regional Follow-up Mechanism”) responsible for following up on the process and ensuring the fulfilment of the commitments included in the Regional Plan of Action.

According to the text of the San Salvador Commitment, the Regional Follow-up Mechanism is composed of various levels of coordination:

a) Executive Committee

The Executive Committee constitutes the first level of general coordination for the operation of the eLAC platform and will be composed of representatives of the following four groups of countries until the next Ministerial Conference:

- *for Mexico and Central America: El Salvador, presidency*
- *for Andean countries: Peru, with the consent of the government of Ecuador, vice-presidency*
- *for the Southern Cone: Argentina, vice-presidency and*
- *for the Caribbean: Trinidad and Tobago, vice-presidency*

The Executive Committee will be responsible for directing the administration of the Regional Follow-up Mechanism, particularly the activities of the thematic coordinators and the working groups.

This Regional Follow-up Mechanism will also request the participation of, as observers, and in accordance with the participation mechanisms established at the World Summit on the Information Society and with their respective roles and responsibilities:

- *by consensus of civil society organisations, an entity with regional scope and*
- *by consensus, a private sector entity , with regional scope*

b) Points of thematic coordination

The Regional Follow-up Mechanism will also have a second level of thematic coordination for each of the chapters in the eLAC platform and until the next Ministerial Conference will be composed of:

- *Education: Cuba*
- *Infrastructure and Access: Costa Rica*
- *Health: Mexico*
- *Public administration: Peru*
- *Productive sector: Uruguay*
- *Policy and strategy tools: Bolivia*

⁵ <http://www.cepal.org/socinfo/noticias/noticias/2/32362/2008-1-TICs->

Each one of these points of thematic coordination will be responsible for following up on the goals contained in the respective chapters, identifying opportunities for collaboration based on the support for or creation of new working groups, and stimulating the use of collaborative elements, such as forums or other means of electronic communication, including coordination with ECLAC to prepare newsletters referring to each chapter, holding consultations/consultancies, among others.

c) Working groups

Those working groups established in eLAC 2010 as well as those formed later will be part of the mechanism.

Inclusion in the eLAC Follow-up Mechanism of a civil society entity stems from an initiative proposed by civil society organisations themselves to the governments in the region. The original proposal aimed at incorporating one civil society organisation into the existing Coordination Mechanism in eLAC, and endowing it with the same authority as those governments within the mechanism. The main function of this organisation would be that of facilitating the participation of civil society organisations in all the debates, decision-making and implementation of the eLAC2010 plan of action. Due to the lack of support for this alternative by some governments, it was agreed upon in San Salvador that one civil society organisation would be included in the Follow-up Mechanism as an observer, although, in reality, the exact nature of this participation was not defined.

After the San Salvador meeting those civil society organisations participating in the process (grouped within the listserv alc-cmsi@wsis-cs.org) met to elect the civil society member that would function as the link between the organisations of the region and the eLAC Follow-up Mechanism. Following an online discussion, it was decided that the Association for Progressive Communications (APC) would take on this role.

The exercise and its objectives

APC felt it necessary to obtain input that would allow for: i) an evaluation of the participation and incidence of civil society in general and of the APC Latin America Policies Programme (CIPP LA) in particular in the eLAC process and ii) contributions to the definition of strategies for future APC participation in the process, as a civil society link.

To this end, we believed it was necessary to carry out an exercise of political analysis of the process of participatory governance in the context of eLAC, including an analysis of the actors and relationships between them, in order to evaluate past participation and analyse the challenges for future participation of civil society and APC in the eLAC process.

Methodology

A general survey plus a series of individual interviews with five key actors in the region were carried out in order to obtain the necessary inputs for the analysis.

Survey

For the general survey, we searched for those active in ICT policies in Latin America, using as sources:⁶

- i) Subscribers on the e-mail list alc-cmsi@wsis-cs.org (The region's civil society caucus in the WSIS)
- ii) Subscribers on the e-mail list lac@un-gaid.org (Regional list of the United Nations Global Alliance for ICT and Development)
- iii) The list of persons accredited for the Second Ministerial Conference on the Information Society
- iv) The list of APC members in the region

From these sources we developed a list of 286 persons active in the area of ICT for development in the region, to whom an invitation was sent to respond to the survey. To avoid having unintended biases in the results, members of the APC team and ITeM who participated in the implementation of the exercise were excluded from the list.

An effort was made to have the list contain persons with varying degrees of participation in the eLAC processes (2007 and 2010).

The final list of those polled is made up of people who work in government, civil society organisations, the academic sector, the private sector, multilateral bodies and funding agencies.

Of those invited to participate in the survey, 85 responded. Of these, 53 persons did so completely (answering all the questions), while 32 responded partially (only some questions). The partial answers received were taken into account, especially for the first sections in the survey (which were those that produced the largest number of responses).

The questions posed in the survey are included in Appendix 1. They were organized into five blocks of questions:

- i) Personal and institutional information
- ii) Topics of interest and collaboration with other actors
- iii) Opinions on the eLAC process
- iv) Perception of the participation and incidence of civil society in eLAC
- v) Perception and opinions about the work of APC in ICT policies in general and in the eLAC process in particular

The survey was presented online, using the service offered by SurveyMonkey.com. It was open from 28 May to 11 June 2008 and written in Spanish.

The data collected from the survey was exported onto a spreadsheet, where the first processing and filtering was done. In this phase responses were standardized (for example, in cases where the actor would have been designated in various ways) and

⁶ We were unable to obtain the list of persons who responded to the Delphi exercise carried out by CEPAL for the formulation of the eLAC2010 Plan of Action nor the list of participants in the First Ministerial Conference on the Information Society (eLAC2007), despite having requested them.

data stemming from tests done by the APC team and ITeM was eliminated, as were erroneous or illegible inputs. The data was later incorporated into a relational database in order to facilitate the consultation.

Once the relevant data was extracted for analysis, (for example, the number of replies per sector, etc.) it was again exported to tables where indices were calculated and charts included in the report were generated.

Interviews

The selection of the respondents qualifying for the interviews was based on identification of actors with a high level of knowledge on the processes of ICT policies in the region and on the process of eLAC in particular. The information supplied by the respondents was considered essential for evaluating the participation and incidence of APC in the eLAC process and to formulate recommendations for its future participation, as a link between regional civil society and the eLAC Follow-up Mechanism, for which it was also crucial to have a great degree of knowledge about APC and its work in the region.

The interviews were done in three modes: in person, by Skype, and by e-mail.

A basic model with four general questions was developed for the interviews with respondents, which covered topics included in blocks ii-v of the general survey (having the respondents' institutional information made it unnecessary to include questions from the first block). These questions included information obtained as a result of the survey, and respondents were asked for reflections or opinions based on the same. The questions (which are included in Appendix 1 of this document) were sent to the respondents prior to the interviews in order to facilitate reflection on them

The conclusions obtained from the information provided by the respondents are included in the analysis in the next section.

2. Results of the exercise

Analysis of actors

The survey was responded to (completely or partially), by people affiliated to 75 different institutions.

Countries providing the greatest number of responses were: Uruguay (13), El Salvador (11), Argentina (9), Costa Rica (8), Brazil (5), Mexico (5) and Peru (5). It is important to point out that in many cases the relationship between the actor and the country indicated in the survey must be relativized, since we are often dealing with institutions acting in the regional or global realm with headquarters in a specific country.

Index of relevance

Survey participants identified 162 actors with some degree of relevance in the ICT policies processes in the region. Each one of the survey participants identified up to 10 actors in decreasing order of importance. In cases where a person indicated the same actor more than once, only the first position appearing was considered.

Based on the number of times and the positions mentioned for each actor, an index of relevance was developed. The objective of this index was to measure the perception of the interviewees regarding the roles of the various regional actors in ICT policies processes. The order in which the different actors were mentioned in the answers was information that should be reflected in the index. To this end, a weighted sum was performed for the calculation using the following formula:

$$\text{Relevance } (actor_x) = \sum_{i=1}^{10} \frac{C_i}{i}$$

Where C_i is the number of times $actor_x$ is mentioned in position i

In this manner, those actors who were mentioned in the first places obtain a greater value for the relevance index than those who are mentioned later (for example, an actor must be mentioned two times in fifth place or three times in ninth place in order to be assigned the same relevance value as another mentioned once in first place).

From this index we obtained a chart of actors arranged by relevance value (between 20.94 and 0.31). For a manageable number of actors included in the following analysis, we will consider only those in the first 20 places on the chart:

Position	Actor	Relevance	Mentions
1	ECLAC	20.94	27
2	APC	12.78	20
3	National governments	9.30	11
4	ICA/IDRC	9.29	15
5	LACNIC	9.07	13
6	Civil society	7.48	13
7	eLAC	7.40	9
8	OAS	7.09	11

9	IADB	5.63	10
10	Private sector	5.30	9
11	Government of Brazil	4.45	7
12	Academia	4.39	7
13	UNESCO	4.19	6
14	CITEL	3.98	6
15	ITU	3.87	6
16	AHCIET	3.29	6
17	Microsoft	3.27	6
18	CLARA Network	2.82	4
19	ONU	2.80	3
20	GEALC Network	2.67	3

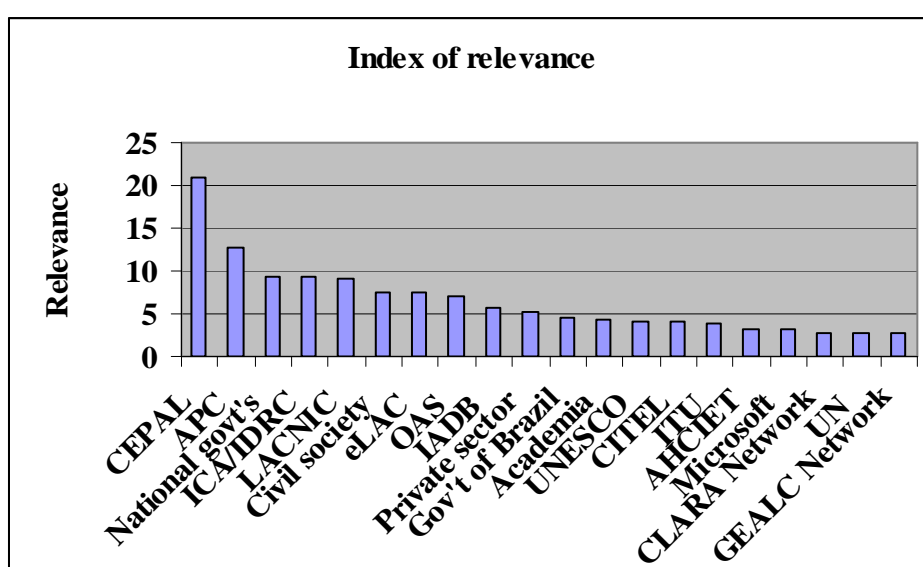


Figure 1

In analysing these results it is important to take the following methodological considerations into account:

- i) To calculate the index of relevance, the cases considered were those in which the person placed his/her own organisation as an actor to highlight.
- ii) Given the criteria that the survey would be performed on an individual level (personal participation in political dialogue settings, e-mail lists, or individual accreditation for the El Salvador ministerial meeting, were used to create the list of those to survey), responses from more than one person per institution were registered. In these cases, survey responses from all persons in the institution were considered.

We also considered the possibility of interviewing only one person per organisation but, given the wide variety in institutional formats of the regional actors (including governments, networks with varying levels of cohesion, etc.), this was not a viable option. In addition, we would run the risk of having the survey results skewed by the greater or lesser personal knowledge (by the members of the APC team and ITeM who

worked in the implementation of the exercise) regarding the various institutions and peoples' roles within them.

Similarly, it was not considered viable to eliminate some of the responses in a way that, for example, would fail to consider the cases in which a person named their own institution as one of the most relevant actors, since it is understood that a specific institution's knowledge is a valid element in considering its relevance. One of the givens in the exercise is the possibility that those surveyed might indicate first the institutions they know best or those with whom they have the greatest level of collaboration—including their own. Therefore, before deciding to omit some responses, not only must the person's relationship to a particular institution be known and evaluated beforehand, but also the networks or other institutions linked to it. This would lead us to wonder, for example, if it would be necessary to eliminate all references to a network by the persons linked to its member organisations, or if the references to all governmental bodies by officials of a particular government should be eliminated, etc. This is clearly unviable, leading us, therefore, to take the data provided directly in the survey, without considering the affiliation of the person surveyed in calculating the index of relevance.

Nevertheless, it is important to point out that, even if the criteria to eliminate responses in which the person surveyed had indicated their own organisation had been used, there would not have been significant changes in the list obtained.

Although the question included in the survey asked for specific actors to be named, many of those surveyed included groups or sectors as is the case for "National governments," "Civil society," "Private sector," or "Academia." It seemed appropriate to include these "collective actors" in calculating the index of relevance and keep them on the list, just as those surveyed had done. However, it is important to point out— as some responders underlined— that these are very diversified entities and that it is not possible to think of them as single actors, since each one of them encompasses a broad number of institutions, with different degrees of relevance and with different interests and activities, on both the national as well as regional levels. It is possible, in addition, for some of those surveyed to be thinking about entities of civil society, academia or the private sector within their own country, while other survey participants may have been considering those entities whose activities had a broader scope at the regional level.

One specific case is the high number of mentions of "eLAC" as one of the most relevant regional actors. It is possible to consider that some of these mentions refer specifically to the coordination/facilitation role performed by ECLAC. In the cases where ECLAC was mentioned along with eLAC (for example: "ECLAC-eLAC goals") they were counted as ECLAC mentions. However, it is possible that others of these mentions may refer to the process itself, to the government of El Salvador, or even to the coordination mechanism or the working groups. This ambiguity is assumed as an inherent limitation of the survey as a methodological technique and it is not possible to force an interpretation without introducing an undesirable bias into the results.

We should also briefly mention the high index of relevance received by APC as a regional actor. One might think that a certain bias existed due to the significant participation of network members in the survey. However, if references to APC by its own members (4 in total) were eliminated, the relevance value obtained by APC would be 10.07, and would not cause changes in APC's position in the chart. As indicated

above, it was not considered appropriate to eliminate, in any case, the references made to networks by persons linked to its members.

Index of collaboration

As part of this exercise survey participants were asked to identify, in decreasing order of importance, up to 5 actors with which their institution had relations of collaboration in the area of ICT policies (for example: political organisation, technical collaboration, financing, participation in same networks).

Based on these responses, an index of collaboration was calculated for each of the 162 actors previously identified as relevant in the regional context of ICT policies by those surveyed.

This collaboration index allows for enriching and complementing the information supplied by the relevance index, contributing more “objective” data on the concrete activity of the various institutions/organisations.

Applying an analogical methodology to the index of relevance, the following formula was used to calculate this index:

$$\text{Collaboration (actor}_x\text{)} =$$

where C_i is the number of times that actor_x is mentioned in position i

Analogous to the index of relevance, this index assigns different weight to the mentions depending on the order in which they occur (an actor mentioned in first place is given twice the value for the index as one mentioned in fifth place).

Below we show the 30 actors who obtained the greatest index of collaboration, including the number of mentions obtained in each case:

Position	Actor	Collaboration	Mentions
1	APC	10.87	13
2	ECLAC	8.39	11
3	ICA/IDRC	7.84	11
4	IADB	5.17	7
5	OAS	4.78	7
6	European Union	4.50	6
7	Civil society	4.10	5
8	UNESCO	3.60	5
9	GEALC Network	3.57	4
10	LACNIC	3.04	4
11	GAID	2.60	3
12	eLAC	2.57	4
13	LACTLD	2.37	3
14	ITU	2.37	3
15	CITEL	2.30	3
16	CLARA Network	2.10	3
17	AHCIET	2.04	3

18	Academia	2.00	3
19	REGULATEL	1.97	3
20	Gov't of El Salvador	1.80	2

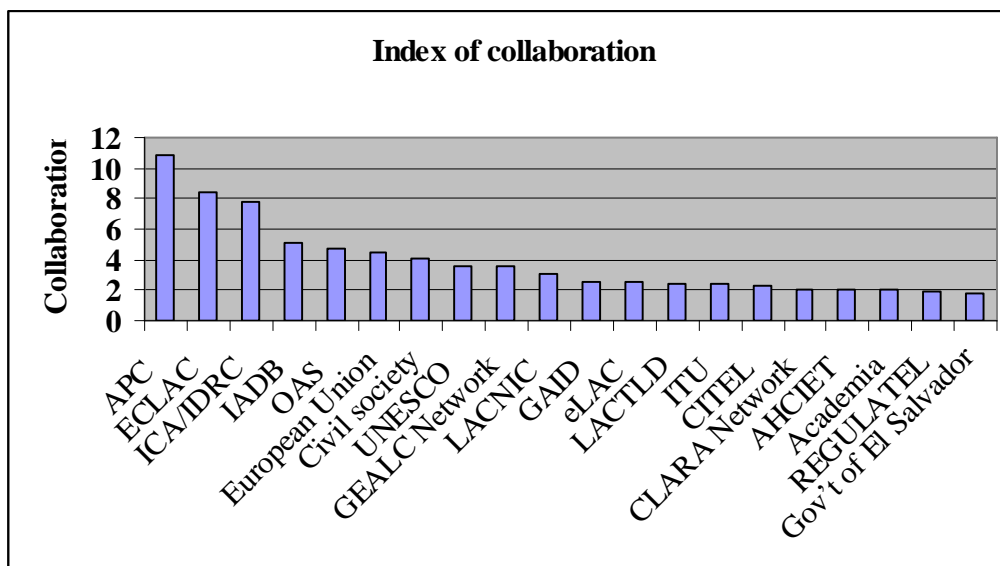


Figure 2

Analysing the two tables, we see that there is a significant degree of concordance between the values obtained for relevance and collaboration. Well-thought-of actors in the area of ICT for development are clearly distinguished, consistent with their degree of activity in the region, expressed through the collaboration links they establish with different institutions.

It is not surprising to obtain as a result of the survey a high number of mentions of APC, as a network of civil society organisations with a high penetration in the region, of ECLAC, as a body which facilitates processes of ICT policies in general and of eLAC, in particular, and of IDRC as a funding organisation for a great number of projects on information society and ICT policies in the region.

In addition, the correlation obtained from the survey for the relevance and collaboration indices allows us to confirm that the group of those surveyed is mostly composed of people who are part of a cluster of relevant actors in the subject of ICT policies in the region (which was within the methodological assumptions of the exercise).

It is interesting, nevertheless, to dwell on some cases in which the correlations between relevance and collaboration do not seem to be as direct. This is the case for the European Union, for example, which appears with a high index of collaboration but is not included in the actors identified as most relevant by those surveyed (in the list of relevance, the European Union (EU) appears in position 23, with a relevance index of 2.44). It is possible that as an actor whose presence in the region and participation in regional ICT policies processes is not direct but mediated—through other regional bodies—the EU is not seen or identified immediately as a relevant actor at the regional level but appears with a strong presence when those surveyed are asked to identify the

real bonds of existing collaboration. In this sense, the conclusions reached by one of the respondents are especially significant, indicating that the EU's role has been crucial to implementing the eLAC process, and that without the EU's interest, translated into financial support for ECLAC to launch the process, it would not have existed. Something similar, although more nuanced (partly due to its local setting) exists with the IADB and the OAS, who are "behind" regional projects on ICT policies but with a lower level of visibility and direct participation.

In considering the actors identified by the survey, the informant proposes a classification in clusters according to political relations and interests. These clusters would be "led" by the European Union, the OAS and the UN, respectively. Linked to the European Union cluster, the respondent identifies ECLAC and entities with a strong presence of European enterprises, such as AHCET, and would have close relations with governments of the region (Brazil, in particular). The cluster led by the OAS, on the other hand, would operate in close coordination with other regional entities such as the IADB and IDRC and would have strong ties of collaboration with the governments of the United States and Canada. In contrast to the previous cluster, this one would exclude Cuba. Lastly, the cluster associated with the UN would operate at the regional level through the Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA), and recently would begin to have a regional presence through the Global Alliance for ICT and Development (GAID), with close ties and financial support by European governments (Italy and Switzerland, in particular). In addition to identifying these three clusters or interest groups, the informant suggests a fourth possible group made up of private enterprises and sectors of national governments linked to the area of telecommunications reform, in which the World Bank would have an especially important weight.

Without a doubt it is interesting to include the global political dimension in the analysis of regional actors in ICT policies and in this sense, the informant's contribution to this analysis is particularly relevant. It is especially helpful in visualizing actors that do not appear at first glance in regional political processes but which are nevertheless determining elements in them. This consideration is particularly relevant in identifying the various dialogue partners in civil society organisations as they relate to regional political processes, as is the case of eLAC. It is in this sense that the respondent makes a call to entice into the dialogue spaces those interlocutors who initially appear as a second line of action but who are essential to assuring the success of the regional processes. It is, however, difficult to establish the precise limits of the various interest groups or clusters identified by the informant since there is evidently a significant amount of overlap among them. The relationship between the first group identified (European Union) and the third (UN) is clear. Not only through the direct relation between ECLAC and UNDESA, for example, but also through the weight of European governments in the GAID initiative in Latin America. In addition, the collaboration relations between IDRC (and the ICA, in particular)– associated by the informant with the second cluster– and ECLAC are also evident.

Another interviewee suggested another form of "grouping" of the various institutions identified as relevant in the regional context: according to their role. This perspective is interesting because the various types of "relevance" or levels of collaboration can be distinguished in this way. Although it is difficult to interpret the responses to the survey and in each case determine upon which criteria of "relevance" the response is based, it is evident that, for example, the type of relevance that an institution or company operating as a donor may have is not the same as that of a civil society network.

Concretely, the informant suggests a distinction between donors (including some companies), facilitating and technical support bodies (among which would be ECLAC and LACNIC, for example), decision-makers (including governments, regulating and multilateral agencies that manage/facilitate financing and donations) and monitoring/activism entities (NGOs, business entities such as AHCJET, some academic bodies).

Using this criteria of analysis, we can see that those surveyed acknowledge a strong relevance of decision-makers and governments in particular (both at the individual as well as multilateral agency levels) and of funders (donors as well as entities that arrange for funding) in the ICT political processes. Also, an important role is acknowledged for those who the respondent calls “facilitating bodies” or of “technical support” (in particular ECLAC and LACNIC).⁷ In the case of civil society, however, only APC is identified with a high level of relevance and collaboration, while the private sector apparently has a very weak presence in the ICT policies processes at the regional level.

The lack of presence of the private sector as a regional actor is a sign that has caused concern among some of our interviewees. In particular, one of the interviewees points out the difficulty entailed in designing and implementing ICT policies that do not come out of a debate with private actors having an important regional weight, as is the case of the cell phone system operators.

With respect to the values obtained by the relevance index, another interviewee for this exercise, indicated their agreement regarding the role assigned to APC by those surveyed and also with respect to the high positions occupied by ECLAC, LACNIC and the IDRC. Recognizing the importance of governments for achieving progress in the area of information society, they especially underlined the relevance of non-governmental bodies since, according to him, governments often move at their urging.

Another interviewee specifically referred to the relevance of the different actors in the context of the eLAC process. The respondent indicated that although APC has had a significant relevance in the process, it should be framed in the overall set of actions carried out by civil society participating in the process, and that it is in this context (that of civil society organisations) that APC appears with a greater level of visibility. He also pointed out that other actors (such as national governments) should probably appear higher up on the list. Regarding national governments, the informant was surprised that the government of Brazil was the only one explicitly appearing in the top positions of relevance when, in his view, there are other governments that have an equally relevant participation.

Examining the values obtained by the indices of relevance and collaboration, we can observe that, in general terms, the actors appearing with greatest values are those whose field of action is regional or covers several countries. In this sense, one of the interviewees highlighted the need to make the relevance of national actors visible, such as the national systems of internet governance and the national networks (infrastructures) supporting research. It is important to point out that some of these actors were duly identified by those surveyed, but due to the universe of those surveyed (which encompasses persons linked to institutions in various countries in the region) it

⁷ But it would be necessary to evaluate in greater depth the degree to which these entities limit themselves to that role.

was likely that they would receive a lower number of mentions and, therefore, lower relevance values than those institutions that work on the regional level.

Participation in networks

In addition to collaboration relations, those surveyed were asked to indicate, in each case, their organisation or institution's membership in one or more networks. The list of networks obtained, according to the number of mentions, is found below. While the survey performed allows us to identify this set of networks, which, in turn, helps to identify collaboration relations among the different regional actors, we must point out that the number of responses obtained for this question is limited. Evidently, we cannot conclude, based on these responses, that these are the only relevant networks in the region, or even the most active.

It is important to indicate that not all the entities identified as networks by those surveyed consider themselves as such; it would be more appropriate to characterise them as organisations. Since it was an open question, there is no way to make that distinction within the survey.

Entity	Mentions
Association for Progressive Communications (APC)	9
Development Gateway Foundation-Latin America	4
World Association of Community Radio Broadcasters (AMARC)	3
Latin American Association of Radio Education (ALER)	2
Global Knowledge Partnership (GKP)	2
Global Development Learning Network (GDLN)	2
Network of Electronic Government Leaders in LA&C (GEALC Network)	2
Network on Social Impact of IC Technologies (RedISTIC)	2
Somos@Telecentros	2
World Association for Christian Communication (WACC)	2
<i>Agence Universitaire de la Francophonie</i> (AUF)	1
ICANN At-Large Advisory Committee (ALAC)	1
Bellanet	1
Campaign for Communication Rights in the Information Society (CRIS)	1
Continental Campaign for Communication Rights (DECAL)	1
Dgroups	1
Global Alliance for ICT and Development (GAID)	1
InfoAndina	1
Latin American & Caribbean ccTLDs Organisation (LACTLD)	1
Learning Initiatives on Reforms for Network Economies (LIRNE.NET)	1
Maaya Network	1
Mountain Forum	1
CLARA Network	1
Latin American Network on Indicators of Science, Technology and Innovation (RICYT)	1
Latin American Data Protection Network	1
Latin American Educational Portals Network (RELPE)	1
VIT@LIS Network	1
Network of Latin American & Caribbean Women's Popular Education (REPEM)	1

Mercosur Specialised Meeting on Science and Technology (RECYT)	1
Telecentre.org	1

The eLAC process in the regional context of ICT policies

As a part of this exercise, we were interested in knowing the degree of importance assigned by regional actors to the eLAC process, contextualising the responses according to the interest of those surveyed in the various issues and ICT policies processes.

The perspectives of regional actors on the eLAC process are particularly relevant in defining APC's strategy for future participation in the process, as an entity that would operate as a link between the eLAC Follow-up Mechanism and civil society organisations in the region (in particular those who coordinate through the alc-cmsi listserve).

Below we will analyse two aspects: the interest shown in ICT policies processes and in the issues considered in the context of eLAC and the relative degree of interest and participation in the eLAC process. In addition we will study the relationship between these two aspects: specifically, to what degree the noted interested translates into levels of active participation in the process.

Relationship of those surveyed to ICT policies

In order to contextualise the answers given by those surveyed, they were first asked to provide information on the degree of relevance assigned by their institution to the area of ICT policies (assigning a value between 1 and 5, where 1 is "very low" and 5 "very high"). Of the 84 responses received for this question, 55 (65.48%) assigned a relevance of 5 ("very high") to the ICT policies area, while 15 persons (17.86%) assigned it a value of 4; 10 persons (11.90%) a value of 3; 1 person (1.19%) a value of 2, and 3 persons (3.57%) a value of 1.

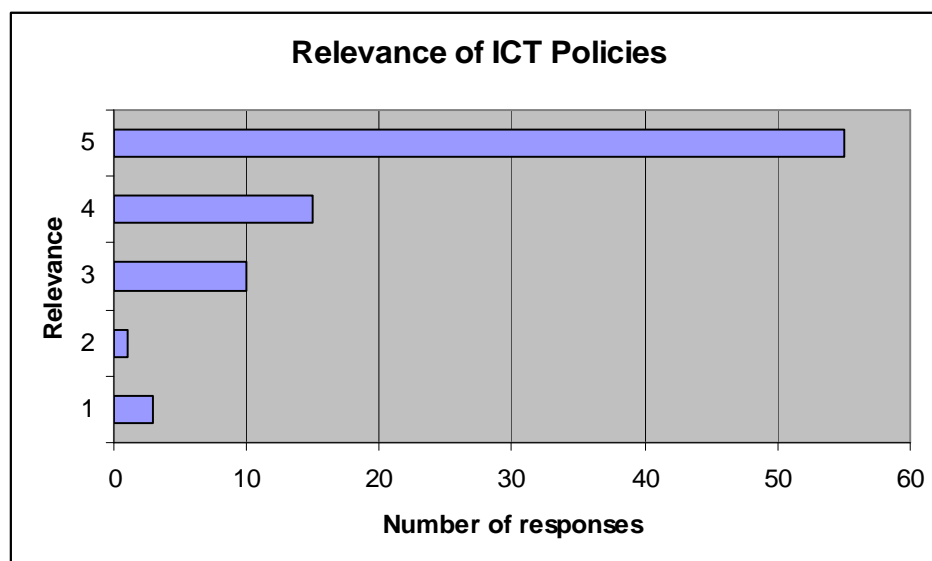


Figure 3

It can therefore be generally stated, that the universe of those surveyed has a high or very high interest in ICT policies processes, making it an interesting group from which to gather opinions about the relevance of the eLAC process in particular.

Priority issues for those surveyed

As part of the survey, participants were also asked to indicate, in order of relevance, the five issues they considered priorities for the regions (from a list provided).

It is important to clarify that this question was not aimed at pinpointing the most relevant issues in the regional context of ICT policies (in contrast, for example, to the Delphi exercise⁸ carried out by ECLAC), but rather to contextualise the response of those interviewed according to the areas of interest of their institutions and to analyse their opinion of the eLAC process in light of these results.

From the responses, an index of priorities for the issues was calculated, analogous to the indices of relevance and collaboration of actors.

The formula used in this case was:

$$\text{Priority (issue}_x\text{)} = \frac{C_i}{n}$$

Where C_i is the number of times issue $_x$ is mentioned in position i

The values of priority obtained for the issues proposed were:

Position	Issue	Priority
1	Strategies and national agendas for the information society	29.44
2	Access and use of ICT by most vulnerable populations	21.03
3	Electronic government; ICT and democracy-building	18.92
4	Access to ICT in educational centres	17.63
5	Infrastructure and regional interconnection	13.48
6	Distance education/formation	12.13
7	ICT financing mechanisms; Policies of universal access	12.06
8	Indicators and ICT measurement; Studies on ICT impact	11.31
9	Legislative framework for ICT	10.96
10	Access to ICT in libraries and community centres	10.87
11	ICT for business development	7.62
12	Free and open source software	7.52
13	Creative industries and digital content	5.69
14	ICT industry (software, hardware); Poles and technological parks	5.28
15	Management of the radio electric spectrum	5.19
16	Internet governance	4.91
17	Advanced networks based on ICT for research	4.88
18	Training in ICT for jobs; Teleworking	4.02
19	ICT and gender equity	2.61
20	ICT and health: Access in health centres; Electronic health;	1.80

⁸ http://www.cepal.org/socinfo/noticias/noticias/4/29954/eLAC_Prioridades_Politiclas_Delphi_2.0.pdf

	Medical applications	
21	Use of ICT in handling and prevention of disasters	1.78
22	Access to cellular telephony	0.80
23	Environmental protection through ICT use	0.67
24	Digital TV; Alternative technologies	0.44
25	Use of ICT to preserve cultural heritage	0.00

Examining these results, we can see a strong relationship between the issues highlighted by those surveyed and those covered in regional action plans.⁹ In particular, those referring to the need for definition and implementation of national agendas for the information society, as well as the use of ICTs as a tool to strengthen educational processes, promote social equity and as a support for democracy and citizen participation. Also acknowledged by those surveyed is a high priority for development of regional ICT infrastructure.

Although the survey included the possibility of adding issues not appearing on the proposed list, this option was employed by a small percentage of those surveyed. The issues suggested by those surveyed, which had not been initially considered, were the following (in some cases there is visible overlap with categories proposed in the survey):

- Impact of ICT on society and on human rights
- Regulatory frameworks
- ICT for local development of rural or semi-rural communities
- ICT for local capacity development
- Public-private alliances for comprehensive development of ICT policies
- Strategies for dissemination of progress, use, quality and impact of ICTs
- Networks of R & D in ICT
- Use of ICT in the fight against poverty/social inclusion through use of ICTs
- Web production of local content (by the communities)
- Incorporation of ICTs in productive and income-generating activities
- Technological convergence between radio and ICT
- Informational and digital literacy programs
- Promotion of linguistic diversity (with mostly indigenous peoples in mind)
- New business models so that communities have ICT services that respond to their needs and so that profits remain in the community
- Access to ICT by *Pymes* (Small and micro enterprises)
- Induction of the general population into the culture of the information society
- Telecentres or community centres; distance education
- National information policies (not only on ICTs)
- Promotion of innovation and entrepreneurship with support of ICTs

Interest and participation in eLAC by regional actors

The survey included 9 questions (see questions 10-18) aimed at estimating the degree of interest sparked by the process among regional actors and evaluating both the obstacles and benefits associated with participation in this process, as well as the resources available to them for it. The responses to these questions allowed us to obtain values for the following aspects:

⁹ Reference: eLAC2007 and eLAC2010

- Evaluation of the relevance of the eLAC process
- Expectations regarding the eLAC process
- Contribution to the eLAC process
- Benefits obtained from participation in the eLAC process

For each of these aspects we obtained a value (if there was more than one response per organisation, the average was used). These values were in turn averaged to obtain, for each organisation, an index of interest in eLAC.

The value on participation in the eLAC process was obtained as an average of the values assigned by each one of those surveyed on the participation of their organisation or institution in the eLAC2007 and eLAC2010 processes. It should be noted that the overall averages for participation in eLAC2007 and 2010 did not differ significantly (1.73 and 1.87 respectively).

These values do not stem from actual participation data but rather measure the perception that the various persons who responded to the survey have about the involvement of their organisation or institution in the process. Therefore, this information could be more or less accurate depending on the person, how long they have been working in the institution, and their personal commitment to the eLAC process (beyond that of their organisation or institution).

In cases where the survey was answered by more than one person from an organisation or institution, the average of the responses was taken, in order to obtain a single value for each actor.

In this way it is possible to comparatively analyse the values of participation/interest according to the various sectors to which those surveyed pertain.

Sector	Index of interest (combines values for expectations, contribution, benefits and resources)	Index of participation (eLAC2007 and 2010 averages)
Government	2.17	2.02
Civil society	1.90	1.96
Other sectors	1.91	1.81

In the column “Other sectors” responses from persons affiliated with academic bodies, private sector, donors, and multilateral organisations are included. Due to the low number of responses obtained in each one of these sectors, a more precise division was not possible while maintaining comparability.

In general, there is a high concordance between the interest and degree of participation declared by the actors. On average, both are located in medium values (the possible range was from 0 to 5), which also agrees with the relative relevance assigned to the eLAC process, as can be seen below.

Relevance of eLAC

In response to the request to assign a relevance value to the eLAC process, the following results were obtained from the survey:

Relevance of eLAC	Number	Percentage
Did not respond	29	
Very high	9	16.07
High	10	17.86
Medium	25	44.64
Low	12	21.43
None	0	0.00
Total responses	56	

Although it is important to bear in mind that more than 21% of those surveyed assign a “low” relevance, it is noteworthy that none of them chose the “none” category for eLAC relevance. One hypothesis on this might be a certain “self-conditioning” of those surveyed to grant some degree of relevance to the process, even if low. Stated another way, it is natural to suppose that in a universe of persons mostly active and committed either through employment or politically to this type of processes, a corollary would produce an assignment of importance ranging between medium and high.

However, we must point out here that the high level of non-response to this question makes generalisation of the results to the entire universe of those surveyed difficult. Among the obstacles, a dimension we analyse in the next section, the difficult access to qualified information, as well as to participation in political and topical networks associated with eLAC were mentioned. This factor, that is, the scant involvement in these opportunities, could explain the large number of non-response. As is evident, one cannot evaluate the relevance of a process about which one has little or no knowledge.

Another dimension arising while inquiring about these matters is the heavily discursive nature of the process, that is, eLAC as a fundamentally political process, of drafting commitments not yet translated into palpable results. One of those interviewed, introduced the adjective “potential” to describe the process, which validates the great number of those surveyed who highlight the importance as high or very high. However, this respondent clarifies, that the practice to this point justifies the opinion of those who consider its relevance as low. As often occurs, the weight given also depends on the subjective and personal perspective of the person evaluating.

The greater or lesser “descent” to the national level of the plans contained in eLAC was also pointed out by those surveyed and interviewed as an indicator for measuring relevance. Testing some hypotheses, one of the interviewees raised the point that eLAC does not exhibit a high relevance in and of itself (something easily confirmed by the scant media coverage given to the events), but rather must later be translated into the importance granted it by each country as a political project. Thus, it may display an “argumentative” importance for the promotion of certain policies in national contexts. The informant also believes that extremely general and theoretical documents come out of the process, which in some cases do not take specificities or differential demands by

zones or countries into account. The importance of the process lies in its propositional nature. Later on, follow-up must be done to evaluate its true relevance.

Furthermore, eLAC is a process that spurs exchange and debate among the region's actors, which is held up by another interviewee as a positive and legitimating factor. Particularly in the case of civil society, it appears as a uniting process in defining and determining a common political perspective on the information society and knowledge, and the duties of the different actors involved in its construction. Likewise, the fact that a formal process exists obliges the various actors to mobilise. In terms of follow-up, or the landing to which we referred earlier, this is considered an effective indicator, to evaluate who has fulfilled the commitments assumed and to what measure. The action plan contained in eLAC would in this case be considered basically a supervising and reference tool.

In addition, with the intent to dig deeper into the reasons for the appraisals on the relevance and interest in the process, those surveyed were also asked to specify in order of relevance 5 elements that facilitate/hinder their organisation's participation in the eLAC process. It is important to make clear that it was asked at two different moments (see questions 17-18).

Similarly, the qualitative appraisal of the actors interviewed also provides useful clues for probing this matter in more depth.

Obstacles and challenges to participation

Looking at the diagnostic made by those surveyed, the following overall characterisation of hindering and facilitating elements for participation in the eLAC process seems accurate. As is evident, other more specific elements were mentioned, related to the specific reality of each country and even of the organisational situation of individuals surveyed, which did not seem relevant to detail here.

Obstacles:

- **Financial:** difficulty in access to and availability of resources (economic and human)
- **Participatory / Strategic:** lack of settings for participation and mechanisms of articulation and follow-up (at both the eLAC process level as well as country level)
- **Political:** lack of political will to implement eLAC commitments, lack of national ICT policies agendas, need for awareness-raising on the issues within ICT policies since they are not a traditional national pivot point

Facilitators:

- **Financial:** access to specific resources to participate in processes like eLAC and in their follow-up

- **Participative / Strategic:** existence of spaces for participation and coordination, inclusion in working networks related to the eLAC process, a strategic agenda in each institution for participating in and impacting eLAC, training/specialisation in issues of ICT4D and regulation.
- **Political:** existence of political will to open up participation; in the case of civil society organisations, effective relations with governments (which guarantees access to documents and spaces for participation)

Consistently, what is diagnosed on one hand as a facilitating element, is visualised, when absent, as a hindering element. For example: access to resources facilitates, difficulty in accessing resources hinders. Nevertheless, it should also be understood that this simplification stems from practical reasons: reality demonstrates that difficulties in participation generally involve a multiplicity of dimensions.

Equally, it could be inferred that those organisations that participate and do so effectively, show a practice sustained over time and an accumulation of experience that classifies them in a way that is difficult to calculate or to weigh. Added to this, in most cases, is a favourable political environment or one that is conducive to collaboration. Therefore, there are no magic formulas and greater availability of resources might not instantly remove the obstacles to participation or even to politically impact the processes and decision-making moments.

Another element to take into account is the existence of clear channels and mechanisms which ensure the participation of all the relevant sectors immersed in the process. Another informant maintained in this regard that since eLAC's inception, coordinated by ECLAC, the rules for participation by civil society were never clearly established or communicated. Although on several occasions adherence to principles of multi-sectorality were proclaimed, this has not been effectively put into practice. This no doubt creates obstacles and compromises relative participation. As mentioned earlier, similar cases are experienced in some national contexts.

Relative continuity in the process also appears as a dimension that facilitates participation, and, eventually, the impact that could occur in the general process over time.

It is important to also consider some of the optional remarks included in the responses to the survey that differentiate participation in events and specific meetings of eLAC (for example, the ministerial meetings) from participation throughout the entire process. Some actors, on the other hand, show important activity in the area of ICT policies on a national level, which does not translate into high involvement in the regional process. This supplies important guidelines for analysing the political impact demonstrated by participation of the various organisations in eLAC as a political space, especially by civil society, which we usually call incidence. We examine this last dimension in more depth in the next section.

Participation and incidence of civil society in eLAC

One of the elements to be evaluated through this exercise was the perception of the regional actors about civil society participation and incidence in general, and of APC, in particular, in the eLAC process. In the next section, we will specifically analyse the case of APC, while concentrating in this section on the perception about the role of civil society in general.

Perception of the relevance of the participation of civil society in eLAC

In the survey participants were asked to evaluate the relevance they assigned to the participation of civil society in the eLAC process. Of 53 responses obtained for this question, 10 of those surveyed (18.87%) considered this participation as “very relevant,” while 18 (33.96%) considered it “somewhat relevant,” 11 (20.75%) as “neutral,” 11 (20.75%) as “not very relevant,” and 3 as “not at all relevant.”

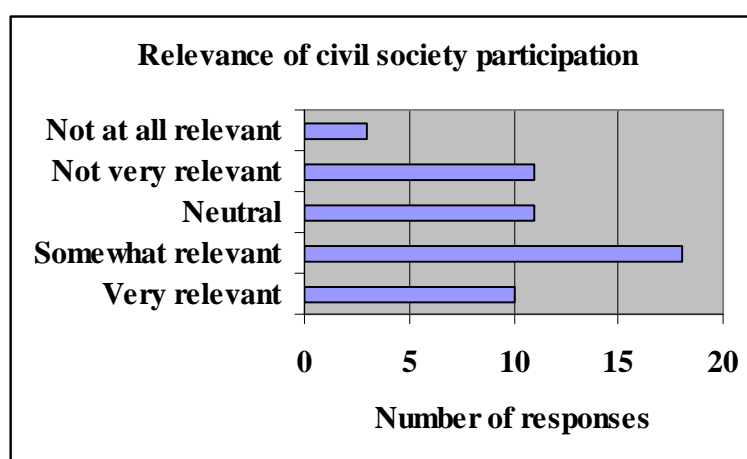


Figure 4

Doing a cross section according to the type of actor, we obtain the following values:

Relevance of participation of civil society in eLAC						
	Civil society		Governments		Other actors	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Very relevant	3	12.50	4	26.67	3	21.43
Somewhat relevant	8	33.33	5	33.33	5	35.71
Neutral	5	20.83	4	26.67	2	14.29
Not very relevant	7	29.17	1	6.67	3	21.43
Not at all relevant	1	4.17	1	6.67	1	7.14

Figure 5

As the number of responses per sector varies, we might also wish to analyse within each sector, what percentage of responses leaned towards one or another option:

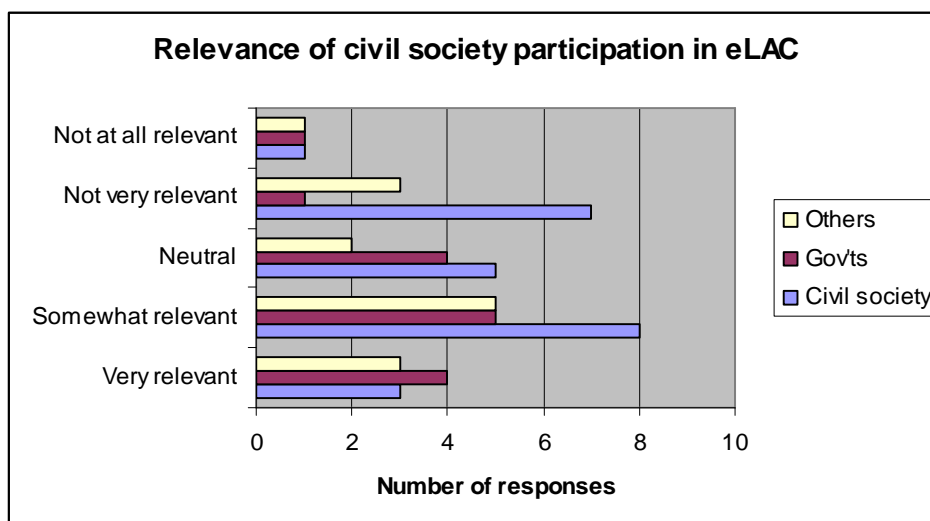
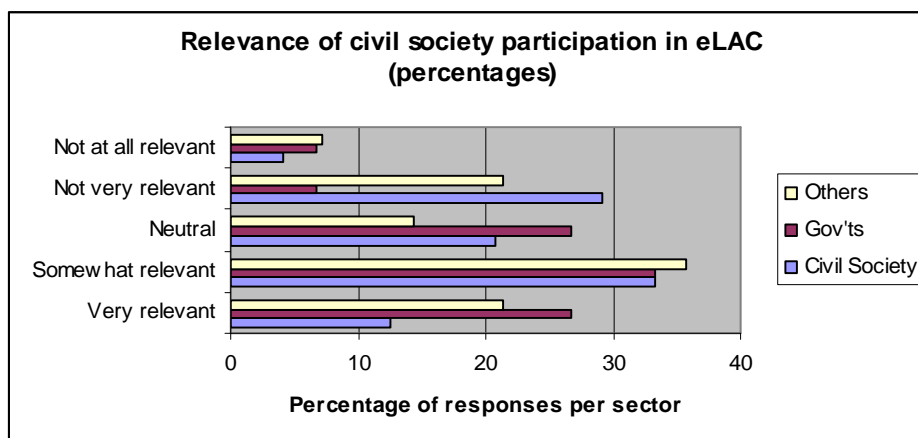


Figure 6

Although it is necessary to take into account how limited the sample is, it is interesting to observe that it was the government representatives who, percentage-wise, assigned a higher level of relevance to the participation of civil society in the eLAC process, while the members of the civil society organisations themselves adopted a less enthusiastic view, with a significant percentage of responses indicating participation as “not very relevant” (even though, as in the case of other sectors, the “somewhat relevant” option was the majority choice).

While the responses given by government representatives are encouraging for civil society, in evaluating responses by those surveyed, it is necessary to consider that the fact that the survey was an initiative of civil society entities may have had an effect. It is also important to keep in mind that since the WSIS, the relevance of participation by all sectors (and in particular, of civil society) in ICT policies processes is deeply embedded in the discussion, which may have also had an influence on responses given.¹⁰ In any case, the acknowledgement of a certain level of relevance by government actors of civil

¹⁰ See, in the next section, the results in relation to future participation of civil society in eLAC.

society participation provides a good platform for putting the agreed-on principles of multi-sectoral participation within the framework of the WSIS into practice in the eLAC process. In the last ministerial meeting of eLAC in San Salvador there was progress on the subject, as we will see later on.

Incidence of civil society in eLAC

In addition to evaluating the perception of the various actors on civil society participation in eLAC, we were interested in analysing the real degree of incidence that this participation had in the process, considering, in particular, the degree to which the positions supported by civil society organisations were reflected in the regional action plans.

From this question, the survey produced the following results. Of 53 responses obtained, 4 (7.55%) considered it “nil,” 10 (18.77%) as “low,” 32 (60.38%) as “average,” and 7 (13.21%) as “high.” No one surveyed considered civil society incidence to be “very high.”

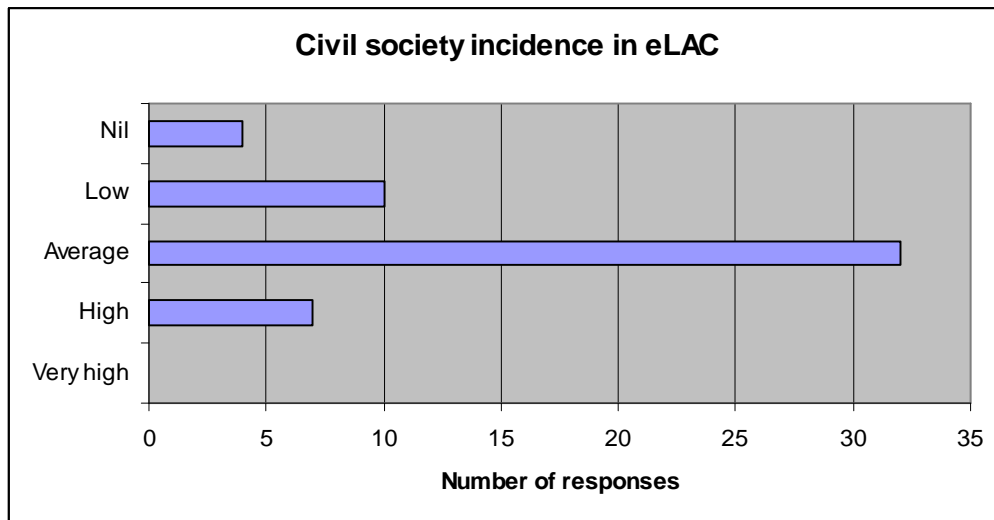


Figure 7

If we analyse the responses of the different sectors, we get:

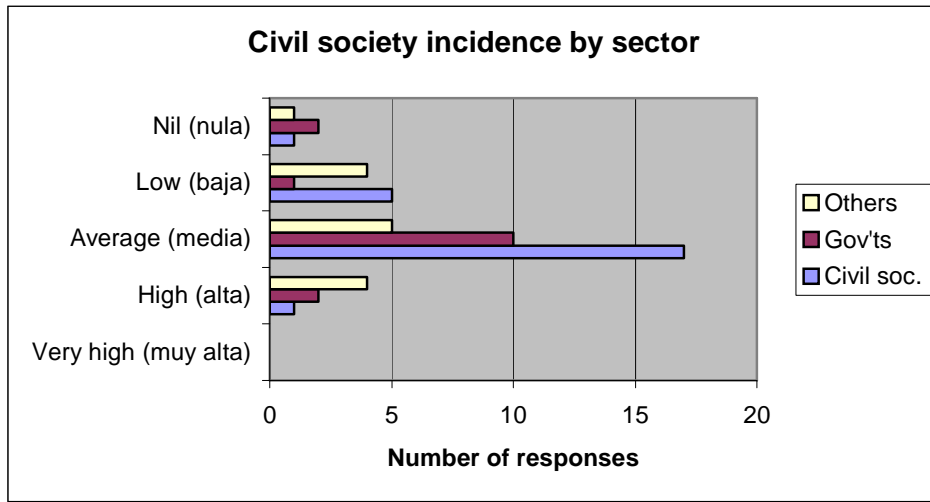


Figure 8

In terms of percentages within each sector:

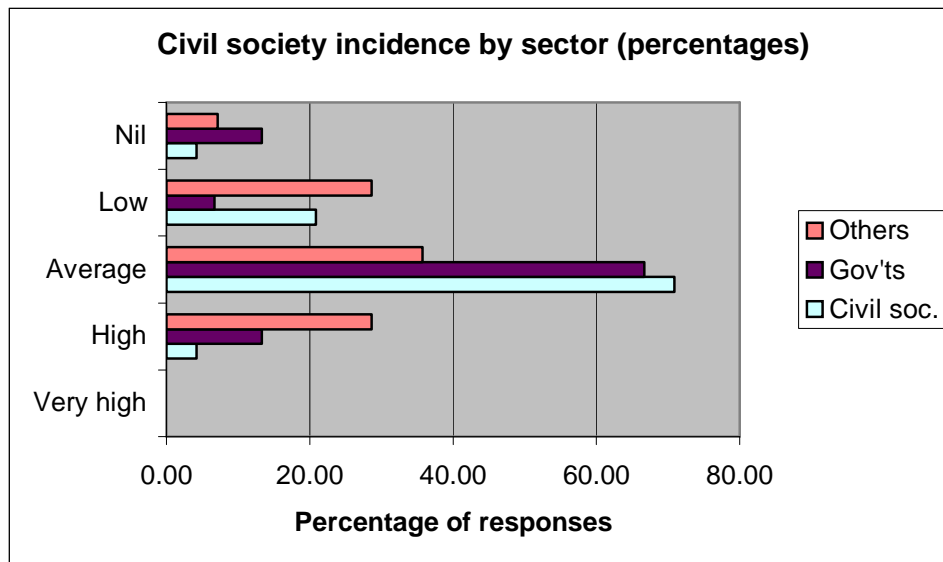


Figure 9

These results show quite an overall consensus among the various actors in terms of civil society having an average-level real incidence in the eLAC process (with a tendency towards average-low in the view of civil society actors and an average-high tendency according to governmental representatives). In this case the same observations can be applied with respect to the possible influence of the “must be” view, which may somehow be affecting the responses given by government representatives in the survey.

Future participation of civil society in eLAC

In addition to analysing the participation and incidence in past eLAC processes, we were also interested in looking at the perspectives of the various actors regarding what future civil society participation should be like, compared to the current situation.

Considering the responses per sector, we obtain the following results in percentages:

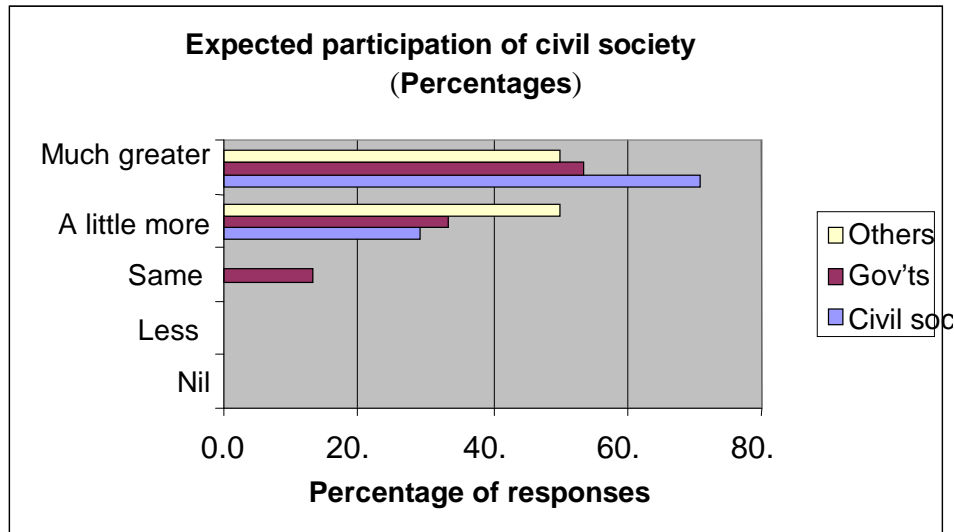


Figure 10

This result allows us to reaffirm the previous conclusions that a positive consensus exists among the various actors regarding civil society participation while also strongly visualizing the need to increase this participation. There is a minority view by government representatives indicating that civil society participation should remain at current levels. Another conclusion emerging from the results is the degree of difference between civil society organisations and other actors, in the sense that expectations for civil society participation are significantly greater among civil society organisations themselves than among those of other sectors. This fact, which was somewhat expected, is an element that civil society organisations should take into account when carrying out lobbying actions aimed at increasing their participation.

The previous question was complemented by others in the survey that asked to indicate what civil society participation should be like with respect to other actors (in particular governments and the private sector).

In this case, the results shown in the following charts were obtained (expressed in percentages considering the number of responses obtained in each sector).

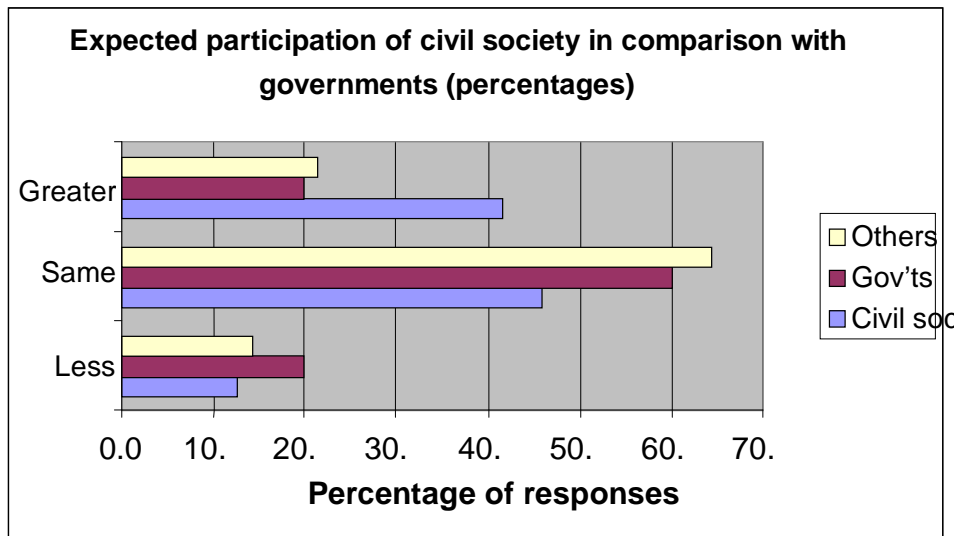


Figure 11

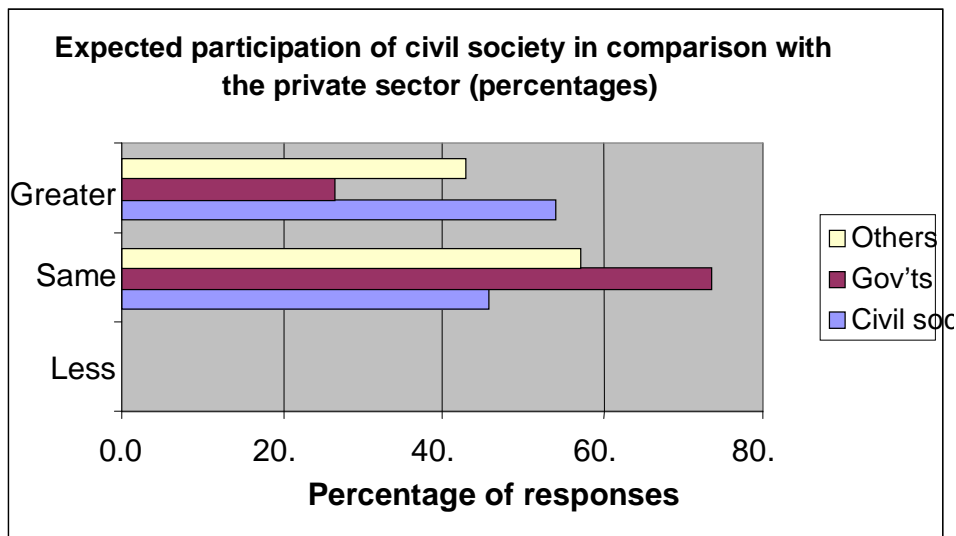


Figure 12

In general terms, we also see a majority opinion in all sectors of those surveyed that equal participation by the three actors mentioned (civil society, governments and private sector) is desirable in the eLAC process.

However, there is a considerable percentage of responses that indicate that governments should have greater participation in the process than civil society. This is somewhat to be expected from the time that eLAC was the regional sphere for debate around the WSIS, an inter-governmental negotiation process. In the comments made by

those surveyed, different opinions on it appear: there are those who state that eLAC should remain primarily a governmental process since it is understood that this is the only way that agreements achieved in this realm can be assumed as such by governments for implementation in their countries. In this line of thought, some surveyed believed that civil society organisations participating in the process should limit themselves to having a propositional role (contributing analysis and proposals that arise from their experience working on the issues) and monitoring policies. On the opposite side, there are those who indicate that civil society's equal presence is essential because of this sector's acquired knowledge, and for the possibility to make contributions on the issues debated from different points of view. It was also pointed out that the presence of civil society is necessary to give continuity to the process, since the experience acquired in it could be lost among governments, with the political changes that occur within countries.

In the comparison between participation expected of civil society and that of the private sector, a general tendency can be seen that indicates that civil society should have an equal or greater participation than that of the private sector. However, in this case there is a slight discrepancy between the vision of the majority of those surveyed who come from civil society and those linked to governments and other sectors. While the option of egalitarian participation represents a majority among those surveyed that are linked to governments and other sectors, those belonging to civil society indicate by a slight majority (45.83% compared to 54.17%) that civil society should have a greater participation. Some of the explanations given in the optional comments for choosing this option state that the private sector has a high degree of influence (especially on the national level), and that their positions are equally present in the negotiation processes, both directly and indirectly. According to this view, therefore, it is understood that greater participation by civil society with respect to the private sector would be necessary, so that a balance could be established between private interests and those of society as a whole, which would be put forth through civil society organisations.

Regarding incorporation of civil society into decision-making spheres in eLAC (coordination, working groups), 27 of those surveyed indicated that this should be "much more than the current level," while 20 stated that it should be "a little more," and 6 said "equal." None of those surveyed were of the opinion that there should be "less" participation.

Separating the responses by sector we obtain the following graphic:

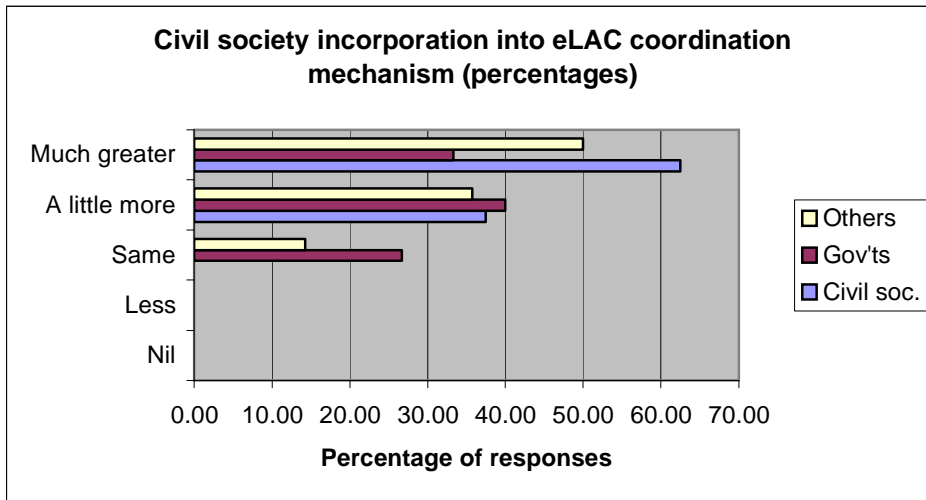


Figure 13

Although there is a general tendency to consider greater civil society participation in coordination mechanisms desirable, this tendency is visibly more marked in the context of civil society actors themselves, while in the case of other actors (governments, in particular) it is more moderate. Even though the overall tendency in terms of expecting greater participation in the eLAC process is maintained, for some of those surveyed related to governments, in particular, this should not necessarily translate into greater participation in coordinating mechanisms.

Inclusion of civil society in the eLAC Follow-up Mechanism is without a doubt one of those in which it is more difficult to achieve consensus by governments. Although there are several government representatives who have spoken in favour of this option, and in the San Salvador Commitment the inclusion of a civil society entity in the eLAC Follow-up Mechanism was agreed upon, this participation is established with a role that is different from that of governments and as an “observer.” There is, therefore, an opportunity for civil society organisations participating in the process to work closely with the more sympathetic governments, and in this way achieve a greater degree of incidence in the outcomes of eLAC.

In general terms, examining the responses given by all the actors in this section of the survey, we can see a moderately positive view of civil society’s participation and real incidence in the eLAC process. Nevertheless, the answers obtained provide a certain warning signal and show that civil society organisations still have a great deal of work to do to increase their effective participation, and above all, to translate this participation into real incidence in the definition of regional policies on the information society.

This need can also be deduced from a qualitative analysis of the optional commentaries made by those surveyed. In several of them the need for a better coordination by civil society organisations is put forth, developing agendas and clear priorities, in order to achieve greater incidence. Also expressed is that this coordination is necessary to facilitate joint work with other actors in the process. In addition, the need for more space to be opened up to civil society by governments was noted, both at a national as well as regional level, so that these organisations can contribute, based on their concrete experience, to the formulation of ICT policies.

The need for greater coordination among civil society entities was also strongly present in the opinions expressed by the interviewees. One of the interviewees for example, indicated that this is the basic problem faced by civil society organisations. In their view,

this coordination should begin within each one of the countries, through a level of national coordination of eLAC follow-up (including the greatest possible number of the country's civil society organisations), complemented by a regional level coordination structure which would allow for linking of organisations in different countries who work on the same issues.

Another informant also points out that coordination between the various organisations is also necessary, even as far as obtaining funds in order to carry out better monitoring of the different eLAC goals. In their view, participation in events does not translate into concrete incidence in the general eLAC process due to the limits on existing resources, which does not allow organisations to perform effective monitoring of the large number of commitments assumed at the regional level.

Another interviewee also noted the need for coordination between the various organisations of civil society and the difficulty this entails, given the variety of participating organisations and the difference of interests within civil society. In this vein, they believe a more viable option is coordination between those organisations that can come together around a particular issue, in order to carry out lobbying actions based on this level of agreement regarding objectives to be attained. They underlined the opportunity for incidence existing in the eLAC setting stemming from a change in relationship between civil society organisations and several governments in the region. According to their view, governmental representatives have a more open attitude towards civil society because of joint efforts in the WSIS and eLAC processes, and that there are more possibilities for organisations to work in collaboration with governments in the development of policy proposals. An example of this dialogue capacity noted by the informant is the inclusion of civil society actors in the official delegations of several countries, both in the context of WSIS as well as, specifically, that of eLAC.

For one of the interviewees it is necessary to show seriousness in the proposals in order to achieve a greater level of incidence by civil society. They also indicate that continuity in participation is necessary to attain greater levels of confidence among the various actors. The informant expresses concern that there are many organisations with erratic and discontinuous participation in the process, with little preparation in the subjects discussed, fomenting mistrust towards civil society's proposals. The great diversity and disarray of organisations is an element that also attempts against legitimation. Which means, at times it is not possible to identify a civil society actor who has a continuous, reliable and strong presence in the process. So, governments would fear that there may be organisations who present themselves as part of civil society that in reality have little to contribute, which naturally undermines the credibility and relative incidence. In this sense, the informant points out the need for civil society organisations that work seriously in the region to come to negotiation meetings with concrete proposals supported by prior work on the issues and by a continuous presence in the process.

Greater seriousness in ideas, unity in proposals, sustained work and continuity over time would therefore be key elements to keep in mind in thinking about an effective and "incisive" participation of civil society.

For another interviewee, although civil society organisations have had important opportunities to participate in eLAC meetings, this participation has to some extent been wasted and its real incidence has been low. According to this informant, there are civil society actors who have chosen to have a declaratory role, establishing principles,

without a direct connection to incidence in the outcomes of the process. In order to have actions more focused on incidence, the informant points to the need to establish an agenda that clearly states the specific objectives to be achieved on a particular occasion (for example, the inclusion of an issue in the agreements reached in the framework of eLAC). In order to establish this agenda at the civil society level, the interviewee believes that a discussion is necessary to identify the issues and positions considered important. According to the respondent, many civil society organisations have lacked this level of strategic planning, which is reflected in the low levels of real incidence. Once the positions to be defended by civil society organisations are clearly determined and there is real work in incidence, they can be ready to carry out a more effective follow-up on these issues, both on the regional as well as national levels, interacting with governments and other actors to ensure that the commitments assumed are implemented.

Finally, the suggestions of another interviewee reintroduce several elements from previous analyses as well as recommendations made by others interviewed. They basically point out the difficulties experienced by civil society, as a conglomerate of organisations, in acting and participating as a group in these types of processes. The informant maintains that, beyond concern for the influence demonstrated or not in the process, this is the first real step, fundamental for gaining credibility and later thinking about incidence strategies. As has been expressed, the diversity of organisations, the difficulty in coordinating spaces for discussion and later face-to-face meetings, hinders the debate and the drafting of genuine and consensual proposals. On this last point, the achievement of agreements and promotion of the broadest possible participation are underlined, as essential to gaining legitimacy and influence as a group.

However, the interviewee warns that putting together a network and making it operate efficiently is not a simple task, as can be seen from earlier experiences. In addition, the traditional structures, with a hierarchical type of organisation, have not proven adequate when one attempts to horizontalise and increase levels of participation. Managing to form a flexible and functional structure seems to be the greatest challenge. In this context, the informant states that an energiser who can “enliven” the exchange within the network is essential, as well as establish mechanisms for agreement and decision-making while avoiding bureaucratisation. Without a doubt, this adds an interesting perspective in thinking about the function and future work of APC as a linkage body.

Likewise, the interviewee suggests that the turnover in people participating in the processes and the discontinuity in attending events impedes the formation of interpersonal links and bonds of trust, which are necessary for working together. Some degree of prior acquaintance among those involved is therefore seen as a requirement for working efficiently through virtual platforms, facilitating coordination with fewer economic resources.

Participation and incidence of APC

As indicated above, we were particularly interested in gathering elements with which to evaluate the perception held by regional actors on APC's work in the area of ICT policies in general and the eLAC process in particular. This would be important input enabling APC to define a strategy for future participation in eLAC and its role as civil society link in the Follow-up Mechanism of the process.

Therefore, the survey aimed to obtain information about both the knowledge and perception held by the regional actors on APC's work in general terms, as well as in the specific context of the eLAC process.

The results obtained in the evaluation of APC's regional work in ICT policies are as follows:

APC's work at the regional level

Considering all the sectors as a whole, the following responses were obtained for the question regarding APC's regional level work:

Evaluation	Number	Percentage
Very negative	1	1.89
Mostly negative	0	0.00
Mostly positive	22	41.51
Very positive	19	35.85
Have no knowledge	11	20.75

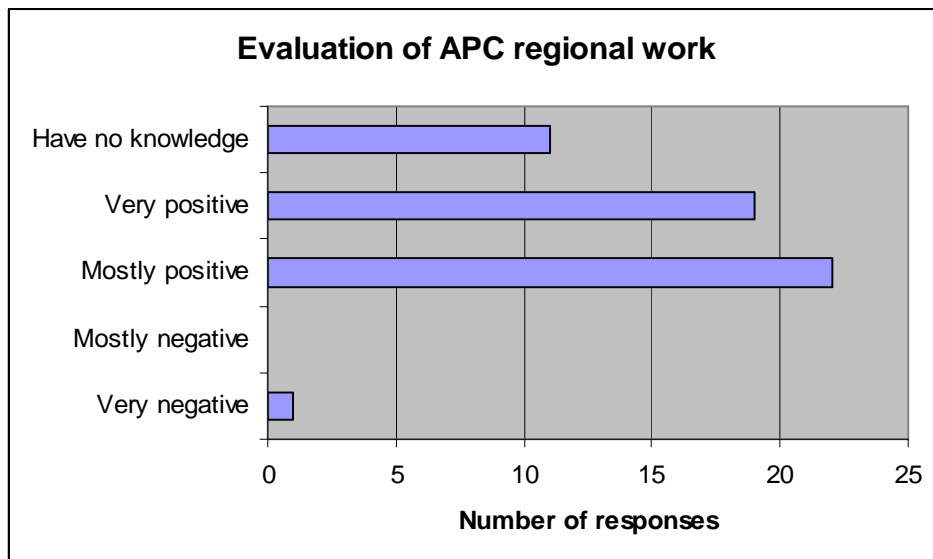


Chart 14

It is relevant to mention that, along with the response showing APC's evaluation as "very negative," a comment was included that somewhat softens this response. In this case the person explained: *"It's not exactly 'negative.' I think it is limited to an exchange involving only a few people. It is therefore 'sectarian'...and sometimes even academic."*

In general terms, it can thus be said that there is a majority positive view regarding APC's work in the region, since 77.36% of those surveyed considered it "very positive" or "mostly positive." This coincides with the data obtained for indices of relevance and collaboration of actors, in which APC appears in the upper levels.

On the other hand, it should be noted that 11 persons (20.75%) of the 53 who answered this question on the survey stated they did not know about APC's work at the regional level. We were interested in analysing which sectors are mostly unaware of APC's regional work.

Analyzing the replies by sector, we see:

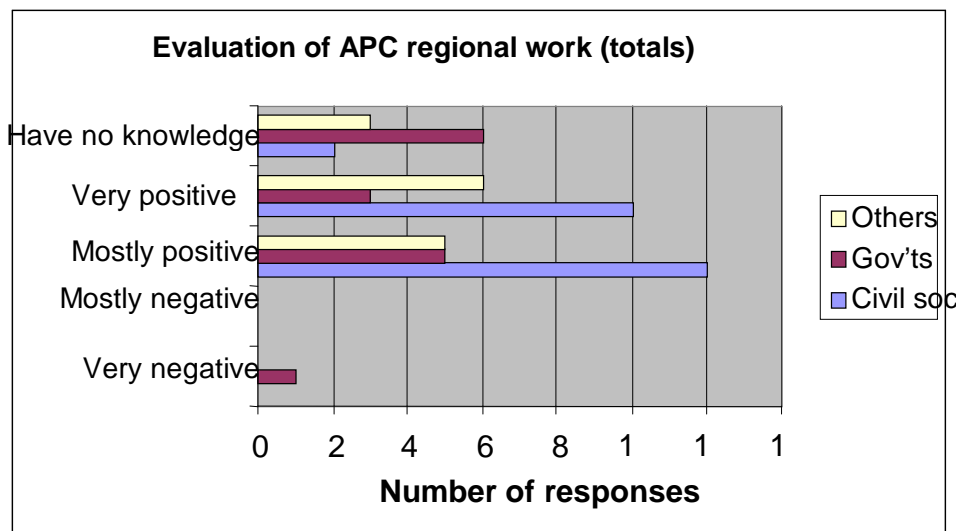


Chart 15

Considering it in terms of percentages by sector:

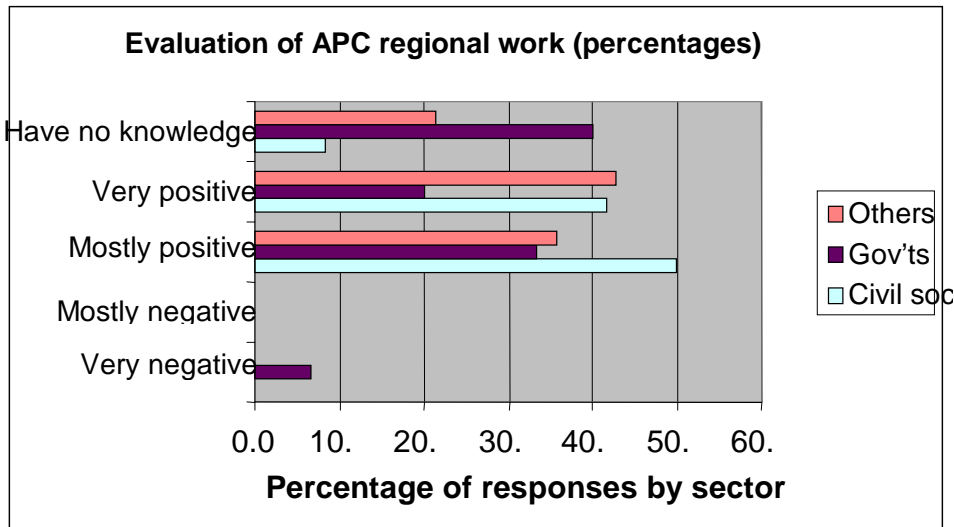


Chart 16

It can be seen, therefore, that the greatest lack of awareness regarding APC occurs at the level of the government actors who responded to the survey, while this work is most known and recognized in the civil society realm, with an important recognition by other regional actors taken as a whole (private sector, funders, academia, international bodies).

In addition to the question, those surveyed were given the possibility to include comments explaining how or by what means they were acquainted with APC's regional work. Although the number of responses obtained is low (not allowing for a quantitative analysis), the principle elements mentioned were:

- Work in "APC LAC Public Policy Monitor" (currently ICT Policies Programme in Latin America, PICAL)
- Women's Networking Support Programme
- APC website and newsletters
- Work with members
- Participation in networks
- Political processes on the information society at the global and regional levels

Participation and incidence of APC in eLAC

Two questions were included in the survey to analyse the perception regarding APC's role in the eLAC process (see Appendix 1). The first was aimed at obtaining information on the degree of knowledge about APC's participation in eLAC, and the second focused on obtaining information on how the regional actors evaluate APC's incidence in the process.

With respect to APC's participation in eLAC, the following results were obtained:

Degree of information	Number	Percentage
Not at all informed	9	16.98
Slightly informed	11	20.75
Somewhat informed	14	26.42
Quite informed	16	30.19
Very well informed	3	5.66

On a graphic level:

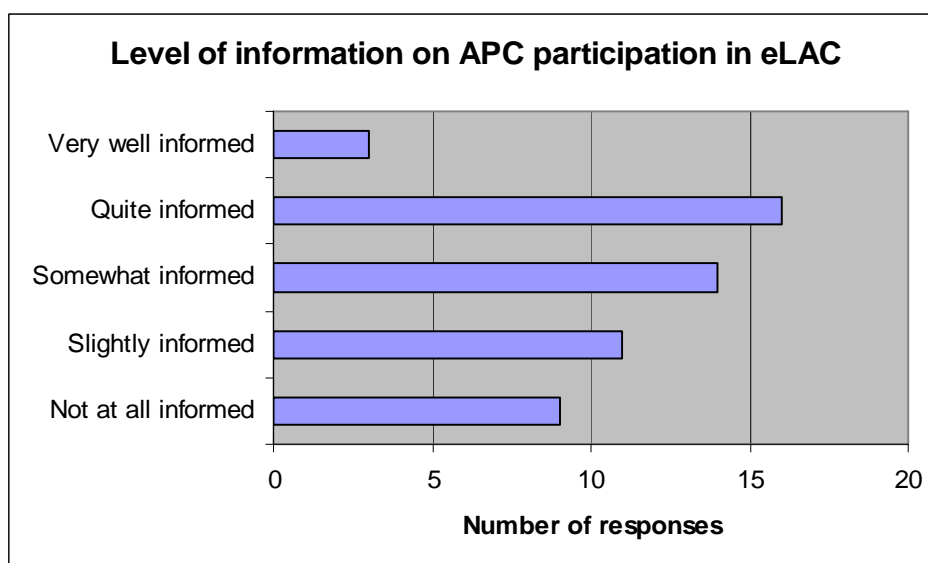


Chart 17

While 35.85% of those surveyed responded that they were quite well or very well informed about APC's participation on eLAC, 37.73% responded that they were little or not at all informed. Assuming people who answered this question (number 26 on the survey) are interested in the eLAC process and considering the continual presence of APC in both phases of the eLAC process this could be considered a surprising outcome.

One possible explanation for this is that in the list of those surveyed, there was a significant percentage of people who had participated in the second ministerial conference of eLAC, in El Salvador, and in the previous event organized by GAID. APC had an active role in the eLAC process and covered the event in El Salvador through the website of the Programme of APC Policies in Latin America (PICAL), but due to dates coinciding with an APC meeting none of the regional staff members could attend; APC representation was delegated to one of its member (ITeM). It is possible that the absence of APC staff persons at the ministerial conference in El Salvador was detrimental to APC's visibility in the process since, at the level of regional actors in ICT policies there is a strong association between APC's work and the persons who form their staff.

If we divide the responses according to sector surveyed, we get:

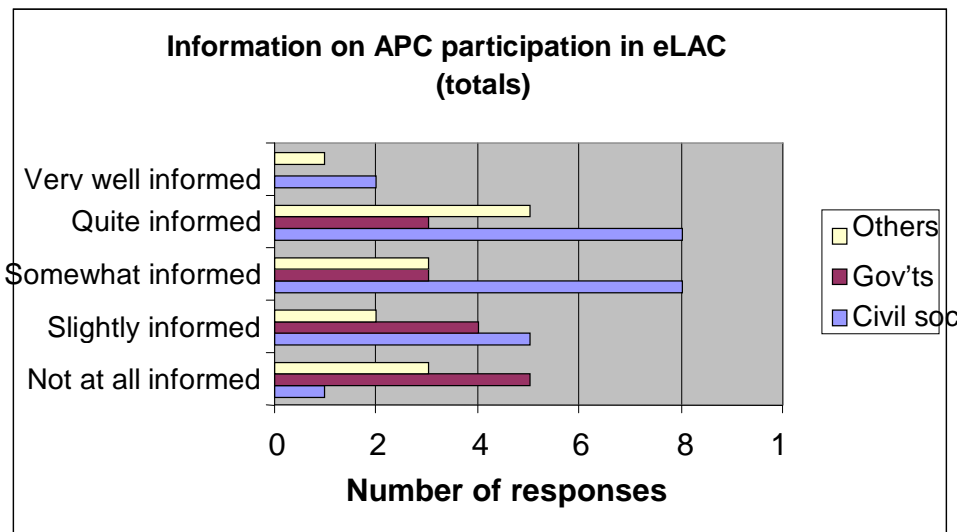


Chart 18

If we take the percentage of responses within each sector:

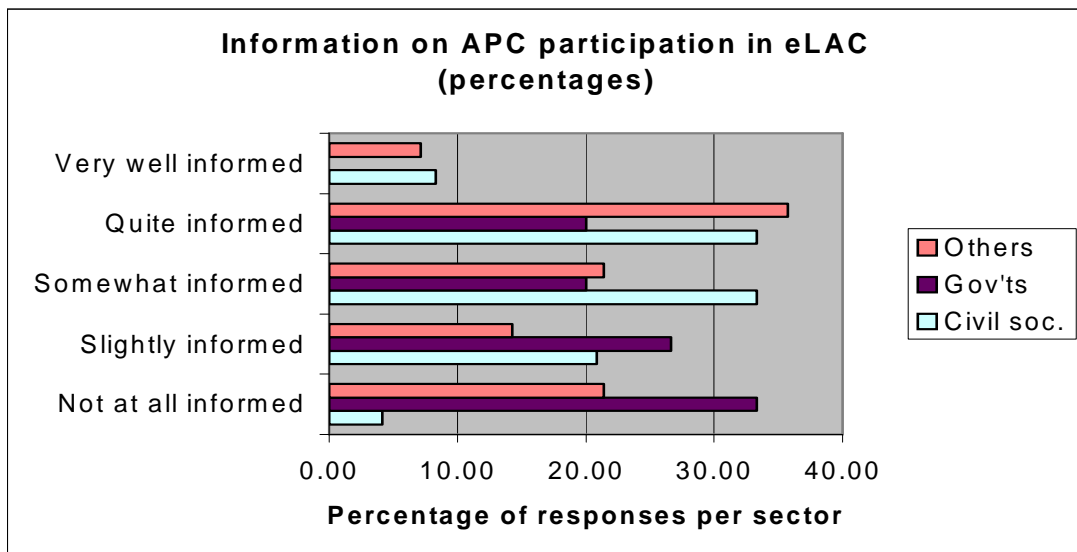


Chart 19

Here it can be more clearly seen that, of those who responded to the survey, a significant percentage of government representatives indicated not having information on APC's participation in the eLAC process.

Conclusions

Through this exercise we were able to collect information on the views of an important number of regional actors in the area of ICT policies regarding the eLAC process and on the roles of the different parties interested in it.

The quantitative and qualitative data obtained from the opinions provided by those interviewed allowed us to visualize the strong presence that a small group of regional actors have in the region, among whom are multilateral bodies, funding agencies and civil society organisations. However, as one interviewee pointed out, less visibility in the regional ICT policies processes (as is the case of the private sector or of actors outside the region) does not necessarily mean a lesser degree of influence in the policies implemented.

With respect to the eLAC process, we can see moderate interest, expressed through a medium amount of participation by the various actors. The interest and participation of the actors are two closely related dimensions that mutually nurture one another. In this sense, it is important to consider the shortfalls identified in the process—in particular, the scant impact that regional-level government commitments have on the national level—as well as the obstacles that hinder a greater degree of participation by all those interested. We can refer specifically to the limited economic and human resources available and the lack of spaces for information and participation, or the poor functioning of those that already exist.

Regarding participation and incidence in regional processes of ICT policies, we were interested in analysing the perceptions of the various actors on the role of civil society organisations in general, and of APC in particular. Based on the results obtained, we saw a broad consensus regarding the importance of civil society participation in this type of process. While the need to increase this participation and make it more effective became evident, it needs to translate into greater levels of incidence in the definition of regional policies on the information society. In this sense, one element that figured prominently, especially in the information provided by the interviewees, is the need to achieve greater levels of coordination among civil society entities.

With respect to APC, the exercise shows a highly positive vision of the work in the area of ICT policies in Latin America and the organisation is identified as one of the actors with the highest level of importance and collaboration in the region. However, the heavy weight of APC in the region is demonstrated in a partial way in the eLAC process, especially evident considering the perspectives contributed by governmental actors, who show a lesser degree of knowledge about APC's actions in the context of eLAC. Taking on the role of civil society link in the eLAC Follow-up Mechanism, therefore, represents as much an opportunity as an important challenge for APC.

Appendix 1 – Text of the survey

This survey is part of a political analysis effort by APC and ITeM on participatory governance processes in the context of eLAC.

The responses obtained will be used as inputs for the analysis, which include a charting of relations between actors participating in the eLAC process.

Based on the analysis made two reports will be produced: one for APC internal use and another which will be published as a contribution of APC and ITeM to the eLAC process.

The personal information and specific responses will not be divulged.

Thank you for your participation!

1. Name

2. Organisation / Institution

3. Country

4. If your organisation/institution is part of a network, please state which

5. Sector:

Academia

Funding

Government

NGO

Multilateral organisation

Private sector

Other (please specify)

6. How would you weigh the relevance of the area of ICT policies in your institution/organisation on a scale where 1 is “very low” and 5 is “very high”?

1 2 3 4 5

7. Please name, in order of relevance, the issues you consider priorities for the region in the area of ICT policies:

Issues

1. (greatest relevance)

2.

3.

4.

5. (least relevance)

Others (please specify)

8. Please identify 5 to 10 actors (organisations / institutions / governments / companies) that you believe have a relevant participation in the ICT policies processes in the region.

1 (greatest relevance)

2

3

4

5

6

- 7
- 8
- 9
- 10 (least relevance)

9. Please identify, in decreasing order of importance, up to 5 actors with which your institution/organisation maintains collaborative relations in the area of ICT policies (formal and informal)

In each case, specify the principle type of relationship established (for example: Political coordination; Technical collaboration; Financing; Participation in same networks).

- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5

10. How would you evaluate the relevance of the eLAC process in the regional context?

- Nil
- Low
- Average
- High
- Very high

Comments (optional):

11. The participation of your organisation/institution in the eLAC2007 process and in the First Ministerial Conference in Rio de Janeiro (June 2005) was:

- Nil
- Low
- Average
- High
- Very high

Comments (optional):

12. The participation of your organisation/institution in the eLAC2010 process and in the Second Ministerial Conference in San Salvador (February 2008) was:

- Nil
- Low
- Average
- High
- Very high

Comments (optional):

13. Initially, the expectations of your organisation/institution regarding the eLAC process were:

- Nil
- Low
- Average
- High
- Very High

Comments (optional):

14. Do you feel the contribution of your organisation/institution to the eLAC process was:

- Nil
- Low
- Average
- High
- Very High

Comments (optional):

15. Do you feel the benefits obtained by your organisation/institution based on its participation in the eLAC process were:

- Nil
- Low
- Average
- High
- Very High

Comments (optional):

16. The resources (economic, technical, human) available to your organisation/institution for participation in the eLAC process are:

- Nil
- Low
- Average
- High
- Very High

Please specify

17. Please name, in order of relevance, up to 5 elements that you identify as possible obstacles to participation of your organisation/institution in the eLAC process.

(Examples: lack of appropriate setting for ICT policies in your country; lack of training in specific eLAC issues within the organisation)

1 (greatest relevance)

2

3

4
5 (least relevance)

18. Please name, in order of relevance, up to 5 elements that you feel facilitate the participation of your organisation/institution in the eLAC process.
(Examples: participation in networks linked to the eLAC process; existence of funds for participation in ICT policies processes)

1 (greatest relevance)
2
3
4
5 (least relevance)

19. How would you evaluate the formal participation of civil society organisations in the entire eLAC process?

Not at all relevant
Not very relevant
Neutral
Somewhat relevant
Very relevant

Comments (optional):

20. How would you evaluate the incidence of civil society organisations' participation in the eLAC process up to now? (considering the degree of influence of civil society in the agreements that have emerged from the eLAC process)

Nil
Low
Average
High
Very High

Comments (optional):

21. Do you feel that participation by civil society organisations in the eLAC process should be:

Nil
Less than current
Same as current
A bit more than current
Much more than current

Comments (optional):