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REGIONAL OBSERVATORY ON PLANNING FOR DEVELOPMENT IN LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN: CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

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BACKGROUND

In the course of the twenty-first century, planning has gained momentum in Latin America and the Caribbean as a guiding policy tool for ensuring continued progress in development. However, current conditions are difficult both for planning as an instrument and for policymakers as executors of those plans that are developed. Social inequality, poor economic growth and global warming are but a few of the main issues in the current global context.

To address these challenges, in 2015 the General Assembly of the United Nations adopted the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. This Agenda, which was drafted on the basis of proposals made by Member States themselves, presents an historic opportunity for Latin America and the Caribbean.

The 2030 Agenda is a civilizing agenda that places dignity and equality at the centre. At once far-sighted and ambitious, its implementation will require the engagement of all sectors of society and of the State.

Based on analysis of the 2030 Agenda, the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) has identified four priorities in support of the implementation and follow-up of the Agenda in the countries of the region. These are:

(i) Strengthen the regional institutional architecture to place Latin America and the Caribbean in a better position to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals.

(ii) Enhance analysis of the means of implementation of the 2030 Agenda at the regional level.

(iii) Support the integration of the Sustainable Development Goals into national development plans and budgets.

(iv) Promote the integration of the measurement processes necessary to build Sustainable Development Goal indicators into national and regional strategies for the development of statistics (ECLAC, 2017a).

On the basis of the four priorities identified by ECLAC in support of the implementation of the 2030 Agenda, planning becomes all the more important and is recognized as a means of implementing the Agenda. It serves as the ideal tool for ensuring the cohesion, coherence and rationality of the entire public administration process in each of the Latin American and Caribbean States, in particular, with respect to the challenges of meeting their development goals.

Having acknowledged the importance of planning, it is vital to establish a consolidated planning system that is capable of making long-term projections and anticipating economic, social and environmental risks in support of policies that must remain in place regardless of political cycles of government.

Hence the idea of setting up a regional planning observatory: this was in response partly to resolution CRP/XV/01, which was adopted at the fifteenth meeting of the Regional Council for Planning of the Latin American and Caribbean Institute for Economic and Social Planning (ILPES), held in Yachay (Ecuador) in 2015; and partly to the widespread demand from Latin American and Caribbean States for strengthened planning practices in view of the resurgence of interest in planning at the start of the twenty-first century. The regional planning observatory therefore serves as a forum for information and knowledge for both State stakeholders and officials responsible for implementing policies and civil society.

The main objective of the Regional Observatory on Planning for Development in Latin America and the Caribbean is to support the countries of the region in strengthening their planning and public administration processes, and help to link those processes to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development with due regard for national and subnational realities and priorities, generating information, knowledge, identification of good practices and exchange of experiences.

In order to improve planning practices, it is necessary to rethink the meaning of planning: consequently, the Observatory should serve as a space for monitoring, analysing, learning and sharing experiences —at inter- and intra-State levels— on planning practices, national planning structures, requisite institutional architectures, relevant stakeholders and existing planning instruments, among other things.

What planning system does each State have and how do they plan in order to achieve development goals? This is the question at the heart of the Observatory that should guide the analysis and generation of knowledge with a view to addressing the concerns of specialists and government officials from the region. In research conducted by ILPES, the following issues were identified as key in planning processes:

- difficulties in plan implementation processes

- short-term planning

- lack of intersectoral coordination

- insufficient budget allocations for implementing plans

- limited coordination between plan design and budget

- political interests that outweigh technical recommendations

- frequent government turnover, with no continuity in implementation processes

- lack of political will to implement plans

- complexity of institutional architecture and excessive bureaucracy

- planning given little value as an instrument for effecting change or anticipating unfavourable situations (ECLAC, 2017b)

The Observatory will answer these questions for users on the basis of national practices rolled out at various territorial levels, as for more than 10 years States have been stepping up the development of their national planning systems and designing planning instruments for implementing their public policies. The Observatory aims to become a forum for sharing these practices and for learning, re-learning, evaluating and redesigning new approaches.

The Observatory is a forum for the continuous production of information and knowledge. The idea of a continuum reinforces the concept of the Observatory as a dynamic forum for collective learning, a virtual, permanent meeting place in which countries of the region can generate the critical mass needed to strengthen not only the capacities of the planning systems of each State, but also the regional dialogue on the shared problems that Latin America and the Caribbean will have to face in the coming years.
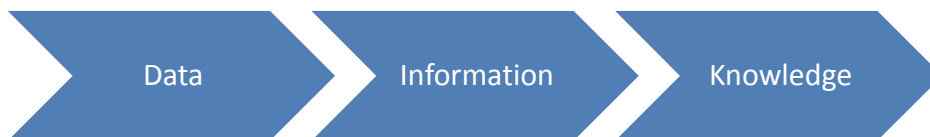
A. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

1. What do we mean by Observatory?

In the domain of social sciences, an observatory is a tool used to systematically compile data on an ongoing basis and convert them into information of importance and purpose. Its objective is not just to observe a phenomenon, but to generate knowledge on the subject in question and investigate it in more depth, promoting reflection and influencing action.

As a multi-stage process, monitoring gives rise to complex activities such as knowledge creation. "New information does not necessarily lead to new knowledge. Information is only transformed into knowledge when it is properly processed, when it is used to make comparisons, draw conclusions, and establish connections. Knowledge can be understood as information that is accompanied by experience, judgment, intuition, and values" Innerarity (2013). "Knowledge is information with value, with a high degree of reflexivity. Knowledge is not something you have. Knowledge is an activity" (Stehr, 2003, cited in Innerarity, 2013).

This distinction between the elements of the continuum —data, information and knowledge (see diagram 1)— shows how the role of an observatory differs from that of a repository. While a repository stores data and information, an observatory must generate knowledge from that information, with which to add to the knowledge of its users.

Diagram 1
From data to the production of knowledge

Source: Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC).

2. ILPES Regional Observatory on Planning for Development in Latin America and the Caribbean

The Regional Observatory on Planning for Development is intended to be a forum for exchanging and building knowledge around the question: What planning system does each State have and how do they plan in order to achieve development goals? It aims to serve as a space for dialogue and reflection on the public administration and planning processes of the 33 countries of Latin America and the Caribbean, in order to share the experiences of these countries in planning and implementing development strategies.

(a)   The observation strategy

If we consider the thematic focus of the Observatory to be planning systems and related instruments, the next question we must ask is: what do we mean by national planning systems and development planning instruments?[1]

There is no uniform definition of these concepts. ILPES defines a national planning system as a set of processes and rules through which the State, via its institutions and levels of government (municipal, departmental and national), interacts with society and rationalizes decision-making in the area of allocation of public resources with a view to ensuring the sustainable development of the country.

Variations of this definition stem from the emphasis that each country wishes to give its planning system, rather than from conceptual differences. An analysis of the definitions offered by the countries of the region shows that the common denominator was the existence of processes, norms, stakeholders and institutions that devise the mechanisms to plan, allocate resources and implement public policies on national and subnational scales.
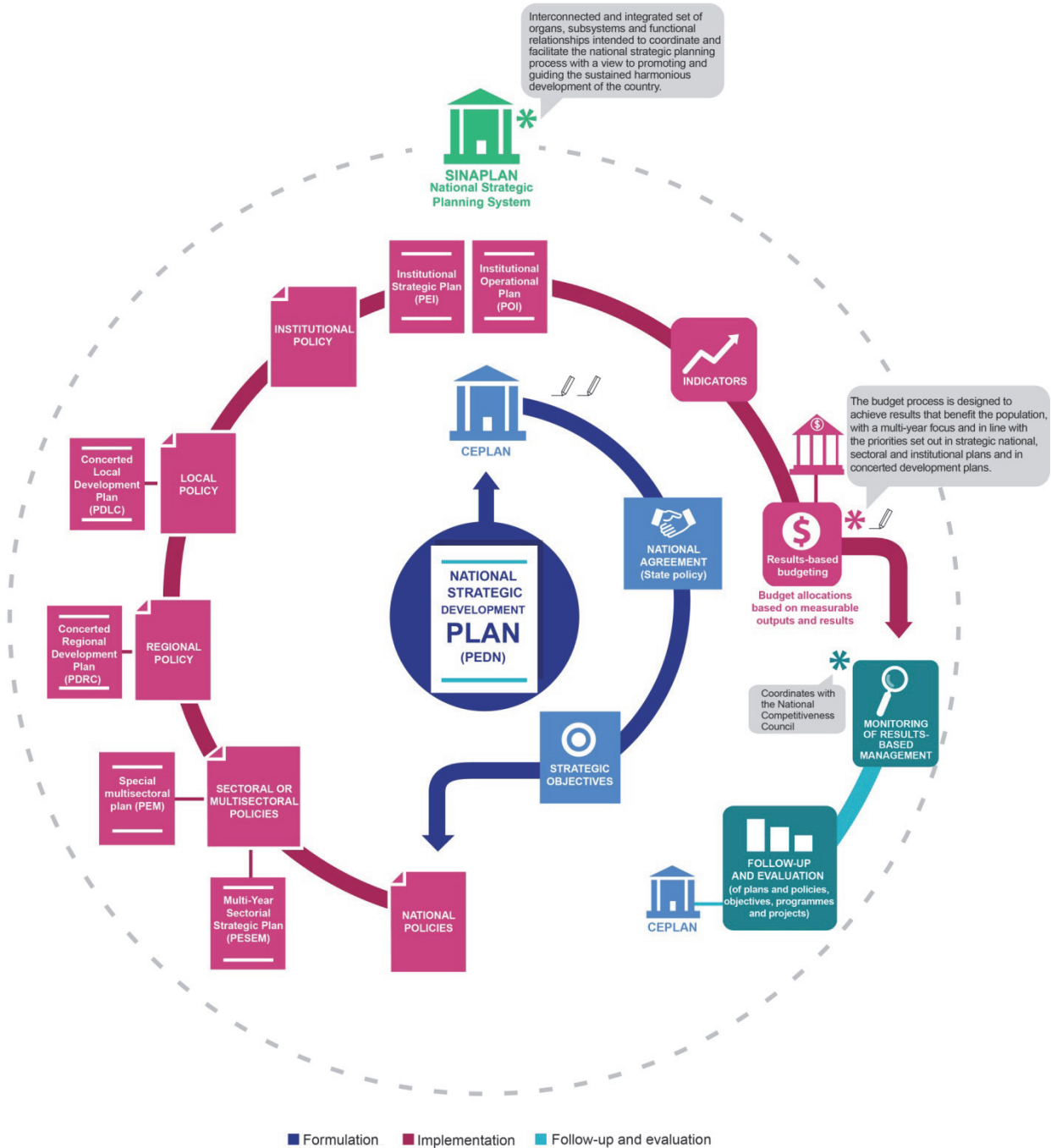
ECLAC defines the concept of development planning as a "view of the way forward in which the policies needed to achieve the targets are agreed upon and indicators are defined to measure progress within a specific time frame. This is an inclusive, explicit, organized and participatory process of government, aimed at determining the courses of action a country must undertake to achieve long-term objectives" (ECLAC/SEGIB, 2011, p. 51).

These planning processes are contained in what are known as planning instruments, which may include national development plans, sectoral plans (for example, targeting agriculture, education or health), cross-cutting plans (such as gender equality plans), subnational plans or municipal plans. In this regard, the State's role, through its national planning system, is to coordinate actions, bring stakeholders together and use resources throughout the different phases of planning and public administration, from the construction of a desired future and the plan to achieve it —including the actions needed to implement and monitor it along the way— to the evaluation of both the process and the results achieved.

The Regional Observatory on Planning for Development in Latin America and the Caribbean will focus on national planning systems and the planning instruments designed by each country to carry out these processes (see diagrams 2 and 3).

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[1]   We distinguish between "planning for development" and "development planning", a term that is consistent with the manner in which planning was conceived in the 1960s and 1970s, when development was planned in State offices - without discussion or consultation with other social, political and economic stakeholders, and from an economic perspective that overlooked social and environmental issues (Máttar and Perroti, 2014).
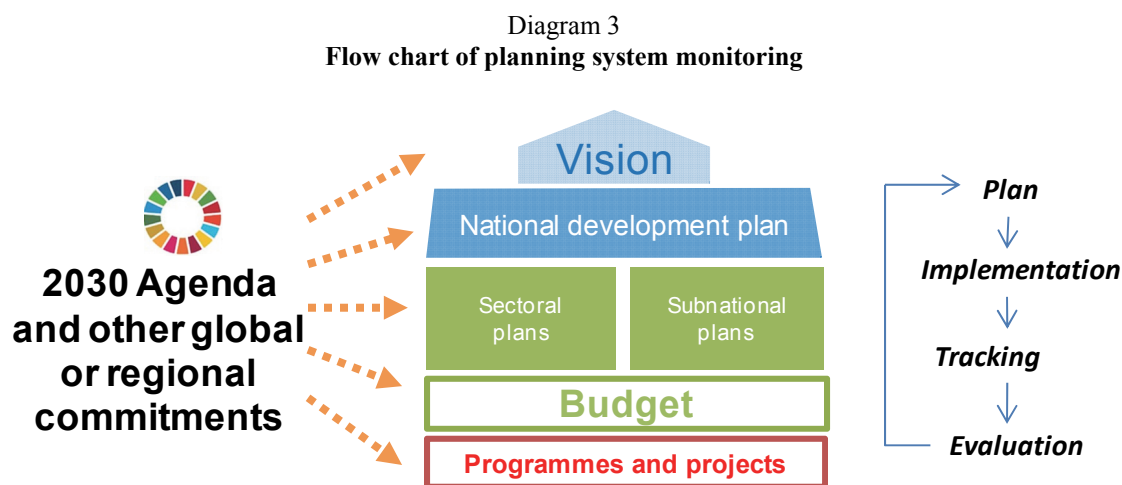
Diagram 2
National planning system of Peru

Source: Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), on the basis of information from the Centre for Strategic Planning (CEPLAN) of Peru [online] https://www.ceplan.gob.pe/.

(b)   What does the Observatory do?

The Observatory will use national planning systems and related instruments as the axis around which it will analyse the systems available in each country and highlight the interactions between the various stakeholders, sectors and levels of government throughout the planning and public administration process.

In parallel to the analysis of planning systems, the Observatory focuses on the various planning instruments in each country, which may include national development plans, subnational plans, cross-cutting plans (such as gender equality or open government plans) and sectoral plans.

In addition to monitoring these systems and instruments within each country, it will also explore how these national processes are linked to global and regional development commitments, with a special focus on the 2030 Agenda for sustainable Development (see diagram 4).

Diagram 3
Flow chart of planning system monitoring

Source: Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC).

(c)   How does it work?

If we consider the national planning systems and planning and public administration processes of Latin American and Caribbean countries to be its field of observation, the Observatory develops methods for identifying, collecting and systematizing the data from those processes to transform into information and knowledge. Broadly speaking, the procedure is as follows:

- Data collection from official primary and secondary sources.

- Data processing to generate information in accordance with the methodologies defined by the Observatory team and validated by ECLAC officials and country authorities.

- Visualization of the information (output).

- Generation of periodic analytical reports which will present the main findings of the Observatory based on the analysis of the information processed.

As the data are obtained from official government sources, the Observatory should maintain ongoing interaction with the relevant authorities of the countries of the region.

Table 1 shows the types of data that are collected. It should be noted that this list is not exhaustive, it can be extended or rearranged based on the recommendations of the States, and taking into account the stage of the processes in each of the countries.

Table 1
Sources of the Observatory's data

Stages	Formulation	Implementation	Tracking and monitoring	Evaluation
Contents	– Existing institutional coordination mechanisms – Legal framework – Visions and plans for development – Current strategies and sectoral, subnational and crosscutting plans	– Budgets – National public investment systems – Public investment – Programmes and projects – Management mechanisms	– Tracking and monitoring instruments – Accountability instruments – Tools and instruments for citizen participation in monitoring public administration	– Evaluation mechanisms – Evaluations of the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals – Evaluations of the impact of programmes and projects – Case studies

Source: Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC).

It should be noted that, given the complexity, diversity and specificity of the systems involved in the process the Observatory is intended to capture, its work will be scalable and carried out in several phases.

The Observatory is currently focusing on what has been termed the analysis of countries' national planning systems and the available planning instruments. In the latter case, the emphasis is on the design (or formulation) of national development plans and their links with the implementation of the 2030 Agenda.

In this phase, the Observatory will make the following outputs available to users:[2]

- Characterization of the national planning system of each country: identification of the stakeholders, instruments and processes making up the planning system and how they interact.

- Identification of the national development plans of the 33 countries in the region.

- Characterization of national development plans: the Observatory will determine dimensions and criteria in line with those outlined in the national development plans.

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[2] The methodological sheets for each of the outputs are included in annex 1.

- Institutional arrangements in each country for the implementation and follow up of the 2030 Agenda: it will describe the way in which each country of the region is organized institutionally to implement and monitor the Sustainable Development Goals.

- Convergence between national development plans and the 2030 Agenda: qualitative analysis of the convergence between the objectives mentioned in national development plans and the content of the Goals in the 2030 Agenda.

- Thematic convergence between national development plans and the 2030 Agenda: lexicometric analysis of national development plans, by identifying not also the incidence of themes in each of the plans through the analysis of the most frequently used words, but also the frequency of "SDG concepts" present in national development plans. The aim of such an analysis is to highlight the priority themes and their convergence among countries and with the 2030 Agenda.

(d)   Why does it do it?

The central purpose of the Observatory is to support countries in strengthening their public administration and planning for development processes, providing them with systematized data and creating a space for dialogue and exchange of information and knowledge to enable policymakers to develop tools for evidence-based decision-making.

With this in mind, the Observatory aims to achieve the following objectives:

- To serve as a forum for dialogue for the countries of Latin America and the Caribbean in the area of planning and public administration for development.

- To work with countries to link their planning processes with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

- To generate planning-related input on progress in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda with a view to contributing to the Forum of the Countries of Latin America and the Caribbean on Sustainable Development.

- To provide a regional overview of planning and public administration.

- To serve as a reference tool in the region for the development of national and subnational observatories for the monitoring and implementation of the 2030 Agenda.

(e)   What is its target audience?

The primary target audience is governments, given their leadership in policy implementation and their importance in bringing together the various stakeholders involved in the complex process of development planning. Similarly, as an open data forum, it can serve as an input for a diverse public: parliamentarians, political parties, academia, the private sector and civil society in general.

(f)   How is it governed?

The Observatory is run by the Latin American and Caribbean Institute for Economic and Social Planning (ILPES) of ECLAC.

The functions of the ILPES team administering the Observatory are to enter data and official information received from the government authorities of the 33 countries and to process that information for users.

The Observatory has to be a tool for meeting the needs of the countries of the region in the thematic areas under its purview. To that end, ongoing interaction with all other parties involved in planning processes is vital; this feedback thus creates a circle of constructive and collaborative knowledge.

B. THE OBSERVATORY'S WEB PAGE

The Observatory's virtual platform is a simple, clear, up-to-date and open access medium that will provide a space for the dissemination of data and information generated as explained in the previous section. To that end, technological tools will be used to make the Observatory an attractive, informative, dynamic, purposeful site, with products that generate value for the interested public.

The resources used will include tables, graphs and dynamic maps, infographics, animated GIFs, videos and other tools to disseminate the information generated as widely as possible. Detailed information on the data processing methodologies used will also be made available to the public through reports, case studies and other documents, which will discuss specific issues within their scope of observation in greater depth. Experiences from outside the region that can serve as a reference or input for achieving the Observatory's intended goals proposed will also be available on the website.

To achieve its objective of presenting all of the diverse and complex information generated, the Observatory's virtual platform will be structured as described below (see image 1).

Image 1
Virtual platform of the Regional Development Planning Observatory

Source: Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC).

1. Home page

The home page (see image 2) presents important and up-to-date information on the Observatory. It consists of a map of the region that allows users to access each country and view corresponding national development plans. It will also include the most recent published documents and plans and featured articles.

Image 2
Home page of the Observatory's virtual platform

Source: Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC).

2. About

This section provides information on the Observatory, its field of observation, objective, and a brief description of its conceptual framework, technical governance, policy and other details relating to its make-up.

3. Countries

The country tabs allow users to access information specific to their countries of interest. When the user selects a country, an option appears to select information by Sustainable Development Goal, along with a dynamic display. This section also shows the country's main planning tools: the main one is the national development plan, but subnational and sectoral plans can also be viewed. The institutions that make up the planning system (for example, ministries and ad hoc or institutional agencies pertaining to the 2030 Agenda) can also be viewed, with the governing body highlighted. Lastly, users can view related documents.

4. Planning systems

In this section of the website, users will be able to view information on planning systems, which are understood as the set of stakeholders, processes and instruments that interact with each other at each of the stages we have identified in planning and public administration. It provides a schematic description of the institutional structure of planning, the regulatory framework that governs it, the formulation of plans and the actors involved in the process; it also provides information on the implementation, follow-up and evaluation of plans.

5. Plans

This section presents the government plans, national development plans, sectoral plans, subnational plans and cross-cutting plans used by countries in the region as instruments for setting their development objectives. It will contain a brief description of the plan, a link to the original document and certain details providing additional information, such as the structure, type or timeline of the plan.

6. Legal frameworks

This section contains the regulatory frameworks that define the legal conditions under which planning systems must be carried out.

7. Sustainable Development Goals

The purpose of this section is to illustrate the relationship between planning and public administration systems with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). It will provide aggregated, detailed information on each SDG, reflecting the priorities countries give to development goals on the basis of their existing planning instruments, plans or strategies that deal with specific SDGs and the institutional arrangements for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda.

8. Documents

This section will contain the following types of documents:

- Global and regional agreements that are the foundation of country commitments for achieving development, including the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the Paris Agreement, the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030, the Montevideo Consensus on Population and Development or the New Urban Agenda.
- National documents: official reports, evaluations or case studies relating to development planning that are produced and shared by countries.
- Observatory studies: analysis documents produced by ILPES and ECLAC through the processing of information collected by the Observatory. Reports will be prepared on regional developments in planning and public administration.

- Methodologies: methodologies and tools developed by ILPES to strengthen planning and public administration in the region, such as PlanBarometer (tool for the characterization of development planning processes).
- Capacity-building: information on exchange of experiences and triangular, South-South, North-South, or peer-to-peer cooperation, as well as actions countries are taking, both within the region and beyond, to strengthen their planning and public administration processes and their convergence towards achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals.

9. Dissemination resources

This section will showcase any activities organized by ECLAC and ILPES to build capacity for implementation of the 2030 Agenda.

C. MILESTONES IN THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE OBSERVATORY

The following milestones were defined for the run-up to and launch of the initial publicly-accessible version of the Regional Observatory on Planning for Development:

- Definition of the Observatory's scope, objective and conceptual framework: this phase involves defining the Observatory's objective, preparing the conceptual framework outlining the purpose and scope of the observation, and developing the proposal.
- Development of contents and the data systemization methodology: the methodological proposal for compiling and systemizing the data at each of the stages defined, on the basis of the conceptual framework.
- Technological development of the platform: once the Observatory's substantive content has been defined and information generated by compiling and systemizing data, the website containing the conceptual framework of the Observatory and including graphic design and content viewing, will be developed.
- Legitimization of the methodology, data, information and virtual platform by the Presiding Officers of the Regional Council for Planning, ECLAC divisions and other stakeholders. Although the interaction with these stakeholders will be ongoing throughout the development of the platform —as the Observatory is envisaged as a collective construction— this milestone was nevertheless established so that the pilot version could be legitimized by stakeholders prior to its launch.
- Launch of the Observatory prototype: the Observatory will be presented during the next meeting of the Regional Council for Planning, to be held in Lima, in the second half of 2017. From then on, an information, dissemination and feedback protocol will be maintained with the counterparties, to enable the Observatory to serve as a dynamic tool that constantly adjusts to the needs of the region's countries, adapts its scope and evolves into a planning and public management laboratory for development in the medium term.
- Once the Observatory has been launched and is live as a virtual platform, stakeholders from the 33 countries of the region and other relevant stakeholders will provide content that the Observatory will process and make available to users as part of a feedback process based on a collaborative construction effort.

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Annex A1

Table A1.1
Methodology sheet 1: Characterizing the national planning system

What do we monitor?	The **national planning system of each country**, explicitly defined as such, or the institutional architecture the country uses to conduct planning and public administration processes.
	A **national planning system** can be defined as: "the set of processes and rules through which the State, via its institutions and levels of government (municipal, departmental and national), interacts with society and rationalizes decision-making in the area of allocation of public resources with a view to ensuring the sustainable development of the country".
	The system is composed of **standards, stakeholders/institutions and processes**.
	Standards are defined as the laws and decrees establishing mandates which government bodies must fulfil.
	Stakeholders/institutions are responsible for making the planning system operational. These may be government bodies, public-private bodies or public interest non-governmental bodies, such as civil society organizations.
	Processes refer to the procedures carried out by stakeholders/institutions, in line with the normative framework, for planning and managing public resources for the country's development.
How do we process information?	1. Consultation of official sources 2. Design of a conceptual map that includes stakeholders, processes and normative frameworks. 3. Analysis or synthesis of the system 4. Mapping of the system 5. Validation by the country
Why do we do it?	To make available to users a graphic repertory of national planning systems in Latin America and the Caribbean.

Source: Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC).

Table A1.2
Methodology sheet 2: Identifying national plans

What do we monitor?	**The national development plan**, government plan, or the main planning instrument in the country.
	The national development plan, by its vision, objectives and strategies, reflects the core policy areas for the development of the country. There are short-, medium- and long-term development plans.
	Although the **government plan** includes core policy elements for the development of the country, it also reflects the partisan manifesto of the incumbent administration and is, therefore, time-bound to the term of office.
	Planning and management instruments are defined as the tools used by the country's administration to carry out, in an effective and efficient manner, the actions related to public service. Examples of such instruments include national development plans, regional strategies or investment programming.
	NB: There is no uniform definition of these concepts and, in practice, it is often observed that a development plan is also considered to be a government plan.
How do we process information?	1. Consultation of official sources 2. Creation of a table with the country name, the name of the main planning instrument, and the timeline of the instrument.
Why do we do it?	To provide users with information on the situation in the region with regard to the existence of planning and development management instruments as well as government plans.

Source: Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC).

Table A1.3
Methodology sheet 3: Characterizing development plans

What do we monitor?	The national development plan, government plan or the main planning instrument of the country, based on the criteria established by the Observatory team from an analysis of existing plans.
	These criteria are as follows:

1	Type of plan	Is the plan established through a law or decree?	Yes/No
2	Participating bodies	Does the plan provide for citizen participation in its development and implementation?	Informative Advisory Decision-making Co-managing
3	Tracking and monitoring system	Does the plan establish entities for tracking and monitoring planned actions and strategies?	Yes/No
4	Definition of indicators	Does the plan set out management indicators?	Yes/No
5	Timeline of plan	Is the plan short-term, medium-term or long-term?	Short-term Medium-term Long-term
6	Operationalization	Does the plan set out areas of action?	Yes/No
7	Budget reference	Does the plan refer to the national budget or link the proposed strategies thereto?	Yes/No
8	Public investment and action areas	Does the plan link the areas of action to public investment in the country?	Yes/No
9	Stakeholder involvement	Are other non-governmental stakeholders involved in the formulation and implementation of the plan?	Yes/No

How do we process information?	1. Reading official documents 2. Establishing of a single set of criteria from a reading of the plans 3. Classifying the plans based on these criteria
Why do we do it?	To provide users with the characteristics of the national plans or government plans (based on the analysis criteria) available in countries of the region.

Source: Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC).

Table A1.4
Methodology sheet 4: Institutional architecture for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda

What do we monitor?	The institutional architecture created or adapted by the country for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. The institutions making up the architecture may include sectoral ministries, interministerial commissions or national development councils.
How do we process information?	1. Searching the websites of government ministries in each country to identify institutions that were established or modified for the purposes of implementing the 2030 Agenda 2. Creating conceptual maps 3. Lists or diagrams of institutions
Why do we do it?	To inform users about the existence of the new institutional architecture for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda, with a view to creating networks and fostering collective learning among countries.

Source: Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC).

Table A1.5
Methodology sheet 5: Convergence between development plans and the 2030 Agenda

What do we monitor?	The development plans of each country and their possible thematic linkage with the 2030 Agenda and the 17 Sustainable Development Goals.
How do we process information?	1. By studying the national plan 2. By identifying the substantive content of the plan (vision, national objectives, sectoral objectives) 3. By creating an Excel spreadsheet detailing the vision national (primary level) objectives and sectoral (secondary) objectives. This categorization is used to standardize the different forms and structures of existing development plans. 4. By reading the substantive content of the plan and linking it to each of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals and their respective targets. Each of the plan's objectives may be linked to more than one G oal. 5. Submitting results for peer review once the process is complete. There are two steps in this final stage. First, a person who has not studied the plan or its linkages with the Goals reviews the linkages made by the first person. Next, the reviewer and the first person discuss and come to a consensus on divergent aspects of the analysis to justify any convergences or divergences that arise.

Table A1.5 (concluded)

Why do we do it?	To understand the density of existing links between the issues addressed by the national plan and those covered in the 2030 Agenda and its 17 Goals.								

Linkage between the national development plan of El Salvador with the 2030 Agenda	Five-year Development Plan 2014-2019								
	Main purpose	Description	ILPES interface	Abbreviation	1	2	3	4	5
	Vision	El Salvador is a prosperous, equitable, inclusive, supportive and democratic country, which offers opportunities for well-being for all citizens.	Vision	V		X		X	X X
	Priority actions for the period	1. Stimulating productive employment through a model for sustained economic growth.	N1	OE1	X				

Source: Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC).

Table A1.6
Methodology sheet 6: Lexicometric analysis of national development plans

What do we monitor?	1. The priorities of national plans with regard to their development objectives, through key concepts that identify:
	    – desired stages of development (e.g. economic growth, prosperity and quality of life),
	    – the problems at hand (e.g. poverty, climate change, inequality or natural disasters),
	    – subject areas/groups (e.g. women, cities, forests or oceans) and
	    – the resources (institutions, funding or infrastructure).
	2. The presence of Sustainable Development Goals in development plans, through **key, pre-defined concepts** outlined in the 17 Goals and 169 targets in the 2030 Agenda.

How do we process information?	1. **Text summarization**: the national development plan is stripped down to the substantive elements, eliminating parts such as the introduction, background, diagnosis, annexes and bibliography.
	2. **Data mining**: the summarized plan is processed using a text mining tool (RapidMiner Studio) as follows:
	    (a) "Tokenization", or segmentation of the text into linguistic units including words, punctuation marks or numbers
	    (b) Filtering by "token" length
	    (c) Conversion to lower case letters
	    (d) lemmatization
	    (e) Filtering based on a list of common words, and
	    (f) Generation of n-grams.
	3. Generation of a "concept cloud".

Why do we do it?	1. To understand which are the most frequent concepts or themes in each country's national development plan. 2. To observe the frequency with which 2030 Agenda topics appear in national plans.
Frequent concepts in a national development plan	

Source: Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC).