



The project

The Europe-Cuba Forum is an initiative that began in 2017 and involves a consortium of 11 leading institutions with consolidated experience in researching Cuban affairs and relations between Europe and Cuba. The three-year Work Plan is divided into three thematic clusters that will be developed through joint and multidisciplinary research:

1. In the first year, cooperation on the economic reforms and sustainable development will be analysed.
2. In the second year, cooperation on institutional reform and social policies will be examined.
3. In the third year, the project will focus on interregional cooperation and global integration.

“We Europeans are united with Cuba, Latin America and the Caribbean by history, culture and common values, as well as shared aspirations for the present and the future.”

Federica Mogherini
EU's foreign policy chief.

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Seminar on Cuba in the International Context: Economic Reforms and Sustainable Development

On February 20, the first seminar held within the framework of the Europa-Cuba Forum project, Jean Monnet Network, took place at the University of Havana. This initiative, financed by the European Union and made up of a consortium of eleven institutions, aims to analyze the processes of economic, political, social and institutional reform that are taking place on the island, as well as contributing to energize a new stage of constructive engagement in relations between Cuba and the European Union after the signing of the Political Dialogue and Cooperation Agreement (PDCA).

Experts and academics from centers in Europe and Cuba analyzed some of the central issues that constitute challenges for the Cuban economy and its relationship with the international and European context. During the event, the basis for macroeconomic stability and economic growth, productive change, the competitiveness of the Cuban economy, the future of some strategic sectors and the international relations framework of Cuba were discussed.

The seminar focused on economic reforms and sustainable development and was the first of three planned within the framework of the Europe-Cuba Forum. In 2020 and 2021, Hamburg and Barcelona will host two more seminars focused on institutional reform and social policies, as well as interregional cooperation and global insertion respectively.

First Call for Young Researchers of the Forum Europe - Cuba

During the seminar "*Cuba in the International Context: Economic Reforms and Sustainable Development*" some papers by a group of academics were presented. They answered the "Call for Young Researchers" of economic sciences conducted by the Jean Monnet Network Forum Europe Cuba, and co-promoted by CIDOB (Barcelona Center for International Affairs).

The goal of the contest was to encourage the creation of a group of academics interested in the study of the relations between Cuba and the European Union. Four thematic lines were proposed: economic growth and macroeconomic management; competitiveness; innovation and external trade insertion; key sectors for growth and development: tourism, agroindustry and energy, and Cuba and its international relations.

The two winners awarded were: Frank Arzuaga with his workpaper titled "Modelación SVAR: un acercamiento al análisis del equilibrio interno y externo" and Henry Colina with "Actualizando el Sistema de pensiones de la Seguridad Social en Cuba".



Workshop on Political Dialogue and Cooperation Agreement

Under the auspices of the first seminar of the **Jean Monnet Network Forum Europe Cuba**, a workshop on “Political Dialogue and Cooperation Agreement: variables and actors that condition its evolution” was held on the morning of the 22nd of February at the headquarter of CIPI (Centro de Investigaciones de Política Internacional).

At the event, network members, as well as delegations of academic institutions, think-tanks, and public institutions of Cuba, like MINREX and leaders of the Cuban Communist Party (DRRII - CCPPCC), came together. A total of 10 European academic institutions from Spain, Germany, France, Great Britain, Poland, and Switzerland attended the event. In addition, Andrea Rossi, Deputy Head of Mission of the Delegation of the European Union in Cuba and María Salcedo Ortíz, Political Counsellor of the Embassy of Spain to Cuba, was involved.

The workshop analyzed in-depth the prospects of Cuba’s ties with the EU after the signing of the Political Dialogue and Cooperation Agreement. The discussions evolved around the threats and challenges imposed on the relationship by the aggressive course of US policy, the imminent Chapter 3 of the Helms-Burton Act, as well as the situation in Venezuela. Another talking point was concerned with Cuba’s relations with other international actors, including Russia and China. There was a consensus that the current relations between Cuba and Europe, based on mutual respect and sovereign equality are to be seen positively. However, it was emphasized that further cooperation projects between the two actors were needed, especially in the areas of the cultural and academic exchanges.



News

Constitutional Referendum: 86,85% of the voters approve the New Constitution of Cuba

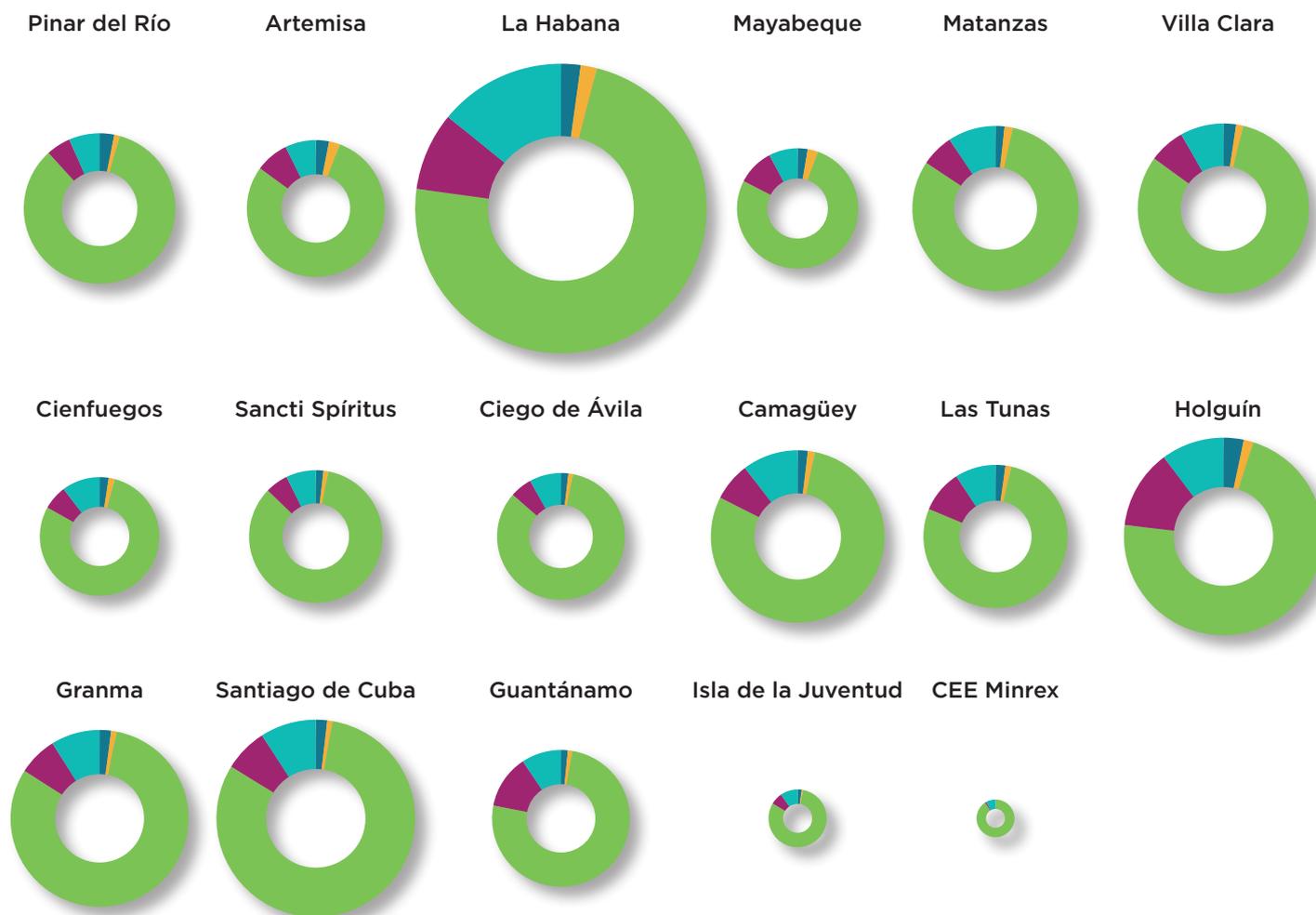
The National Electoral Commission has confirmed that the new constitution of the Republic of Cuba was ratified by a favorable vote of the majority of electorates during the Constitutional Referendum held on February 24, 2019.

7,848,343 citizens exercised the right to vote, of which 86.85% of the voters gave their support to the New Cuban Constitution, demonstrating a desire to incorporate new institutional and political reforms in favor of transformation on the Island.

The New Constitution recognizes the right to private property, allows for a market and foreign investment.

It also establishes the positions of the president and that of the prime minister, although it still does not allow the election of the president by direct popular vote.

According to the analysis carried out by Proyecto Inventario, the breakdown of votes shows that 1,449,768 people voted in Havana, representing 85.90% of total previously registered citizens. The vast majority supported the new constitution: 1,235,178 voted in favor, while 147,380 voted against the constitutional project; 36,772 votes were blank and 30,438 void.



Source: proyectoinventario.org

Cuba: A constitution for the future?

José Chofre

University of Alicante

After an eight-year-long drafting process, the new Cuban constitution has been endorsed by the people on February 24th and will be enacted on April 10th. At the 6th Congress of the PCC in April 2011, Raúl Castro Ruz, First Secretary of the Communist Party of Cuba (PCC), announced the implementation of an eventual amendment to the constitution, declaring it as “part of the legal modifications required to accompany the economic update”.

In April 2018, Castro announced the official beginning of the constitutional reform clarifying that “we do not intend to change the irrevocable nature of socialism in our political and social system or the role of the Communist Party of Cuba, as the organized vanguard and leading force in society and state, as established in Article 5 of the current constitution, which will also be part of the new constitution”.

Within this reference framework, the new Cuban constitution essentially maintains its coherence with its revolutionary principles. Changes in the new constitution include among others: the election of the president of the republic by the National Assembly of People’s Power; abolition of the Provincial Assemblies of People’s Power and their replacement by a Provincial Council headed by a governor and deputy governor; recognition of the autonomy of municipalities; recognition of the Office of the Comptroller General and the National Electoral Council as new constitutional organs; recognition of women’s sexual and reproductive rights and their protection from gender-based violence; extension of the catalogue of rights such as the right to information and access to personal data; recognition of various forms of ownership that co-exist with state ownership, including cooperatives, joint enterprises and private property.

But the multiple changes introduced to its articles in different subject areas do not alter its constitutional structure. The main pillars remain the same. The principle of unity of power, which is the essential core of Cuba’s revolutionary constitutional tradition, and which manifests itself in People’s Power (the way power is organized in Cuba), remains intact. However, the first-time inclusion of the category “Rule of Law” (art. 1) in the frontispiece of the constitution can be regarded as “incoherent” with its predecessor. “Rule of Law” has always been considered a taboo for socialist constitutionalism, with Marxists attributing

it to bourgeois thinking and historically disparaging, ignoring and even vilifying it. Time will reveal the extent to which this until recently reviled clause is developed.

Cuba remains an exception, despite the approval of its new constitution, differing even in terms of Latin American constitutionalism. Cuba’s constitutions – the 1976 version that underwent partial reforms in 1978, 1992 and 2002, as well as the current one from 2019 – appear to withstand the influences of the countries surrounding it. Thus far, Cuba has been unable to transfer its constitutional model to any other country in the Americas, and none of the nearby models with ideological affinities to Cuba have managed to influence the new constitution. Cuba retains its own unique character.

Cuba’s distinct model of constitutionalism is rooted in those countries that are structured under the Marxist-Leninist aegis. This harmony overcomes vast geographical distances. The 2019 Cuban constitution is the last socialist-inspired constitution whose language maintains a Soviet influence. Most prominently, the preamble refers to communism, the exploitation of man by man, and proletarian internationalism. Terms that did not appear during the drafting, but ended up being included in the official constitutional text.

The great challenge the new Cuban constitution faces is to guarantee its supremacy and to become a genuinely “normative constitution”, and by that accomplishing the direct application of its norms and principles. A challenging undertaking of great magnitude which needs to be approached with a long-term view, given the cheapened role of laws in Cuba that have suffered from a non-existent, or very weak, legal culture. Previously, the Cuban constitution had merely been a reflection of the deep-rooted “legal nihilism” on the island. But following the enactment of the 2019 constitution, a process of transformation has begun that faces enormous difficulties and obstacles that will need to be removed, as well as structural deficiencies that will have to be fixed in order to move towards the steady configuration of a “normative constitution”. This should be the true meaning of the new constitution. No more and no less.

First Dialogue on Sustainable Development between the European Union and Cuba

On April 16, the European Union and Cuba held their first Dialogue on the advancement of the Sustainable Development Goals in Havana. The meeting was co-chaired by Stefano Manservigi, I. Director-General for International Cooperation and Development of the European Commission, and Alberto Navarro, Ambassador of the European Union in Cuba, on the one hand, and Rodolfo Reyes, General Director of Multilateral Affairs and International Law of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs on the other. The meeting was held within the framework of the Political Dialogue and Cooperation Agreement which seeks to promote bilateral relations and accompany the island's process of regional and international integration.



Source: MINREX

This first dialogue analyzed the progress Cuba and the EU have made on the 17 SDGs, along with the challenges they both face and the opportunities for joint initiatives that can be implemented together, both bilaterally and multilaterally, in response to the 2030 Agenda.

The debate addressed 6 thematic axes that were prioritized by both parties: SDG 2 (zero hunger), SDG 5 (gender equality), SDG 7 (sustainable energy), SDG 8 (decent work and economic growth), SDG 10 (reduction of inequalities) and SDG 13 (climate change). In the debate, the most relevant possible actions and strategies that can foster the creation of partnerships and alliances for development concerning SDG 17 were studied. Among others, these included the promotion of triangular cooperation and regional programs that are developed with Latin America and the Caribbean at different levels.

The Cuban government representative warned that the tightening of the sanctions and embargoes applied by the Trump Administration is undermining the nation's sustainable development efforts. On this issue, the EU reaffirmed its position in opposition to the blockade policy and referred to the illegal nature of the extraterritorial sanctions.

During the meeting, Stefano Manservigi and Ileana Núñez Mordoche, Deputy Minister of Foreign Trade and Foreign Investment of Cuba signed several agreements that envisage additional commitments of a total of €61.5 million to finance the EU-Cuba cooperation on food security, renewable energy, climate change, economic modernization, and culture.

The New Social Structure of Cuba: Evaluating the Re-stratification of the Cuban Society 60 years after the Revolution

A recent publication of the German Institute of Global and Area Studies (GIGA) analyzes the process of social re-stratification that is taking place in Cuba, despite the political continuity of communism in decision-making. The political landscape of Cuba bases on the great social transformations that emerged from the Cuban Revolution in 1959, where the upper class that concentrated wealth and power, was evicted by the socialist agenda that ensured the work, and equalitarian education and health to the civilian population.

The study evaluates how this phenomenon has facilitated the strengthening and resurgence of the old elites and highlights the level of involvement in the widening of the socioeconomic gap in Cuba, specifically, about the limitation of access to property, education, and generation of capital for Afro-Cubans.

To download the whole text: www.giga-hamburg.de



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