Business at OECD | Business and Industry Advisory Committee to the OECD

Harnessing Trustworthy Artificial Intelligence for Productivity, Competitiveness and Inclusive Growth in Latin America and the Caribbean

Business Recommendations to the 2026 OECD Latin America and the Caribbean Ministerial Summit in Uruguay

Priorities Paper
September 2026

Introduction

Artificial Intelligence (AI) represents a major opportunity for Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC) to raise productivity, strengthen competitiveness, attract investment and accelerate innovation. This opportunity is particularly important for a region where longstanding gaps in productivity, technology adoption and innovation continue to constrain economic growth.

The momentum is already visible. LAC accounts for around 14% of global visits to AI tools and ranks among the leading regions in the use of generative AI. Yet progress remains uneven: the 2025 Latin American Artificial Intelligence Index (ILIA) identifies Chile, Brazil and Uruguay as the region's AI "pioneers", while more than one-third of the 19 countries assessed remain at an earlier stage of AI readiness.

Recent AWS research also points to rapid business uptake. In Colombia, the share of companies using AI increased from 34% to 42% in one year. In Brazil, 50% of companies surveyed use AI, while in Chile 94% of surveyed AI adopters report productivity improvements and 89% increased revenues. Yet much adoption remains relatively basic: only 15% of AI adopters surveyed in Brazil and 13% in Chile have reached advanced implementation. In Mexico, AWS research finds that only 22% of businesses surveyed consider themselves prepared for agentic AI.

The challenge is therefore no longer simply to encourage experimentation. LAC needs to create conditions for companies of all sizes to move from AI experimentation to AI transformation, translating adoption into measurable productivity and competitiveness gains.

Key *Business at OECD* Recommendations

Build an enabling and interoperable framework for trustworthy AI

LAC countries should build on the OECD AI Principles and pursue AI governance that is risk-based, proportionate, outcome-oriented and responsive to technological change. Trust and innovation should reinforce each other.

At the same time, diverging national approaches risk raising compliance costs and making it harder for businesses to deploy solutions across the region. Regulatory interoperability should therefore be a strategic objective for LAC. Governments should make greater use of regulatory sandboxes and other experimentation mechanisms, engaging businesses early to understand the practical implications of emerging rules.

The OECD can help countries move from principles to implementation through important resources such as the OECD.AI Policy Observatory and Policy Navigator, its AI policy tools and international peer learning. These instruments should be systematically leveraged through the OECD LAC Regional Programme to promote greater convergence around the OECD AI Principles.

Close the connectivity, cloud and AI infrastructure gap

AI adoption depends on access to high-quality connectivity, cloud computing, data centres, computing capacity and reliable energy infrastructure. Yet these capabilities remain highly uneven across LAC. ILIA 2025 finds that Brazil accounts for more than 90% of the region's measured computing capacity, while more than half of the countries assessed lack high-performance computing infrastructure.

Governments should create predictable and technology-neutral frameworks that encourage long-term private investment, facilitate network deployment and maintain effective competition. This evolution requires careful consideration to ensure that competition remains robust, investment is sustainable and regulatory frameworks are fit for purpose. A flexible predictable transparent approach that prevents distortions is needed. These principles are particularly important for SMEs, for which cloud computing provides access to sophisticated AI capabilities without prohibitive upfront investment.

The OECD should continue supporting LAC governments in designing policy frameworks that provide adequate incentives for investment across the digital ecosystem while facilitating access to affordable, secure and sustainable infrastructure.

Keep LAC open on data, investment and global innovation

AI development and deployment depend on access to global technologies, data, specialised talent, hardware and digital services. LAC governments should promote trusted cross-border data flows and avoid unnecessary localisation or discriminatory requirements that restrict firms' access to global AI capabilities.

Cybersecurity frameworks should likewise rely on objective, technical and internationally interoperable standards, rather than requirements based on the nationality or location of technology providers. This can strengthen security while avoiding unnecessary market fragmentation.

Open markets should be accompanied by regulatory certainty and coherence. Predictable and interoperable frameworks will help LAC attract international investment, allow businesses to scale solutions across borders and strengthen the region's integration into global digital value chains.

Help SMEs and workers participate in the AI transformation

Smaller firms face particular difficulties turning experimentation into meaningful AI adoption. Skills are already emerging as a major constraint: AWS research in Brazil finds that 48% of surveyed businesses identify shortages of digital skills as a barrier to AI adoption. More broadly, ILIA 2025 finds that 13 of the 19 countries assessed do not yet incorporate early AI skills into school curricula and 11 lack doctoral-level AI programmes.

Governments should expand access to practical AI and digital skills, technical assistance, finance and trusted digital infrastructure, while avoiding disproportionate administrative burdens on smaller firms. Lifelong learning, upskilling and reskilling should also become central components of national AI strategies.

The OECD Digital for SMEs Global Initiative provides an important platform to identify successful approaches and scale them across LAC. Governments, businesses and business organisations should use it to exchange practical solutions that help SMEs move beyond basic off-the-shelf applications towards AI uses that genuinely transform products, services and business processes.

Use the OECD as a platform for implementation and regional convergence

The considerable differences in AI readiness across LAC make benchmarking, peer learning and public-private cooperation particularly valuable. Rather than creating additional layers of principles, countries should make full use of the OECD's existing toolbox (OECD AI Principles, OECD AI Policy Toolkit, …).

The OECD LAC Regional Programme should connect these instruments and provide a platform for regional policy convergence and implementation, bringing together governments, businesses and other stakeholders. Building on the OECD Strategic Framework for Latin America and the Caribbean and its Implementation Plan, ***Business at OECD* calls for a clear action plan on AI and innovation under the LAC Regional Programme**, translating the outcomes of the 2026 Ministerial into concrete priorities, deliverables and follow-up. Such an action plan should focus on accelerating business adoption, strengthening digital and AI infrastructure, promoting regulatory interoperability, closing skills gaps and supporting SMEs, while making systematic use of existing OECD tools and expertise.

Business should be closely involved in both the development and implementation of this action plan. Structured public-private cooperation is essential to ensure that priorities reflect technological and market realities, identify barriers to investment and adoption as well as translate OECD principles into practical outcomes across the region.

- *We invite Ministers and stakeholders to register for our Business at OECD side event in Montevideo on 28 September and read our 2026 report: "Business Perspectives on Advancing Artificial Intelligence: Business Recommendations to the OECD*

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