



UK Science & Innovation Network Summary:

Colombia

1. Science and Innovation Landscape

Colombia is in the top ten countries in Latin America in terms of scientific growth with an annual percentage of 11.3 between 2011 and 2020. By 2021, there were 6,160 investigation groups and 21,094 researchers working in the country. The Global Innovation Index indicates that from 2021 to 2023 the University-Industry Research & Development collaboration increased by 2.5 points and the state of cluster development has gone from being ranked 77 to 58. ([Source: Global Innovation Index, 2023](#)).

In 2021, Colombia's Gross Expenditure on Research and Development (GERD) was 0.26% from the GDP. However, the activity of Science, Technology and Innovation has been increasing, reaching 1.02% of the GDP, with the activity on innovation being the principal contributor. ([Source: Colombian Observatory for Science and Technology, 2021](#)).

In the last three years, Colombia has maintained in the top 70 of the Global Innovation Index ranking and the top 5 for the region on that same index. During 2023, Colombia was performing in line with the average level of development as an upper middle-income country. The strongest areas for the country in innovation are business sophistication, infrastructure, and knowledge and technology inputs. For this last category, the knowledge impact is ranked globally in 38th place, indicating a strength in labour productivity growth and unicorn valuation. ([Source: Global Innovation Index, 2023](#)).

In 2020, the Colombian government created a new Ministry of Science, Technology and Innovation ([MinCiencias](#)) in charge of formulating, coordinating, executing and implementing the State policy in these areas. MinCiencias administers the "*Francisco José de Caldas Fund*", a national funding mechanism that allows the Ministry to integrate public, private, international and donor resources to finance the development of Science, Technology and Innovation in Colombia.

Between 2023 and 2024, the Colombian government plans to invest 2.9 billion Colombian pesos in royalty resources for the territories in ST&I. ([Source: Presidency of the Republic of Colombia, 2023](#)). Additionally, MinCiencias received the approval of a total of \$2.5 billion COP of tax benefits for country enterprises that make investments and donations in research, technological development and innovation. These may include a linkage of high-level human capital in the country's enterprises, and thus continue to promote the science sector. ([Source: Ministry of Science, Technology and Innovation of Colombia, 2023](#)).



2. UK-Colombia partnership on Science, Technology & Innovation

The UK and Colombian governments have maintained a strong and lasting relationship focused on promoting bilateral scientific collaboration, generating strong exchanges of knowledge, and strengthening academic partnerships. This close Government to Government collaboration became even more systematic and strategic since 2014, when the UK launched the Newton-Caldas Fund with the Colombian Government. The Global Challenges Research Fund (GCRF) also contributed from 2017 to 2022 and the UK became one of the two main international partners of choice of Colombia to do science with.

The Newton-Caldas Fund was co-financed between the UK government and various Colombian stakeholders like MinCiencias, [Ruta N](#), [DNP](#), amongst others, with a total allocation of around £60 million between both countries. To date, it is considered the largest cooperation programme in science and innovation signed between Colombia and the international community. In 2021, Colombia became an official member of the FDCO Science and Innovation Network.

After the planned closure of funding mechanisms like Newton-Caldas and GCRF, the bilateral relationship has grown to foster collaborations with multiple actors and a great part of the work sits under the “*UK-COL Partnership for Sustainable Growth*”. This agreement signed between both countries commits the United Kingdom and Colombia to work together towards greater climate ambition and action, understanding and valuing biodiversity and its sustainable use, amongst other key areas.

SIN Colombia has been working systematically to project UK ST&I excellence and to facilitate meaningful collaborations by supporting projects around a wide range of thematic areas. Notably, SIN Colombia recently pioneered a project with the Frontier Tech Hub in collaboration with the Alexander von Humboldt Institute as country partner.

The project, still in-progress, focuses on applying DNA sequencing technology, mainly used for epidemiological genomic surveillance during the COVID-19 pandemic, to a novel context of biodiversity management. As a result, twenty-two of the most trafficked wildlife species in Colombia have been identified and their respective DNA sequences were shared and made available to the global scientific community.

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