



# DEVELOPMENT CO-OPERATION TIPS TOOLS INSIGHTS PRACTICES

## In practice

# MESAS PAÍS – BUILDING SOLUTIONS ACROSS GOVERNMENTS AND COUNTRIES

### Key messages

Spain's *Mesas país* (country roundtables) involve structured policy dialogue between peers to solve sectoral and multidimensional development challenges. Bringing together senior policymakers from partner governments, EU institutions and EU Member States, they have proven effective for developing joined-up responses to crises, such as COVID-19, and for taking forward the Team Europe approach.

### Keywords

[Governance](#) | [Institutional arrangement](#) | [Partner countries](#) | [Partnerships](#) | [Policy coherence](#)

### Key partner

[Spain](#)

### Challenge

The integrated economic, social and environmental pillars of the 2030 Agenda require various parts of governments to work together when solving development challenges – be they local, regional or global; single or multi-sector. While some countries and territories have set up some formal high-level co-ordination structures, these do not necessarily include all development partners and can lack the impetus to find sustainable solutions to shared challenges. Under [Eurosocial+](#) and other regional European Union (EU) programmes in Latin America, the [Ibero-American Foundation for Administration and Public Policies](#) (FIIAPP) has developed *Mesas país* or country roundtables to facilitate structured dialogue between peers to create synergies, manage trade-offs and take a coherent approach to sectoral and multidimensional development challenges.

### Approach

*Mesas país* are convened by Spain and bring together representatives from the key public bodies in partner countries, EU institutions and EU Member States. They are designed to:

- be flexible and adaptable, tailoring actions to partner countries' strategic demands and allowing for broader and deeper dialogue, stronger support, and more strategic action planning

- establish long-term and catalytic policy dialogue, reflecting the added value of Team Europe’s development co-operation
- develop “public policy itineraries” of strategic value for the partner country, backed by strong political will and guided by the Sustainable Development Goals
- avoid fragmentation (e.g. too many disconnected and low-impact activities) by being structured, strategic and coherent’
- ensure ownership by the main stakeholders through dialogue, consultation and co-ordination led by National Focal Points designated by partner countries.

They begin by analysing the partner country’s needs and the EU’s priorities in the country, and identifying cross-cutting issues and priorities. They then agree a work programme to meet shared priorities in a horizontal, multisectoral and participatory way. This leads to a joint commitment by stakeholders towards common goals, reflecting the ambitions of the more recent [Team Europe approach](#). Continuous dialogue is then established: 1) as a follow-up mechanism to identify progress, potential challenges, and solutions; and 2) to adapt approaches and priorities as needed.

## Results

- **Regional programmes**, such as [EUROCLIMA+](#), that are [better tailored to country contexts](#).
- **An approach that allows for a joined-up response to COVID-19.** In Ecuador and Costa Rica, the *Mesas COVID-19* exercise was an ideal process for providing a co-ordinated response to the temporary and exceptional needs generated by the pandemic.
- **An innovative work methodology to help make European Union action more effective.** *Mesas país* offer a way to substantiate and operationalise the new paradigms of European co-operation based on international partnerships ([Mesas Team Europe](#)). They also promote coherence, complementarity and co-ordination among actors and initiatives, mutual understanding of needs and flexibility, while maintaining the principles of ownership and dialogue with the partner country – key long-standing elements of European co-operation.
- **A better overview of programme interventions for partners.** Partners are positive about *Mesas país* as they allow for structured and long-term working relationships, helping them develop a co-ordinated and coherent response to local demands and needs and identify local reform priorities.

## Lessons learnt

- **Engage the right institutions in sectoral policy dialogue.** There should be a balance of actors from partner countries and territories, EU Member States, and ministries involved in technical co-operation. Involving the finance and planning ministries helps to attract donors and bring financial resources to fund policy reforms, as well as ensuring political backing.
- **Create a body to co-ordinate** EU Delegations (which exercise leadership); National Focal Points (which define national institutional priorities and guide and co-ordinate the country’s multiple internal dynamics); and regional programmes.
- **Understand the country context**, both at the institutional and political levels. This is critical for preparing a broad-based dialogue.
- **Ensure the agreements emanating from the Mesa país are living documents**, to be enriched and modified through subsequent meetings between all counterparts.

- o **Establish more than one National Focal Point.** In addition to the main sectoral focal point, *Mesas país* can fill intersectoral co-ordination gaps, helping the main National Focal Point to bring other ministries and actors to the table.
- o **Provide constant support from the implementing agency.** Some partners with weaker institutional frameworks and resources find it difficult to commit to the efforts that the process requires. This has been mitigated by sustained support.
- o **Be aware that considerable human resources are required,** both from programmes and partner countries.

### Further information

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### OECD resources

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### To learn more about Spain's development co-operation see:

OECD (2021), "Spain", in *Development Co-operation Profiles*, OECD Publishing, Paris, <https://doi.org/10.1787/26d68de7-en>.

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