



# DEVELOPMENT CO-OPERATION TIPS TOOLS INSIGHTS PRACTICES

## In practice

# SPAIN'S DEVELOPMENT CO-OPERATION COUNCIL – BUILDING A UNIFIED APPROACH TO DEVELOPMENT CHALLENGES

### Key messages

In countries with complex and decentralised development co-operation systems, such as Spain's, mechanisms that bring diverse actors together are key. In reviving its whole-of-society Development Co-operation Council, Spain is now better placed to take a unified approach to development challenges and build ownership across the system.

### Keywords

[Civil society](#) | [Governance](#) | [Partnerships](#) | [Policy and guidance](#) | [Policy coherence](#)

### Key partner

[Spain](#)

### Challenge

Strong, inclusive and integrated partnerships at all levels are critical for implementing the 2030 Agenda, as reflected in [Sustainable Development Goal \(SDG\) 17](#) on partnerships. But to be effective, they need to steer policy towards shared objectives. Spain has a long tradition of inclusive partnerships, notably through the [Development Co-operation Council](#), set up in 2012 as a broad-based and inclusive body made up of representatives from non-government organisations, academia, the private sector and public institutions to define international development co-operation policy. Even so, the Council could have been used more effectively for consultation and to inform decision making, as noted in the OECD DAC [2016 peer review of Spain](#). Aiming to consolidate a shared understanding of international co-operation across government and society, Spain has revived its Development Co-operation Council and given fresh impetus to thematic and structural working groups.

### Approach

The Development Co-operation Council is involved in defining Spain's international development co-operation policy. In addition to representatives of the state administration, the Council includes social

agents, experts, specialised NGOs, institutions and private organisations in the field of development co-operation.

The Council acts in plenary sessions at least three times a year. Its Development Policy Monitoring Commission plays a steering role, organising Council activities on a monthly basis. The Council considers draft laws and other general government provisions on development co-operation. It can also set up working groups on specific topics.

As the central government has given more emphasis to development co-operation in recent years, the ministries and the members of the Development Co-operation Council have made efforts to revive dialogue and co-ordination. These efforts have included:

- Improving annual communication and providing a comprehensive picture of financial flows and resources from all Spanish institutions and instruments related to ODA and TOSSD, and how they align with the SDGs.
- Reactivating “special purpose groups” dedicated to issues such as gender equality, children’s rights and education for development, or broader themes such as the 2030 Agenda and the institutional reform of Spain’s development architecture.
- Forming ad-hoc groups with the other two advisory bodies, the Inter-territorial and Inter-ministerial Commissions for Development Co-operation, to discuss concrete action plans and strategies on issues such as COVID-19 recovery or development effectiveness.

## Results

These efforts have contributed to a shared understanding of the key challenges facing Spain’s development co-operation, and a sense of ownership of its overall vision:

- **Spain can now speak with one voice on important issues** such as COVID-19 recovery. The [Spanish Co-operation Joint Response Strategy to the COVID-19 Crisis](#) is a whole-of-society action plan, developed through constructive Council discussions and an inclusive approach that led to strong ownership for taking the strategy forward.
- **Diverse actors have a greater say** in the direction of Spanish development co-operation. The working group on capacities recently presented [reform proposals for making the 2030 Agenda a reality](#) to the Development Co-operation Council. The Council published them on its webpage as the opinion of non-government actors, whilst observing that it did not necessarily represent the administration's position.

Spain is now planning to develop a similar approach with the Inter-territorial Commission for Development Co-operation to strengthen co-ordination with decentralised co-operation actors.

## Lessons learnt

- **Ensure active engagement by all ministries** involved in development co-operation, not just the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, to build a whole-of-government approach.
- **Plan ahead for consultations and communication** so Council members can not only provide informed advice to the central administration, but also help shape strategy development.
- **Maintain independence:** its independent agenda has helped the Council to be proactive, including on themes not necessarily on the radar of the central administration.

## Further information

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Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Cooperation of Spain (2018), *Spanish Cooperation*, <http://www.exteriores.gob.es/Portal/en/PoliticaExteriorCooperacion/CooperacionAlDesarrollo/Paginas/Planificaci%C3%B3n.aspx>.

## OECD resources

OECD (2022), *OECD Development Co-operation Peer Reviews: Spain 2022*, Development Co-operation Peer Reviews, OECD Publishing, Paris, <https://doi.org/10.1787/eed71550-en>.

### 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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