

## Updating and Closing of the Project: 'Spanish Development Assistance: A Mid-term Review And Proposal for Participative Consultation'

### Context

In 2004 the current Spanish government approved the 'Master Plan for Spanish Development Cooperation 2005-2008'. Its motto was: 'From Assistance Policy to Development Policy'. The electoral programme of the new Executive promised a significant change in Spanish development cooperation policies.<sup>1</sup> One of the goals of the programme was to gradually increase Official Development Assistance (ODA – AOD in its Spanish abbreviation) from 0.24 percent of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) in 2004 to 0.33 percent in 2006, 0.5 percent in 2008 and 0.7 percent in 2012, thus exceeding the ceiling set by the seventh recommendation of the Millennium Development Goals.<sup>2</sup>

That year FRIDE organised a series of workshops in which the main actors involved in Spanish development cooperation participated. The final purpose was to come up with recommendations and guidelines for the institutional change of the Spanish aid system.<sup>3</sup>

More than two years have passed since then. Reforms have already been applied and some others are still being implemented. The goal of the project: 'Spanish Development Assistance: Mid-term Review and Proposal for a Participative Consultation' was to review the report 'Towards a New Spanish Development Cooperation', in light of the most recent events and agreements. A follow-up of the terms that were established therein was also amongst the purposes of the project. We have further tried to study and discuss new development cooperation instruments and policies, compile and analyse experiences regarding their application, and evaluate the progress of compliance with the goals that were initially set.

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<sup>1</sup> Check the Spanish Socialist Worker's Party (PSOE) electoral programme at: <http://www.psoe.es/ambito/elpartido/docs/index.do?action=View&id=18166> (in Spanish)

<sup>2</sup> High-income countries must increase official development aid from 0.25% of the donor's GDP in 2003 to, approximately, 0.44% in 2006 and 0.54% in 2015 to support the Millennium Development Goals, in particular, in low-revenue countries, with an improved quality of ODA (including harmonised, foreseeable assistance and mainly under budget support on the basis of subsidies). Donors must reach 0.7% by 2015 at the very latest to support to MDG and other assistance priorities for development. UN Millennium Project, 2005. *Investing in Development: A Practical Plan to Achieve the Millennium Development Goals*. <http://www.unmillenniumproject.org/reports/fullreport.htm>. See the Millennium Development Goals at <http://www.undp.org/mdg/goallist.shtml>.

<sup>3</sup> S. Hidalgo and F. Espada, *Hacia una nueva cooperación española* [Towards a New Spanish Cooperation], Madrid: December 2004. See full text at: <http://www.fride.org/Publications/Publication.aspx?Item=721>

## Goals and Methodology

The mid-term review project began in April 2006. It is expected to be concluded during a conference to be held in February 2007. The project has a flexible format, in order to encourage participation from experts, the general public, intellectuals, business representatives from North and South, development workers, and citizens of aid-recipient countries. This participative consultation process focused chiefly on reflecting on and discussing how to improve the quality of Spanish development assistance. FRIDE thus created a space to check compliance with the reform agenda of Spanish development cooperation, by identifying the main advances and obstacles in the implementation of the initiatives, based on the 'more and better aid' principle. Mid-term achievements were evaluated positively, based on a comparative analysis of the commitments of the Master Plan for Spanish Development Cooperation 2005-2008.

## Structure

By the end of April 2006 the first concept paper of the project 'Spanish Development Assistance: A Mid-term Review and Proposal for Participative Consultation' was presented.<sup>4</sup> Since then, it has been modified and enlarged. It is the team's opinion that these changes, as well as the will to gain transparency and accountability, justify the updating of the project.

Before going into further depth, it should be noted that this is a large and very dynamic project, since its core element is a consultation process through a virtual forum on ODA – the [FORO AOD](http://www.foroaod.org).<sup>5</sup> This dynamism, which is consistent with the nature of the project, required changes in its design and conception while being executed.

## Format and Itinerary

The first modification concerned the stages of implementation of the initiative. A decentralised informative round was initially planned regarding the project in some Autonomous Communities, including: Catalonia, Basque Country, Galicia, Andalusia, Madrid, Castile-La Mancha and Castile and Leon. Finally, for agenda reasons, it was not possible to proceed with a decentralised dissemination as such, although the team made several trips during the course of the project, holding meetings with representatives of decentralised development cooperation agencies and some of the most important research centres in Spain.

The calendar also suffered some changes. For instance, the consultation stage for actors involved in Spanish development cooperation had been scheduled less time than was finally needed. This delay in the consultation stage was justified, since the involvement

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<sup>4</sup> *La ayuda española al desarrollo: Balance a mitad de Legislatura y propuesta para una consulta participativa* [Spanish Development Assistance: A Mid-term Review and Proposal for Participative Consultation]. <http://www.fride.org/File/ViewLinkFile.aspx?FileId=972>

<sup>5</sup> Official Development Assistance Forum [author's translation]. Official website: <http://www.foroaod.org>



Despite having been closed for publication of new documents and discussion of contents, the virtual forum on ODA is still open to the public, and facilitates access to comments and papers from all those interested or involved in international development cooperation. The complete contents of FOROAOD will be available as of next month on a permanent webpage, containing all documentation produced around the thirteen main topics of the project.

## Topics and Virtual Rooms of FOROAOD

Fifteen discussion topics were initially designed, and each of them was to be discussed in their own thematic room. FRIDE's purpose was not to approach all topics in international development cooperation, but to deal with the most controversial aspects of each, as well as with those in relation to which specific recommendations could be developed. For that, FRIDE summarised the main research and discussion topics under the following headings: Harmonisation, Multilateralism, Coherence, Human Resources, Evaluation, Decentralised Cooperation, Added Value of NGOs,<sup>6</sup> Controlling Bodies, Humanitarian Aid, Responses to Fragile States, Africa, and Empowerment.

Three out of the fifteen topics proposed were not dealt with in the end. These were Absorption Capacity, Middle-Income Countries and Aid and Democracy. Two facts led us not to dig into these aspects regarding international development cooperation. On the one hand, there was the ongoing debate in Spain and other countries within the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) regarding 'absorption capacity' and 'average-income countries'. We considered at the time that the existing debate was too broad to easily summarise and agree on the key issues that the reform agenda regarding Spanish development cooperation had to address. Moreover, other research centres and institutions were working on this field, and are currently preparing several initiatives that will shed light on both topics. As for Aid and Democracy, there was the unavailability for complete involvement of the experts chosen for that room.

In sum, the virtual forum contained more than forty high-quality documents on a vast array of current and relevant topics regarding the reform of development cooperation in Spain. Nearly twenty authors produced significant papers, amongst them: the State Secretary for International Cooperation of Spain (SECI), the Spanish Agency for International Development Cooperation (AECI), the Spanish delegate for the Development Assistance Committee (DAC) of the OECD, the General Coordinator of the United Nations for the Millennium Campaign in Spain, the Catalanian Agency for Development Cooperation (ACCD), representatives from European governments, national and international research centres, the Spanish Red Cross, and NGOs, such as *Intermon-Oxfam* and *Action against Hunger*. Also, several actors involved in Spanish development assistance expressed their interest and support for the project, and

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<sup>6</sup> Non-Governmental Organisations for Development

pointed out the added value of using a virtual forum as an information and discussion tool.

However, the project did not fully achieve its purpose of involving people in the debate who are closer to the actions and outcomes of Spanish Development Cooperation. Since it was structured in two debate spaces – one exclusively for experts and another one for the general public – the virtual forum only managed to generate a few comments and reactions to the base documents and papers included in the topic rooms.

The mid-term review of the Spanish development cooperation policy served to eliminate part of the planned stages, but it also added new elements to the initiative.

### **Workshops**

During the month of November, 2006, coinciding with the closing of the virtual forum, FRIDE organised two special workshops that encompassed most of the topics that had been discussed previously. The objective was to prepare a handbook of useful recommendations focused on the policies of the SECI, the AECI, and the General Directorate for Planning and Evaluation of Development Policies (DGpolDE). The workshops dealt with Institutions and Aid Instruments, and were a reflection of the debate and papers in FOROAOD. They were also based on the data and experiences gathered throughout the two years during which reforms had been taking place. Through dialogue with the various working groups, the most effective and relevant reform options for Spanish development assistance were identified.

### **Audiovisual Materials**

As a complement to previous initiatives, FRIDE prepared a dossier with audiovisual material, which will be included in the final report of the project, expected to be published in February 2007. The topics discussed in the virtual forum during this last stage were summarised in six brief documentaries that include contributions from technicians, experts, scholars, and other Spanish development cooperation actors. The documentaries refer to development assistance policies, consistency between policies, responses to fragile States, links between aid and democracy in Africa, the quality of humanitarian action, and the reform of the Spanish Agency for International Development Cooperation (AECI).

### **Recommendations and Final Conference**

The project will produce a final report that will include a series of recommendations resultant from the process. The conclusions will be presented, together with the audiovisual material, in a public event in February 2007. The meeting will try to reproduce the triangular structure that was seen throughout the different stages of the project, encouraging scholars and NGOD experts to analyse and discuss the

commitments made in 2004 with Spanish development cooperation planners and managers, comparing and contrasting them from a positive standpoint with the achievements to date.

### **FOROAOD – Spanish Development Aid**

FRIDE organised the project “Spanish Development Aid - Mid-term Review and a Proposal for a Participative Consultation” between June 2006 and April 2007. This project aims to develop a consultation process about the current Spanish government’s development cooperation policy. We have created a forum for participation and debate, in order to assess the Spanish development cooperation reform agenda and to identify the main achievements and shortcomings in operationalising the initiatives based on the principle of “More Aid, Better Aid”. A set of recommendation guidelines were developed, through participative methods, with the objective of putting into practice the aspirations of the Spanish development cooperation policy.

[www.foroaod.org](http://www.foroaod.org)