

## OVERSIGHT BODIES OF SPANISH INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT COOPERATION POLICY

### General Directorate for the Planning and Evaluation of Development Cooperation Policies (DGPOLDE)<sup>1</sup>

#### Introduction

One of the essential traits of any democratic system is the existence of control mechanisms for different governmental policies. In this sense, the control conferred upon the Congress, the representative of the Spanish population in accordance with Section V of the Constitution, is fundamental. And, in terms of international development cooperation policy, the Parliamentary Commission for International Development Cooperation plays a primordial role.

There are also other advisory bodies which allow civil society to participate in policy making, thus exercising a certain control function. An example of this is the Development Cooperation Council described below.

Controlling Spanish international development cooperation policy is especially important for two reasons:

- The implementation of this policy implies public fund expenditure, and
- There is special awareness within our society about the need to foster development in southern countries.

#### The Parliamentary Commission for International Development Cooperation

The Parliamentary Commission for International Development Cooperation was created in 1998 as mandated in Article 15.3 within the 23/1998 International Development Cooperation Act of 7 July 1998, though there was already a non-permanent Commission on Development Cooperation and Assistance. Currently, the Commission is a permanent, non-legislative body.

The existence of a Commission dedicated specifically to international development cooperation implies an important recognition to development cooperation policy within the state as a whole.

The aforementioned Article 15 in the International Development Cooperation Act grants Congress the competency to establish the general lines and guidelines for Spanish development cooperation policy every four years based on the government's proposals and initiatives. This is achieved through debate and final decision on the Master Plan once approved by the government. Similarly, Congress is responsible for the yearly debate on the Spanish Annual International Development Cooperation Plan (PACI).

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<sup>1</sup> State Secretariat for International Cooperation (SECI), Spanish Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Cooperation (MAEC).

These functions have been developed through the Parliamentary Commission for International Development Cooperation. In order to develop the Commission's actions and its control mechanisms in general, the Commission may request and gather the following in accordance with Article 44 within the Internal Congressional Regulations:

- The information and documentation required from the Government and Public Administrations;
- The presence of government members before the Commission in order to inform about issues related to their respective departments;
- The presence of authorities and civil servants, due to the subject under debate, in order to inform the Commission; and
- The presence of other experts in the subject being discussed in order to inform and advise the Commission.

Similarly, those responsible for international development cooperation policy frequently request to speak before the Commission: the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Cooperation and, especially, the State Secretariat for International Cooperation to inform the Commission about specific aspects of development cooperation policy.

In addition to the above mechanisms, shared by all congressional committees, Article 15.3 of the International Development Cooperation Act also states that the Commission for International Development Cooperation 'will be informed by the government on the level of execution and degree of completion of programmes, projects, and actions included in the Master Plan and Annual Plan, and will be presented with development cooperation evaluation results as well as results detailed in the Follow-up Document on the Annual Plan for the preceding year'.

Lastly, there are other regulations which also regard the Commission for International Development Cooperation: Royal Decree 2217/2004 of 26 November 2004, regarding the competencies, functions, composition, and organisation of the Development Cooperation Council (referred to below), states that the Council may have the power to forward the suggestions and proposals it deems relevant to the Commission. In addition, the same Royal Decree establishes that the different reports the Council has to prepare as part of its mandate shall be forwarded to the Commission. With this decree, the links between both bodies are strengthened.

### **Development Cooperation Council**

According to Article 22 of the International Development Cooperation Act, the Development Cooperation Council serves as an advisory and participatory body in the definition of international development cooperation policy.

The Council, adjunct to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Cooperation through the State Secretariat for International Cooperation, has undergone various reforms since its inception in 1995. The last of these reforms was carried out by Royal Decree 2217/2004 of 26 November 2004, affecting the Council's competencies, functions, composition, and organisation. The aim of the reform was to broaden the Council's functions, increase the number of members and represented collectives, and standardise member appointments.

The two most relevant departments of the General Administration for international development cooperation are represented,<sup>2</sup> as well as development NGOs, trade

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<sup>2</sup> Ministries of Foreign Affairs and Cooperation; Treasury; Industry, Tourism, and Trade; Defense; Education and Science; Labor and Social Affairs; Agriculture, Fishing, and Food; Culture; Health and Consumption; and Environment



unions, business organisations, social-economy organisations, universities, and human rights groups. In addition, the Council also includes six experts among its members, two of these specialised in gender and humanitarian action.

The following Council functions are worth highlighting:

- To inform in a perceptive manner about proposed laws and other General Administration actions regulating development cooperation issues prior to their enactment. Its participation, however, is non-binding;
- To inform about proposals for the Master Plan and Annual Plan on international development cooperation prior to the government's approval;
- To know the results of the Annual Plan follow-up document and of the evaluation of development cooperation efforts; and
- To report on the coherence of actions carried out by the different organisms within the General Administration.

As can be deduced, by carrying out the aforementioned functions, the Development Cooperation Council not only participates in defining development cooperation policy but also serves as an *ex ante* or *ex post* control mechanism, given the case, on the government's actions in terms of international development cooperation.

In order to better carry out its responsibilities, the Council works in full plenary sessions as well as in different working groups and committees. Currently, the following groups and committees exist:

- A working group on policy coherence whose principal responsibility is to prepare the aforementioned report on policy coherence;
- A working group on co-development, created with the aim of reaching consensus regarding the objectives and characteristics of co-development, areas of action, what is required to progress in this area, and possible actions;
- A working group on gender issues which ensures that gender concerns are included within the different lines of Spanish development cooperation; and
- A committee for the development and follow-up of the Master Plan and PACI, responsible for studying the different Spanish development cooperation planning and evaluation documents.

## **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.

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