



## Spanish participation in the new European architecture of international development: The transformation of Spanish policy

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In less than a decade a “new global architecture” of international cooperation for development has been materializing<sup>1</sup>. This regime includes efforts in consensus regarding orientations, policies and objectives as well as in the design and implementation of specific instruments to carry out these changes. The European Union has a leading role in this process. The transformations to adopt a new concept of cooperation in Europe, particularly in the last decade, can be regarded as a milestone. With the new Spanish government in 2004, Spanish policies in this matter undertook a Copernican turn, which allowed the country to align itself fully with European and international current tendencies.

Spanish policy of cooperation for development, during the 2004-2008 legislature, has undertaken a path that results in an increased legitimacy among other States due to the deep transformation of its policies and a greater relative weight due to the substantial growth of its funds for development. Moreover, in some specific issues Spain has been able to start promoting its vision of what an adequate European policy for development should be. In sum, Zapatero’s government has aligned itself with other European States and has approached a closer level to its relative weight in Europe and to the demands of its citizens regarding development policies.

### **The new global architecture of international cooperation for development**

The high consensus around the need to craft a new international architecture for development arises from a long and wide questioning of the effectiveness of aid policies implemented so far. Particularly towards the second half of the 1990’s, this questioning began to take shape in concrete results and a new doctrine in the international community began to emerge. The UN Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and the renewed political compromise in the 2005 World Summit of the United Nations are the main references at international level. Indeed, this is the context that guides the design of Spanish policy of international cooperation for development during Zapatero’s government.

At the European level, the efforts to consolidate an international cooperation for development regime are even more significant, especially from 2005. In this sense, the EU had made great efforts to improve issues related to aid quality. The Paris Declaration (March 2005) and the European Consensus on Development (December 2005) are a clear manifestation of this will to deepen and improve the international cooperation for development. These compromises were renewed with the 2006-2007 Working Programme on Policy Coherence for Development. In parallel, all of this had been complemented with the European Compromise at the beginning of 2005 to improve management and increase the resources allocated to international cooperation for development.

In sum, these efforts take part in what is referred to as the new architecture or doctrine of international cooperation for development, which has been elaborated by the Development Assistance Committee (DAC/OECD) and that refers, on the one hand, to the objectives of coordination, harmonization and alignment among donors to improve the results of the interventions and, on the other hand, to the rise of participation and dialogue with partners, or receptors in the more traditional conceptualization, in order to reach an advanced appropriation and sustainability of the benefits.

### **From a aid policy to a policy of cooperation for development**

The contrasts between the Zapatero's government in the period between 2004 and 2008 and the previous local narrowly defined policy, based on the cultural and economic Spanish presence from the Aznar period, especially the second government, are very radical (Sanahuja, 2006). The new development policy represents a strategic vision of this subject seen as a State policy. That is, a qualitative change took place in the strategic definition of the Spanish cooperation policy which implies a greater integration of cooperation policies within the country's foreign policy, including a large participation of civil society and its alignment with the new tendencies of the international cooperation for development architecture and especially with European tendencies. Regarding the openness on this area, it is worth underlining that, as part of a design process of foreign policy, cooperation for development has been characterized by a greater participation from all sectors in a wide dialogue to define the strategic objectives of Spanish policy on development.

The new government initiated its legislature in 2004 with the approval of the "Master Plan of Spanish Cooperation 2005-2008". The strategy reflects the qualitative change of approach of Spanish cooperation policy, which is consistent with the PSOE's electoral programme. The main aim is expressed in "...to stop being a policy of aid to become one of development".<sup>2</sup> This document, in addition to an unequivocal government's will to align itself with international policies, includes compromises that are both difficult and highly necessary for Spain to play a relevant role in European and international policy of international cooperation for development.

At the European level, these changes in the strategic orientation and the objectives of the Spanish development policy are recognized and valued. The 2007 DAC/OECD report, for example, acknowledges that in comparison to the previous policies and practices the 2005-2008 Spanish Master Plan establishes substantial improvements.<sup>3</sup> It is also underscored that the Spanish increased multilateral support is becoming more strategic.

### **Adjusting the institutions incorporating the new European architecture**

This new government's strategy for cooperation required a profound transformation of national institutions in order to adequately confront the magnitude that the change of policy has implied during the four years of Zapatero's government and the considerable deterioration of Spanish cooperation due to the previous government's policies. The subsequent institutional changes have highlighted the importance that cooperation policy has acquired as a State policy and its international projection. In this regard, first the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Cooperation (previously without the cooperation part) has been modified; the entity in charge of aid policies was denominated State Secretary of International Cooperation (*Secretaría de Estado de Cooperación Internacional*, SECI), taking away the Ibero-American part, and the planning and evaluation sub-directorate

was upgraded to Directorate General of Planning and Evaluation. It is also necessary to underline that in October 2007 the regulatory body of the Spanish Agency of International Cooperation for Development (*Agencia Española de Cooperación Internacional para el Desarrollo*, AECID) was approved. This is another step that facilitates the realization of local and international aspirations to implement a State policy that is coherent and effective.<sup>4</sup> The coming into force of the regulatory body for cooperation workers, a long demand from the local civil society, also represents an important landmark in this period.<sup>5</sup>

To raise the standing of the planning and evaluation entity, SECI, and to increase its personnel –from 3 to 50 people- has been a key step in order to set this Directorate General as a facilitator of the strategic transformations and a provider of more adequate support at international forums such as the OECD and the cooperation meetings of the European Council.<sup>6</sup> Another crucial aspect, and one that displays the political will to accomplish its objectives, is its budget's growth that had been raised from 300 millions in 2004 to nearly 760 millions in 2007.

### **Substantial growth on funds for ODA**

In the last few years Europe has renewed its compromise to increase ODA funds. Spain is well ranked in this tendency. In the Spanish case, there is a substantial growth in the funds allocated to ODA,<sup>7</sup> moving towards 0,5% in 2008 (most likely to be accomplished) and eventually to compromise to achieve 0,7% by 2013.<sup>8</sup> With up and downs this is a tendency in which Spain stands out very positively within the European efforts (0,35% average at the moment) towards achieving the donors' targeted levels.

Due to its increased funds for development cooperation, Spain is acquiring a greater relative weight at the European and international level. This rising importance is not only quantitative but also significant in the sense that Spain begins to be a more active and strategic player thanks to its contributions. This takes place in a framework in which most of Spanish contributions for multilateral aid are distributed within the European context. Even more relevant is the fact that, as the DAC report highlights, Spanish contributions are directed to non-financing institutions and to the achievements of the MDGs, increasing the quality of Spanish multilateral aid. Thus, Spanish contribution goes from being marginal to be progressively more relevant for its quantity and even to initiate, more recently, the path towards a more significant contribution during the strategies' definition process. This objective will be accomplished as the political changes in development policy are consolidated internally and, in particular, what refers to effective multilateralism. In this sense it is also necessary to define Spanish development policies, especially in relation to the EU, in a more active role.

### **Defining a leadership**

The promotion of policies regarding migration and remittances, in the framework of co-development, is a concrete example of policies fostered by the Spanish government in Europe. The government has acquired an increasingly significant role when implementing a cooperation policy on migration and development and making efforts to steer the issue of remittances in that direction as well, even surpassing internal pressure in specific periods (such as in 2005) when the urgency of the subject made way into more traditional patterns to confront the issue of illegal migration.

The manner of addressing this issue is a clear example of the Spanish government's role, which not only sought to overcome a traditional view but also tried to influence European policy on development so that it could be more consistent with the new international architecture concerning the subject. In fact, on its report about Spain the DAC underlined in 2007 the Spanish efforts to design a coherent policy on migration and development, taking advantage of its new status on cooperation for development and that even at the international level the country promotes coherent policies. This is precisely what Spain, after recuperating from an initial reaction,<sup>9</sup> has fostered among its peers and within European institutions.

Another issue, especially sensible for Spanish cooperation, is the policy towards middle income countries. The current tendency is to concentrate on low income countries. However Spain's more traditional partners, Latin America, are not included in that category. Spain is in support of not reducing aid to middle income countries due to their large poverty gaps and their deep social and economical disparities. Spain's achievement on this matter can be summed up by: "Spain has been defending at the international level and, finally for our satisfaction, the need to continue supporting middle income countries has been also recognized by the EU" (De la Iglesia, 2007: 133). After a great deal of debate, a "new generation" of URB-AL programmes had been approved, officially to be announced during the first part of 2008, and that in accordance with the principles of the EuroSocial programme will provide a framework for the cooperation with Latin America very much in accordance with what Spain has been putting forward.

## Future Challenges

Coherence of development policies and their effectiveness are two of the main issues of the new doctrine of international cooperation. For Spain coherence is most certainly a key issue in cooperation for development.<sup>10</sup> Due to the extension of the changes undertaken by Spain, coherence is at the same time one of the areas where the country has progressed significantly in order to approach current European doctrine and one of the major challenges for Spanish cooperation for development during the next legislature.

Besides coherence one of the main forces of Spanish policies of cooperation for development, and another key element of the new architecture is the effectiveness of cooperation policies. In this manner, Spain aligns itself with the principles of the Paris Declaration. However, due to the level of Spanish policies for cooperation when the Zapatero government began, the country has been behind others in implementing these international principles. Despite this fact, Spain is committed to until its aid by 2012 and starts using more of budgets' support and inter-sector perspectives, just like other European actors.

Another level of debate about effectiveness concerns the division of labour among donors. The EU Code of Conduct related to the division of labour in the area of policy for development (COM (2007) 72 Final) from the European Commission has encouraged much work in this field. The issue still needs to be studied in-depth, especially its more relevant aspects and the challenges for Spain remain considerable, but the policy fostered by the Zapatero government and its new position among other European States will allow it to be a more relevant actor as this debate advances. In this manner, Spain not only could benefit from the experiences of others but could also contribute as it advances in the extensive strategic and institutional changes of its cooperation for development policy.

Definitive progress in the direction of these great challenges confronts the issue of the necessary institutional reforms to adjust better the institutions of cooperation for development to external (the new architecture of cooperation for development) and to internal (State policy) demands. As in other issues related to this area, great changes have taken place in the past four years of Zapatero's government and the results will be visible more clearly during the following years.

## Conclusions

This underlines the panorama and the great challenges post 2008, the bases of which have been implemented by the current government, and the more effective participation in the European policy making process will start. The changes that occurred during the 2004-2008 legislature have permitted Spain to gain a relevant status in international and European forums where the design and implementation of cooperation for development policies are debated. Gradually, Spain has started to contribute to the elaboration of the new European development architecture, including promoting debate concerning delicate issues such as migration and remittances, in the goal to create a long and integrated cooperation policy.

In general, the impact of Spain in the policy making of international cooperation for development has been much more relevant during Zapatero's government than during the previous one (Barbé, 2006: 298). First of all, because the changes within the Spanish cooperation policies have aligned it the other European members which permitted Spain to participate in the design and the research concerning coherence and efficiency of the communitarian policies as a more involved actor. Second of all, because the amount of aid allocated to ODA has been significantly raised during Zapatero's mandate. Finally, the institutional reforms taking place are also a key aspect of the new status acquired by Spain as well as the increasing use of the multilateral approach during the last four years.

In order to sum up, during this period the government has gained prestige and legitimacy as an active actor of international cooperation for development in Europe and internationally, reputation that the previous government didn't enjoy, thanks to which Spain has high possibilities to influence increasingly on European cooperation for development policies.

## Notes

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<sup>2</sup> "Plan Director de la Cooperación Española 2005-2008", Ministerio de Asuntos Exteriores y de Cooperación, Secretaría de Estado de Cooperación Internacional, Dirección de Planificación y Evaluación de Políticas para el desarrollo, Madrid, 2004. p. 16.

<sup>3</sup> Development Assistance Committee (DAC), *Peer Review: Spain*, Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), Paris, 2007.

<sup>4</sup> Dirección General de Planificación y Evaluación de Políticas para el Desarrollo (SECI, *Órganos de control de la política española de cooperación internacional*, in Foro AOD, FRIDE, 2008.

<sup>5</sup> Real Decreto 519/2006 from April 28<sup>th</sup>.

<sup>6</sup> A Unit of Humanitarian Action was also created here, which helped to provide greater efficiency to one of the most visible aspects of Spanish policy on cooperation for development.

<sup>7</sup> There are also some conflicting issues regarding the accounting the amounts and some pending reforms, especially that of the FAD credits. During the examined legislature the amounts differ, though in a general sense it can be stated that they had been doubled. Statistically there was a change in the national accounting system and for that reason in 2006 Spain appears by little not fulfilling its compromise to reach 0.39% that year. Some years are also questioned for being strongly influenced by foreign debt aid. Nevertheless, even though is a necessary condition, the increased funds are not sufficient to demonstrate a change in essence of Spanish aid for development system. There are some pending issues regarding accounting of funds as well as some institutional reforms, especially in relation to FAD credits.

<sup>8</sup> It all indicates that at the end of the legislature the 0.5% objective will be accomplished.

<sup>9</sup> The Official Aid for Development offer for those countries in Africa that complete repatriation agreements has been a demonstration of the unfinished stage of moving from a policy of aid to one of development.

<sup>10</sup> See for example, Atienza and Soleto (2007).

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