

The New Prospects for Spanish Development Co-operation in the Mediterranean Region

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In January 2005 the Spanish Co-operation's new Director Plan 2005-2008 was approved.

The elaboration of the new Director Plan coincided with the beginning of this new legislature and the change in Government that allowed us to introduce a new political direction, based on the commitments stated by the Socialist Party in its electoral programme.

The elaboration of the Director Plan was carried out with the participation of a wide range of social actors which, in one way or another, are involved in the implementation of international cooperation public policies: non-governmental organisations, unions, business and social economic organisations, universities, etc., in conjunction with the public administration, including different levels such as municipal councils, autonomous communities and the state administration.

The most important new features of the 2005-2008 Director Plan are, first of all, the principle of moving from an aid policy to a development one. The other novelty is to grant international cooperation the status of state external action.

The economic growth that Spain has experienced during recent decades obliges us to demonstrate our willingness and capacity to extend some of the benefits of our own development beyond our borders. From another point of view, the launch of a Spanish Official Development Aid (ODA) policy and its evolution were strongly determined by the historical relations with Latin America and being it also

possible to perceive the influence of commercial and geo-strategic interests. Currently, the amount of resources allocated for co-operation is increasing, the range of countries and areas of intervention has been enlarged and there is an increasing number of public and private agents participating in its management.

However, the operations have been implemented in the absence of an appropriate legal framework that specifically regulates public action related to co-operation. It is a matter of establishing the relation that ought to exist between Co-operation policy, Foreign and Security Policy and Commercial Policy, aiming at clearly defining the principles to guide it as much as the objectives to be achieved.

The Law of International Development Co-operation (LCID1998) having been approved by all the political groups and in agreement with civil society, tried to overcome these problems by establishing the principles, objectives, priorities and types of instruments to be used by the Spanish International Development Cooperation Policy. In its statement on its motives it states:

"The International Development Cooperation Policy constitutes a fundamental aspect of the action of democratic states in relation to those countries that have not reached the same level of development and it is based on the concept of the interdependence and solidarity of both, the international society and the relations that are developed within it."

This concept of interdependence of international relations and the necessity of a Development Co-operation Policy is a specific response to the mandate contained in the preamble of the Spanish Constitution, that is, to contribute to the

strengthening of pacific relations and effective co-operation with all the Earth's peoples.

As this policy concept is regarded as constitutionally fundamental, the Law makes an appeal to the consensus that ought to be at the heart of this policy and to the need of obtaining adequate collaboration, complementariness and co-ordination between the different public administrations and the various co-operating actors.

This Law of International Development Co-operation is also part of the State's Foreign Policy which is conceived within the framework constituted by the international agreements and the respect for the commitments adopted by the Spanish State within international organisations. The attainment of the development objectives is, therefore, an essential element of the State's Foreign Policy.

The Director Plan is the basic element of a four-year plan; it determines the general lines and basic directives, indicating the objectives and priorities and provides, in advance, the indicative budgetary resources for this period. The Director Plan is made up of a planning cycle which will be completed by the elaboration or revision of documents of sectorial strategy, geographical areas and countries that are of priority for co-operation.

Geographical Priorities: The Arab World and the Mediterranean Area

One of the priorities for co-operation is the Arab Mediterranean area. This co-operation is articulated through three pillars, the two great sub-regions of the Maghreb and the Middle East and a third

one which is the Mediterranean region, all of which is directly tied to the Barcelona Process, thus allowing to act with greater coherence and impact, complementing the bilateral action, and fulfilling the mandate of the Law of Co-operation with regard to the coherence with the policies of the European Union.

For the new Spanish Foreign Policy, the Maghreb is a very important region which suffers from great deficiencies in terms of human development. These necessities, its strategic importance and the need to assist in its development and stability, have to directly make it a high priority for co-operation, thereby considering every component of this region of priority: Morocco, Mauritania, Algeria, Tunisia and the Sahrawi population.

The Middle East is the most troubled region and the origin of the majority of the strategic problems the world faces. At the same time its development indicators continue to worsen as time goes by. It is evident that to support the peace process between Israel and Palestine is a top priority and thus it is necessary to give support to the Palestine National Authority.

The Mediterranean is the new dimension to our new Foreign and Co-operation Policy and is shaped by the Barcelona Process. The Euro-Mediterranean dimension deserves its own chapter, regardless of the consideration given to the two previously mentioned regions and the framework drawn up in the Barcelona Agreements in order to regionally support economic and social transition, as well as, on the one hand, the partners that will bring the region to the partners

that form part of the free trade area with the European Union and, on the other, to the dialogue and its human and cultural dimension.

A regional strategy for the Mediterranean countries is being developed in order to define specific performances in the area. The basic objectives of this strategy include: support of institutional reforms in the framework of the Barcelona Process, with special attention to the Association Agreements, the strengthening of institutions and the new European Neighbourhood Policy, thus contributing to a sustainable development based on a valuation of natural and human resources, with special emphasis provided to local development, that would allow to slow down the rural exodus through the support of sustainable productive sectors; making a greater effort, when required, to reinforce cultural links and the valuation of historic heritage; greater investment in the knowledge and endeavours of the links between communities through the social organisations that incorporate civil society throughout the development process, as well as taking into account the migratory phenomenon in the development policies, providing special attention to the areas of origin and to the participation of immigrant communities in Spain in the development of their regions.

Many autonomous communities have prioritised the Mediterranean area in their respective co-operation plans. They have begun to draw up the scope of action in a joint and co-ordinated way, in order to fulfil the commitment of reaching foreign actions between the various public admi-

nistrations, so as to improve the quality of the Spanish co-operation. The Spanish municipalities are especially dynamic in this respect, contributing to the strengthening of a horizontal net of relations between cities on both sides of the Mediterranean, where the transfer of experiences in development and local governance help to stimulate the development processes.

On 30th November 2004, 35 European, North African and Middle East Foreign Ministers declared, at the Euro-Mediterranean summit in The Hague that 2005 would be the Year of the Mediterranean. In this way, they highlighted the firm commitment from the countries of the region to use the tenth Anniversary of the Barcelona Declaration to promote the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership and to move it into a new era that takes into account the balance of the last decade and integrates the neighbourhood policy into the structure and objectives of the Partnership.

As is already clear, during 2005 Spain will play an active role in the re-launching of Euro-Mediterranean relations. Apart from the celebrations for Barcelona +10 and the high level meeting that will take place in November 2005 to culminate the anniversary of the Partnership, many events related to the Mediterranean region are being organised. Many initiatives, proposed by various social and institutional sectors, are being worked out with the aim of generating a wide participation, both, to take stock of these ten years and to put forward proposals that enlarge and consolidate our bonds of friendship and neighbourhood.