



Mindcraft

Bridging and Mapping Knowledge
Gaps in Decentralised Cooperation

Country Profile on decentralised development cooperation



#3 SPAIN

Abbreviations

ACCD	Catalan Agency for Development Cooperation
AECID	Spanish Agency for International Development Co-operation
CEMR	Council of European Municipalities and Regions
CSC	High Council of Cooperation for Sustainable Development and Global Solidarity
DAC	OECD Development Assistance Committee
DDC	Decentralised development cooperation
EU	European Union
FEMP	Spanish Federation of Municipalities and Provinces
FEDES	Spanish Fund for Sustainable Development
FIAP	Foundation for the Internationalisation of Public Administrations
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
Gencat	La Generalitat de Catalunya (Government of Catalonia)
GNI	Gross National Income
MAEUEC	Ministry of Foreign Affairs, European Union and Cooperation
NGOs	Non-Governmental Organizations
ODA	Official Development Assistance
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development



Data

Form of state structure¹ **Unitary state**

Territorial-administrative division²

- 17 autonomous communities
- 2 autonomous cities
- 50 provinces
- 8,132 municipalities

Intermediate level: **52** governing authorities that carry out provincial or island-level functions:

- 38 diputaciones provinciales (provincial governing bodies on the mainland)
- 3 diputaciones forales (special chartered provincial bodies in the Basque Country)
- 7 cabildos insulares (island councils in the Canary Islands)
- 4 consells insulars (island councils in the Balearic Islands)

since 1991 **OECD DAC membership**

0.7 (UN target: 0.7) **ODA target as % GNI⁷**

2024 **0.25** (provisional data) **ODA target as % GNI in the last three years⁸**
2023 **0.24**
2022 **0.30**

decreasing between 2022 and 2023 but showed recovery in 2024 **Trends in total ODA**

21 **Seats⁹ in the European Committee of the Regions**

1 (Spanish Federation of Municipalities and Provinces (FEMP)) **CEMR members¹⁰ in Spain**

Population³ **48,610,458** (2024)

Geographical size⁴ **505,983 km²**

GDP per Capita⁵ **€32,590** (Prov. 2024) EU average: €37,600

EU membership⁶ **since 1986**

5 (Andalusian Fund of Municipalities for International Solidarity (FAMSI), Extremadura Agency for International Development Cooperation (AEXCID), Spanish Federation of Municipalities and Provinces (FEMP), Government of Catalonia (GENCAT), EUSKADI – Basque Country) **PLATFORMA members in Spain**

¹ Spain
² INEbase/ Clasificaciones / Relación de municipios, provincias, comunidades y ciudades autónomas y sus códigos / Relación de provincias con sus códigos
³ Spain – EU country profile | European Union
⁴ Spain – EU country profile | European Union
⁵ Eurostat [tec00001] Spain's Gross domestic product at market prices
⁶ Spain – EU country profile | European Union
⁷ OECD Data Explorer • DAC1: Flows by provider (ODA+OOF+Private)
⁸ OECD Data Explorer • DAC1: Flows by provider (ODA+OOF+Private)
⁹ Spain | European Committee of the Regions
¹⁰ National Associations – CEMR CCRE



1. Decentralised development cooperation (DDC) framework in Spain

1.1. Framework defining engagement in DDC

Spain's development cooperation is guided by the [Law 1/2023 on Sustainable Development Cooperation and Global Solidarity](#) adopted on 20 February 2023. This Law aligns Spanish development cooperation with the 2030 Agenda and EU priorities, reinforces the commitment to allocate 0.7% of GNI to ODA by 2030, and provides a broader understanding of development that goes beyond poverty reduction and includes climate justice, feminism, global citizenship, and the promotion of peace.

To implement the Law 1/2023, the Spanish government has adopted a set of implementing acts, the so-called Royal Decrees. [The Royal Decree 1246/2024](#), among other things, formalises the role the Spanish Agency for International Development Cooperation (AECID) in supporting decentralised cooperation by establishing mechanisms for coordination and collaboration with autonomous communities and local governments. Art. 12 of the Law 1/2023 mandates the AECID to promote active participation of decentralised actors within the national cooperation framework, enabling joint programming, co-financing, and shared monitoring and evaluation.

Next, [the Royal Decree 708/2024](#) regulates work conditions for collaborators in development cooperation working for national bodies (like AECID) as well as those engaged through autonomous communities, local governments, and other decentralised actors. [The Royal Decree 188/2025](#) regulates the legal framework for subsidies and grants in development cooperation to enhance transparency and efficiency in the allocation and management of financial resources for development projects. [The Royal Decree 140/2025](#) regulates the Interministerial Commission for Sustainable Development Cooperation and Global Solidarity as a coordination and consultation body for Spain's development cooperation policies.

Two remaining Royal Decrees were recently adopted. [The Royal Decree 898/2025](#) reforms the [High Council of Cooperation for Sustainable Development and Global Solidarity \(CSC\)](#). The CSC is an advisory body for coordinating and guiding Spain's cooperation system, including decentralised cooperation actors. It is expected to provide strategic oversight, facilitate multi-level governance, and enhance policy coherence across different levels of government. [The Royal Decree 810/2025](#) establishes the Spanish Fund for

Sustainable Development (FEDES) as a more strategically aligned financial instrument for improving the funding support for both centralised and decentralised cooperation efforts in line with the Law 1/2023 (see Art. 16-22).

The implementation of Spain's development cooperation is steered by a multiannual strategic plan, currently the [Spanish Cooperation Master Plan 2024-2027](#) (the Master Plan). The current Master Plan reflects reforms introduced by the Law 1/2023. It elaborates on social, economic and ecological transition as the guiding approach of Spanish development cooperation and presents thematic and geographic priorities. It also outlines Spain's commitments to the goals and targets of international agendas, including the pathway to achieving the objective of allocating 0.7% of GNI to ODA.

In addition to the Master Plan, there are four other relevant [cooperation planning instruments](#). The Partnership Frameworks and Country Alliances for Sustainable Development (currently active with 10 partner countries) that aim to strengthen cooperation and political dialogue. Next, the Multilateral Strategic Partnership Frameworks, which regulate relations with international financial and non-financial organisations, and the Regional and Thematic Strategies for Sustainable Development that focus on development of specific and horizontal priorities. Finally, the Annual Communication provides updates on the achievement of the Master Plan's objectives.

Importantly, the Art. 35 of the Law 1/2023 formally recognises decentralised cooperation, highlighting the role of autonomous communities, local governments, and provincial and island councils in development policy. The Law 1/2023 (Art. 36 and 37) promotes their participation and coordination within the national cooperation system, emphasising a diverse and territorially rooted approach to international development. Additionally, the Royal Decree 1246/2024 supports this recognition by integrating DDC into the AECID's mandate and providing institutional channels for dialogue and collaboration. Complementing this, other approved Royal Decrees further strengthen cooperation structures, strategic governance and financing of the cooperation system, including its decentralised components.

Spanish development cooperation is highly decentralised, with autonomous communities having their own specific legislation, governance framework, budget, and implementing plans for development policy. Therefore, additional examples from Catalonia will be presented as a case study in this and remaining sections of this publication.

In Catalonia, the [Law on development cooperation](#) (Law 26/2001) defines and regulates Catalan development cooperation and international solidarity. According to Art. 8, development cooperation policy is guided by a four-year master plan, which is prepared by the Catalan Government (Gencat). The current [Catalan Development Cooperation Master Plan 2023-2026](#) provides a strategic guidance by presenting geographical and sectoral priorities, and outlines the financial forecast for development cooperation, including a method for achieving the target of allocating 0.7% of the Gencat's own resources to development. To implement the Catalan Master Plan, an action plan is prepared annually (Art. 9). The [Annual Development Cooperation Plan 2025](#) provides details about actions to achieve objectives and commitments of the Catalan Master Plan, including funding. Overall, the Law 26/2001 together with the Catalan Master Plan and Annual Plans provide a stable framework for action in development cooperation (Interview 17 October 2025).

1.2. Key actors involved in DDC

The **Spanish development cooperation system** has a multi-actor framework, including general state administration actors, decentralised cooperation actors (autonomous communities and local governments) and civil society and other actors.

Within the general state administration, the MAEUEC is the key actor, responsible for formulating and implementing Spanish foreign policy, including international cooperation. The MAEUEC's State Secretariat for International Cooperation (SECI) directs, implements, monitors and evaluates the Spanish cooperation (Art. 25.2 of the Law 1/2023). It is also responsible for drafting the Master Plan (Art. 6.4). The Directorate-General for Sustainable Development Policies (an office supporting the SECI) is responsible for planning and strategic coordination of development cooperation. The Law 1/2023 reinforced its role in aligning cooperation with the SDGs and a cross-government coordination. Furthermore, the Law 1/2023 (Art. 8) also establishes the new Office for the Evaluation of Spanish Cooperation to strengthen the effectiveness, transparency and accountability of the Spanish cooperation system and policies.

Several institutions are tasked with implementation of Spain's development cooperation policy, according to the Law 1/2023. The main implementing institution is the **AECID** (part of the MAEUEC), whose role has been both reaffirmed and strengthened by the new Law. The AECID administers strategic planning, implementation and promotion of Spanish cooperation, its operational coordination as well as collaboration with all development cooperation actors (Art. 31 of the Law 1/2023, see also AECID's Statute). Next, the Spanish Cooperation Offices are tasked with coordination and monitoring of Spanish cooperation actions in the countries they operate. These are the units of Embassies and Permanent Representations, guided by the AECID (Art. 32 of the Law 1/2023). Finally, the **Foundation for the Internationalisation of Public Administrations (FIAP)** is a public foundation for technical cooperation, especially in administrative and governance-related capacity building, while the **Carolina Foundation** promotes educational and scientific cooperation.

In Catalonia, public administration actors at regional and local level play an active role in development cooperation. The Directorate-General for Development Cooperation formulates development policy of the Gencat in an open and participative way, including different stakeholders (Interview 17 October 2025). The **Catalan Agency for Development cooperation (ACCD)** is a key actor responsible for implementation of development and humanitarian actions and projects of the Gencat. Other departments of the Gencat also contribute with resources and sectoral expertise to specific projects.

Moreover, the Province of Barcelona is particularly active in DDC among four provinces. The Provincial Council of Barcelona (DIBA) has its own strategic plans and guidelines for development cooperation. It provides technical and financial support to local governments in all aspects of public policies related to development cooperation (including the preparation of local policy, implementation and evaluation as well as networking) and encourages them to participate in DDC. Finally, the city of Barcelona is a prominent actor, with its own active development and international policy (Interview 15 October 2025).

Another important actor is the **Catalan Development Cooperation Fund** (Catalan Fund). The Catalan Fund is not part of the Catalan public administration but an association of Catalan municipalities. It manages contributions from participating municipalities that don't have sufficient financial, technical or human resources to prepare or implement development projects and engage internationally on their own. In this regard, the Catalan Fund provides support by identifying potential projects and opportunities for cooperation (Interviews 15 October 2025, 22 October 2025). Moreover, it provides support related to the management of its members calls for proposals for development projects. Besides, the Catalan Fund offers

advice, organises and facilitates technical cooperation for municipalities, and assesses opportunities and promotes municipal engagement in European projects. It also acts as an interlocutor with the Gencat and the ACCD on behalf of Catalan municipalities (Interview, 21 November 2025).

Many other actors at the general state, regional, and local level play a role. For example, NGOs are instrumental in Spanish DDC. The commitment to development cooperation and solidarity, including achieving the target of allocating 0.7% of GNI to ODA, started with the widespread civil society movement in Spain, demanding prioritisation of these commitments (for a brief overview see Ecoper 2024 report). The Law 1/2023 (Art. 38) acknowledges the role of NGOs in promoting and implementing development cooperation activities. The [report](#) of La Coordinadora (2024a, p.4), a national network of organisations and social platforms active in development cooperation, showed that in 2022, its members implemented 4,142 projects worth EUR 641.2 million in 100 countries. The general state level as well as regional and local governments in Spain financially support NGOs' implementation of development cooperation projects.

Associations of local governments are also important. For example, the [Spanish Federation of Municipalities and Provinces – FEMP](#) represents and coordinates local governments at the national level (gathering municipalities from all autonomous communities). It facilitates knowledge sharing on regional and local practices and information sharing regarding funding opportunities. As a member of CEMR, FEMP contributes to promoting local perspectives and cooperation at the European level. Finally, FEMP provides support in managing and distributing [grants and subsidies](#) from different ministries and agencies intended for local governments to implement projects supporting, for example, localisation of SGD or youth participation. In Catalonia, local governments are represented by the Association of Catalan Municipalities (ACM) and the Federation of Catalan Municipalities. The ACM usually does not focus on DDC to avoid duplication with the Catalan Fund and ACCD support to municipalities (Interview 22 October 2025). The ACM engages with the Catalan Fund and has recently organised a [training on practical guidance in development cooperation for municipalities](#) together with the Catalan Fund. Another training on [municipal internationalisation strategy](#) has been organised with the Centre for International Studies.

Moreover, it is important to mention [Confocos](#), a platform for cooperation between different development cooperation and solidarity funds that exist in Spain (such as the mentioned Catalan Fund). It is a venue for information exchange and coordination between different existing funds as well as joint advocacy towards the Spanish government.

Finally, actors from academia, the private sector and business organisations and others are also included and supported in implementing development cooperation.

1.3. Coordination mechanisms of DDC activities

Spanish decentralised, multi-actor framework of development cooperation enables actors across different levels to plan and implement development activities autonomously. These are strategically coordinated with the Spanish government on external action via the MAEUEC.

The Law 1/2023 (Art. 27) specifies three coordination and consultation mechanisms. First, [the CSC](#) as a venue for coordination of all relevant actors in the field of development cooperation, gathering representatives from NGOs, academia, private sector, civil society and public institutions. Among other functions, the CSC prepares reports on draft laws and provisions concerning development cooperation, reviews the

Master Plan and other strategic documents and relevant instruments and provides recommendations, and evaluates cooperation strategies and actions (Art. 28). Second, the Interministerial Commission for Cooperation for Sustainable Development and Global Solidarity enables coordination between different Ministries, whose portfolio includes development cooperation. Its aim is to ensure policy and action alignment and effectiveness (Art. 29). Finally, the Sectoral Conference on Cooperation for Sustainable Development and Global Solidarity enables dialogue, coordination, and collaboration between public administrations across different levels (general state level, autonomous communities, and local governments), including attendance by the FEMP (Art. 30). It is a venue for information exchange about national, regional and local development cooperation regulations, policies, and activities as well as for ensuring regional and local level participation in and contribution to important strategic documents concerning development cooperation, such as the Master Plan.

The Catalan Law 26/2001 specifies three mechanisms for coordination of Catalan development policy actions and actors. The Commission for Coordination with Local Authorities, which aims to ensure discussion, coordination and cooperation between representatives of the Gencat, territorial and local entities as well as the Catalan Fund (Art. 23). Furthermore, the coordination of and consultation with all relevant Catalan actors and cooperation agents in the field of development cooperation is organised via the Development Cooperation Council. For example, the Council is a venue for gathering opinions on the Catalan Master Plan and Annual Plan, issuing its report on these plans (Art. 24). This is a consultative body of the Gencat and other local administrations might have their own consultative councils. Finally, the Interdepartmental Council, a technical body within the Gencat, ensures information sharing, coordination and coherence between different activities in development cooperation (Art. 22). Overall, Gencat's coordination of development policy is done via both formal and ad hoc venues. The formal coordination is organised via the mentioned Development Cooperation Council, while ad hoc coordination tends to be technical and is mostly organised at the start of a specific project or initiative to involve all relevant stakeholders (Interview 17 October 2025).



1.4. Specific programmes supporting DDC activities

DDC in Spain is organised and implemented respecting the autonomy of regions and local governments. Specific programmes supporting and promoting DDC are therefore mostly provided at these levels. In case of Catalonia, three key administrations (the Gencat - ACCD, DIBA and city of Barcelona) have calls for proposals for DDC projects for actors active in the field of development cooperation. These calls for project proposals are complementary, and the three administrations coordinate among themselves to avoid overlaps in opening of their respective calls and to share information (Interview 15 October 2025).

The Gencat supports development cooperation carried out by Catalan local governments via its support to the Catalan Fund. Specifically, the Gencat has an agreement with the Catalan Fund, and it directly supports functioning of its Secretariat. Additionally, the Gencat has calls for project proposals for NGOs and

academia in field of development cooperation and humanitarian aid. These calls are not directly intended for local governments, but they are involved in projects as partners (Interview 17 October 2025). DIBA's call for project proposals focuses on education for development cooperation, while the city of Barcelona focuses on city-to-city cooperation and exchanges, and provides support to NGOs active in development cooperation (Interview 15 October 2025).

Finally, as a collective municipal fund, the Catalan Fund provides a range of supporting services to its members. These include assistance in the preparation of calls for proposals for development cooperation projects, evaluation of submitted proposals, and monitoring of the approved projects by engaging with implementing entities. The Catalan Fund also has its offices in [Costa Rica](#) and [Senegal](#) to facilitate coordination and monitoring of projects and activities implemented in these countries as well as to support cooperation efforts of Catalan municipalities, including engagement with Catalan diaspora (Interview, 21 November 2025). Additionally, when a specific need is identified, the Catalan Fund might initiate humanitarian projects to which municipalities can contribute directly. Furthermore, the support is provided at the technical level. The Catalan Fund manages the [platform](#) that helps connect Catalan municipal officers interested in decentralised technical cooperation exchange. Finally, funding for specific projects and activities, obtained from the ACCD-Gencat, AECID or different EU level programmes (for example AMIF, CERV, Erasmus) that Catalan Fund is managing, includes a component of supporting municipal cooperation and technical exchange (ibid.).

1.5. Modalities, activities, and focus areas of DDC

In Spain, the general state administration, autonomous communities and local governments define and pursue their own development cooperation initiatives, including geographical and thematic focus areas.

Spanish cooperation is directed towards triple transition (social, economic, ecological) and alignment with international agendas, specifically including the achievement of the Agenda 2030 goals. According to the Master Plan (2024, p. 62), geographic priorities for Spanish cooperation are divided into three groups, namely priority regions, priority countries and other countries of interest. Importantly, Spanish development cooperation follows a multi-dimensional approach to development, and therefore, does not exclusively focus on countries with low income (according to the OECD criteria) or on the goal of eradicating poverty. Instead, it takes into consideration inequalities experienced in certain countries, their challenges in achieving 2030 Agenda as well as shared values and interests (ibid. pp. 61-62).

Drawing from the Law 1/2023, the Master Plan (p. 63) lists 35 countries in four regions (Latin America and the Caribbean, Sub-Saharan Africa, North Africa and the Middle East, and Asia) as priority areas. Key thematic areas are closely tied with the SDGs and follow the triple transition (social, economic, ecological) approach (ibid. p. 34). For each indicated transition, the Master Plan elaborates a set of actions and initiatives across different sectors that will be in focus.

Furthermore, the Master Plan outlines instruments for development cooperation, emphasising that defined cross-cutting and sectoral approaches need to be implemented in line with the partner country's needs as well as abilities to attain the 2030 Agenda objectives. The main modalities of actions include technical cooperation and knowledge transfer, projects and programmes (either regional or more thematic as well as through activities of international organisations), financial cooperation, and multilateral and delegated cooperation (Master Plan, pp. 74-79; Art. 10 of the Law 1/2023).

Geographic priorities of the Gencat are indicated in the Catalan Master Plan (p.21) and include 12 priority countries (Bolivia, Colombia, Ecuador, Gambia, Guatemala, Honduras, Morocco, Mozambique, Nicaragua, El Salvador, Senegal and Tunisia). Continued cooperation in Palestine, Western Sahara and Kurdistan is also highlighted. The 2025 Annual Development Plan (p. 29) further specifies Spanish-Catalan cooperation for complementary actions in Latin America and the Mediterranean. It also elaborates plans to strategically guide Gencat's cooperation with Morocco and Colombia. These plans include a 'Team Catalonia' approach, gathering all relevant Catalan development cooperation actors. This is a pilot-project, and the intention is to extend this approach to more development programmes to ensure coordinated efforts (ibid, p. 29, 40). Furthermore, the Catalan development cooperation focuses on eight strategic thematic priorities, including human rights, gender issues, peace, health, environment and climate justice, mobility, institutional and democratic reinforcement and boosting transformative economies (Catalan Master Plan pp. 16-20) and emphasises development of feminist policies in cooperation.

1.6. Financial scheme for DDC

Financing of development cooperation in Spain is dispersed, as there are different levels of donors, including the general state level, autonomous communities, provinces, cities and municipalities. The support from the latter is usually organised via collective funds, such as the Catalan Fund in Catalonia.

At the general state level, FEDES is a key instrument for providing financial support through bilateral and multilateral cooperation. It represents an upgrade compared to the previous fund FONPRODE, with an enhanced flexibility, improved management as well as range of financial instruments at its disposal (Master Plan, p. 76). FEDES is managed by the AECID and covers a range of actions related to sustainable development and cooperation in identified partner countries as well as in any other country, if actions align with objectives of Spanish cooperation (Art. 8, 3, 4 of the Royal Decree 810/2025). Funding under FEDES can be transferred to different entities (public sector, including states, regional and local public administrations and public sector entities, private sector and international organisations) with the scope of promoting development cooperation. Different funding instruments can be used, among others, loans, credit, guarantees and grants (ibid., Art. 5-7).

Importantly, the Law 1/2023 legally enforces Spain's commitment to allocate 0.7% of GNI to ODA by 2030. According to [preliminary OECD data](#) (2025, p.2), Spain exceeded the amount of EUR 4 billion of provided ODA, which accounts for 0.25% of Spain's GNI. In 2024, ODA increased in real terms both in volume and as a proportion of total aid, compared to 2023. Furthermore, Spain has the highest share of gross bilateral ODA channelled through civil society organisations (53.4% in 2023) among OECD DAC members (ibid). Also, a large share of Spanish funding for ODA is earmarked for contributions to the EU in international cooperation (Interview, 16 October 2025).

Spanish autonomous communities, municipalities and universities contributed around 10% of Spanish ODA (about EUR 379 million), according to calculations by [Donor Tracker](#) of the Seek Development. A recent [La Coordinadora report](#) (2024b) on trends in ODA allocation by autonomous communities during the 2018-2024 period, showed that some, including Catalonia, managed to exceed their pre-financial crisis levels of budget ODA allocation in 2024, while several others (such as the Canary Islands) saw their budget ODA allocation reduced between 2023 and 2024, with levels still below their pre-financial crisis allocations. Despite an overall upward trend in the ODA budget, the report notes that additional effort is required to achieve the 0.7% target. It should be mentioned that while allocation of 0.7% of GNI to ODA is a relevant indicator for monitoring efforts in development policy, the methodology for defining this target (for example, whether the 0.7% target is calculated based on total budget, like in Andalusia or specifically on revenue sources, like in Catalonia) can make a significant difference (Interview 23 October 2025).

The Gencat 2025 Annual Development Cooperation Plan (pp. 15-16) indicates a total of EUR 95.57 million for ODA (including support expenses for refugees) in 2025 or EUR 73.37 million without support expenses for refugees from the Gencat's budget. The planned allocation in 2025 shows a gradual increase compared to previous two years. Moreover, 61,33% of the funding will be channelled for development, while 10,86% of the planned ODA will be directed to humanitarian aid and 27,80% to global education in line with the Catalan Master Plan's targets (ibid. 30). Of the planned budget for ODA, the ACCD will manage EUR 45.54 million (without support expenses for refugees) of which 53,40% will be directed to development. Finally, most of the planned funds will be channelled via bilateral initiatives of other actors (in total 57,68% of the planned ODA) in line with the objectives of the Catalan Master Plan (ibid, p. 34).

According to data provided by the [Municipalist Cooperation Observatory of the Catalan Fund](#), Catalan municipalities implemented EUR 27.92 million ODA in 2022. After a drop in 2020, the allocated funds show a steady gradual increase. In the period 2019-2022, a total of EUR 42.49 million was directed to development, representing 47,14% of the total allocated ODA. Importantly, 15 Catalan municipalities/supra-municipal bodies have achieved 0.7% target (according to the 2023 data).

The Catalan Fund is funded from different sources, including mostly contributions from its members, but also ACCD-Gencat, AECID and the EU level. The Catalan Fund is tasked with the joint management of contributions from its members as pooling (even smaller) contributions, makes it is possible to finance projects of a considerable size. Therefore, support provided via collective fund allows for greater impact. According to the latest available data from the [Municipalist Cooperation Observatory](#), the Catalan Fund managed EUR 4.41 million of total contributions in 2023. Total contributions in 2023 decreased compared to 2022, when they amounted EUR 4.95 million. In the period of 2019-2023, most of total annual contributions to the Catalan Fund were channelled to development (40.85%).



2. Enabling factors for DDC and future developments

Having development cooperation planned and implemented at different levels is the key enabling factor for DDC in Spain (Interviews 16 October 2025, 22 October 2025, 23 October 2025). Significant decentralisation of the system provides for greater flexibility and enables regional and local actors' implementation of their own initiatives and activities. This in turn allows these actors to accumulate their own experiences, which they can share with their partners internationally (Interview 22 October 2025). Furthermore, a close cooperation with NGOs is another enabling factor. Working with territorially rooted NGOs allows specialisation in cooperation, focusing on relevant topics based on local needs (Interview 22 October 2025). Also, implementing DDC at different levels by various actors and stakeholders contributes to raising awareness and overall citizens' perception of development cooperation (Interviews 16 October 2025, 23 October 2025). Finally, participatory approach to development policy, as also highlighted in the Catalan example, brings an added value to DDC. It provides capacity to build joint actions and experiences with NGOs, academia, and other stakeholders and enables mutual understanding and learning (Interview, 17 October 2025).

There are several challenges in the Spanish DDC framework which should be mentioned. High decentralisation of the system with all its positive sides and merits, also makes the system complex and actions fragmented (Interviews 16 October 2025, 22 October 2025, 23 October 2025). The fact that there are many actors active in DDC across different levels, might create challenges for practical and effective implementation. The coordination challenge particularly was identified in the 2022 OECD Mid-Term Review. The recent reform with re-established CSC aims to strengthen the capacity to coordinate various DDC instruments and actors, specifically at regional and local level, in a more effective way¹¹. The recent 2024 OECD Mid-Term Review recognises the progress towards more policy coherence in development cooperation and efforts to enhance synergies between different actors. Still, coordination across levels should be strengthened further (Interviews 16 October 2025, 23 October 2025). The need for stronger coordination for the shared goals is also recognised in the Catalan example, as more coherence between different actors would be beneficial (Interview, 17 October 2025). The recent endeavour to implement development cooperation in Morocco and Colombia in a 'Team Catalonia' approach seem to be one of the responses to this challenge (Interview 23 October 2025).

Furthermore, it should be noted that along Spain's overall strong commitment to development cooperation and international solidarity, current political developments at the national as well as regional and local levels has seen polarisation also on this topic (Interviews 16 October 2025, 22 October 2025, 17 October 2025). Spain has secured and increased budget allocation for ODA and public opinion continues to be generally supportive of development cooperation. However, emerging sceptical political voices and increased political misalignment coupled with the current prominence of other policy areas, such as defence, might have an impact on the Spanish DDC in future (ibid.). Additionally, looking at the results of the study¹² conducted by the Catalan Fund, more visibility of development cooperation and raising citizens awareness of the role of municipalities in this regard would be beneficial.

¹¹ See: [Detalle proyecto normativo](#)

¹² See more: [Enquesta 2023 – Fons Català de Cooperació](#)

Finally, another set of challenges relates to practical implementation that municipalities face. This concerns their capacity constraints (administrative, technical, financial) as well as administrative complexity, which can be particularly challenging for smaller municipalities (Interview, 21 November 2025). Furthermore, there are implementation challenges in partner countries due to the changing context and political situation (Interviews 15 October 2025, 17 October 2025). In some instances, an increasingly challenging context on the ground diminishes opportunities for cooperation with local governments. Part of this challenge stems from the difficulty of finding reliable partners and establishing partnerships committed to respecting human rights, democratic values and sustainable development (Interview 15 October 2025). In such a context, cooperation with NGOs and associations rather than local governments represents a more viable option to pursue cooperation for development. Moreover, these challenges also require rethinking and adaptation of the existing tools to the realities on the ground, since many partner entities face difficulties in implementing actions. Hence, a more flexible, tailor-made approach and set of tools are needed (Interview 17 October 2025).

3. Conclusions

Spain plays an active and internationally recognised role in supporting and promoting international development cooperation and solidarity. The recent overhaul of the framework regulating development cooperation, including legal enforcement of the commitment to allocate 0.7% of GNI to ODA by 2030, confirms this role.

The Spanish model is notable for its decentralisation. There are specific regulations, strategic plans and specialised structures for development cooperation at regional/autonomous community level as shown in case of Catalonia, but also in Andalusia, the Balearic Islands, the Basque Country and other autonomous communities. Moreover, the role of autonomous communities, provinces, cities, and municipalities as well as DDC as a modality of development cooperation are legally recognised. Overall, DDC in Spain is important, active and heterogeneous with actors across levels pursuing their own initiatives and partnerships and allocating their own resources to implement activities. The common municipal development cooperation funds (such as the Catalan Fund) are particularly relevant in this regard and are another distinct feature of the DDC model in Spain. By pooling resources through these funds, municipalities, especially the smaller ones, can effectively overcome challenges for their active international engagement. Finally, a broad participative approach and consultations in planning development cooperation is emphasised across levels, whereby the involvement of different stakeholders is seen as providing added value.

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