



# The **SDGs** in the **Development Cooperation** Policies of the Spanish **Autonomous Communities**





The **Catalan Ministry for Foreign Action and European Union** is responsible for coordinating and organising the Government of Catalonia's foreign actions, including those involving European Union institutions, development cooperation and peace-making. In the ministry, the Directorate-General for Development Cooperation is responsible for drawing up this public policy, in conjunction with all its actors and other government bodies, and for Catalonia's participation in and contribution to spaces for defining the international development agenda.

**PLATFORMA** is the pan-European coalition of town and regions (and their national, European and global associations) active in town-to-town and region-to-region development cooperation. It is one of five local government networks to have signed Framework Partnership Agreements with the European Commission. PLATFORMA's research and advocacy work is oriented particularly towards ensuring local government is reflected in EU development policy. Since its creation in 2008, PLATFORMA has secured the representation of over 100,000 local and regional governments. They are all key actors in international cooperation for sustainable development.

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The preparation of this report, *The SDGs in the Development Cooperation Policies of the Spanish Autonomous Communities*, responds to a double need. The first is to take stock, more than five years after the adoption of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), of the new role that the Spanish autonomous cooperation agencies are assuming in the face of the challenges posed by the 2030 Agenda. The second is to reopen the debate on the SDGs and reaffirm the commitment to this universal agenda, shared by all countries, which in its internal dimension poses significant challenges for all public policies, while at the same time connecting with global problems.

Thus, the main objective of this study is to understand the connection between the SDGs and development cooperation policies, analysing the impact of the 2030 Agenda in relation to the functions of these policies, as well as the relationship between development cooperation and other public policies. We believe that, for this purpose, the Spanish autonomous communities are a good object of study: they stand out on the international development landscape for the stability of their legislative mandates in the area of development cooperation, their institutional and technical capacity, and the significant volume of resources they manage. For all these reasons, they constitute a relevant case that can generate useful lessons in other contexts.

The report examines in a comparative manner, through different experiences, how the SDGs are integrated into the different stages of the development policy cycle – planning, monitoring and assessment; how they affect the different instruments and modalities of development cooperation; their impact on the generation of new partnerships, and the extent to which they modify the place of development cooperation in the policy arrangements in each autonomous community for the general implementation of the 2030 Agenda.

This work would not have been possible without the support of the PLATFORMA project, financed by the European Commission, or without the generous involvement of the large number of Spanish regional cooperation agencies, which decided to become involved in this initiative. We hope that the result will be of interest to you, and that it will allow us to continue learning and sharing.

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# Executive Summary

The main aim of the report is to analyse the impact of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) on the development cooperation policies of the Spanish autonomous communities, with special emphasis on strategic planning processes and dialogue with other public policies. More broadly, it also aims to examine the position and role of development cooperation in regional strategies for the 2030 Agenda (or localisation of the SDGs). Given its inclusion in the PLATFORMA project, the need to prepare a questionnaire-based analysis methodology that could be used in other European contexts was also identified.

An examination of the state of the art in integrating SDGs into development cooperation policies revealed the limitations of the proposals addressing this issue and their tendency to use sustainable development results jointly with partner countries, which is beyond the effective capacity of sub-state cooperation. A working group was set up for the study, made up of the heads of the development planning units from Spain's main regions: Andalusia, the Balearic Islands, Castile and León, Extremadura, the Community of Madrid, the Valencian Community, the Basque Country and Catalonia itself. This group discussed, agreed on and subsequently completed a questionnaire with 19 questions: six on the formulation of development cooperation policy and priorities for the use of official development assistance (ODA) resources; six on the SDGs in relation to other development actors, both public and private; and seven on dialogue on development policy with other areas of government and on the regional SDG strategy.

The findings and conclusions of the analysis, presented and discussed in the working group, revealed that the principles of sustainable development are highly congruent with longer-term policy development in the autonomous communities. The universality of the SDGs connects well with current narratives in regional cooperation and has rapidly enriched new approaches to education for development and global citizenship, and also certain forms of cooperation (horizontal exchange of experiences and mutual learning, focus on issues shared with partners, such as urban poverty, social exclusion and climate change). The use of the SDGs in regional cooperation strategic planning exercises has facilitated greater flexibility in theoretical frameworks and dialogue with actors, especially NGOs, planning for the longer term (2030) and extending the relationship to new actors and issues relevant to sustainable development. Universities, research centres, businesses and non-traditional development actors are among the initial promoters of the SDGs. Although some traditional NGOs initially perceived them as a challenge to their narratives and status, ownership of the SDGs is steadily improving over time. SDG integration is sophisticated and operates at different levels, but in all cases it goes beyond merely labelling pre-existing targets. The main challenges lie in adapting the instruments and

modalities of aid: the transition to new partnerships (beyond traditional subsidies) is slow. ODA is rarely seen as a catalyst for other spending and new development funding schemes are seen as necessary but complex, but are also not a demand from traditional actors. The use of SDG-based results indicators is limited.

The questionnaire also showed that the SDGs create worthwhile opportunities for the division of labour between development actors in different territories (municipalities and provinces), where some autonomous communities have made significant progress. In addition, at State level, the 2030 Agenda opens up opportunities for further harmonisation. Policy consistency for (sustainable) development (PCD) can improve the position of development cooperation units within regional government, and it has been noted that 2030 Agenda localisation strategies work best when foreign relations and cooperation units play a leading role in them.

Progress in the integration of the SDGs is general and present in all autonomous communities participating in the study, but the ambition and pace of integration is also linked to factors of political leadership, public choice and bureaucratic interests. It is not a linear process, but rather one that goes backwards and forwards. Future research should be able to assess this development.

# 1. Introduction

## 1.1 Approach to the problem

The United Nations' (UN) adoption of the 2030 Agenda, together with the new Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), was a major international milestone. The SDGs provide a universal framework to guide humanity's sustainable development efforts, at local to global, governmental and non-governmental levels. Their implementation and follow-up are increasingly discussed in the public debate, and some see the 2030 Agenda as a new foundational document, a type of new UN Charter, based on the serious and present threat to life on the planet.

Clearly, the new results framework did not come as a surprise to many regional and local governments who, individually or more particularly in networks,<sup>1</sup> had been deeply involved in the process of revising the previous framework (the Millennium Development Goals, MDGs). In this reflection on the "post-2015" age, *localisation* became the key word for the impact of territorial governments and the synthesis of a political agenda that included greater participation in defining new goals, association in their implementation, more detail in territorial indicators and specification of sub-state results, and better funding, among other elements. An agenda which, as we know, was drawn up and transferred by the foreign action and international cooperation units, representatives of sub-state governments in the global development debate.

However, once the SDGs were adopted, decentralised cooperation took on a new, internal role: conveying the idea that the new 2030 Agenda is not a foreign, but a domestic programme. A universal agenda, which challenges all public policy, in all countries, and which connects government action itself with global problems. Regional governments, as well as all other public authorities, from international organisations to municipalities, understood this challenge and began a process of creating structures and drawing up plans to respond to the new global framework from their own areas of responsibility. Thus, the SDGs are steadily becoming an essential benchmark for all public policy, at different levels of government.

At the same time, the balance of the last five years or more shows that the connection between the SDGs and development cooperation policy and, more generally, the field of foreign action, is

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<sup>1</sup> Sánchez Cano, J. (2015). "Redes de gobiernos locales y nueva agenda mundial: una perspectiva multinivel". *Cahiers de la coopération décentralisée*, No. 5, 112-130. <https://cites-unies-france.org/No5-des-Cahiers-de-la-cooperation-decentralisee-septembre-2015-numero-special>



not always simple, nor is it expressed the same way by all public authorities. Although not exhaustive, a number of initial observations may be made on this issue:

- The 2030 Agenda is a relatively ambiguous framework for development cooperation policy. It points to a very broad set of results, which, by failing to consider more radical measures, such as degrowth and the redistribution of resources and power, appear contradictory. Although its funding clearly goes beyond official development assistance (ODA), no clear specific priorities have been set for it.
- As of 2016, some public cooperation projects started to align their strategic goal matrix with the SDGs. However, understanding the SDGs solely as sectors for intervention can obscure the interdependence of global issues and hinder the policy integration required for effective implementation of the Agenda.
- For cooperation in some autonomous communities, the four-year reflection for the new master plan has a strong, autonomous rationale, and is very much based on previous experience. There may be room for change and innovation, but the most important thing is learning from one's own management and continuous correction and improvement within the public policy cycle. Integrating new frameworks (such as the previous MDGs) does not always lead to profound change in approach, and may end up in little no more than lofty pronouncements.
- In some cases, the SDG portfolio is handled at government level in a way that is poorly connected to the foreign agenda, or with an international dimension focused on benchmarking, comparison and presentation of results, rather than on public policies acting outside one's own territory.

However, the last few years have also provided us with a number of observations. Basically, the SDGs do allow for a transformative interpretation, and the 2030 Agenda can be interpreted in such a way that the notion of “sustainable development” can drive profound change in public policy, making it more integrated, coherent and participatory. This is also the direction taken by a research study commissioned by the Government of Catalonia, which examines the extent to which decentralised cooperation can be a lever for achieving the SDGs.<sup>2</sup> Their conclusions show us that sustainable development requires cooperation that is now less a specialised action removed from domestic priorities than a policy that links up citizens' concerns through various

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<sup>2</sup> This work was carried out in the framework of collaboration with the United Cities and Local Governments Capacity and Institution Building (UCLG-CIB) Working Group. Prepared by Ignacio Martínez and Pablo Martínez Osés, from the research collective La Mundial. [http://www.cib-uclg.org/sites/default/files/dc-2030agenda\\_esp.pdf](http://www.cib-uclg.org/sites/default/files/dc-2030agenda_esp.pdf)

development partner countries or territories, while also connecting their public authorities to tackle problems that, at the current time, unquestionably common to all.

This positive vision of the 2030 Agenda goes hand in hand with the idea of special responsibility: development cooperation, with the lessons learned in recent decades, appears to be in a better position than any other public policy to represent and raise the visibility of the change required by the new Agenda. A change that is more about process than results: above all, implementing the SDGs means moving towards a different policy, and in this respect development cooperation can be a lever, as José Antonio Alonso rightly points out.<sup>3</sup>

## 1.2 Study objectives

One of the main lines of work of the European Commission-funded PLATFORMA initiative is the analysis of the Sustainable Development Goals, including sharing and exchanging experiences.

The proposal from Catalonia, a member of PLATFORMA, is to analyse the relation between the SDGs and development cooperation; more specifically, to examine how the SDGs are being integrated into different components of cooperation policy, including planning, monitoring and assessment, instruments and modalities, actors and alliances. It also aims to analyse the place of such policy in more general organisational schemes, in each autonomous community, for the implementation of the SDGs. In this regard, it is important to analyse the dialogue between cooperation with central units on SDGs, the extent to which the SDGs guide foreign action, including cooperation, and to what extent it is an internal catalyst for the 2030 Agenda and its implications.

The Spanish Autonomous Communities (ACs) provide a space for meaningful reading and analysis. All have been boosted in recent decades by cooperation laws, placing this regional policy in the national and international panorama, and demarcating its concepts, instruments, modalities, priorities and forms of organisation. It may be said that the ACs operate as donors comparable to members of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) Development Assistance Committee (DAC): they know and apply the rules of ODA (such as eligible countries and activities and resource accounting criteria); they regularly employ monitoring and accountability mechanisms; and even OECD statistics present ODA figures for each Spanish AC, collected and monitored by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, European Union and Cooperation (MAEUEC). In this, the ACs have differentiated themselves from other donor regions, but without legislative powers,

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<sup>3</sup> “Guía rápida para valorar la respuesta española a la Agenda 2030”, in *El País*, 6-4-2018.  
[https://elpais.com/elpais/2018/04/05/planeta\\_futuro/1522931224\\_032014.html](https://elpais.com/elpais/2018/04/05/planeta_futuro/1522931224_032014.html)

like non-state cooperation actors, such as a number of municipalities, which have less legal and economic capacity. Internationally, the Spanish regions have the best established development cooperation policies and practices among intermediate governments, with a stable legal basis and considerable resources, what are also differentiated depending on each case. The ACs can thus serve as an initial study to develop and test a research methodology that may later be used in other contexts, especially in Europe.

We hope that the work, synthesised in a final report, will enable us to:

- Gather trends in SDGs and development cooperation among ACs, conducting a comparative review of different experiences and identifying valuable practices, to improve planning cycles where possible, especially with regard to integrating the SDGs and the 2030 Agenda.
- Better understand the real and potential impact of the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs on the functions of development cooperation and its relationship with other areas of public policy, with special emphasis on the regional level.
- Develop, test and refine a methodology of analysis, with a questionnaire at its core, to help other government bodies, especially in the European Union, undertake a similar examination and draw conclusions for their own context; and also identify the elements of a research agenda that allow us to continue increasing our knowledge in these areas.

### 1.3 Phases and dates

The preparation of this report involved:

- a) The initial project preparation and identification phase (October 2020 - February 2021), which included contact with all the ACs, an explanation of the initiative objectives and an invitation to participate. At the same time, work was carried out on the study methodology, by obtaining and examining the most relevant bibliographical references. These provided a good idea of the state of the art in the integration of SDGs, especially in cooperation policy. The research approach was also guided by a number of conversations and discussions with relevant actors.
- b) The second work phase (March to April 2021) with the eight ACs who had responded positively to the proposal: Andalusia, the Balearic Islands, Castile and León, Extremadura, the Community of Madrid, the Valencian Community, the Basque Country and Catalonia itself. This phase focused on designing, sharing and completing a questionnaire to gather

the different aspects of the relation between SDGs and development cooperation in each AC.

- c) In the third phase (May to October 2021), the results were analysed and presented to the group of ACs participating in drawing up the report. The final report was drafted from the reactions and comments obtained, situated in the framework of studies on SDG integration in development cooperation.
- d) Finally, the concluding dissemination phase (from October 2021) aimed at communicating the report and its results to the other PLATFORMA project partners and beyond.

## 2. Methodology

### 2.1 State of play

SDG-related scientific output is undoubtedly abundant and continues to grow, especially in the environmental and natural sciences. Numerous studies analyse interactions between the SDGs and their targets, based on modelling the impacts that different, duly quantified actions can have on them. These studies are very useful for understanding the interdependent nature of the SDGs and the need to address them by taking into account the different dimensions of sustainability (environmental, social and economic) and integrating different public policies or sectors of intervention.<sup>4</sup> The scientific study of the SDGs provides public policy analysis and policy advice with extremely interesting observations and data. However, its usefulness is limited with regard to development cooperation, as it tends to look inward rather than outward, and does not, at least so far, include cases providing in-depth examination of the interactions between the means of implementing the 2030 Agenda, which are the ones that most clearly demarcate the tasks for cooperation and technical assistance. Consequently, studies taking a more applied and prescriptive approach were needed to guide the focus of our study: reports and manuals analysing the implications of adopting an Agenda 2030 rationale in development cooperation policies, suggesting specific ways for them to integrate the SDGs into their components and organisational rationale: values, analysis, plans, programmes, instruments, actions, policy dialogue and so on.

A valuable contribution in this regard was made in 2017 by Alexandra Rudolph and her notion of “*SDG-sensitive development cooperation*”.<sup>5</sup> Rudolph believes that the notion of “coherence” is central to achieving the 2030 Agenda, as it makes sustainable development efforts compatible between different public actors within a country and, above all, allows national development strategies to reinforce each other and contribute to the construction of global public goods.

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<sup>4</sup> A highly recommendable compilation and systematisation of these works from a *policy* perspective can be found in Bennich, T., Weitz, N. & Carlsen, H. (2020). “Deciphering the scientific literature on SDG interactions: A review and reading guide”. *Science of the Total Environment*, vol. 728.

<sup>5</sup> Rudolph, A. (2017). “The Concept of SDG-Sensitive Development Cooperation. Implications for OECD-DAC Members”. IDOS Discussion papers 1/2017, Bonn, Deutsches Institut Für Entwicklungspolitik.

<b>2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development</b> A SDG-sensitive action requires countries (stakeholders) to implement the 2030 Agenda to its fullest extent		
<b>1.</b> <b>Domestic efforts</b>	<b>2.</b> <b>International coherence</b>	<b>3.</b> <b>International cooperation</b>
Integrated implementation of the SDGs and promotion of coherence between public policies, e.g. between different ministries and administrative levels.	International policy coherence for development, based on the values of the 2030 Agenda, in all areas of domestic and international policy.	(Bilateral and multilateral.) Allocation of resources aligned with progress on the 2030 Agenda, international partnerships and global public goods.

Source: Rudolph (2017), p. 3

Rudolph also identifies a number of parameters in which development cooperation had to adapt to the specific provisions and the rationale and principles of the SDGs. The specific provisions relate mainly to SDG 17, and the targets of meeting commitments relation to ODA and allocating 0.7% of gross national income to ODA, and allocating one third of these resources to the least developed countries. The adoption of an SDG rationale should, above all, lead to a more strategic and ambitious use of multilateral cooperation (global public goods), as well as bilateral cooperation that strengthens the capacities of partner countries and governments to contribute to the 2030 Agenda, favouring the instruments and modalities they manage (programme and budget support) and the use of SDG-oriented evidence and results indicators generated by the beneficiaries themselves.

Subsequent work,<sup>6</sup> especially by the OECD, stresses the latter idea: the use of the SDGs as a framework of results shared between donors and beneficiaries. In 2019, the OECD Development Assistance Committee (DAC), largely building on previous experience of monitoring the MDGs, adopted six guiding principles for managing sustainable development results. DAC member states thus now have the beginnings of a proposal for the practical implementation of the SDGs in their cooperation policies, which will largely depend on their ability to establish a sustainable development policy dialogue with partner countries, and then

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<sup>6</sup> OECD (2021). "Achieving SDG Results in Development Cooperation: Summary for Policy Makers". Paris, OECD Publishing. [https://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/development/a-baseline-survey-of-the-guiding-principles-on-managing-for-sustainable-development-results\\_f8974d89-en](https://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/development/a-baseline-survey-of-the-guiding-principles-on-managing-for-sustainable-development-results_f8974d89-en) See also: Guerrero-Ruiz, A., Schnatz, J. & Verger, C. (2021). "A baseline survey of the guiding principles on managing for Sustainable Development Results". OECD Development Co-operation Working Paper, no. 93. [https://read.oecd-ilibrary.org/development/achieving-sdg-results-in-development-co-operation\\_5b2b0ee8-en#page1](https://read.oecd-ilibrary.org/development/achieving-sdg-results-in-development-co-operation_5b2b0ee8-en#page1)

agree with them on general programming, operational instruments and SDG-oriented monitoring and learning systems. This is an appropriate approach, but it is beyond the true capacity of decentralised cooperation. In terms of resources and constitutional position, they do not really have the capacity for political dialogue with partner countries that the OECD methodology requires.<sup>7</sup>

**DAC Guiding Principles on managing for sustainable development results:**

1. Support the sustainable development goals and desired change.
2. Adapt to the context.
3. Enhance country ownership, mutual accountability and transparency.
4. Maximise the use of results information for learning and decision-making.
5. Foster a culture of results and learning.
6. Develop a results system that is manageable and reliable.

[https://www.oecd.org/officialdocuments/publicdisplaydocumentpdf/?cote=DCD/DAC\(2019\)37/FINAL&docLanguage=En](https://www.oecd.org/officialdocuments/publicdisplaydocumentpdf/?cote=DCD/DAC(2019)37/FINAL&docLanguage=En)

Of greater interest for our purposes is the research work “The SDGs as a compass for Belgian development cooperation”,<sup>8</sup> commissioned by the Belgian government Directorate-General for Development Cooperation and Humanitarian Aid, carried out in 2020 by a team of experts from the University of Antwerp and the Catholic University of Leuven. The study, which includes an extensive review of the literature and a large amount of work with interviews and focus groups, once again mentions the lack of both methodological proposals for the integration of the SDGs in development cooperation and integration practices among donors that could serve as a guide for the Belgian case. It therefore to adopt its own model, distinguishing between two different levels.

Firstly, the level of *ambition* in integrating the SDGs in development cooperation policy, distinguishing between incremental incorporation of the SDGs, based on changes in certain practices, the integration of the SDGs into the ODA paradigm, with changes in strategy, objectives and operations, but without affecting either the existing mandate and or the outlines of competencies in development cooperation policy, and a transformative integration of the

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<sup>7</sup> In this respect, it is worth remembering the still valid conclusions of the study carried out in 2022 by An Desmet and Patrick Develtere, which are fully applicable to the Spanish regions. Desmet, A. & Develtere, P. (2002). “Sub-national authorities and development co-operation in the OECD-DAC member countries”. Higher Institute of Labour Studies (HIVA-K.U.Leuven).

<sup>8</sup> Braeye, S., Vandenbroucke, S., Van Ongevalle, J., Molenaers, N. & Huyse, H. (2020). “SDGs as a compass for the Belgian development cooperation - final report”. Research Institute for Work and Society (HIVA-K.U.Leuven).

SDGs, also involving traditional and newly created social agents. An approach that can make development cooperation a “champion” policy in terms of SDGs and a lever for changes that have the potential to affect all areas of government, so that the 2030 Agenda is gradually addressed from the whole-of-government and even from the whole-of-society.

Secondly, the extent of SDG integration and the incorporation of one or more *components* of the 2030 Agenda into development cooperation policies. Thus, the institution can make its own interpretation of the *principles* of the Agenda (policy integration, universality, “leaving no one behind”, multi-stakeholder partnerships, shared responsibilities etc.) and translate them into its own cooperation principles and practices. Another way of using the SDGs is to align the matrix of development cooperation strategic objectives with the *goals and targets* of sustainable development. A third approach, explored extensively in the OECD work reviewed above, is the use of *SDG monitoring indicators*, linking progress on development results to the SDGs, shared between donors and recipients. This is a valuable possibility, but with the difficulty that the donor will not be able to attribute a given impact to its own cooperation, as the results would be joint, reflecting the different contributions converging in each partner country in the form of programmes and projects in support of sustainable development.

## 2.2 Analytical approach

A first methodological proposal was adopted based on this review of documents and an unstructured exchange of views with different actors (officials from Spanish cooperation, regional and local government networks, the OECD Development Assistance Committee and the PLATFORMA project partners). Confirming the initial ideas, it involved on creating a questionnaire to collect information on how the participating ACs were integrating the SDGs into their cooperation policies. In creating this questionnaire, it was decided, firstly, to organise the questions into the three levels identified in the research commissioned by the Belgian cooperation: public policy and use of ODA resources; relations with actors (whole-of-society); relations with other areas of government (whole-of-government), asking about the initiatives and actions driving the public cooperation of the participant ACs at each of these levels. Secondly, the choice of questions combined the subjects identified in the previously examined works examined (different possibilities for incorporating components of the 2030 Agenda: principles, objectives, indicators; policy coherence and dialogue with government on the adoption of a sustainable development paradigm; ODA as a catalyst for other investments in sustainable development; and use of data and statistics), while leaving room for the traditional, well known issues of regional, and in some cases also local, cooperation: role and importance of education for development; dialogue with social partners; coordination with other public authorities; and improving capacities, policies and techniques.



It was decided to limit the questions on the *evolution* of certain issues, despite the indisputable fact that the issues under study are not static and the process of adaptation towards sustainable development, with its possible advances and setbacks, should be understood. However, introducing this aspect would require a specific questionnaire design, which could compromise the chances of obtaining meaningful observations from comparable responses. The issue of evolution will therefore have to be monitored through further research.

Based on these considerations, the participating regions received the initial proposal for the questionnaire, which was discussed at a specially convened meeting. This was used to agree on a final questionnaire, consisting of 19 questions, together with a final balance sheet and concluding comments, which would be interpreted more generally, but not tabulated. Arranged in the three levels mentioned above,<sup>9</sup> the questions concerned:

### **I. Cooperation policy and the use of official development assistance**

- Sector priorities
- Geographical priorities
- Instruments
- Funding
- Monitoring and assessment
- Planning processes and methodologies

### **II. SDGs and relations with private and public actors**

- Incorporation of new actors and sectors
- Partners and alliances
- Other public authorities in the territory
- Attitude of the actors towards the SDGs
- Education for development
- Communication

### **III. Cooperation in government dialogue on sustainable development**

- Visibility of cooperation
- Policy coherence for development
- Mainstreaming cooperation
- Driving the regional SDG strategy
- Characterisation of the strategy

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<sup>9</sup> Originally, the structure of the questionnaire was slightly different, with two sub-sections in the first section: priorities and instruments, and the “new agenda”.

- Role of development cooperation
- Addressing SDG 17

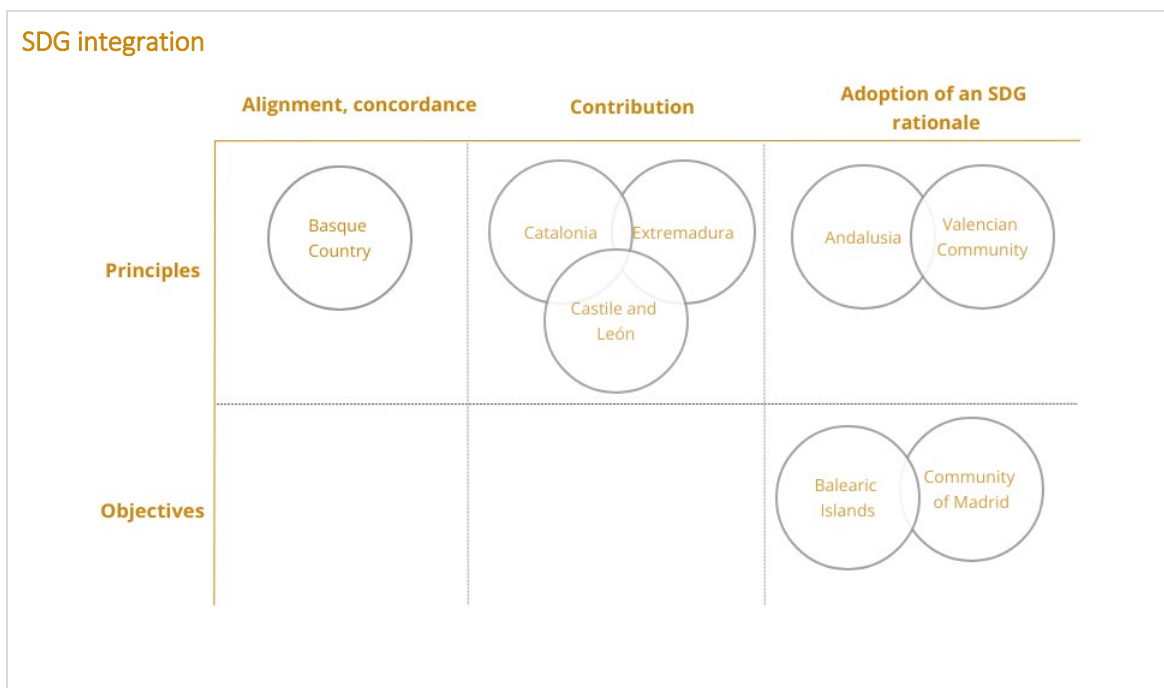
On a final note to close this section on methodology, it is worth mentioning the decision to create an open-ended questionnaire, with no pre-set list of answers. It was felt that, despite the greater complexity this means for processing and tabulation, it was worth the effort to get a better idea of what these responses might be to later build a more closed questionnaire for wider use, based on this experience.

## 3. Analysis of the Answers to the Questionnaire

### 3.1 Development cooperation policy and instruments

#### 1. Are the sectoral priorities of development interventions oriented towards the SDGs? How is this orientation produced?

This is the first and perhaps most important question, which will no doubt need to be asked with greater nuance in a revised questionnaire. The answers and accompanying explanations, as well as information from the rest of the questionnaire, provide a number of elements to understand the integration of the SDGs and the 2030 Agenda into the ACs' priority fields. These elements, which are more than just sector-based, can be categorised in two areas:



“SDG 4 and its targets 4.7, 4.3 and 4.4 serve as a general framework for most of the calls for proposals in the education for development and global citizenship modality. Alignment with the SDGs is a requirement and is positively rated in all interventions in this modality.” (Castile and León)

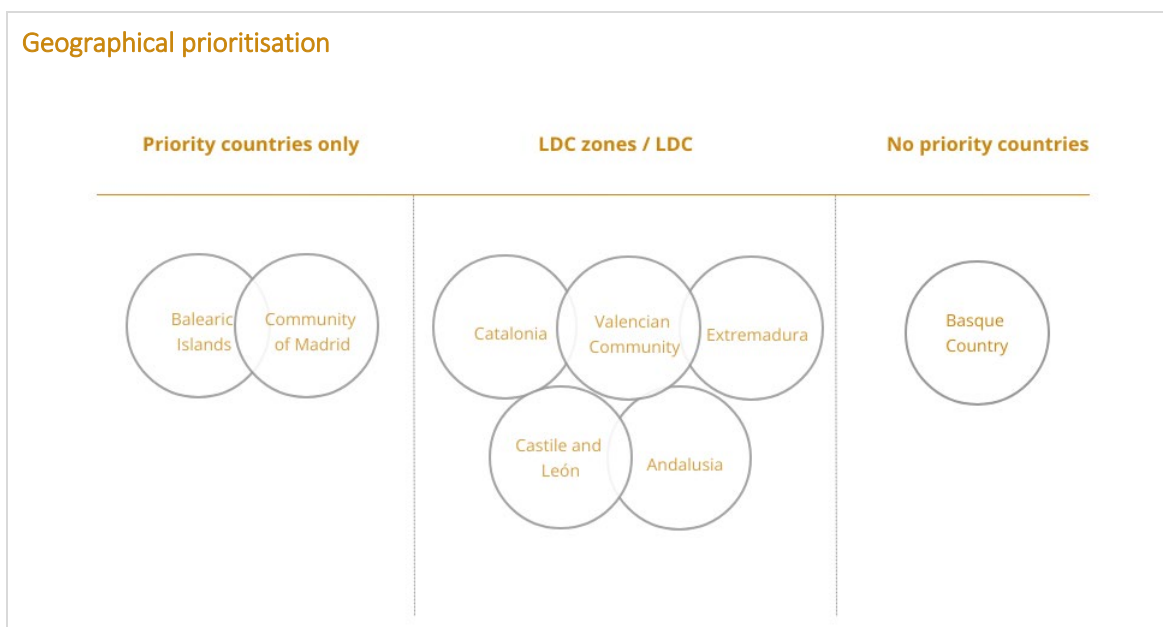
The horizontal axis represents the connection between SDGs and topic prioritisation, ranging from an organisational and prioritisation rationale that is aligned and congruent with the SDGs,

followed by an approach based on contributing to the SDGs, albeit with its own organisational rationale, and then on to the comprehensive adoption of an 2030 Agenda-based organisational rationale and contributing to the SDGs. The vertical axis represents the different ways of integrating the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs: either by implementing and using the principles of the 2030 Agenda or by aligning the strategic objectives themselves to the SDGs and their targets.

## 2. Have other forms of territorial prioritisation been adopted, based on the SDGs, beyond the conventional notion of “priority country”?

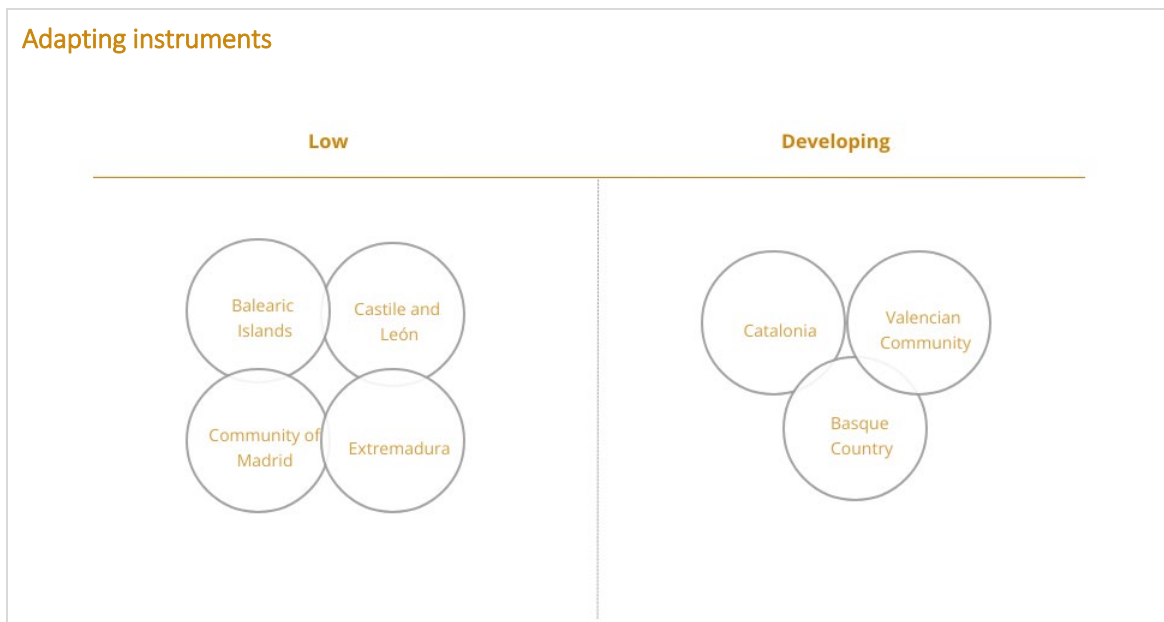
Although they contain little detail on how to address territorial prioritisation, the SDGs can foster a different rationale to the traditional one, based on priority countries: the phrase “leave no one behind” places the emphasis on impoverished people and populations, even within the same state. Other explicit references include the least developed countries (LDCs, with the aim of targeting 0.2% of gross national income to these countries through cooperation mechanisms), as well as a focus on the African continent in various sustainable development goals and means of implementation.

There is a predominance of conventional geographical prioritisation formulas in the answers to the questionnaire, combined in some cases with special focus areas, including LDCs; there is also one case where planning does not include priority countries, but a preference for Africa.



**3. Have your cooperation instruments been modified to make them more SDG-oriented?  
(Expanding eligible actors, including new priorities, association to N-S issues, sector integration,  
etc.)**

Modifying spending instruments is often seen as important unfinished business, as programmatic thinking moves faster and is more independent than the mechanisms used for providing funding. The new trends cited by the ACs that have started adapting their instruments include complementarity of international cooperation and other foreign programmes, linking projects in partner countries and education for development actions and the general introduction of the local-global connection, the nexus between humanitarian action, development and peace, the eligibility of new actors (third sector organisations, local authorities), and more wide-reaching and longer-lasting interventions, which tend to be multi-sectoral.

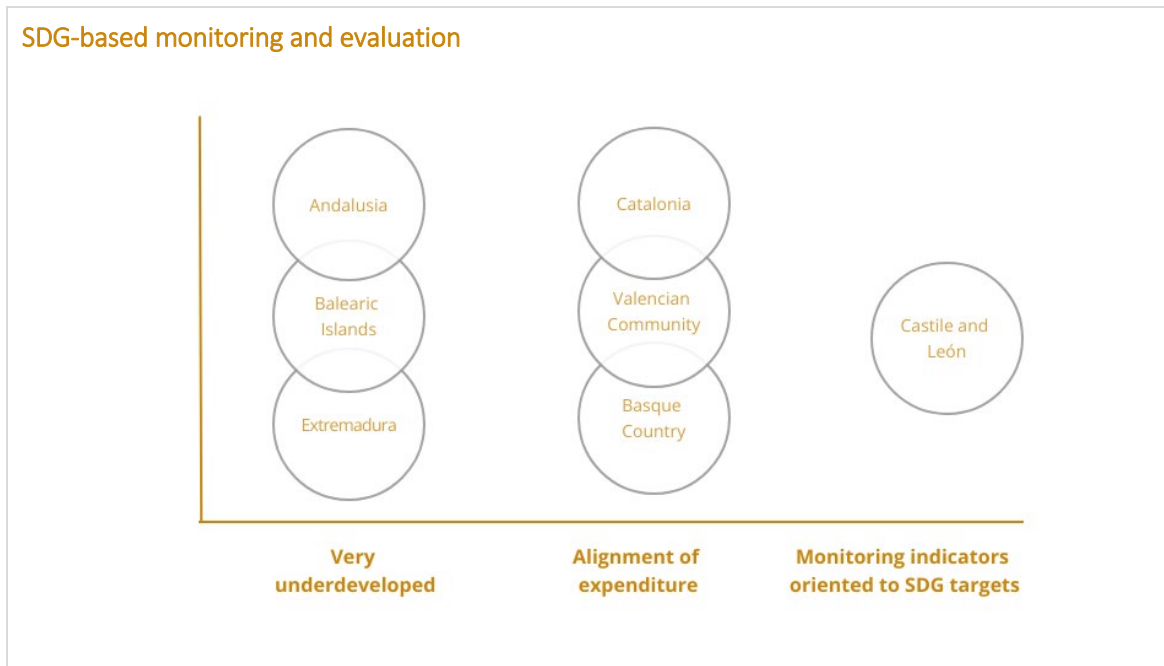


**4. Funding: Have you incorporated other development funding rationales, building on the SDGs?  
Has the position of ODA, as a catalyst for further funding beyond cooperation resources, changed  
in your cooperation? Are you using the TOSSD standard to measure such additional resource  
mobilisation?**

The answers seem to show that these issues are most widely debated in Catalonia. Given the resistance to considering ODA as a means of mobilising other resources and not just the target expenditure, especially among NGOs, the SDGs have helped consolidate lines of work that began in previous years: efforts to develop financial instruments to complement concessional financial support (guarantees, microfinance) and participation of public cooperation units and agencies in partnerships with funding from other actors, especially the European Union. In none

of the cases has a formula for measuring the impact or mobilisation of additional funds been reached, nor has the TOSSD standard been used in this regard. This is seen as an innovation of interest, but also one still in the process of development and stabilisation.

**5. Have you brought the SDGs into cooperation policy monitoring and assessment? What challenges have you encountered, and how have you overcome them? Are you developing any sort of SDG-based monitoring indicators?**



Development here is more limited, especially in terms of results. No AC reports SDG-sensitive assessment methodologies, nor the use of formulas aimed at attributing results in partner countries, in agreement with them, and based on official SDG monitoring indicators. One community is trying to make progress on its own SDG-oriented monitoring indicators. Finally, three ACs report that they are using the SDGs as a formula for analysing expenditure orientation, in a similar way to the DAC sector codes, although they also state that the coexistence of these two systems is complex, possibly unhelpful, and may even result in contradictory data.

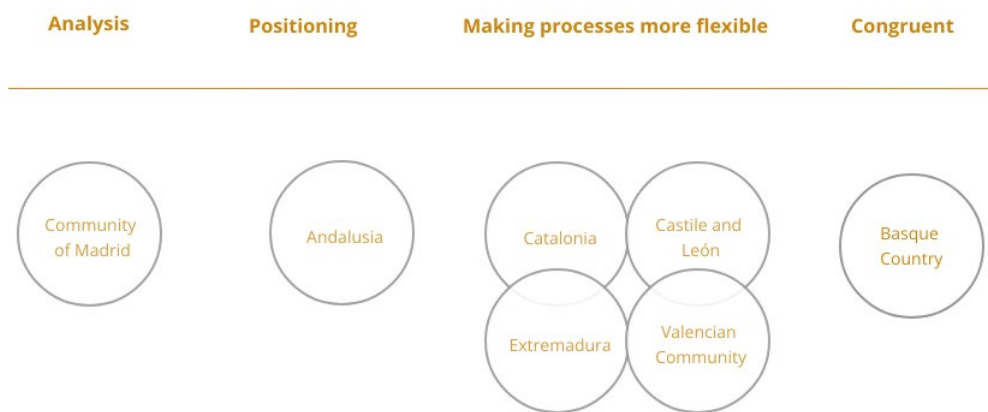
**6. In general, what do you think the 2030 Agenda has contributed to the processes and methodologies of strategic planning for cooperation in your AC?**

The answers here are necessarily varied and, even at the risk of simplification, our analysis highlights a preference for valuing the capacity of the SDGs to make programming frameworks more flexible, and to address previously diagnosed problems and constraints with new tools

and greater legitimacy. In other cases, the SDGs and the 2030 Agenda are valued as a framework for positioning, international harmonisation and communication, and as a tool for analysing and understanding global problems. Even regions that have not made explicit use of the SDGs as a planning framework have also equipped themselves with a system of priorities and ways of working that are fully consistent with the 2030 Agenda.

“What the 2030 Agenda has brought to our strategic planning processes and methodologies is a broader vision of the actors to consider, greater emphasis on education for social transformation and the need for policy coherence.” (Balearic Islands)

### The contribution of the SDGs to strategic planning

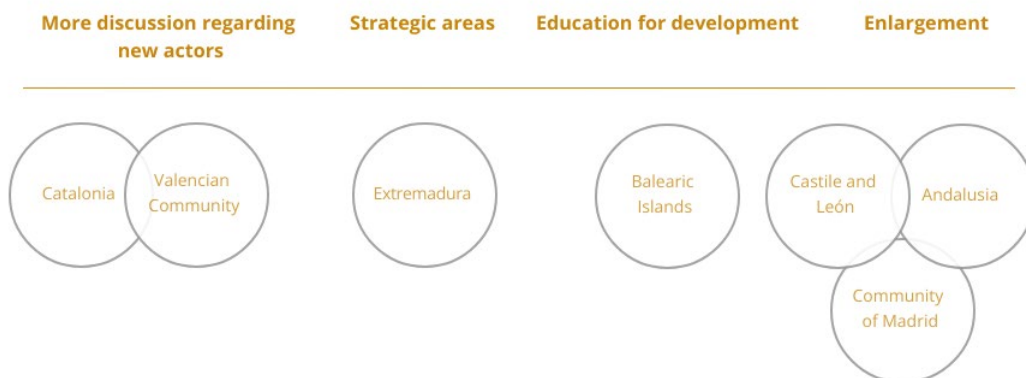


## 3.2 SDGs and relations with private and public actors

**7. New actors and sectors: Have the SDGs helped you broaden the range of actors and sectors you engage with? Has there been a debate in your AC between “cooperation actors” and “development actors”?**

Although some ACs report this debate between cooperation actors (NGOs, specialised bodies) and development actors (third sector, business, knowledge, etc.), what predominates is a broadening of the types of actors related to this public policy, especially with regard to the local-global connection, through a broader conception of education for development and ways of working (such as the “strategic areas” of Basque and Extremadura cooperation), which strengthen links between common problems in ACs and development partners and actors operating in a transnational rationale. The answers show that the 2030 Agenda permits a new dialogue and new alliances with public and private actors, mainly in the territory itself.

### Broadening agents/channels for incorporation



“The new Agenda led the current General Plan, in force since 2018, to consider the need to rethink, expand and strengthen the map of actors in Extremadura cooperation policy, moving towards a sustainable development policy in which the boundaries between the ‘international’ and the ‘domestic’ are increasingly blurred. In other words, a policy and a map of actors that favours building links between proposals, solutions and participation on a global and local scale.” (Extremadura)



**8. Alliances and partners: At a more strategic level, have you introduced any changes to the partnership policy of your cooperation, based on the SDGs?**

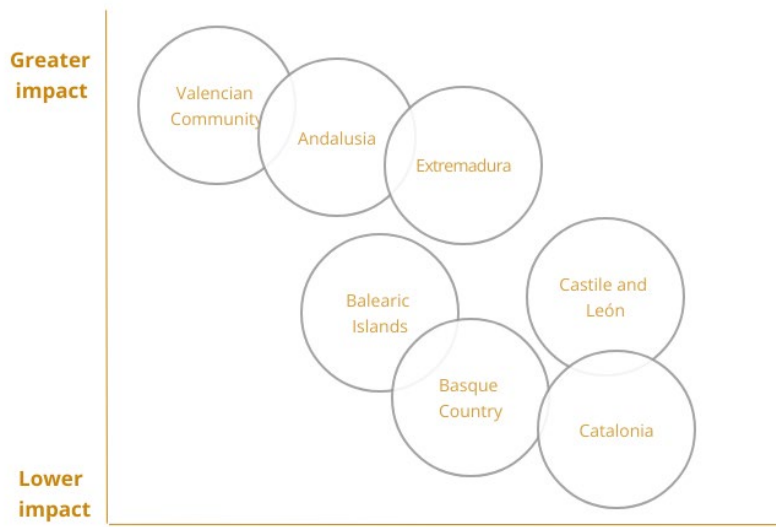
In some cases, the answers here match the answers to questions 6 and 7. Other key partnerships cited are the private and knowledge sectors and multilateral organisations linked to territorial development.



**9. Has the existence of the SDG framework led your AC’s development cooperation to play a new role in relation to the cooperation of public authorities in your territory? And in relation to Spanish cooperation?**

The link with Spanish cooperation appears to be of little relevance here: the replies, at most, refer to participation in an ongoing pilot initiative, run by the MAEUEC Directorate General for Sustainable Development Policies, for measuring the contribution to the SDGs, and the use of SDGs in improving the methodology for drawing up Country Partnership Frameworks (CPFs). With regard to municipal partnerships, the impact of the SDGs varies greatly, although in some cases the ACs use the new framework to take on functions of a certain scope, such as initial promotion and awareness-raising regarding SDGs, coordination and division of labour between public authorities and the promotion of more strategic alliances.

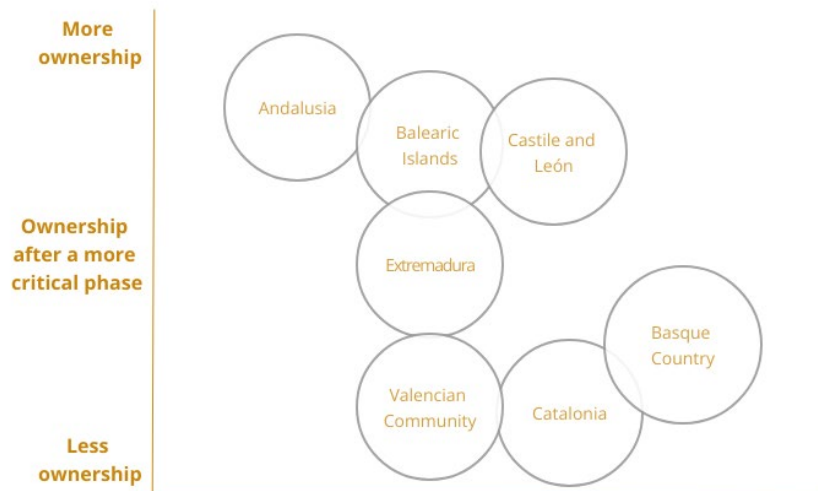
### The SDGs and municipal cooperation



### 10. How has the attitude of cooperation actors in your AC changed over the years with regard to the SDGs and especially with regard to appropriation of the new framework?

The answers to questions 7 and 8 already provide some information on the position of actors with regard to the 2030 Agenda framework. The following table refers only to non-governmental development organisations and includes the time dimension included in the question.

### Ownership of the SDGs by non-governmental development organisations

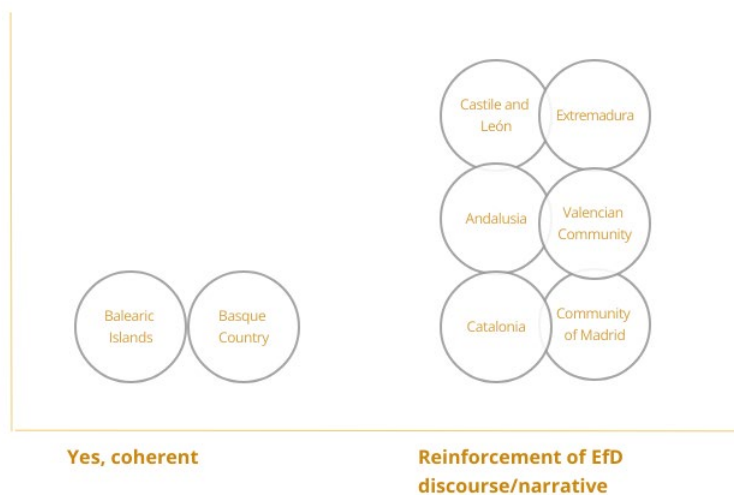


“In the framework of inter-government relations, joint work with local government bodies has been greatly enhanced. The SDGs have facilitated dialogue, coordination and finding common working spaces in relation to cooperation and sustainable development. Alliances and spaces for coordination (such as the Sector Territorial Council for International Development Cooperation and the Cities Alliance for Sustainable Development) and spaces for training, exchange of experiences and debates have been boosted.” (Valencian Community)

**11. In addition, the SDGs normalise a transition that goes back some time: the shift from education for development (EfD) focussing on the issue of “underdevelopment” to education for critical citizenship (or some other expression) focussing on the global nature of the issues affecting humanity today. In your community, are you using the SDGs to reinforce this transition? Or is EfD somewhat disconnected from the SDG narrative?**

The responses here show a significant convergence, whereby for a majority of ACs the local-global approach in the SDGs helps create a narrative that connects well with the aforementioned evolution in EfD, while also providing an element that facilitates ownership by cooperation agents.

#### Education for development and the SDGs

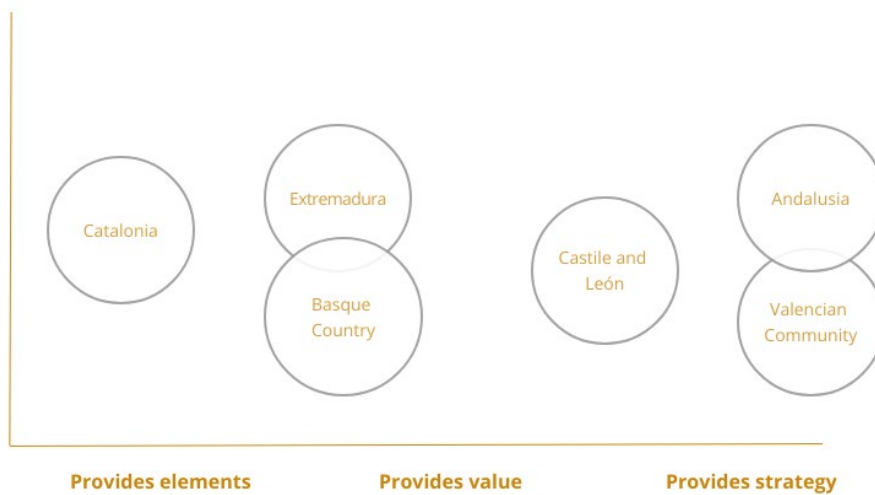


## 12. How have the SDGs impacted on development policy communication agendas in your AC?

The SDGs are helping modulate development cooperation discourses, with varying degrees of intensity: from providing a number of communicative elements to reinforcing the existing communication strategy or even providing the basis of the strategy itself.

“The 2030 Agenda has inevitably become the urgent roadmap for tackling and resolving the enormous challenges that COVID-19 is leaving us, where the only way of overcoming this crisis is international cooperation. It is essential [...] to develop attitudes, socio-affective skills and critical capacity that look at the environment from a perspective based on interdependence and co-responsibility in global problems.” (Andalusia)

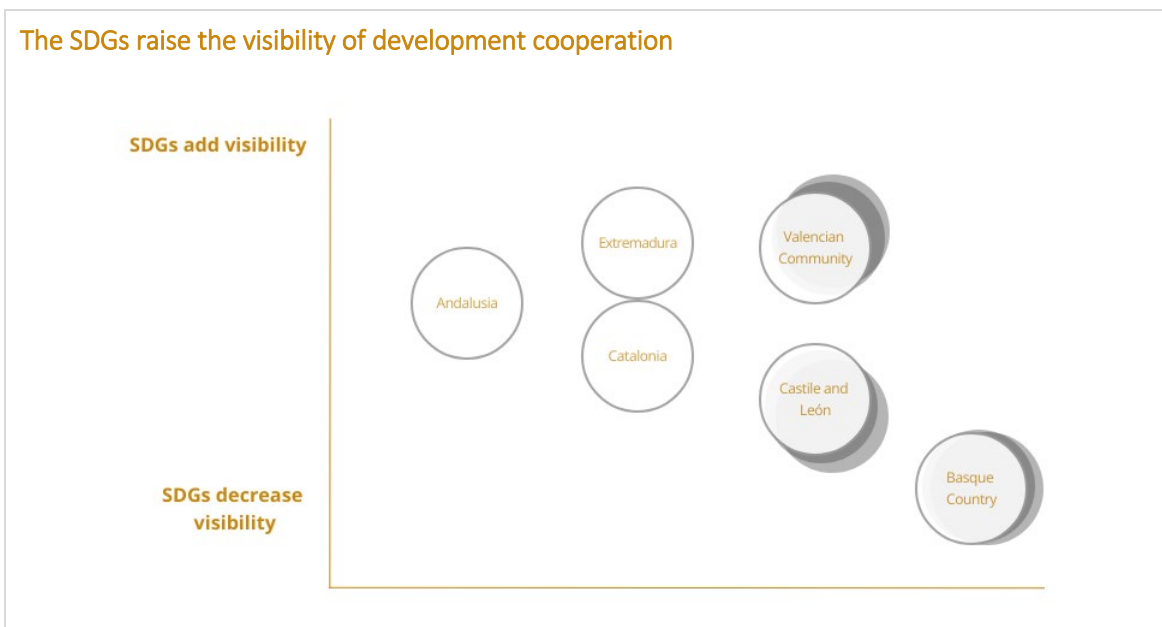
### The 2030 Agenda and the communication of development policy



### 3.3 Cooperation in the government dialogue on sustainable development

13. Do you think that the rather internal nature of the SDGs is leading, in your community, to a loss of visibility of cooperation, when talking about the 2030 Agenda? Or rather, is the new framework enhancing the capacity of development cooperation for dialogue with other areas of government? What limits and/or internal contradictions have been identified in this dialogue?

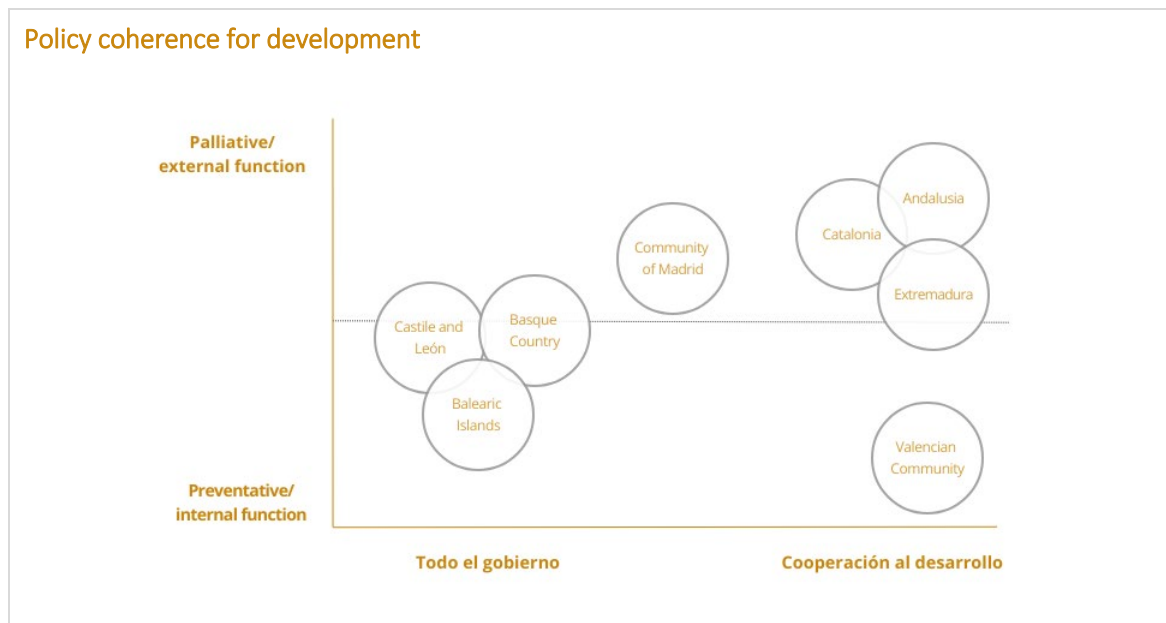
The answers to this question show that this is a developing subject. While the profile of cooperation in the general SDG panorama in some regions has steadily increased, there have also been setbacks in others. In many cases, it will be necessary to await the implementation of new organisational designs that have been endowed with significant responsibilities with regard to the 2030 Agenda.



14. Is PCD the target of a new approach, based on the SDGs? Is cooperation primarily responsible for this function? Do other areas of government come into play? How does the system work?

International cooperation units are often responsible for ensuring PCD, traditionally defined as limiting the possible negative external impacts of other public policies (business, trade, etc.) on development partners through a rather reactive or palliative approach. As is clear, the SDGs can drive a new *coherence for sustainable development policy*, focused on whole-of-government public policy dialogue for the SDGs, operationalised preventively, and with greater attention on growth-sustainability interactions than on external impacts. Between these two notions, a reinforcement of interdepartmental coordination can be located, with the aim of improving the alignment of the various cooperation actions and ODA spending in all areas of government. The

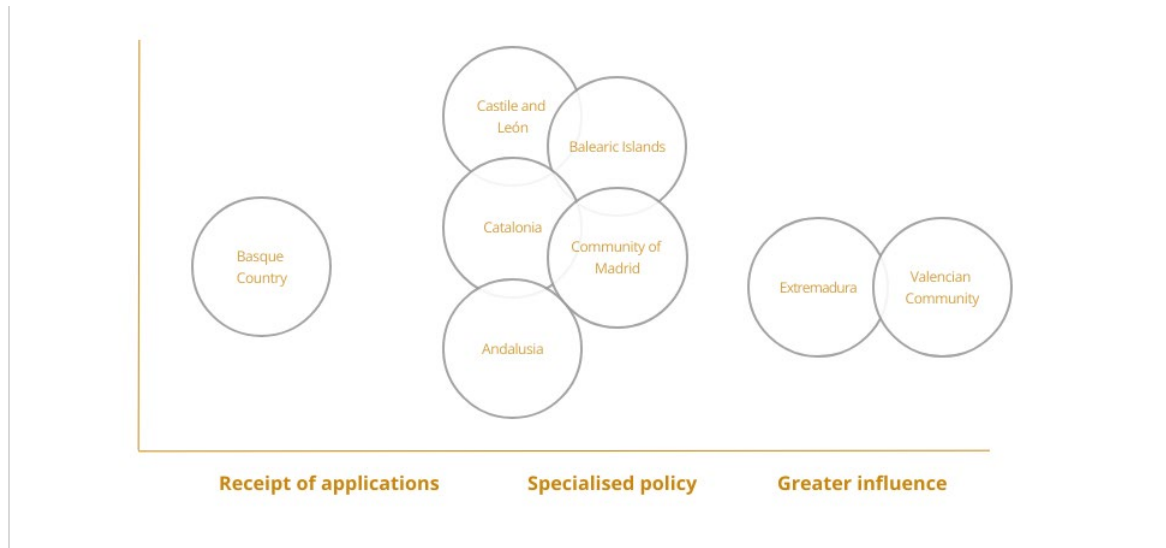
answers show the wide variety in the situations among participating ACs and even in the differing scopes of the concept, with a coherence that also refers to strengthening coordination with other public authorities in the AC. The *system* which the questions ask about appears to be fluid and often in construction. Below is a possible representation of the current state of play on the issue.



15. Similarly, by outlining a universal agenda, the SDGs can encourage different areas of government to connect their priorities with those of other public authorities, and act transnationally. In this sense, based on the SDGs, is cooperation still a specialised policy, or is it being mainstreamed into different areas of government? If such is the case, is this causing changes in the role of the units (agencies, directorates-general) with central responsibilities in development cooperation?

All the regional cooperation projects analysed consider that they carry out specialised work, and that the “niche” competencies are not being substantially modified as a result of the 2030 Agenda. At the same time, some have undergone certain changes: receiving new demands for action, from the government itself and ways associated with the overall SDG strategy; greater prominence in discussions on the implementation of the 2030 Agenda; and strengthened interdepartmental coordination via PCD.

**Development cooperation and SDGs: more or less specialisation**



16. In your AC government, is there an overall strategy for the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs? What unit is responsible for driving the overall SDG strategy?

Only four ACs answered the question in the affirmative, while the location of the unit responsible for leadership of the regional strategy for the 2030 Agenda varies significantly.



**17. How would you rate this strategy? Is this a pooling of separate sectoral plans, “labelled” with SDG nomenclature? Does it include any new and specific lines of action, already identified by sustainable development rationale? Or is it a broader and more ambitious strategy, aimed at a deeper change in public policy-making?**

Significantly, two of the four answers refer to plans or strategies limited to amalgamating actions, without varying departmental boundaries or analysing the balance and trade-offs between policies which, in terms of sustainable development logic, could turn out to be incoherent or contradictory. Another two ACs are at a turning point. In the Basque Country, they are moving from a broad, highly political initial stage, with a strong component of coordination between public authorities and the involvement of private agents, to a more mature and ambitious stage which, among other ideas, aims to encourage not simply adherence but also proactivity on the part of the actors. In the Valencian Community, after a preparation and capacity-building phase, development cooperation will be the executing and coordinating unit for the strategy, which will be drawn up in a highly participatory way within the framework of the Interdepartmental Commission for International Development Cooperation and the High Consultative Council for the Development of the 2030 Agenda.

“In the new commitment there is a desire to maintain the same dynamics of monitoring and dissemination as in the previous stage. But there is specific emphasis on the design of its governance, as well as on the prioritisation of some visible initiatives called “flagship projects”. These initiatives help translate the 2030 Agenda to specific practices and in some cases may have a certain cross-departmental component. For the moment, its desired contribution appears to be building a stronger link between local and global situations by asking the Basque Agency for Development Cooperation to propose initiatives in this area for each and every one of the projects. Whatever the case, the proposal for the Global Health flagship project already includes joint work between the Department of Health and eLankidetza from the outset.”  
Basque Country



**18. What has been the role of development cooperation in shaping your AC's SDG strategy? What role does development cooperation play in it? What monitoring data does it provide?**

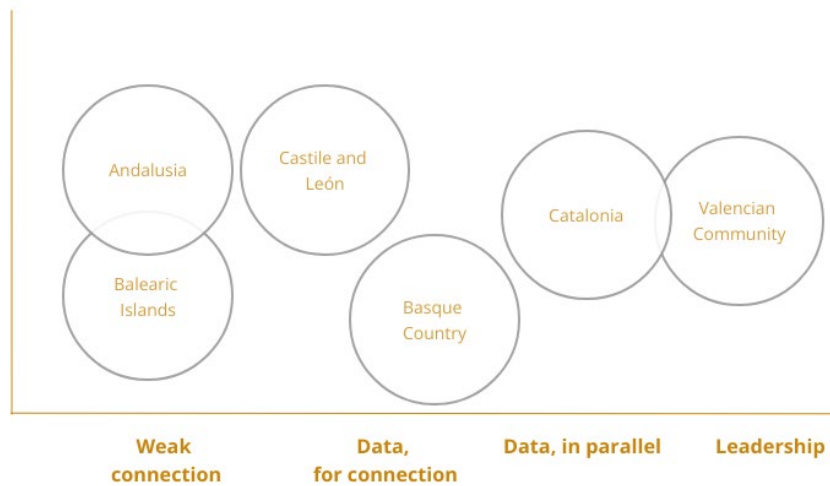
In most cases, the role played by development cooperation has been as a promoter and driver, even when an actual strategy is not eventually adopted. There is a significant lack of demand for SDG monitoring data from development cooperation units and agencies.



**19. If not commented on in the two previous answers, how is foreign action, and specifically development cooperation, handled? How is SDG 17 being addressed?**

The answers reflect how little the foreign dimension, including cooperation, has been developed in regional SDG plans and strategies. Cooperation is often not treated as the public policy or sector of reference in SDG 17 planning, and as mentioned above it generally provides little or no monitoring data. The case of the Valencian Community is different, where the role of cooperation is central to the implementation of the strategy, and also partly that of the Basque Country, where cooperation, which has not explicitly used the SDGs to improve development cooperation planning, although it does integrate their principles, is now being asked to identify actions to improve the international scope of the Basque 2030 Agenda.

**SDG 17 and cooperation in regional strategies for the 2030 Agenda**



## 4. Conclusions

### 4.1 General conclusions

All public policy seeks make improvements in: meeting the most relevant needs effectively, optimising their performance and use of resources and learning from experience. A distinctive feature of public development cooperation policy is the centrality and stability of its planning, monitoring and assessment functions, as well as the standardisation and comparability of its data and statistics. The key reflection for this improvement is thus, in our policy, more closely regulated than in other areas of regional government action, and its analyses usually have strong, verifiable foundations. Four-year planning exercises, based on the lessons learned from the concluding cycle, are fundamental in drawing up cooperation policies, as they attempt to place new priorities in a relevant space in the international development panorama, proportionate to capacities and coherent with its pathway. Exercises that should also mediate with *local political economy*: the system of actors, alliances, interests and rules, etc., organised around public cooperation. These are also influenced by the context of doctrine and ideas: the innovations, debates and frameworks of analysis and results that, at the international level, compete to guide and give shape and meaning to development efforts in the broadest sense. That is the starting point of this report: the link between improving the public cooperation policy cycle and the 2030 Agenda and Sustainable Development Goals as a new international framework.

Thus, a first general conclusion is that a large majority of ACs consider that the SDGs connect well with their own analyses, objectives and road maps regarding continuous improvement in cooperation policy. In broadly interpreting the answers to the questionnaire, a large proportion of AC cooperation sees the 2030 Agenda as a positive innovation, which can also be applied to their own fields and adapted to their own needs and priorities for longer-term reform. Even where new planning approaches do not explicitly use the SDGs, they are seen as consistent with the SDGs' own roadmap and formulas for improvement, and the 2030 Agenda is expected to go beyond image and communication to implement actual changes, transitions and transformations in development actions. Among the ACs in general, different levels of ambition can be perceived in this effort to mainstream the 2030 Agenda: from little more than simply aligning strategic goals with the SDGs to a complete overhaul of policy. We can hypothesise that this level of ambition will be proportional to the perceived advantages of adopting an SDG rationale, in the process of improving public policy and given the actors involved or the regional political economy.

The study identifies seven areas in which the 2030 Agenda translates **into the ideas, language and practice** of cooperation in the Spanish ACs examined. These are areas where the degree of implementation has been uneven, but which we may see as forming a coherent and complete whole, shaping the different dimensions of SDG integration into this policy. These are:

- 1) The global nature of development problems, and **linking the local and the international** beyond states and their borders (universality, overcoming the North-South logic, convergence between development cooperation, ODA and other forms of cooperation: interregional, territorial, international).
- 2) The **integration of policies and sectors of intervention**, required by the multidimensionality and interdependence of development issues.
- 3) The **broadening of topics and actors**, relevant from a sustainable development perspective, and thus the need to broaden the modalities of collaboration and promotion available in development cooperation management units, making the notion of “new partnerships” more practical.
- 4) The need to strengthen work on **PCD** and deepen the dialogue with other areas of government on sustainable development.
- 5) Improving **knowledge, technology, research, statistical capacity and data** to enable effective and innovative development practices in both developing countries and their partners, and the generation of appropriate **indicators** to measure their results.
- 6) The effort to create **new instruments** adapted to the different needs of partner countries and programmes, as well as diversifying **funding formulas for development**, with ODA as a catalyst other expenditure and mobilising additional private resources.
- 7) Depending on differing capacities for contributing to the 2030 Agenda, a certain **rationale for the division of coordination and labour with other public development and cooperation actors**: harmonisation among donors and coordination with municipal cooperation. In partner countries, national-territorial dialogue on development policy and local capacity-building in this regard (multilevel governance, localisation).

The degree of development and maturity of these seven areas is highly diverse and none of the ACs is in a position to offer the same level of development and maturity. The ACs in the study have managed to progress in the different doctrinal and operational aspects of all of them. We stress here the fact that the first (local-global connection) is the one most widely emphasised by all participating regions, and apparently the one being implemented most rapidly. This is present in the new EfD narratives, bolstered by the SDGs, but which respond to changes prior to the SDGs; in formulas of approach (strategic areas, lines of work, etc.) that link local and partner country actors in the face of common problems; and in policy dialogue with other areas of government on development policy coherence and localisation of the 2030 Agenda.

## 4.2 On the three levels of analysis: politics, agents, government.

I. With regard to **cooperation policy itself and its instruments**, one sees (question 6) that the SDGs facilitate, above all, a greater **flexibility in the framework** in which planning processes operate: the possibility of tackling previously identified problems from a new perspective that is both internationally legitimised and congruent with the roadmap for improvement; dialogues that incorporate new themes as well as new voices; and even a time frame (2030) to guide the four-year plans. It is interesting to note that all the approaches claiming to be SDG-oriented easily find their place in the ACs' own consolidated ways of working: a rights-based approach, strategic areas, humanitarian nexus and more. Apparently, adopting a sustainable development rationale does not call into question areas that are preferably left unquestioned. The ACs in the study do not integrate the SDGs as a way of labelling work already in progress, but to provide rhythm and legitimacy and to broaden the social base for their own reform agenda. A flexible and legitimising framework, which underlines the analysis of the global (multidimensional, universal) problems in which cooperation operates, while at the same time improving the positioning and, especially, the **communication** (question 12) of such policy: the SDGs have rapidly come to integrate, if not structure, the strategic communication on cooperation of several of the ACs participating in this study.

Two ways of integrating the SDGs into planning that are by no means mutually exclusive can also be seen (question 1). In some ACs the adoption of the **principles** of the 2030 Agenda to implement or reinforce certain approaches predominates: local-global perspective, new agents and rethinking the PCD. In others it is more common to see the incorporation of the SDGs as a framework of **objectives** guiding sector priorities, or **results** for monitoring. In some of the regional cooperation projects participating in this study, both the principles and goals and targets of sustainable development are equally present. Whatever the case, it is a flexible and gradual integration: the development of spending **instruments** adapted to new priorities can be complex and very few ACs claim to have made significant progress in this respect (question 3).

Participating ACs state that they have not changed either their sector or geographical priorities (questions 1 and 2) on the basis of the SDGs. Although the 2030 Agenda is not particularly explicit in this regard, there are certain thematic (funding capacity, statistics) and geographic (least developed countries, Africa) orientations in its goals and targets that can inform cooperation policy. Mainstreaming of the new agenda seems to have had much more impact on the “how” of development cooperation than on the sectors and location of interventions. It is therefore not surprising that, so far, **monitoring and assessment** mechanisms (question 5) measuring the impact of sustainable development are scarce. The emphasis seems to be more on organisation: a broad reading of the answers reveals complex and dynamic processes, which advance through experiment and trial and error; this is in turn conditioned by situational

variables, without excluding leaderships, electoral cycles and the political and bureaucratic public choice.

II. With regard to **development cooperation actors**, the answers reveal both a willingness to open up to new actors and subjects and echoes of previous diagnoses, concerning the difficulty of translating the innovations of the 2030 Agenda, especially its notion of “partnerships” (question 7), into instruments of economic implementation that have to maintain criteria of competition, information and transparency, in a context of increasingly demanding accounting oversight. This difficulty also explains the stability in regional cooperation **partnerships**, as well as the tendency to initially establish partnerships between public bodies (municipalities, universities and multilateral organisations, among others) (question 8). One striking observation is that the **reception of the SDGs** among certain actors (local authorities, academia, private sector, etc.) has been positive from the outset. Other actors, such as NGOs and their coordinators, may in some cases be initially more critical of the new framework, although the trend will be towards progressive appropriation of the 2030 Agenda and a more positive assessment of what it provides (question 10). As far as **public actors** are concerned, the transition towards the SDGs seems, for the moment, to be having a very limited impact on the dialogue with Spanish cooperation (focused solely on the elaboration of the Country Partnership Frameworks); and a more intense, but uneven impact among ACs, in relation to local authorities in their own territory.

The impact of the local-global rationale in the SDGs on **education for development** (question 11) is particularly striking, and underlines a long-standing transition that has given rise to multiple terms: “Education for social transformation”, “education for global citizenship” and “education for development and global citizenship”, among others. EfD stands out not only as a way for new organisations (third sector) to access cooperation instruments, but also as a resource that provides development NGOs with less specialisation in international interventions with a firmer conceptual and functional anchorage in the ACs own territory.

III. We now turn to **regional government as a whole** to see to what the extent adoption of a sustainable development rationale is encouraging transitions on two specific issues. The first concerns the **mainstreaming of cooperation in all areas of government** and the pooling of different regional foreign action programmes: an SDG rationale could foster convergence between the specific modalities and instruments of development cooperation and other forms of international cooperation (sector networks, European regional cooperation, technical cooperation, etc.). However, as yet there is no movement in this direction (question 15): development cooperation looks at the whole of government, but without changing consolidated competency, conceptual or operational boundaries. It is thus maintained as a policy specialising in working with impoverished populations and countries, and in managing ODA resources.

A second issue in the whole-of-government impact of the SDGs relates to **PCD** (question 14), whose synthesis is much more complex. As we know, the conventional notion of PCD (focused on cooperation partner countries and palliative in the face of the externalities and negative external impacts of the actions of other areas of government) can, with the SDGs, evolve towards a broader scope of activity (focused primarily on the domestic level, and preventive in the face of the negative trade-offs of different public policies with a view to the SDGs). This transition may also affect the responsible units: if cooperation has traditionally played an important role in monitoring the impacts of other policies in partner countries, the emerging CPSD (where the S stands for *sustainable*) can be entrusted to other, more central, spheres of government. The answers also show that we are in a moment of transition, of change in the scope and leadership of PCD. The role of cooperation, which is well versed in this area, is being strengthened, maintained or diminished, with changing roles and new organisational frameworks, which have yet to be developed – and tested.

Finally, our study asks a set of questions (16 to 19) on the **regional strategy for sustainable development and cooperation policy**, which provide useful qualitative information.<sup>10</sup> The answers show that development cooperation, despite being an internal promoter of the new Agenda, even using it for its strategic planning, does not, in most cases, occupy an important place either in the regional organisational design for the 2030 Agenda or in the external dimension of this scheme. Nor is the implementation of SDG 17 usually entrusted to cooperation units, although they are best placed to understand and implement the innovations it contains. Cooperation planning, even when based on SDGs, sometimes runs parallel to the regional plan or strategy, and provides little or no monitoring data. Only in one case is there cooperation leadership in the implementation of the overall regional SDG strategy. There is little need to repeat the fact that the reality observed here is dynamic, involving progress and setbacks, and that the time dimension is crucial.

“These five years have taught us that the SDGs are a tool with many facets, and that the most appropriate thing to do is not strive to implement them as a whole, but to understand the types of changes they propose, as well as to draw up our own roadmap, in which the Agenda can give us the strength to undertake or follow reforms that in many cases have been clear in cooperation for some time. While it initially appeared to be a complex results framework, today we place less emphasis on the goals of the 2030 Agenda and more on its elements of change and public policy transformation.” (Catalonia)

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<sup>10</sup> In this case in particular, a more refined and simplified version of the questionnaire, with less value-laden questions, could more easily be developed.