

Preliminary Conclusions

For two days this Cooperation 2.0 Meeting as allowed people from a wide variety of fields including administrations, social institutions, companies, and universities to meet around their common interest in the use of Information and Communications Technologies (ICT) for Development and particularly in the use of ICT in relation with Development Cooperation.

We debated on ideas and generated knowledge which will help the actors of cooperation and development to make a more practical use of ICT in their work of Development Cooperation and which will enable to advance towards the setting-up and fostering of networks for development and cooperation. In short, we have explored together the possibilities and characteristics of a renewed model for Cooperation Network, which, because of its distinctive features of collaboration, shared knowledge and innovation, we have labelled, for the purpose of this Meeting, Cooperation 2.0.

We have arranged the conclusions from the various sessions around three main topics: (i) The use of ICT for development and its integration in the cooperation models; (ii) Networking or reticulation of cooperation and the emergence of a Cooperation Network; and (iii) The incorporation of these technological tools and reticulated processes into Spanish Cooperation.

1. The use of ICT for development and its integration in the cooperation models

ICT offer interesting possibilities to make Development Cooperation more efficient since information and knowledge are both essential ingredients for human development. These technologies possess a horizontal nature across the whole array of interventions in Development, such as for example, the Millennium Development Goals.

An objective attitude is advisable when it comes to identifying the right ICT for each development activity. The key elements when assessing the usefulness of each type of ICT should be the benefits these technologies might bring to the persons and organisations towards which the actions of cooperation are aimed.

In order to enable the agents of development cooperation to successfully integrate IC Technologies, it is recommended to act both on the internal and external dimensions, that is on the organisational level as well as on the work at programmes or projects level. On the one hand operations should be facilitated and access to information and knowledge management granted, but on the other, ICT should be used to help successfully implement the programmes and projects and achieve the expected results.

For an adequate use of IC Technologies in development cooperation, we should as well point out the following:

- That in the countries of the South there are many advanced experiences about the use of ICT for Development, and thus, not only do we need to acquire these knowledge, but we should take advantage of these for the use of ICT in Northern countries.

- That technology is an incentive for the system of cooperation in itself and that the processes are more important than the tools.
- That training in ICT for the staff and the collaborators of the organisations involved in development cooperation is essential in order to secure a fruitful use of these technologies.
- That for the communities and the users to appropriate the ICT, the key factors are its user friendly nature, its accessibility, sustainability, and the possibility of introducing their own contents.
- That research and innovation with regard to the use of ICT for Development can be very useful for the international system of development cooperation.

One field which is particularly interesting for the integration of ICT into Development is e-Governance which goes beyond e-Administration (already very important in itself) and refers to the capacity of a given society to face its challenges. In connection with that, the use of ICT to encourage the participation of citizens, called digital democracy, could change the processes of democratic governance and the interaction between society and the authorities who represent it. As for the services of e-Governance, they require an extensive internal restructuring of the Public Administration's information systems as well as of the concept of service to the citizen. There are interesting experiences in the field of e-Governance both in Spain and Latin America, which enable a scheme of mutual learning and real cooperation. This is a good example of how international development cooperation can bring tangible benefits for all the agents involved while following multiple directions.

2. The reticulation of cooperation and the emergence of a Cooperation Network

The reticulation of cooperation is the answer to its evolutive adaptation to the environment of the Web Society. These are gradual processes which arise bottom-up, whether it be within an organisation or within huge international systems of cooperation. In such processes structures and dynamics of the cooperation evolve, fostering horizontal relationships, collaboration, and access to shared resources as well as to knowledge management.

The models of network cooperation possess some characteristics among which the following stand out:

- The daily increase in the number of both technological and human networks, eased by a wide use of ICT;
- The priority given to knowledge management;
- The new definition of the traditional cooperation activities (such as the project) in order to include web based designs and processes;
- The canalisation of the social capital in the web; and
- The implementation of multilateral actions with the participation of administrative authorities, civil society, companies, universities and other agents;

The **empowering** networks models (with a spatial or 3 D morphology) are probably those that offer the best possibilities for working in development cooperation since they foster the strengthening of nodes, their collaborative capacity as well as their operational autonomy. But the networks of a more institutional or **representative** nature (with a flat morphology or 2 D) are useful too and are very well suited for tasks such as campaigns or negotiations with other fields. As a matter of fact, sometimes a network might have both characteristics at the same time.

But it is worth mentioning that working in a network is not easy, and the abilities related to the management of networks are just starting to being developed. Changes are taking place not only with institutions (at an individual level) but they are also collective. For a network to be successful it takes agreeing on its goals and clearly defining them, an adequate design, and a confident management with appropriate levels of leadership. It is also recommended to monitor and evaluate its implementation.

The 2.0 Web (or social web) has brought about a number of new tools aimed precisely at facilitating participation and collaboration. This fact offers interesting opportunities for reticulating development cooperation work. These opportunities deserve to be included in those initiatives of RDI linked to ICT and Development. As was stated during the congress "We should start thinking in the networks of tomorrow, because there are already those of today".

3. The incorporation of ICT and reticulated processes into Spanish Cooperation

The integration of ICT constitutes an important aspect of the modernisation of Spanish Cooperation, at all levels, from the big agencies, such as the AECID, to the small NGOs, as has been stated in a recent report on this cooperation prepared in 2007 by the DAC. In recent years, two important advances have been achieved: First the Official Aid to Development was raised to 0.5% of GDP (more than 5 billion euros) which meant almost doubling the amount from 2004. Secondly, a new strategic stance, well devised and coherent with the international present directives, such as the Millennium Development Goals and the fight against poverty, has been adopted. The present challenge would be to increase the quality of cooperation, and that's where the ICT could play an important role.

On the other hand, the fact that Spanish cooperation is so very much decentralised and complex would require reticulating this system in order to improve the collective results. An adequate management of networks would allow a sensible degree of harmonization within that system which at the same time would enable the operational autonomy of its many actors. The tendency towards using empowering networks enable two avoid some of the evolutive steps in order to optimise the performances of the agents as a whole. It also allows advancing towards a network culture based in values, confidence and quality, where power will be increasingly linked to influence and less often to control.

The Spanish Cooperation finds herself, to some degree, at a turning point, and her activities aimed at applying ICT to Development Cooperation as well as her adoption of technological tools at the internal level, with the networking processes this allows, could well put her at the forefront of international cooperation in the medium term. In order to achieve that goal a clear determination is needed (and not only on the part of the leading entities such as the governmental SECI or AECID), a collaborative attitude too, as well as consistency and

professionalism when carrying out her tasks and a generous effort aimed at sharing experiences and capacities.

The indicators are positive, from the clear political will expressed at the opening session by the director of the AECID (the Spanish Agency for Development Cooperation) to the willingness to collaborate shown by a vast majority of the participants in the congress, including the evidence of the creativity and the capacity for leadership of some of the actors. The technological limitations to the challenges discussed at this first Meeting Cooperation 2.0 are disappearing: We are in front of a challenge for our collective imagination. Everything seems to confirm that we are on the right track and what appears to be advisable at this stage, just before the launching of a new Framework ("*Plan Director*") is to change gear, and accelerate towards the goal.

We now face the challenge of turning this First Meeting Cooperation 2.0 into a starting point, building upon the relationships established at Gijon and result in experiences that will nurture these relationships, in a *virtuous* circle (a network, I mean) of collaboration and collective learning.

On behalf of the whole team that has been working on the organisation of this meeting, I shall like to express our heartfelt gratitude and our best wishes to all the participants but particularly to all those who travelled long distances to come here, to discuss about Development, Cooperation, Technologies and Networks on the shores of the Bay of Biscay. I wish you a safe journey back home and hope to see you soon!