

General Secretariat for International Development Cooperation

2016 ANNUAL EVALUATION REPORT

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY AND SYNTHESIS OF FINDINGS



MINISTERIO
DE ASUNTOS EXTERIORES
Y DE COOPERACIÓN



Cooperación
Española
EVALUACIÓN

Edition: June 2017

© Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Cooperation
Secretary of State for International Cooperation and for Ibero-
America
General Secretariat for International Development Cooperation

NIPO on-line: 502-17-040-5

NIPO paper: 502-17-039-2

Legal deposit: M-21181-2017

It is authorized to reproduce total or partial portions of this document as long as the source and authors of the copyright are adequately named.

If you have any questions about this document, please contact:

Evaluation and Knowledge Management Division
General Secretariat for International Development Cooperation

*Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Cooperation
C/ Serrano Galvache, 26. Torres Ágora. Torre Norte
28071 Madrid
Ph:+34913948808
e-mail: evaluacion-sgcid@maec.es*

ABBREVIATION, INITIALS AND ACRONYMS

AECID	Spanish Agency for International Development Cooperation
CPF	Country Partnership Framework
DAC	OECD Development Assistance Committee
FIIAPP	International Latin-American Foundation for Public Administration and Public Policies
ITC	Industrial Technological Centre
MAEC	Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Cooperation
MOPAN	Multilateral Organization Performance Assessment Framework
NGO	Non Governmental Organisations
ODA	Official Development Assistance
OECD	Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development
SAF	Strategic Association Frameworks
SME	Small Medium Enterprise
SGCID	Secretary General for International Development Cooperation

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The 2016 Annual Evaluation Report is structured in four sections:

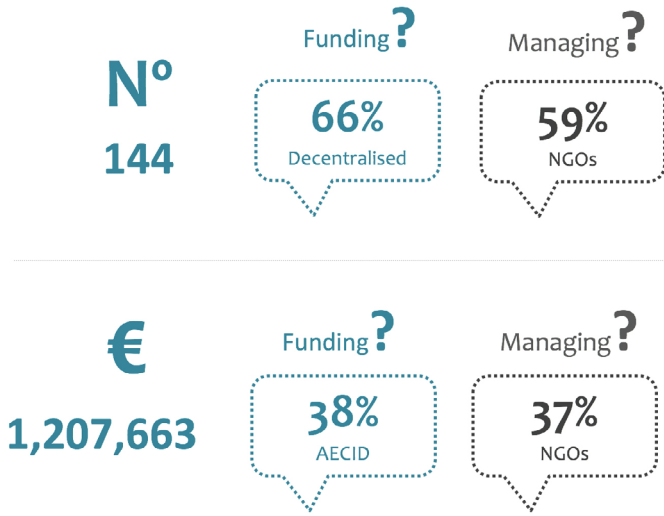
I. SYNTHESIS OF FINDINGS:

This section describes the most important findings of the centralised evaluations undertaken from 2013 to 2016, the last two Peer Reviews of Spain, and the studies and analysis developed about the 4th Master Plan. The main elements conforming the policy system of international development cooperation were used to organize this section: design, structure of the Spanish Co-operation system, implementation, management for development results, and evaluation and knowledge management.

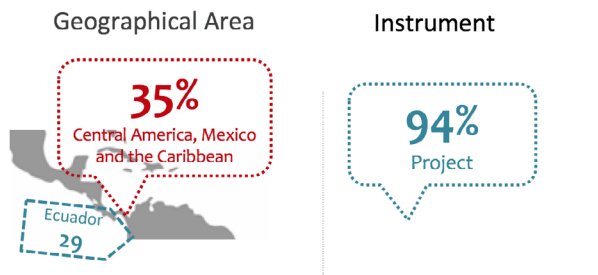


2. MONITORING OF THE EVALUATION ACTIVITY:

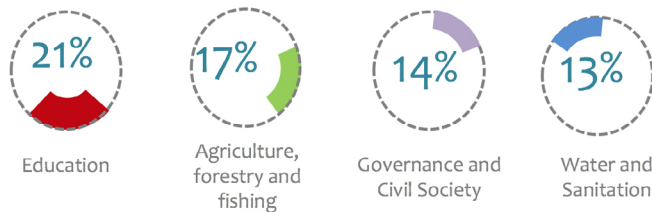
Stakeholder funding and managing more evaluations according to the volume of evaluations and the cost



The most evaluated topics by Spanish Cooperation



Sectors

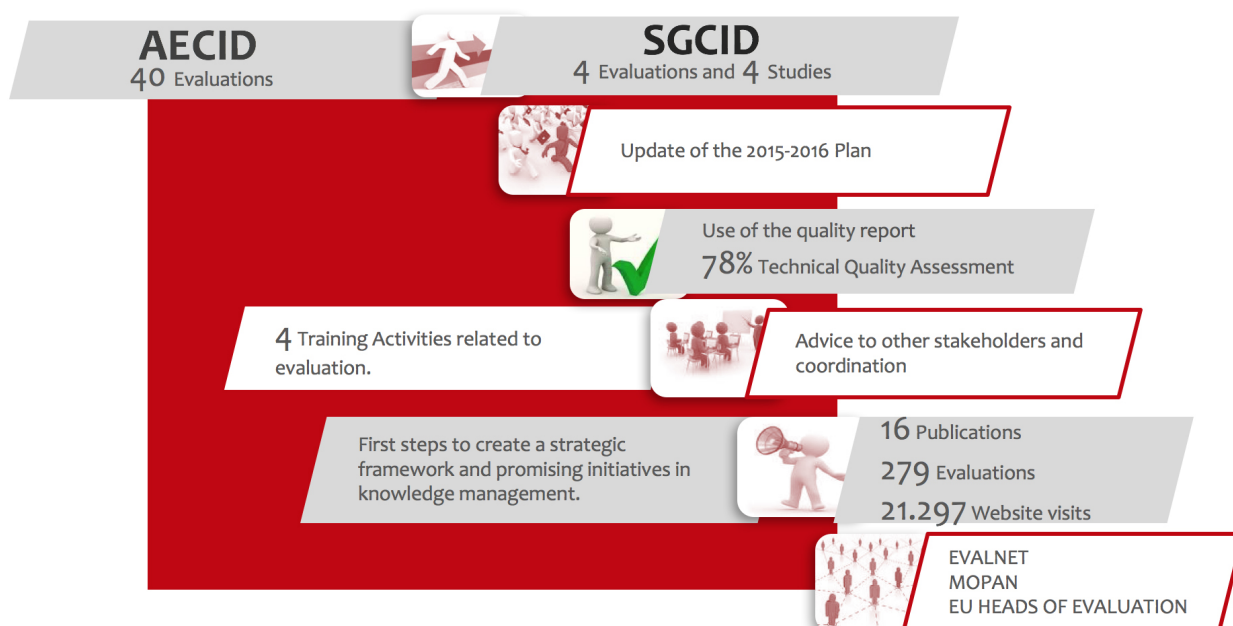


A total of 144 evaluations were finalised in 2016, similarly to 2015 (146). Of them, 95 were undertaken by the Decentralised Cooperation, 40 by the Spanish Agency for International Development Cooperation (AECID) (22 were evaluations of NGOs' collaboration agreements and projects, 12 were operational evaluations, and 6 by the Cooperation Fund for Water and Sanitation), 8 were centralised and 1 was carried out by a University. While the NGOs manage most of the evaluations in the system (both in terms of number and budget), the decentralized cooperation is funding most of them and AECID is allocating the larger budget.

As in previous years, the most evaluated geographical area was Central America, Mexico and the Caribbean, followed by the Andean Countries and the South Cone, with the highest number of evaluations being in Ecuador.

The most evaluated sectors were education, followed by agriculture, forestry and fishing, and later governance and water and sanitation.

2016 Monitoring of the Evaluation Activity



Taking into account the implementation of the 2015-2016 Biennial Evaluation Plan, and bearing in mind the Spanish political context and the current budgetary restrictions, the total volume of implemented evaluations in comparison with the expected amount is good (68%). The number is lower than the previous two years (90%). 2016 was the year with the lowest number of evaluations undertaken since 2013 - the year of publication of the first *Annual Evaluation Report*.

The analysis of **SGCID Evaluation Division shows a satisfactory performance in general**. The number of centralised evaluations was gradually reduced in order to accommodate the current existing capacities of the unit. Now 90% of the planned evaluations are finalised or in process of being finalised, dissemination of evaluations improved, several tools were developed to promote better quality of evaluations, and Spain continues to actively participate in international evaluations networks such as DAC and MOPAN. In terms of capacity building in evaluation, the efforts were focused on integrating institutional evaluation in Latin American countries.

AECID improved its implementation rate of evaluations in comparison with previous years and the number of operational evaluations and evaluations undertaken by the Cooperation Fund for Water and Sanitation increased. AECID provided capacity building in evaluation in partner countries and developed initiatives to establish a strategic framework for knowledge management. There was also progress in evaluation training, in particular in Latin America.

Regarding the State General Administration, FIIAPP promoted capacity building in evaluation in Latin America in the frame of EUROsocial programme.

Within the Decentralised Cooperation, **Andalusia stood out because of its relative weight in funding evaluations**, mainly managed by NGOs. The number of reporting entities increased and, among local entities and universities, Bilbao City Hall reported 4 evaluations, and the University Polytechnic of Valencia reported one evaluation.

3. BALANCE OF THE MANAGEMENT RESPONSE SYSTEM:

The implementation of the management response system continued throughout 2016. Out of the 10 evaluations waiting for management response, 8 of them were completed by the management units and 2 of them are in the process of being finalised.

The time span to provide management responses was extremely variable. However, it is observed that there has been a progressive reduction of time.

Since the regulating instruction sets one year as the timescale for monitoring the management responses received, it was only possible to monitor 2 evaluations in 2016. Both analyses show that there was a high acceptance of recommendations and most of them were applied.

I. SYNTHESIS OF FINDINGS

I.1 CONTENT AND SCOPE OF THE EXERCISE

Incentives and opportunities should be established in Spanish Cooperation institutions to produce changes in structures, arrangements and systems based upon learnings from evaluations (or from any other source of knowledge) in order to build a true learning culture (Evaluating to learn, Florencio Gudiño, 2016)¹

Main findings from the centralised evaluations during the period 2013-2016, the last two *Peer Reviews of Spain* and several studies and analyses regarding the 4th Master Plan are summarised in this section. Main elements conforming the policy system for international development cooperation were used to organize this section: design, structure of the Spanish Cooperation system, implementation, management for development results, and evaluation and knowledge management. Moreover, every section is structured as follows: firstly, progress made over the period, and secondly, issues to be improved, specifying the reasons for those statements. In order to enable access for interested readers to the original information, the reference evaluation report or document is mentioned.

The report only includes those generated findings and conclusions that, due to its repetition or nature, are considered by the author of this report to be more useful in order to introduce substantial improvements in the system – it would be impossible to reproduce all findings in a comprehensive way if that were the case–.

I.2 SYNTHESIS OF FINDINGS

Overall, this exercise highlights that there was more progress in design and planning than in results and monitoring phases, even though the last two are essential for the Spanish Cooperation to become a true system that makes decisions based on objectives and lessons learnt from the results of the interventions.

¹ Gudiño, F. (2016): *Evaluar para aprender. Un análisis de las evaluaciones de la Cooperación Española para la toma de decisiones*. MAEC, Madrid

I. DESIGN

This section describes the findings related to the steps taken towards geographical and sector concentration during the last period, following OECD recommendations as well as those from reference planning tools such as the Master Plan and the Country Partnership Frameworks (CPF).

There is clear progress towards geographical and thematic concentration, promoted by the geographical prioritisation and the 4th Master Plan Strategic Guidelines.

This meant a massive effort made by the Spanish Agency for International Development Cooperation (AECID) that has lately reduced its country offices network, as well as by the rest of the Spanish Cooperation which should now concentrate on one or very few sectors in the same geographical areas.

The absence of more robust analysis to establish criteria based upon Spanish Cooperation's comparative advantages can compromise the prioritisation and influence the plan of expected results, as was mentioned at the *Peer Review of Spain* (OECD, 2016).

Moreover, the movement from sectors to the development results clustered into strategic guidelines in the 4th Master Plan is not an easy exercise. In the analysis undertaken during the period of the 4th Master Plan, a series of limitations were identified in regards to the formulation of guidelines. By studying the actions linked to each strategic guideline, it is clear that actions and planning actions are clearly overlapping and crossing over. This is emphasized in *Funding of Development Objectives of the 4th Master Plan of the Spanish Cooperation (2016)* in the example of the 2nd strategic guideline, where there are many interventions that could be placed in more than one action line. There are also interventions with similar objectives and descriptions to other action lines of different guidelines.

Regarding planning, the Spanish Cooperation managed to progressively integrate innovative elements in planning during the last period (strategic guidelines in the 4th Master Plan, results-oriented planning in the CPFs), and improve some of the tools (revision of the CPF methodology and Sectoral Action Plans). Overall this progress is contributing to improve the application of the criteria for aid effectiveness. However, studies shed doubt on the ability of these tools to lead action of the stakeholders integrating the system:

- **The 4th Master Plan** – although it is the document for strategic planning of a large share of Spanish ODA, more than 60% of it is not contributing to any of the objectives for development ('strategic guidelines') because a direct link is missing (*Funding of Development Objectives of the 4th Master Plan of the Spanish Cooperation (2016)*).
- **Country Partnership Frameworks (CPF)** – evaluation findings show that these documents are known and used as a reference. This planning process promoted a greater participation among different stakeholders and provided information about who does what in each process, by facilitating solid designs in terms of alignment with the partner country, relevance and internal coherence. Nevertheless, some practical weaknesses are found in the CPFs when they come to be the planning tool for the entire Spanish Cooperation. Most repeated reasons put forward are the coexistence of several strategic documents used by

institutional actors and having different logic structures which do not always fit each other, the weak communication between actors from the headquarters and from the field, and the limited involvement of Regional Governments in the process (*Summary of evaluations of CPF, 2014*).

- Moreover, CPFs are not always based on reliable assessments. Although they establish a set of development results, interventions' logic and how to achieve the expected changes is not well defined. Furthermore, most interventions are normally managed according to the aid modality used or the budgetary line rather than articulating them based on the results to achieve (for example, State grants, NGO call for projects, etc.). This does not enable complementarity and hinders the monitoring of a results framework (*Summary from the findings of Funding of Development Objectives of the 4th Master Plan of the Spanish Cooperation (2016)*, *Summary of evaluations of CPF (2014)*, *Lessons learnt drawn from the 2013 and 2014 Annual Evaluation Reports, Peer Reviews of Spain (OECD 2011 and 2016)*, and *Intermediate Exam of the 4th Master Plan (2014)*).
- **Strategic Association Frameworks (SAF)** meant a step forward towards implementing DAC recommendations and Effectiveness Agenda criteria. They firstly contributed to more specific and strategic multilateral actions, and secondly, to the Reform Process of the United Nations. However, there was a relative distance between the SAF conceptual framework and initial formulation and the later implementation, due to economic reasons –lack of predictability and decrease of contributions–, and to operational issues –limited development of necessary mechanisms for monitoring and evaluation (*Evaluation of Multilateral Spanish Strategy for Development, 2014*).

II. STRUCTURE OF THE SYSTEM

This section describes the progress made in the past years and those elements which still require improvement such as the structure of the system, the diversity of stakeholders and the relationships between them.

The Spanish Cooperation progressed in terms of prioritising management mechanisms, providing structures and tools to enable coordination and maintaining the human capital despite budget adjustments and difficulties. However, an adequate institutional structure and a well-defined and effective policy for human resources are still needed in order to face the development challenges. Together with this absence of an official policy for human resources, there are other risky factors: lack of a needs assessment, a continuous rotation of managerial personnel -which makes the assumption of strategic positions in the agenda difficult–, the absence of a medium-term plan to promote staff mobility and inadequate capacity of actors to current needs in implementation and results monitoring. All these issues were pointed out and highlighted in the *Peer Review of Spain (OECD, 2016)*, the *Intermediate Exam of the 4th Master Plan*, the *Summary of the Evaluation of CPF (2014)* and the *Summary of lessons learnt drawn from the 2013 and 2014 Annual Evaluation Reports*.

Moreover, a distinctive feature of Spanish Cooperation is its diverse composition of actors and institutions. This characteristic could be a good capacity for potential complementarity, should roles and functions be well defined and articulated to consolidate the system. Although this coordination has improved over the past years in some AECID's interventions and in the CPFs –there are specific collaboration agreements, for example in Humanitarian Aid–, a joint vision regarding actors' added value could still be strengthened by working with a higher complementarity and coherence. This is referred to in the 2014 Summary of the Evaluation of CPF and in the *Summary of lessons learnt drawn from the 2014 Annual Evaluation Report*.

In this sense, the last *Peer Review of Spain* (OECD, 2016) praised the work carried out by the consultation bodies to coordinate actors but also pointed out that a more comprehensive approach was still needed in order to go beyond basic exchange of information and to work further on defining their added value and comparative advantage for the system.

Lastly, a particular actor in charge of channeling a considerable ODA share should be mentioned: the NGOs. Despite claiming the excessive administrative burden they face regarding the reporting of humanitarian aid grants, the issue has not yet been resolved. There are complex legal difficulties that surpass Spanish Cooperation's decision-making power and involve other departments; and there is not a comprehensive approach to enable the necessary change. It was likewise reflected in the past two *Peer Reviews of Spain* (OECD, 2011 and 2016) as well as in the *Intermediate Exam of the 4th Master Plan*.

III. IMPLEMENTATION

This section analyses how the planning programme is put into action. Main findings are about budget execution, complementarity among different ODA channels and implementation of cross-cutting approaches over programming processes.

The Spanish Cooperation progressed in untying development aid, committing to use national systems of partner countries and not imposing conditionality criteria. Within the system, AECID is managing the budget in a more flexible way -once it is approved by the Congress- so it can respond to partners' needs more easily and adapt the interventions if necessary. There is still room for improvement regarding budget absorption capacity -which is often very low and fails to meet disbursements deadlines- and budget preparation arrangements -for example, multi-annual commitments are not allowed anymore-. These questions hinder Spanish Aid's predictability. Annual rate is 69% at best as mentioned in the *Peer Review of Spain* (OECD, 2016).

In the context of budgetary adjustments, there are two options to allocate funding to multilateral programmes: to provide smaller contributions in order to ensure visibility and diversity, or to fund less multilateral organisations and increase the volume of aid given to each intervention so aid fragmentation decreases. In this sense, Spain chose to continue being present in multilateral organisations. Therefore, the number of organisations supported by Spain did not decrease in the same proportion as the volume of funding, and as a consequence of this, funding per intervention was reduced and a considerable aid fragmentation remains.

Regarding complementarity among several ODA channels, the system shows an important weakness since there is no complementarity between bilateral and multilateral aid on the field in order to ensure coherence and Spain's position as a donor, as emphasized in the *Lessons Learnt from the 2013 Annual Evaluation Report*. Moreover, despite the prioritisation of multilateral organisations made by the Spanish Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Cooperation (MAEC), it seems there are neither economic implications in the decision-making process nor other Departments of the State General Administration share the same prioritization criteria. This is highlighted in the *2016 Meta-summary of Knowledge generated by the Spanish Cooperation*.

Finally, there is firm progress in adopting the cross-cutting approaches proposed in the 4th Master Plan on gender, human rights, environmental sustainability and cultural diversity in particular during the planning process. Application during implementation was more limited. In this sense, findings of the *2016 Evaluation of programmes to support ITC for development of Moroccan SMEs* highlighted that 'there was not a rigorous assessment regarding cross-cutting priorities that could have enabled an adequate design and progress towards the achievement of those priorities could have been measured during monitoring and evaluation and drawn information on environmental sustainability, gender, cultural diversity and human rights'. Furthermore, the *2016 Evaluation of the Knowledge Exchange Programme of Spain and its regions with Antioquia, Colombia*, highlighted that 'the implementation of cross-cutting approaches was very limited and not so strategic despite the specifications detailed in the programme documents'.

IV. MANAGEMENT FOR DEVELOPMENT RESULTS

The system clearly made steps towards management for development results. It developed some emerging but promising initiatives, although they still need to be consolidated by establishing clearer links between actions and results. This improvement was more evident in planning interventions. Nevertheless, the multiplicity of actors, the fragmentation of information, the absence of a monitoring system and the low quality of matrix and indicators were found as important limitations. All of these weaknesses were revealed in the 2014 Evaluation of the CPF and in the *Intermediate Exam of the 4th Master Plan*. As an example, the *Evaluation of the Spanish Strategy of Education for Development* also highlighted that 'defining and specifying results in the strategy of education for development is still an unfinished work because the strategy does not include either a logic structure of results or a monitoring framework of interventions, and it has a very short lifespan and too many action lines and activities within a very tight economic context'.

Regarding monitoring, Info@od, the financial information system, notably improved and it is currently a key element in ensuring transparency towards both national and international actors by providing information on budget execution. However, there is no similar information regarding how Spanish Cooperation resources are contributing to achieve the planned development objectives yet.

Developing a system of indicators and goals is still crucial in order to obtain detailed information about the monitoring of interventions from beginning to end. The 4th Master Plan was committed to results management and some steps were made to create a comprehensive results monitoring system of the Spanish Cooperation programme and connect it with partner countries' development results. However, there is still work to be done to achieve a rigorous and simple monitoring system. This weakness was highlighted, to a greater or lesser extent, by all

evaluations undertaken, and has become -in the author's opinion- an important gap in the system that might cause serious difficulties in learning and evidence-based decision-making processes. Some related findings are described in the *Peer Review of Spain* (OECD, 2011 and 2016), in the *2014 Summary of Evaluations of the CPF*, the *Summary of Lessons Learnt from the 2013 and 2014 Annual Evaluation Reports*, the *2015 Evaluation of the Sectoral Action Plan for Health* and the *2016 Evaluation of the CPF with Ethiopia*, among others.

Progress is notable in relation to transparency and communication. Creation of a unique trademark (Spanish Cooperation) and a single communication website for all actors (www.cooperacionesspanola.es) powerfully triggered this progress. Other future steps to continue the progress achieved in the last period would be to develop a true communication strategy associated with the new trademark and to give easy access to the general public to information about the funded interventions (Memorandums of Understanding, planning and monitoring documents, tenders, budget information, evaluations, etc.). *'If the Spanish Cooperation does not progress along these lines, transparency levels will probably decrease'* (*Reflections on Spanish Policy of International Development Cooperation regarding the challenges of the new global scenario*, 2015).

Moreover, communication should be separated from Education for Development, since the latter goes beyond dissemination, political communication and accountability, and therefore, it must be undertaken through a wider approach and understood as an essential tool for raising awareness on sustainable development among citizens (as is mentioned in the findings of the *Evaluation of the Spanish Strategy of Education for Development*).

V. EVALUATION AND KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT

The Spanish Cooperation will hold a tendency of sustained improvement, only if it is able to integrate lessons learnt from the evaluation of interventions and apply changes to its programmes through well-informed and evidence-based decisions.

There were important improvements in the evaluation function of the Spanish Cooperation over the last period. These improvements were focused on establishing a permanent system, with structures and reports, as a source of required information for accountability and decision-making. The evaluation activity increased -in particular in SGCID's central unit-, planning of evaluations improved, there was more and better quality dissemination through evaluation products adapted to different users, fragmentation of information decreased and the strategic role of evaluation was promoted. However, the *Peer Review of Spain* (OECD, 2016) and the *Report of the Council for Development Cooperation related to the 2015 Annual Evaluation Report* highlighted that there is still room for improvement in the following aspects:

- There are still disparities in the quality of the products due to several reasons, the scarcity of adequate economic and human resources to carry out the needed work or meet the expected deadlines being the most important one. Although the Evaluation Division is the central evaluation unit, it does not have either a specific budget allocated or external examination. This situation jeopardizes its independence and the improvements achieved so far.

- In order to promote evidence-based decision-making, a Management Response System was designed and implemented by SGCID's Evaluation Division (of MAEC) in order that all centralized evaluations receive a response from the team responsible for the evaluated object. This was crucial to trigger a change within SGCID and AECID. Nevertheless, the system to monitor management responses in order to ensure evaluations are used to inform decision-making processes still needs to be strengthened.
- Finally, over the past years there were important innovations in the evaluation field which were barely explored by the Spanish Cooperation. On one hand, there are methodological innovations associated to experimental (or semi-experimental) evaluation methods to define the impact of interventions and its causes. On the other hand, there are innovations produced by the revolution of access and treatment of massive data which allows better quality, more efficient, and faster evaluations in many sectors.

The above-mentioned evaluation progress constitutes a solid base upon which learning should be promoted, which is complementary of a clear vision about the importance of knowledge management. This vision was already implemented in successful experiences of knowledge exchange but often it was the case of a particular exercise. Therefore, future actions should develop a more structured system with a more global focus, in order to ensure sustainability of knowledge and organizational learning. This finding is mentioned in the *Evaluation of programmes to support ITC for development of Moroccan SMEs* where the existence of concrete initiatives is recognised. However, the document also pointed out that '*a strategy of knowledge management is crucial in order to ensure learning sustainability*'. Furthermore, the *2014 Evaluation of the Multilateral Strategy of Spanish Cooperation* recommends '*promoting an information and knowledge management system which is sufficiently structured to assist processes of planning, monitoring and evaluation as well as of coordination among different stakeholders, and contributes to ensure complementarity and efficient work*'.

Other related documents in:
<http://www.cooperacionespanola.es/en/publications>

