

An Innovative Triangular Cooperation for a New Development Agenda

FINAL PUBLICATION



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Presentation

Triangular Cooperation has had a remarkable dynamism in the Ibero-American region over the last 15 years, as the more than 1,300 initiatives of this cooperation modality registered by the Ibero-American General Secretariat (SEGIB by its Spanish acronym) during this period reveal.

This type of innovative cooperation has focused on a wide range of areas, including initiatives related to health, technological development, environment and institutional strengthening of tax systems, to name a few. Others have addressed structural topics, from the support to integrated social policy systems to very specific interventions—such as the care of endangered animals— and it is precisely in environmental issues that Triangular Cooperation displays its great potential.

The development of this cooperation is only possible as a result of countries' technical capacities and their political will to implement these initiatives, which aim is to improve the living conditions of all people in our region.

Accordingly, it is a great responsibility and an honor for SEGIB to be able to contribute to the systematization and generation of knowledge on this cooperation modality in order to substantially contribute to improve its quality and, thus, to strengthen its impact on the development of our region.

Based on this accumulated knowledge, on its recognized institutional prestige and its capacity

for political dialogue on the subject, SEGIB has promoted a working partnership with the European Commission (EC) to generate greater knowledge and evidence on Triangular Cooperation's characteristics and its potential as an innovative instrument for the collaboration between countries and regions to achieve the objectives of the 2030 Agenda. This publication, ***An Innovative Triangular Cooperation for a New Development Agenda***, summarizes the main conclusions of the project that was jointly executed, for over two years, by SEGIB and the EC, which produced five specific studies and various analyses and exchanges.

The document reviews different issues that are essential to strengthen Triangular Cooperation, such as its potential contribution to the challenges of global governance; its role to advance the achievement of the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs; the multiplicity of stakeholders as well as the diversity of modalities and instruments it involves; its specific capacity to address vulnerable populations or decentralized cooperation; and the complexity of combining information and evaluation systems, among others.

Research studies carried out in this framework share a common element in their conclusions: Triangular Cooperation must reinforce its transformative capacity in the face of development challenges, based on horizontal relations, and by overcoming the traditional bipolar North-South approach that differentiates donors from recipients. For more than four decades, the Ibero-American region has been

characterized by the development of a thriving South-South Cooperation that has significantly contributed to generate better development capacities, becoming an international benchmark. This rich experience of thousands of South-South Cooperation projects has laid the technical and institutional foundations for innovative cooperation mechanisms, including Triangular Cooperation, which is nowadays dynamically gaining importance.

We are convinced Triangular Cooperation is a powerful instrument capable of making a substantial contribution to strengthen the relationship between Latin-America and the European Union. Its capacity goes beyond the scope of development cooperation, to also consolidate a strategic partnership that results in great benefits for both regions.

SEGIB's Secretariat for Ibero-American Cooperation is committed to follow this transformative path.



Ambassador Lorena Larios
Secretary for Ibero-American Cooperation
SEGIB

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Acronyms

AMEXCID	Mexican Agency for International Development Cooperation	EU	European Union
BAPA	Buenos Aires Plan of Action for Promoting and Implementing Technical Cooperation among Developing Countries	FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
BAPA+40	Second United Nations Conference on South-South Cooperation (BAPA+40) in Buenos Aires	GDP	Gross Domestic Product
CAF	Development Bank of Latin America	GIZ (by its German acronym)	German Society for International Cooperation
CELAC	Community of Latin American and Caribbean States	GPEDC	Global Partnership for Effective Development Cooperation
DAC	Development Assistance Committee of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD)	GPI	Global Partnership Initiative on Effective Triangular Cooperation
DC	Decentralised Cooperation	IDB	Inter-American Development Bank
DSSC	Decentralised South-South Cooperation	IDCS	International Development Cooperation System
DSSTC	Decentralised South-South and Triangular Cooperation	ILO	International Labor Organization
ECLAC	Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean	IOM	International Organization for Migration
ERI (by its English acronym)	Elcano Royal Institute	JICA	Japan International Cooperation Agency
		LAC	Latin America and the Caribbean
		MDG	Millennium Development Goals
		MIC	Middle Income Countries

MS	Member State/s	UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
NUA	New Urban Agenda	UNEP	United Nations Environment Programme
ODA	Official Development Assistance	UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
OECD	Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development	UN-Habitat	United Nations Human Settlements Programme
PCSD	Policy Coherence for Sustainable Development	UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
PIFCSS	Ibero-American Program for the Strengthening of South-South Cooperation	UNOSSC	United Nations Office for South-South Cooperation
SDG	Sustainable Development Goals	UN Women	United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women
SEGIB	Ibero-American General Secretariat	WB	World Bank
SIDICSS	Integrated Data System of Latin America on South-South and Triangular Cooperation	WFP	World Food Programme
SSC	South-South Cooperation		
SSTC	South-South and Triangular Cooperation		
TC	Triangular Cooperation		
UCLG	United Cities and Local Governments		
UN	United Nations		

Introduction

In a context of permanent transformation of the very concept of development, the *An innovative Triangular Cooperation for a new Development Agenda*¹ project aims to offer technical and political guidelines that determine the potential of this modality of cooperation between the Ibero-American region and the European Union and its Member States to help achieve the 2030 Agenda.

The relevance of this project is endorsed by the 2030 Agenda's express recognition of Triangular Cooperation as a means of implementing the Sustainable Development Goals, while promoting the generation of spaces and governance relationships that are more democratic and better positioned to serve transnational dynamics that have an impact at a local level on global public goods, also doing so from, with and for the different territories involved.

As a result, to a large extent, of the rapid and often abrupt changes brought about by globalisation, the International Development Cooperation System (IDCS) —in full transition between the Millennium Agenda and the 2030 Agenda— has experienced successive progress and stagnation that have added a certain tension as well as a few imbalances, evidencing the need for the multiple actors involved to research and implement new patterns of cooperation.

In Ibero-America, this transition between development agendas has coincided with a renewed rise of South-South Cooperation, whose evolution

has been closely followed by the Ibero-American General Secretariat (SEGIB, by its Spanish acronym) and from which triangulation experiences have emerged and steadily increased in recent years. In this regard, it should be noted that Latin America and the Caribbean is the most dynamic region in the world in this type of actions and that of the 1,355 TC initiatives that the SEGIB has recorded between 2000 and 2021, the European Union or one of its Member States have also participated in more than 26%.

These data are the result of more than a decade's work that the SEGIB has been carrying out to strengthen and promote SSC and TC, a meticulous job of systematising the available information and generating knowledge from its rigorous analysis. This work has been focused on the development of capacities for action in cooperation for sustainable development and the international positioning of these types of cooperation, in order to provide new tools that contribute to the progress of both the region and the IDCS as a whole.

Based on the knowledge available about the wealth of interregional experience and the recognition of its strategic importance for both parties, SEGIB and the European Union decided to join forces to explore the possibilities of Triangular Cooperation as a tool for common dialogue and a transformation vector for the Development Cooperation System, identifying and proposing strategic inputs of a political nature and effective management tools.

These synergies crystallised into the initiative *An Innovative Triangular Cooperation for a New Development Agenda*, signed in November 2019

¹ More information about the project on the website <https://cooperaciontriangular.org/>

by the SEGIB and the Directorate General for International Cooperation and Development of the European Union (DG DEVCO, which in 2021 was renamed the Directorate General for International Partnerships or DG INTPA). With this partnership, both institutions aspire to build an innovative EU-LAC TC model aligned with the 2030 Agenda within the framework of the Development in Transition perspective.

This document summarises the findings of the first phase of this project to promote an innovative EU-Latin America Triangular Cooperation concept and model, which effectively helps move towards the achievement of the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs in a globalised world which, faced with homogeneous views and formulas, requires diverse responses and a high capacity for horizontal political dialogue able to find consensus based on often divergent options.

The objective of the EU-SEGIB project is to help build a technical-political consensus around an innovative definition of TC, measurable and acceptable to all the actors involved, which can be used as an instrument to strengthen the EU-LAC bi-regional relationship and that offers practical TC management tools.

To implement this, during the first phase of the project, a total of five research studies commissioned by the SEGIB were carried out through a bidding procedure to guarantee free competition, the maximum technical solvency of the successful tendering entities and persons and, ultimately, the quality and suitability of the final products produced within the framework of the EU-SEGIB project.

These reports address the reality of TC and explore its potential in the Ibero-American sphere in its relationship with the EU and its Member States from different approaches, based in turn on diverse and interrelated objectives and actors:

- *South-South and Triangular cooperation and the Sustainable Development Agenda in Ibero-America: Critical nodes and horizons in the response to COVID-19*, by Bernabé Malacalza, focuses on the analysis of the "state of implementation of the 2030 Agenda in the context of the emergency of the COVID-19 pandemic in Latin America, as well as on the understanding of how South-South and Triangular Cooperation (SSTC) has been adapting to the changes brought about by

the transition between development agendas. Following this diagnosis, he proposes a series of innovative mechanisms through which TC could contribute to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in the region. Finally, he proposes a roadmap to move towards a transformative TC that helps provide a response to COVID-19 anchored in the 2030 Agenda".

- *Notes for an Ibero-American ecosystem of Decentralised South-South and Triangular Cooperation*, by Pablo José Martínez Osés, advocates for an articulation that he calls the "Ecosystem of Decentralised South-South and Triangular Cooperation (DSSTC)" capable of meeting the challenges posed by current international development agendas, to the profound changes and transitions that are affecting the international cooperation system and the development paradigm itself, particularly the varied and multi-centric interrelationships and interdependencies between its main actors.
- *South-South and Triangular Cooperation and Indigenous Peoples*, by Gerardo Zúñiga Navarro, provides basic instruments for working in Triangular Cooperation with and/or for indigenous peoples and communities as an essential element in building an innovative EU-LAC TC model.

The objective of the EU-SEGIB project is to help build a technical-political consensus around an innovative definition of TC

- *Research on the databases and information quality of South-South and Triangular Cooperation*, led by Bernadette G. Vega Sánchez who, based on the analysis of the available statistical systems, proposes specific lines of action to overcome one of the main shortcomings of TC: the lack of definition and common ways of recording that results in the need to build a “planned information system that includes the different TC initiatives in which the Latin American countries participate together with the European Union (EU) and/or its member countries”.
- *Study on the strategic value of Triangular Cooperation with Latin America and the Caribbean for the countries of the European Union*, commissioned to the Elcano Royal Institute and carried out by researchers Iliana Olivé and María Santillán. It addresses the strategic value of TC with Latin America and the Caribbean for European Union countries based on the analysis of the initiatives carried out and the opinions of various European actors directly involved in them. This report dismantles some assumptions (for example, that TC implies high transaction costs that are difficult to bear) and concludes that “TC’s potential is considerably greater than what has been exploited up to now”. This conclusion is accompanied by a series of recommendations, both political and technical, to reverse this situation to the benefit of the two regions involved.

To contextualise all this wealth of knowledge on TC between EU-LAC and serve as a bridge between the first and second phase of the EU-SEGIB project, the *General Framework for Triangular Cooperation and electoral political panorama of Latin America (2021-2024)* report was also consulted. Its author, Diego Cánepa, a senior expert on the project, describes the electoral political context in Latin America and the Caribbean, which is undergoing far-reaching changes “and will continue to be particularly dynamic until 2024”. The reconfiguration of the Latin American electoral and political map, set against the recovery from the pandemic, results in multiple agendas and interests that must be considered to “promote a truly effective TC where the EU-LAC relationship is strengthened”.

Likewise, in March 2022, a workshop was held with the participation of members of the European Commission, the SEGIB, the ADELANTE Programme, as well as different specialists in the field of cooperation, including most of the authors of the aforementioned studies. Designed as a space for technical exchange and political discussion, this

workshop served to reflect upon the data and share some of the most relevant ideas on Triangular Cooperation that have arisen thanks to the analytical effort made.

Finally, these pages also draw on the conclusions of the consultancy report prepared for the SEGIB by Felipe Ortiz de Taranco as part of the activities to develop a conceptual and methodological framework for TC. The document *Analysis and quantitative and qualitative characterisation of the operations (institutionality and instruments) of Triangular Cooperation* focuses on the 1355 TC initiatives recorded in the SIDICSS in which Ibero-American countries participate.

The findings drawn from all this research work and technical-political dialogue are summarised on the following pages, which are intended to serve as a bridge between the first phase of the EU-SEGIB project and a second one already underway, of which more information will be provided in the conclusions.

As a preamble, it should be noted that, according to the research carried out, the commitment to diversity inevitably involves recognising and promoting the action of different levels of government and of different types of actors with flexible roles (for example, sub-national governments and, in particular, cities), which promotes the inclusion of a cooperation model not only *for*, but also *with* different groups in vulnerable situations (this is the case of indigenous communities) and which incorporates the gender approach in a cross-cutting manner.

The elements mentioned, among others that will be explained, are considered as themes of a political discourse capable of articulating concepts, standards and practices of Triangular Cooperation based on horizontality, overcoming the bipolar donor-recipient, North-South approach, the welfare concept that still survives in the field of international cooperation, and an evaluation of its contribution to development open to new parameters.

The EU-SEGIB project intends to promote a technical and methodological renewal that makes it possible, on the one hand, to improve the quality of regional information systems on Triangular Cooperation and, on the other, to generate useful instruments and effective methodologies to achieve the transformations proposed by the 2030 Agenda.

The objectives are certainly ambitious. Indeed, recognising the value of Triangular Cooperation to strengthen the partnership between Latin America and the EU and contribute to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals involves changes at an institutional level and new balances of power that permeate the structure of the development cooperation system and favour progress worldwide and in the long term.

This is a huge challenge in a reality as complex and fast-paced as the one we are living in, with analyses and measures that can easily get obscured by the emergency, focusing on alleviating the symptoms without addressing the causes, as has been seen with the COVID-19 pandemic (or *syndemic*)².

This document is structured into four chapters, as well as some conclusions. The first one offers a general framework of Triangular Cooperation: the conceptualisation work underway, its historical evolution in the international context and in the specific field of EU-LAC relations. The final part of this chapter 1 is dedicated monographically to analysing TC information systems and frameworks available up to now.

Chapter 2 outlines the main challenges of TC that follow from the previous section, not so much to emphasise the already known obstacles but to better frame the potential of this modality of cooperation in two specific areas: its relevance and suitability to contribute to the achievement of the 2030 Agenda and the articulation of new spaces for political dialogue.

Recognise the value of Triangular Cooperation to strengthen the partnership between Latin America and the EU and help achieve the SDGs

Chapter 3 is dedicated to analysing how the bi-regional EU-LAC Triangular Cooperation can be a source of innovation for the IDCS as a whole in several specific aspects: the configuration of an updated map of actors, of a new differential approach to interconnected themes or sectors and, also, of specific instruments capable of promoting TC.

Chapter 4 brings together the main recommendations or suggestions resulting from the first phase of the EU-SEGIB project, structured into four major headings where progress is considered necessary: the conceptualisation and narrative of TC, the systematisation of information, the political profile of TC and its transformative capacity and impact on development.

The document finishes with some brief conclusions and the bibliography.

² The term *syndemic* “refers to the coexistence during a period and in a place of two or more epidemics that share social factors, in such a way that they feed off each other and end up interacting and causing complex sequelae”. It is a neologism. The word comes from the acronym of the terms “synergy” and “epidemic”. Source: <https://www.fundeu.es/recomendacion/sindemia-termino-valido/>

1

Triangular Cooperation: characterisation within the framework of the International Development Cooperation System

1.1. General framework: historical journey and conceptual delimitation of Triangular Cooperation

Despite a history stretching back several decades, Triangular Cooperation still does not have a clear, agreed upon and globally accepted definition. This makes it very difficult to identify and record in the International Development Cooperation System, as a whole, a precise evaluation of its results and transformative potential and, therefore, a solid narrative that supports a more determined political commitment.

The “first tacit recognition” (Malacalza, 2022) of this modality of cooperation was in 1978, when the delegations of 138 United Nations Member States meeting in the capital of Argentina unanimously adopted the “Buenos Aires Plan of Action for Promoting and Implementing Technical Cooperation among Developing Countries”, better known by its acronym: BAPA.³

However, no significant progress was made to define TC more precisely until the first decade of the 21st century, with the approval of the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness (2005) and the Millennium Development Goals⁴ in 2001 (particularly, MDG 8 *Develop a global partnership for development*). It is in this context that “the conversation about SSC also began to consider the financial support of a traditional donor” and the comparative advantages of South-South Cooperation and Triangular Cooperation began to be recognised (Elcano Royal Institute, by its English acronym, 2022).

After 2008, the growing interest in TC became evident in a gradual increase in the number of

forums and spaces that address this modality, which in turn is directly related to both the financial crisis and its consequences and the rise of South-South Cooperation. In these forums, different conceptions of Triangular Cooperation are offered, ranging from its consideration as a modality subordinated to SSC to the notion of a hybrid reality but differentiated from North-South Cooperation and SSC (Malacalza, 2022).

The discussions suggest that the relevance of TC as an alternative modality of cooperation has a lot to do with the phenomenon of *graduation* (exceeding a certain level of per capita income established by the World Bank above which a country could no longer receive ODA), whereby the number of emerging donors has multiplied, countries of the South, which upon losing their status as recipients of ODA could be left “without a specific role in the international cooperation system” (Martínez, 2022). Many of these countries have seen in TC the possibility of finding a place more in line with their needs, capabilities and aspirations.

The effects of graduation were especially felt in Latin America and the Caribbean, where the consequences of *graduation* were added to the loss of ODA from traditional donor countries, which as a result of the 2008 crisis redirected aid towards African and Asian countries. These circumstances forced a reconsideration of the role of LAC countries in the global development cooperation system, something which appears inextricably linked to the relevance of TC in the region as a modality of cooperation and political dialogue.

The discussions suggest that the relevance of TC as an alternative modality of cooperation has a lot to do with the phenomenon of graduation

³ These pages provide a summary of the origins and evolution of Triangular Cooperation. For information and a detailed chronology of the forums and documents with express references to Triangular Cooperation, it is recommended to consult the report: *South-South and Triangular Cooperation and the Sustainable Development Agenda in Ibero-America: Critical nodes and horizons in the response to COVID-19*. <https://cooperaciontriangular.org/en/publicaciones/>

⁴ The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) constituted a road map to implement the Millennium Declaration. Based on the values and principles agreed upon by the Member States at the 2001 Millennium Summit, the MDGs —forerunner of the 2030 Agenda and its 17 Sustainable Development Goals— served as a global framework to act collectively to reduce poverty. More information: <https://www.un.org/development/desa/es/millennium-development-goals.html>

Another important moment in the evolution of TC occurred in 2009, when the United Nations High-Level Conference on SSC in Nairobi assessed “the trajectory of SSC (and TC) since the BAPA [...] TC was no longer considered as a mere financial support from the donor to the SSC, but rather the contribution of knowledge, training, experience and additional resources that it could bring were also recognised” (ERI, 2022).

The debate about the more or less secondary role of TC has been reflected in different publications and official statements. Thus, in the Busan Partnership for Effective Development Cooperation, TC appears linked to SSC, although there is also a more generic allusion to the need to increase, “where appropriate”, “the use of triangular modalities of development cooperation”.⁵

In 2014, the Global Partnership for Effective Development Cooperation (GPEDC) “recognises TC as an innovative form of inclusive partnership, which puts the role and will of recipient countries at the core and provides an opportunity to bring together the diversity and wealth of experiences, lessons learned and different assets of partners from the North and South maximising, through well-supported cooperation frameworks, the use of effective solutions that are appropriate for the specific contexts of each country” (Malacalza, 2022).

To embody its commitment to TC, in 2016, the GPEDC launched the Global Partnership Initiative on Effective Triangular Cooperation (GPI), in order to form a broad working group on TC open to all actors (Malacalza, 2022). The United Nations Office for South-South Cooperation (UNOSSC) and the OECD have been the organisations that “have led the Global Partnership Initiative (GPI) on Effective Triangular Cooperation, of which countries from the Global North and South, representatives of local authorities and cities, representatives of civil society and private sector actors, are part” (ERI, 2022).

Despite the importance of all these milestones, with regard to the building of an international institutional framework around TC, the most decisive recognition, given its global political importance, was the approval of the 2030 Agenda and its 17 Sustainable Development Goals. The Agenda expressly

⁵ *Busan Partnership for Effective Development Cooperation*. 4th High-Level Forum on Aid Effectiveness. 2011. <https://www.oecd.org/dac/effectiveness/49650200.pdf>

recognises TC as a means of implementation, in line with SDG 17 (*Partnerships for the goals*) and specifically targets 17.6 and 17.9.⁶

The contribution of TC to the achievement of the 2030 Agenda from a complementary conception to SSC was reflected in another of the important milestones in the formation of an international consensus around this type of cooperation: the High-Level Conference of the United Nations on South-South and Triangular Cooperation, BAPA+40, held on the occasion of the 40th anniversary of the Buenos Aires Plan of Action for Technical Cooperation among Developing Countries (BAPA) of 1978. BAPA+40 “reiterated the international community’s commitment to SSC and TC as drivers for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda” (UNOSSC, 2020, cited by ERI, 2022), a commitment that supported the work carried out in the GPI.

From the point of view of the traditional donors, the OECD also considers TC as a source of innovation and includes it in the new strategy called “Development in transition” in Latin America and the Caribbean, for three fundamental reasons:

- Radical economic, social and political changes (rapid technological and digital progress, population ageing, migration growth, greater prevalence of climate change, heterogeneous impact of globalisation on various socio-economic groups and growing social discontent), which “test our shared visions and call for innovative solutions to reduce inequality, improve people’s well-being, and restore trust in institutions, both nationally and multilaterally”.

⁶ 17.6 Enhance North-South, South-South and triangular regional and international cooperation on and access to science, technology and innovation and enhance knowledge sharing on mutually agreed terms, including through improved coordination among existing mechanisms, in particular at the United Nations level, and through a global technology facilitation mechanism.

17.9. Enhance international support for implementing effective and targeted capacity-building in developing countries to support national plans to implement all the Sustainable Development Goals, including through North-South, South-South and triangular cooperation. <https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/es/globalpartnerships/>

- Increase in the capacities of LAC countries and their willingness to contribute to the global development agenda, which coexists with persistent vulnerabilities such as poverty, the technology gap, environmental vulnerability and lack of trust in institutions.
- Higher levels of wealth in terms of GDP that do not correspond to equitable levels of well-being between and within the countries of the region.

Faced with this complex scenario, the OECD has identified a series of keys to make sustainable and inclusive development a reality, all of them present in the principles, conceptualisations and practices of Triangular Cooperation recorded so far:

- Multidimensional approach to development in accordance with the 2030 Agenda, using indicators that better reflect the level of development.
- Greater institutional capacities at a national level which are reflected in comprehensive responses.
- That international development cooperation plays a relevant facilitating role through a broader set of types and instruments that strengthen South-South, triangular and multilateral cooperation and make it possible to break with traditional definitions, explore new structures and build new synergies.
- That countries, regardless of their income level, can integrate political alliances, participate in them on equal terms and address common concerns.⁷

⁷ OCDE (2019). *Perspectivas económicas de América Latina 2019*. Content extracted from the editorial of the document, signed by Alicia Bárcena, Executive Secretary of ECLAC; Luis Carranza, Executive President of the Development Bank of Latin America - CAF; Ángel Gurría, Secretary General of the OECD, and Neven Mimica, European Commissioner for International Cooperation and Development. Full document: <https://doi.org/10.1787/g2g9ff1a-es>

Triangular Cooperation: coordinates in the future of the International Development Cooperation System

The research carried out within the framework of the EU-SEGIB project sets out various aspects of the global situation –with special attention to the Ibero-American space and its relationship with the EU and its Member States– to understand, on the one hand, the *raison d'être* of Triangular Cooperation, the different experiences and interests of the entities that have contributed to its development (which explain, to a large extent, the diversity of approaches and the absence of an agreed definition up to now) and to offer guidelines that make it possible to exploit the potential of TC to strengthen EU-LAC bi-regional cooperation and strengthen and modernise the IDCS in line with the roadmap outlined in the 2030 Agenda.

The systemic crisis in which we find ourselves immersed is therefore highlighted as a decisive element of today's world, a crisis in which planetary and social imbalances converge with visible consequences in the form of climate change and growing inequalities. All this is evident in the succession of crises that have emerged in recent years, with clear links and interdependencies between them in their “economic, social, environmental and political aspects” (Martínez, 2022).

The COVID-19 pandemic has only confirmed this reality and demonstrated the urgency of intervening in a multidimensional and integrated way. As shown by the report *South-South and Triangular Cooperation and the Sustainable Development Agenda in Ibero-America: Critical nodes and horizons in the response to COVID-19*, it is “appropriate to understand this crisis as a *syndemic* rather than a pandemic, because it will allow us to look not only at the health crisis, but also at global risks, as well as at the economic, food and social context of people”.

It therefore seems evident that, given the growing complexity and interdependence of the problems that threaten global public goods (environment, financial stability, health, etc.), it is necessary for traditional donor countries and countries of the Global South to assume shared and harmonised responsibilities, a need with which, by all accounts, the TC principles fit perfectly.

In the midst of this complex scenario, the reports draw attention to two crises: one that concerns the very concept of development and one that affects

global governance. Both make it difficult to achieve the commitments undertaken in the 2030 Agenda and directly affect the IDCS. In the face of them, some transformation opportunities arise offered by Triangular Cooperation, the South-South and Triangular Cooperation and the Decentralised South-South and Triangular Cooperation.

Development concept crisis

The development crisis is determined by the overflow of the material limits of the planet and by the need to act collectively in the provision and management of global public goods.⁸ “It is a systemic and planetary crisis with effects on climate change and patterns of production, consumption and occupation of cities that have become unsustainable” (Malacalza, 2022).

“It is the very conceptualisation of development that is being questioned in a context marked by growing political and social polarisation, generated by the insufficient performance of an economy understood mainly in monetary terms of growth and the evidence of having exceeded and overexploited the limits and resources of the natural ecosystem. Both issues are presented today as indisputable, whereby current attempts to shape alternatives involve incorporating a multidimensional vision of progress that reconciles social and environmental dynamics with an economic dynamism centred on people and the planet” (Martínez, 2022, p. 15).

Based on the review of the broad academic, political and institutional debate around what development means and in light of the challenges posed by the Anthropocene, this author advocates considering sustainability as a substantive element, not merely a qualifying one, of development, while also committing to “renewing the horizon in terms of development models” (Martínez, 2022, p. 19).

⁸ Global public goods are goods whose benefits or costs are practically universal in scope or can affect everyone, anywhere. Together with regional public goods, they make up the category of transnational public goods. The public effects of a good can be local, national, regional or global in scope and can impact one or several generations. The term “good” does not have a connotation of value and its condition of public or private is not an innate property, but rather the result of a political or social choice. Sunlight, international communication and transportation systems, or goods for the control of communicable diseases, financial stability, or peace and security are examples of different types of global public goods (United Nations, 2015 p. 76-77).

The *South-South and Triangular Cooperation and Indigenous Peoples* report also refers to the existence of multiple development models from the reality of these communities. “The proposals and approaches of the indigenous movement and organisations around the question of development and well-being are not defined solely from the denial or simple appropriation of conceptions external to the indigenous world. In fact, these discourses recover, articulate and, to a certain extent, rework a synthesis of, on the one hand, these external conceptions and approaches and, on the other, certain ways of conceiving well-being, the good life, constituting a redefinition of the notion of development from their own world views about ‘good living’ and ‘well-being’” (Zúñiga, 2022).

Logically, the International Development Cooperation System is immersed in this debate, which is not merely conceptual but essentially political. The IDCS experiences numerous contradictions and tensions to overcome the traditional development aid schemes, which are deeply rooted in vertical and welfare dynamics from donor-recipient and North-South binary constructions. Disagreements that the COVID-19 pandemic or *syndemic* has revealed.

As various authors point out, we are in a moment of transition in the international development aid system. Among the changes brought about in this transition, two could be mentioned: Official Development Assistance has gone from being conceived as a mere transfer of resources to a tool for political dialogue and negotiation, and the growing interest in Triangular Cooperation as an enabling modality for multi-stakeholder and multilevel political dialogues.

It is in this context that the discussions around Triangular Cooperation (also SSC) and its role in generating new spaces for political dialogue are situated. Martínez (2022) points out that, among the efforts to reconfigure and adapt the International Development Cooperation System, this “seemed to opt for an increase in actors, practices and motivations that have exceeded the parameters with which it worked for several decades”. Here lies, in the opinion of this expert, the potential of TC, SSC, DC and, ultimately, the DSSTC ecosystem that he proposes in his research: more than just another modality of cooperation, its value lies in its condition of enabling partnership of a political space (Zoccal, 2021, cited by Martínez).

Global governance crisis

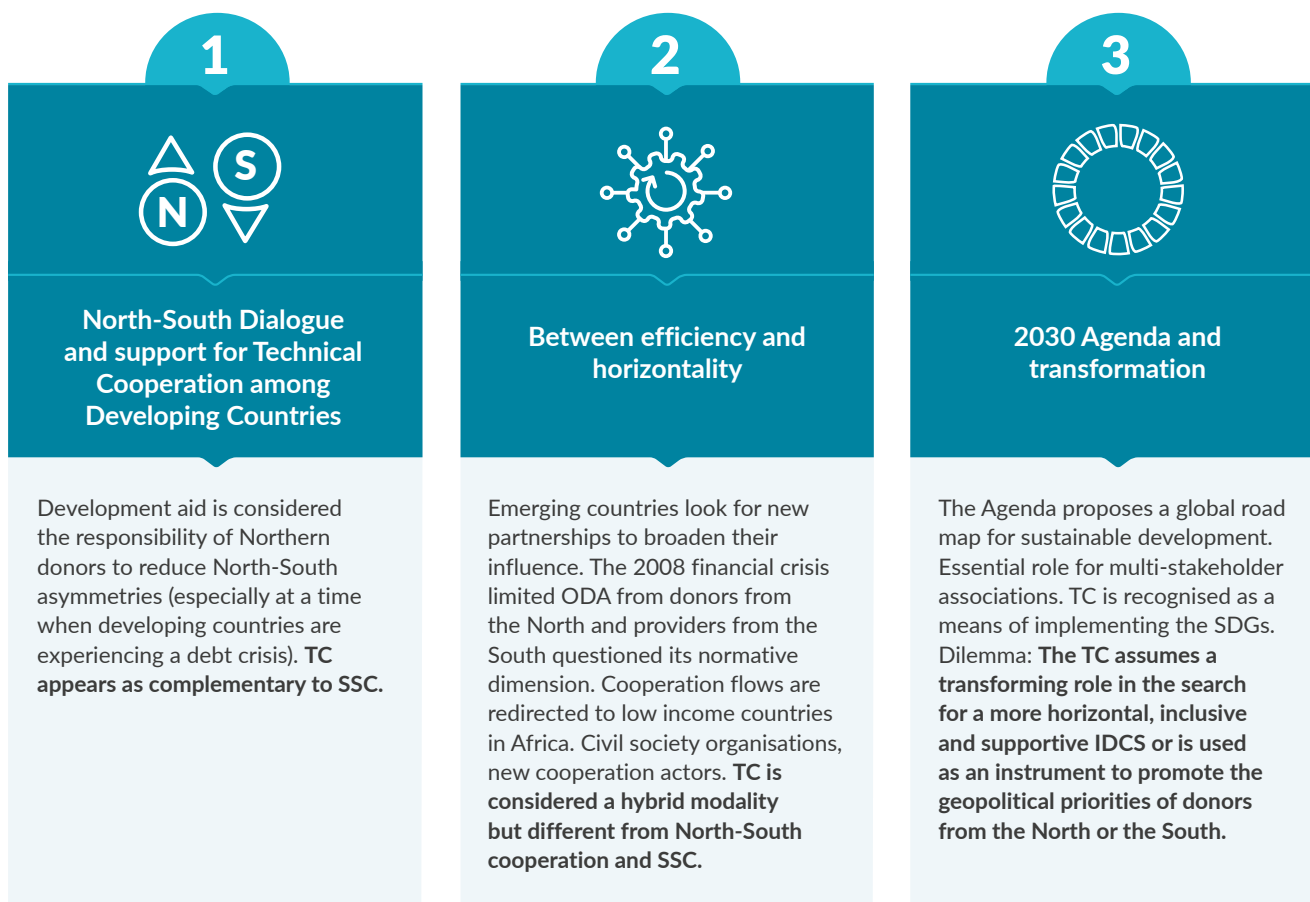
The research carried out within the framework of the EU-SEGIB project also coincides in pointing out the global governance crisis as a key challenge to achieve the transformations established by the 2030 Agenda. In this way they echo the opinion of the United Nations: “Multidimensional problems require multidimensional solutions. A new policy architecture needs to be developed that goes beyond sectoral focus, that articulates territorial strategies –among different levels of government–, that builds policies that cover the different stages of the life cycle of people and that encourage greater citizen participation” (UNDP 2016, p. 132 et seq., cited in Martínez 2022).

The crisis of multilateral governance that results in “serious deficits in legitimacy and

effectiveness of the international organisations themselves” (Malacalza 2022). Against this, an ecosystem of Decentralised South-South and Triangular Cooperation is proposed as a polycentric and multilevel governance model for planetary administration, characterised by greater horizontality in relationships and deeper decentralisation (Martínez, 2022).

On this point, in order to understand how TC has been fitting in and gaining relevance in the evolution of Official Development Assistance and, in general, of the IDCS, particularly enlightening is the differentiation made in the report *South-South and Triangular Cooperation and the Sustainable Development Agenda in Ibero-America: Critical nodes and horizons in the response to COVID-19*, which identifies three stages or “moments” (Figure 1).

FIGURE 1: Stages in the evolution of the debate on Triangular Cooperation



Source: Graphic synthesis prepared from the report *South-South and Triangular Cooperation and the Sustainable Development Agenda in Ibero-America: Critical nodes and horizons in the response to COVID-19* (p. 21-29).

In this third moment, in which we still find ourselves, all the work of the EU-SEGIB project, in line with the dictates of the 2030 Agenda, suggest, from different approaches, a more determined political commitment to a Triangular Cooperation that strengthens transnational horizontal partnerships,

generating a complex, multi-stakeholder and multi-level ecosystem, which transcends the logic of vertical relations between States and decisively incorporates international organisations, at different levels of Government, the private sector, civil society and academia.



1.2. Characterisation of Triangular Cooperation

Despite the fact that the beginnings of TC date back more than forty years, a common definition has not yet been agreed upon. Even the terminology is not uniform. In the literature you can find expressions such as *Trilateral* or *Tripartite Cooperation*, among others. In this project and throughout this publication, the generic term *Triangular Cooperation* is used as a container for the attributes of this modality of cooperation.

Likewise, the term *South-South and Triangular Cooperation* (SSTC) is used to refer to the triangulation experiences which, mainly in the Ibero-American region, have been developed from the South-South Cooperation and share principles and procedures with it. It is no coincidence that the notable wealth of information that SEGIB manages and that has served as the basis for the development of this joint project with the EU comes precisely from this type of initiative.

In addition, the notion of *Decentralised South-South and Triangular Cooperation* (DSSTC) is incorporated to refer to a more complex ecosystem of SSTC that incorporates sub-national governments—in particular, large and medium-sized cities—as notable development cooperation actors. This DSSTC proposal is based on the analysis of SSTC and Decentralised Cooperation in order to improve work strategies with sub-national governments, not so much to identify a set of differentiated practices as to examine the new relationship model that results from the incorporation of new actors and better understand their articulation in the Ibero-American region.

Determining aspects of Triangular Cooperation

The name *Triangular Cooperation* refers to the building of more horizontal relationships between partners, which are not necessarily three-way⁹, and to overcoming the traditional donor-recipient binary (and hierarchical) relationship (ERI, 2022) to opt for more flexible roles.

⁹ In fact, according to the SEGIB data, 20% of TC projects are between five or more actors.

The name *Triangular Cooperation* refers to the building of more horizontal relationships between partners, which are not necessarily three-way, and to overcoming the traditional donor-recipient binary (and hierarchical) relationship

TC is structured around a minimum of three actors with different roles and which in the research work carried out within the framework of the EU-SEGIB project are defined with various terms which, in turn, correspond to as many visions of their role in the development cooperation process:

- Recipient or beneficiary or partner/cooperator from the South, primarily a beneficiary.
- First provider, emerging donor, pivotal partner, partner/cooperator from the South, primarily a provider.
- Second provider, traditional donor or facilitating partner, previously donor country of Official Development Assistance (ODA).

In line with this approach, the aspects that characterise TC from the Ibero-American perspective are that it is carried out from the three aforementioned roles (first provider, second provider and recipient), each of which can be performed by more than one actor, and the type of institutionality that accompanies it.

As part of this general framework, it is worth remembering the approximations to a definition of

Triangular Cooperation formulated by leading entities in this matter and which, logically, are closely related to their own trajectory and interests (Table 1).

TABLE 1: Definitions of Triangular Cooperation

European Union (Adelante Programme)	Ibero-American Program for the Strengthening of SSC
	
<p>Triangular cooperation opens up an opportunity to develop an innovative approach to development consistent with the universal vision of the 2030 Agenda, which promotes partnerships between countries in different stages of development, as well as the coordination and leveraging of various resources and capacities to promptly and efficiently contribute to sustainable development, in pursuit of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Triangular Cooperation must therefore be a new starting point where different and diverse knowledge and experiences are recognised, valued and combined, in a partnership between equals¹⁰, in which the commitment of each one is complemented by that of the others, so that the whole is greater than the sum of the parts, and that the development impact of the combined effort has a multiplier effect. For the European Union, the combination of the three roles inherent to the triangular modality (beneficiary, first provider and second provider) facilitates the joint creation of solutions with a high potential impact on development objectives, promotes complementarity, increases coordination, allows sharing knowledge and learning together, generates ownership and trust, increases the volume, scope and sustainability of interventions and favours flexibility. In this way, all partners are called to contribute and benefit.</p> <p>Triangular Cooperation continues to evolve and may involve actors from different levels of government, non-state bodies or regional entities. Therefore, its conceptualisation within the framework of the EU must be flexible enough to allow innovation and the emergence of new constructive partnerships, while maintaining clarity on the essential nature of Triangular Cooperation since this undoubtedly provides its added value.¹¹</p>	<p>A form of South-South Cooperation involving a group of actors, each of which may make different types contributions (technical, financial or other), and each adopting one of three roles: those of the so-called first provider and recipient (one or several developing countries, in each case), and that of the second provider (developing country, developed country, regional or multilateral organisations, or some kind of partnership between them). The distinguishing feature lies in the role.¹²</p>
<p>Triangular Cooperation continues to evolve and may involve actors from different levels of government, non-state bodies or regional entities. Therefore, its conceptualisation within the framework of the EU must be flexible enough to allow innovation and the emergence of new constructive partnerships, while maintaining clarity on the essential nature of Triangular Cooperation since this undoubtedly provides its added value.¹¹</p>	<p>Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development</p>
<p>¹⁰ In bold in the original.</p> <p>¹¹ Adelante Programme. The European Union and triangular cooperation. Adelante 2 EU-LAC Triangular Cooperation Facility Co-financed by the European Union. https://www.adelante2.eu/es/la-union-europea-y-la-cooperacion-triangular</p>	 <p>Triangular Cooperation is when countries, international organisations, civil society, private sector, private philanthropy and others work together in groups of three or more, to cocreate flexible, cost-effective and innovative solutions for reaching the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).¹³</p> <p>¹² PIFCSS (2015). <i>Guía Orientadora para la gestión de la cooperación triangular en Iberoamérica</i>, Documento de trabajo [Guidelines for the management of triangular cooperation in Ibero-America, Working Paper], no. 8, p. 21. This definition was coined by the SEGIB, together with the Ibero-American countries and the PIFCSS for the <i>Report on South-South Cooperation in Ibero-America 2013-2014</i>, although since the first edition of this report, in 2007, the reference to the TC which, as of 2020, also appears in the title, was also included.</p> <p>¹³ OECD (2018). <i>Triangular Cooperation: Why does it Matter?</i> DCD. Foresight, Outreach and Policy Reform Unit. https://www.oecd.org/dac/dac-global-relations/Triangular%20Booklet%20A5%20pages.pdf</p>

Multiple actors, co-creation of flexible solutions, innovation, leading roles, achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals... All these elements give an idea that we are dealing with a dynamic and open construction, involving not only technical factors, but also –and fundamentally– politicians.

Principles of Triangular Cooperation

The EU-SEGIB project does not set itself the objective of offering a closed definition of TC to frame EU-LAC bi-regional relations, but rather to show the principles that stem from the Triangular Cooperation experiences identified and from the systematisation work carried out in recent years by various multilateral organisations (SEGIB, OECD, GPI, etc.).

The multitude of principles they offer is consistent with the diversity of approaches, conceptualisations and narratives that encompass the origin and development of TC. Likewise, they comply with the specific objectives of each of these reports and the area of research commissioned.

The objective of the ERI study is to “identify the value or strategic importance of TC with LAC for EU countries; that is, the potential or real capacity of TC to contribute to the fulfilment of the political objectives set by the actors involved, both in the area of development cooperation and outside of it” (ERI, 2022).

In line with this objective, it offers a series of TC principles “that stem from those of South-South Cooperation and are influenced somewhat by the effectiveness agenda of the 2005 Paris Declaration” (ibid.):

- Respect for national sovereignty
- Ownership and independence
- Equality/horizontality
- No conditionality
- Non-interference
- Mutual benefit
- That the projects arise from the demand
- Mutual accountability and transparency

- Effectiveness
- Coordination of implementation and results-based initiatives
- Multi-stakeholder approach

The report *South-South and Triangular cooperation and the Sustainable Development Agenda in Ibero-America: Critical nodes and horizons in the response to COVID-19* analyses how SSTC has adapted to the transition between development agendas to propose innovative mechanisms “through which TC could contribute to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals in the region” and “proposes a roadmap to move towards a transforming TC that helps provide a response to COVID-19 anchored in the 2030 Agenda” (Malacalza, 2022).

Based on this broad approach, the principles of different types of cooperation (ODA, SSTC, SSC and TC) are compared, in turn identifying the international organisations or agencies that act as promoters of these principles (and, ultimately, of the narrative associated with them) and, likewise, distinguishing the principles that stem from the effectiveness agenda and those that were incorporated after the approval of the 2030 Agenda (Malacalza, 2022 p. 39).

The multitude of principles they offer is consistent with the diversity of approaches, conceptualisations and narratives that encompass the origin and development of TC

The principles which in this report are attributed to SSTC and TC are summarised below.

TABLE 2: Principles of SSTC and TC

SSTC	TC		
SEGIB-PIFCSS (2009)	SEGIB-PIFCSS (2015)	OECD (2018)	GPI (2019)
Horizontality	Adaptability, articulation	Building of ownership and trust	Country ownership and demand-driven cooperation
Mutual benefit	Access to information and input from all parties	Promotion of complementarity and increased coordination in development cooperation	Shared commitment
Recipient leadership	Co-learning on management	Share knowledge and co-learning	Focus on results-oriented approaches and solutions
Effectiveness and efficiency	Absence of conditions, communication oriented towards consensus and clear definition of roles	Co-create solutions and flexibility	Inclusive partnerships and multi-stakeholder dialogues
Mutual responsibility	Effectiveness in initiatives and efficiency in the use of resources	Support the volume, scope and sustainability of TC	Transparency and mutual responsibility
	Demand-driven approach	Achieve regional and global development objectives through development partnerships	Innovation and creation Promote gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls
	Shared management of results Shared results		Co-learning and knowledge sharing for sustainable development
	Leadership of the recipient, sustainability of actions and visibility		Leave no one behind

Note: The principles in bold correspond to the new criteria incorporated with the 2030 Agenda. The colour blue corresponds to the principles that stem from the effectiveness agenda.

Source: *South-South and Triangular Cooperation and the Sustainable Development Agenda in Ibero-America: Critical nodes and horizons in the response to COVID-19* (p. 39).

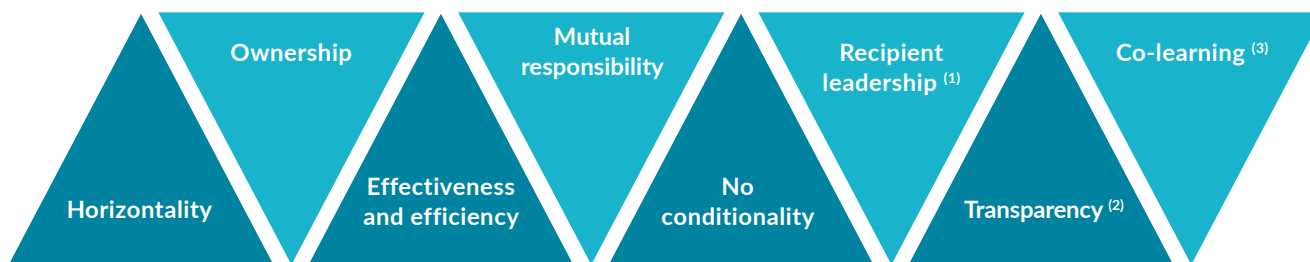
Finally, the report *Notes for an Ibero-American ecosystem of Decentralised South-South and Triangular Cooperation* proposes a roadmap to improve work strategies with sub-national governments, particularly large and medium-sized cities in the area of Triangular Cooperation. With this objective, it brings together a series of principles that correspond to the “analysis, dialogue and coordination agenda to define a strategy” launched by the PIFCSS to strengthen DSSTC.

In accordance with the work carried out within the framework of that agenda, some distinctive principles and characteristics of DSSC have been established which, for the author of the report, can be perfectly extrapolated to the conceptualisation of the DSSTC ecosystem that he proposes. These principles are (ibid. p. 55):

- Mutual collaboration, horizontality and solidarity
- Reciprocity and shared responsibility
- Respect for the local relevance of cooperation
- Complementarity and added value of cooperation
- No conditionality
- Adoption of the principles of sustainable development (2030 Agenda and NUA)

As a summary, based on this sum of principles, Figure 2 brings together those on which there seems to be a greater consensus as defining elements of Triangular Cooperation.

FIGURE 2. Summary proposal of principles of Triangular Cooperation



(1) This principle appears linked to the fact that cooperation arises from demand, the sustainability of actions and the relevance of cooperation.

(2) Related to mutual accountability and access to information of all parties.

(3) The co-learning process comprises the sharing of knowledge.

Together with these principles, it is interesting to mention the proposal for the suitability of the principles of SSC and TC for and with indigenous peoples¹⁴. This proposal appears in the study on the [South-South and Triangular Cooperation and Indigenous Peoples](#) and, to formulate it, the author is inspired by “the guidelines, regulatory standards, policies and the doctrine that has been formed

¹⁴ Since the SEGIB has recorded information, only 1% of TC initiatives are initiatives for and with indigenous peoples. More striking, if possible, is the absence of indigenous institutions among the TC actors recorded in the SIDICSS performing any of the three roles.

on the rights and treatment of matters of interest to indigenous peoples”. However, he clarifies that these principles should be the result of a dialogue process between the cooperation partners “in collaboration with indigenous peoples” (Zúñiga, 2022 p. 54).

In addition to offering a series of recommendations to adapt the principles of Triangular Cooperation established by the PIFCSS in 2015 in DSSTC interventions for and with indigenous peoples, this report compiles a series of complementary principles and criteria. Tables 3 to 5 summarise these principles. (Zúñiga, pp. 55-59).

TABLE 3. Proposal of complementary principles applicable to South-South and Triangular Cooperation for, with, of and between indigenous peoples

	<p>Development priorities</p>	<p>The actors respect and the initiatives are adapted to the development priorities that the interested peoples, communities and/or indigenous populations have adopted.</p>
	<p>Participation and advocacy</p>	<p>Interested indigenous peoples, communities and/or populations are part of and influence decision-making on the design and implementation of cooperation initiatives that specifically target them or those they are recipients of together with other groups.</p>
	<p>Rights</p>	<p>Interested indigenous peoples, communities and/or populations are holders of rights whose enjoyment and exercise must be effectively protected and promoted, both in the design and in the implementation of cooperation initiatives.</p>
	<p>Capacities</p>	<p>Interested indigenous peoples, communities and/or populations have resources and capacities that can be put at the service of cooperation initiatives that are or are not aimed directly at them, as well as those in which they participate as recipients together with other sectors or that are aimed at other indigenous peoples.</p>

Source: *South-South and Triangular Cooperation and Indigenous Peoples. SEGIB. p. 58.*

TABLE 4. Proposal of complementary principles and criteria applicable to SSC and Triangular initiatives of general interest and indigenous impact

	<p>Participation and advocacy</p>	<p>Interested indigenous peoples, communities and/or populations participate and influence decision-making on the contents, scope and conditions of implementation of cooperation initiatives which, being related to issues of general or public interest, are oriented towards obtaining results of which they are also recipients, users or beneficiaries.</p>
	<p>Indigenous capacities and contributions to the general interest</p>	<p>Initiatives aimed at broad sectors of the population, or that address topics and issues of general interest, prioritise the identification of indigenous peoples' own capacities to put them at the service of obtaining the agreed results.</p>
	<p>Relevance</p>	<p>SSC and Triangular initiatives of general interest and indigenous impact incorporate adaptations and definitions in order to be relevant to the interests, identities, cultural singularities and the development priorities of the interested indigenous peoples, communities and/or populations, in everything related to those processes, mechanisms and results of which they are recipients.</p>

Source: *South-South and Triangular Cooperation and Indigenous Peoples. SEGIB. p. 59.*

TABLE 5. Proposal of complementary principles and criteria applicable to SSC and Triangular initiatives with indigenous implication



Safeguards

In the case of initiatives that have the potential to affect the interests and the enjoyment and exercise of the rights of the interested peoples, communities and/or indigenous populations, procedures and safeguards will be established in the early stages of their life cycle, so that these are duly consulted and influence decision-making on the implementation, content and scope of these initiatives, to guarantee the exercise of their rights and safeguard their interests.

Safeguards are the set of measures, requirements, directives or guidelines for the actions of the partners, which seek to protect against possible damages and affecting interests and rights, as well as minimise the risks and negative impacts on the interested peoples, communities and/or indigenous populations, as a result of the implementation of cooperation initiatives.

Source: *South-South and Triangular Cooperation and Indigenous Peoples*. SEGIB. p. 60.



Rafael Idrovo Espinoza, Unsplash

1.3. Evolution of Triangular Cooperation in Ibero-America

The Ibero-American region is the most dynamic in the world in terms of Triangular Cooperation. In Latin America and the Caribbean, TC appears inextricably linked to South-South Cooperation, partly because the triangulation experiences in many cases have started from SSC initiatives to which a traditional donor has been incorporated and, also, because the information compiled on triangular practices in the region forms part – with increasing prominence – of the SSC reports

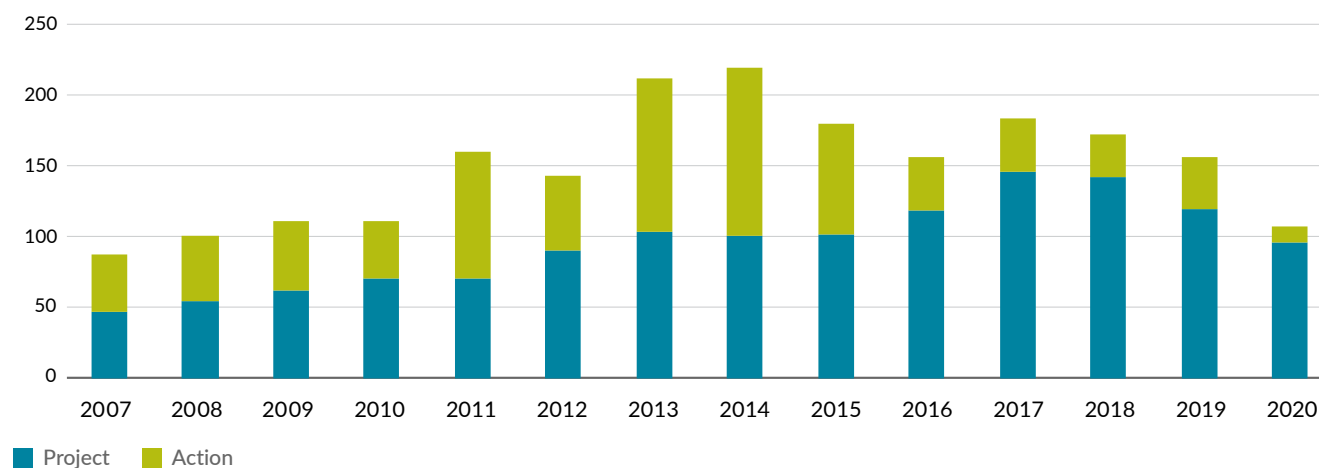
produced by the Ibero-American General Secretariat since 2007.

The work of systematising the information produced by the technical team of the Ibero-American General Secretariat on the cooperation developed in the region aims to offer inputs to the political dialogue. Thanks to this recognised work in the area of South-South Cooperation and the trust of its member countries, SEGIB has information on the triangular initiatives carried out in the last 14 years (Figure 3), which constitutes the most complete TC database available worldwide, allowing observation of the evolution of this modality.

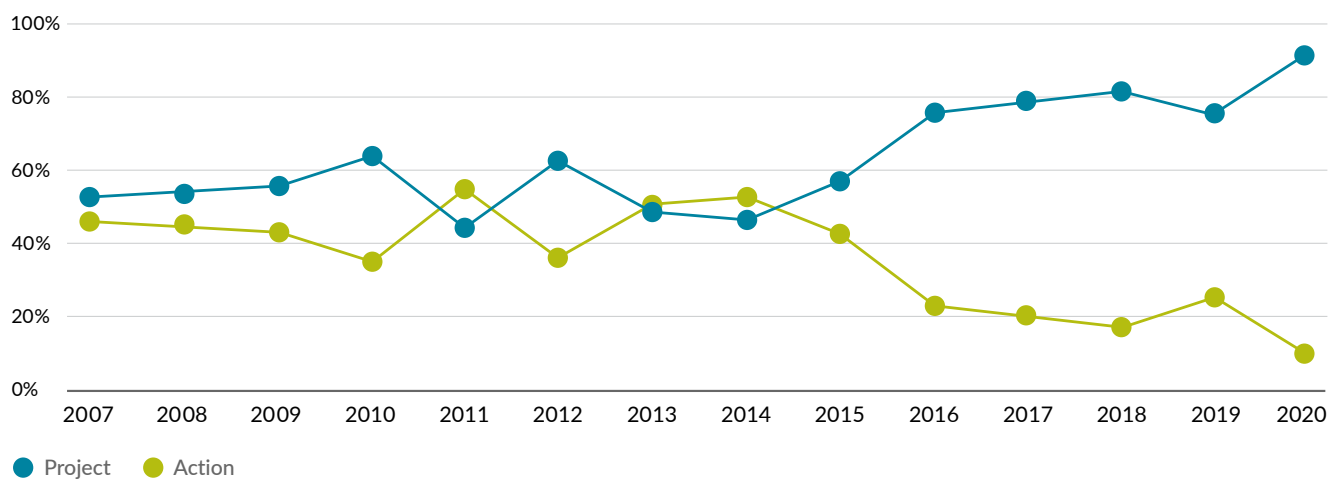
FIGURE 3. Evolution of the Triangular Cooperation projects and initiatives in Ibero-America from 2007-2020

Triangular initiatives 2007-2020

In units



In percentage



Source: SEGIB based on Agencies and Directorates-General for Cooperation.

According to this database, from 2007 to 2020 between 100 and 120 annual projects and actions were carried out in Latin America. This figure provides a glimpse of a certain equilibrium, a figure that will probably remain at around 100 projects per year. A curve is observed that reached its peak in 2013 and 2014 and that has been decreasing (something that has also happened in the case of SSC), which shows that TC moves both in absolute terms and in its composition, in such a way that the number of projects increases and the number of actions decreases¹⁵ (understood as activities or projects of minor importance), all of which is interpreted as a strength and a symptom of a certain consolidation of TC as a specific modality.

The effort to systematise the information available on TC from SEGIB –as well as the work of other institutions such as the OECD– has helped to account up to now for the growing interest and demand for TC as the optimal modality of cooperation in the current context. However, as already indicated, there are also conceptual and

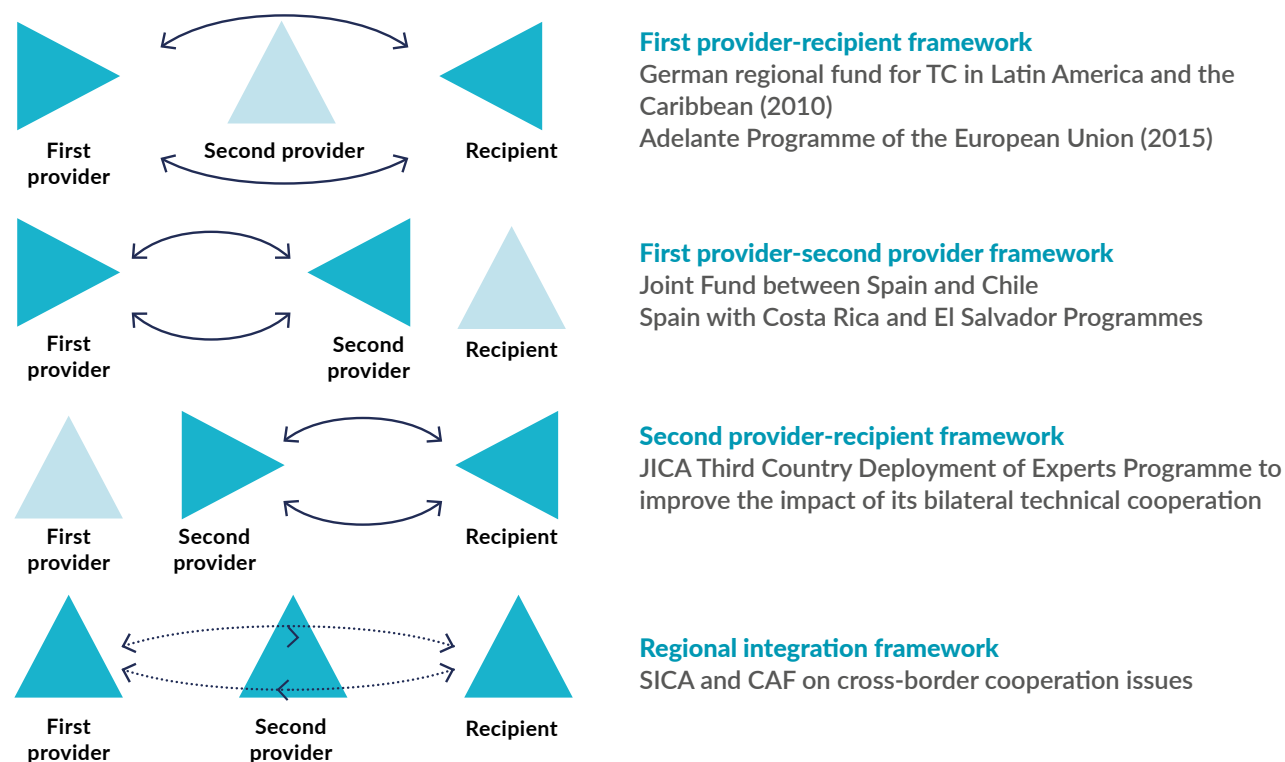
methodological gaps in understanding and delimiting its potential scope.

It could be said that, until now, TC initiatives have been occurring in a somewhat informal way based on other fully established types of cooperation (North-South, South-South bilateral relations, etc.), meeting organically the needs raised by different actors and circumstances, with more or less innovative approaches both in terms of the themes and the instruments used. However, as the reports of the EU-SEGIB project show, the permanence of vertical frameworks in cooperation relations is visible.

Regarding this inertia, of interest is the type of TC relations in the Ibero-American region proposed by Malacalza (2022, page 46), associated with specific cases in which the EU and some of its Member States are also leading players. This classification (summarised in Figure 4) shows to what extent the reproduction or overcoming of the traditional hierarchies of the IDCS restricts or enhances the transformative capacity of the initiatives in terms of enabling spaces for dialogue and more dynamic governance and which are therefore better adapted to the global challenges we face.

¹⁵ Between 2006 and 2014, 53% of the total initiatives were projects, a percentage that rose to 77.4% in 2017 (Malacalza, 2022).

FIGURE 4. Types and practical cases of TC



Source: Information extracted from *South-South and Triangular Cooperation and the Sustainable Development Agenda in Ibero-America: Critical nodes and horizons in the response to COVID-19* (p. 46).

This review of the international evolution of Triangular Cooperation within the International Development Cooperation System offers the necessary context to understand how this evolution has occurred at the European level, in particular, in its relationship with the Ibero-American region.

The European Union has been “developing a broader vision of development cooperation in political and strategic terms”



Lorena Samponi. Unsplash

1.4. Triangular Cooperation in EU-LAC relations

As the world's largest donor of Official Development Assistance, the European Union has been “developing a broader vision of development cooperation in political and strategic terms”. Two of the greatest examples are found in the European Green Deal, whose principles “are also applicable to development cooperation actions”, but also in the “incorporation of security objectives, such as border control and migratory flows in the European narrative on cooperation” (ERI, 2022).

This integration of geopolitics into Community development objectives, which culminated in 2021 with the creation of Global Europe or the Neighbourhood, Development and International Cooperation Instrument (NDICI), makes it possible to identify European priorities in terms of financing, which do not include Latin America and the Caribbean: only 4% of NDICI funds (6% in terms of geographical programming) go to the countries from this region (ibid.).

This dynamic in terms of the scarce allocation of cooperation funds to Ibero-American countries is repeated in the case of the Member States, with the exception of Spain, “for whom cooperation with LAC represents almost half of its total volume of aid” (ibid.).

Cooperation objectives in Europe

To clarify the “potential or real capacity of Triangular Cooperation to contribute to the fulfilment of the political objectives” of the actors involved, in this case at the European level, the ERI has researched the objectives pursued by the EU and its Member States both in their development cooperation relations, paying special attention to those MS with experience in TC.¹⁶

Five areas stand out among the development cooperation objectives in which the majority of MS agree: eradicate poverty, hunger and inequalities; gender equality and women’s empowerment;

¹⁶ The representative sample of Member States –in addition to the European Commission itself– analysed by the ERI includes Germany, Austria, Belgium, Spain, Hungary, Italy, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Portugal and Sweden. The criteria applied were volume of ODA, level of cooperation with LAC, experience in and relevance given to TC, and geographical location within the EU.

inclusive and sustainable growth and development and decent work; peace and stability, and environmental protection, access to sustainable energy and climate action.

Significantly, the most prominent countries in TC agree to a large extent in two other areas: promotion of democracy and building partnerships for development.

Regarding cooperation with Latin America and the Caribbean (Table 6), the predominant objectives make up a broad thematic range that does not reveal any specific type of cooperation with Latin America and the Caribbean compared to other regions of the world.¹⁷

TABLE 6: Main development cooperation objectives with Latin America and the Caribbean of the selected Member States, by level of experience in Triangular Cooperation

	Germany	Spain	EU	Luxembourg	Italy	Austria	Portugal	Belgium	Sweden
Eradicate poverty, inequalities and oppression		■	■	■		■		■	■
Employment and economic development	■				■				
Rural development					■				
Social development and cohesion	■	■							
Health				■					
Gender equality and women's rights		■		■		■			■
Rule of Law, democracy, governance and Human Rights	■	■		■	■	■		■	■
Fight against corruption		■							
Migrations and development									■
Sustainable infrastructures	■								
Environmental protection and climate action	■	■	■	■	■	■		■	■
Renewable energy						■			
Disaster prevention and disaster risk reduction						■			
Conflict prevention						■			
Youth violence prevention					■				
Science, technology, innovation, culture, training and research			■	■				■	
Development of institutional capacities (and of civil society - Spain)		■		■		■		■	
Mobilisation of domestic resources		■							
Integration and regional cooperation in the Caribbean						■			
Global public goods		■							
Special relationship with (Portuguese-speaking) countries							■		
Relevance of the Ibero-American space							■		

Source: Study on the strategic value of Triangular Cooperation with Latin America and the Caribbean for the countries of the Union (ERI, 2022).

17 The Netherlands and Hungary do not indicate specific objectives for this region.

of some countries reduce the cooperation with LAC objectives to a very small number of partner countries. This is the case, for example, with Italy, whose aid to the region goes to Central America and the Caribbean (specifically Cuba and El Salvador) with some focus on Colombia and Venezuela; and with Luxembourg, which only includes Nicaragua among the priority partners of its bilateral cooperation” (ERI, 2022).

The objectives of the EU and its MS in their TC initiatives (Table 7),¹⁸ include in particular: “share knowledge, expertise and good practices and carry out mutual learning; effectiveness; multi-stakeholder partnerships for development, dialogue for the 2030 Agenda and joint leadership for the defence of global public goods; and the development of capacities for the development of partners and their institutional strengthening” (ERI, 2022).

TABLE 7: Main objectives of Triangular Cooperation of the selected Member States that explicitly state them, by level of experience in TC

	Germany	Spain	EU	Luxembourg	Netherlands	Portugal
Share knowledge, expertise and good practices, mutual learning	■	■	■		■	■
Exploit resources, mobilise additional resources, multiplier effect of investment				■		■
Complementarity of actions						■
Efficacy	■	■	■	■		
Harmonisation	■					
Multi-stakeholder partnerships for development, dialogue for the 2030 Agenda and joint leadership for global public goods	■	■	■	■	■	■
Diversification and innovation in partnerships				■		■
Relations with new actors and their expertise, relations beyond development cooperation				■	■	
Inclusive and sustainable socio-economic development				■		
Eradicate poverty					■	
Development of development and institutional strengthening capacities	■	■				■
Presence in priority countries						■

Source: *Study on the strategic value of triangular cooperation with Latin America and the Caribbean for the countries of the Union* (ERI, 2022).

¹⁸ The data come from the European Commission and the MS that explicitly state these objectives: Germany, Spain, Luxembourg, Netherlands and Portugal.

The ERI does not observe in these data “a pattern of priorities that necessarily corresponds to the level of triangular experience”, which seems to show a very limited influence of TC to substantially modify the cooperation frameworks.¹⁹

Furthermore, the authors of the report conclude that “the appearance of specific objectives related to the way of working and the characteristics of this modality can be interpreted as an understanding, in general, of TC as an instrument with clearly differentiated applications or advantages to other forms of cooperation, and not merely as an alternative way to achieve the same results as through other instruments, such as bilateral cooperation”. However, it remains to be seen if these advantages derive from a technical or instrumental interpretation of TC or another more political or more focused on modifying the traditional frameworks of international cooperation.

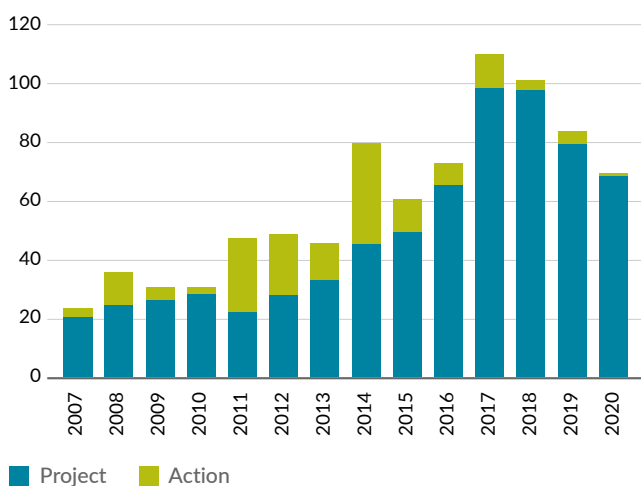
Evolution of EU-LAC Triangular Cooperation projects and initiatives

According to the data available to SEGIB, after a timid start, in recent years there has been a significant increase in TC projects in European Union countries in Latin America and the Caribbean. Thus, bi-regional Triangular Cooperation with the EU and its member countries accounts for approximately half of the total in Ibero-America (concentrated in eight Member States in addition to the European institutions themselves). This leading role of the EU helps accumulate experience that can be expanded and replicated in other regions of the world.

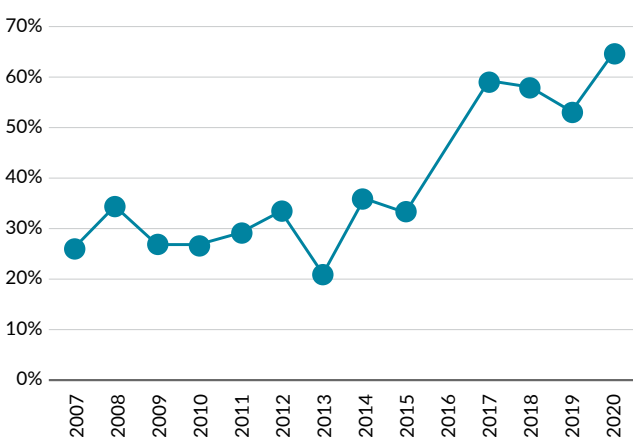
FIGURE 5: Evolution of Triangular Cooperation projects and initiatives between the European Union and its Member States and Latin America and the Caribbean

EU-LAC Triangular Initiatives. 2007-2020

In units



Proportion of EU-LAC Triangular initiatives over the total. 2007-2020



Source: SEGIB based on Agencies and Directorates-General for Cooperation.

¹⁹ The ERI considers the Portuguese TC as “an interesting case”, noticing “some contrast between the mentions of TC in its official documents and the identification of specific objectives for this modality, which are abundant, on the one hand, and the low number of triangular projects carried out so far, on the other”. The authors of the report deduce that this is due to “a clear understanding of the comparative advantages and therefore strategic value of this modality, despite the little experience recorded to date” (ERI, 2022).

Member States with the most experience in TC are: Germany, Spain and, to a lesser extent, Portugal. Germany, a leading country in this area, has a Triangular Cooperation Fund with LAC with an annual budget of between three and four million euros. As a second provider, it regularly collaborates with Chile, Costa Rica, Argentina and Mexico as first providers, while El Salvador, Colombia, Paraguay, the Dominican Republic, Bolivia and Ecuador are the main recipients.

Spain, which joined the TC in 2005, has experienced notable growth in recent years, going from 21 initiatives recorded in 2006 to 183 in 2014. In the Spanish TC, the countries that act as first providers are Costa Rica, Argentina, Mexico, Brazil and Chile and the main recipients were El Salvador, Haiti and Paraguay. Regarding the total budget, according to the data from the Memorandums of Understanding that provided for the contribution of funds by Spain between 2006 and 2018, the amount was slightly higher than three million euros.

For its part, Portugal has acted as a “debate promoter” on Triangular Cooperation (ERI, 2022), as demonstrated by the international events held in Lisbon organised jointly with the OECD and the PIFCSS. Memorandums of Understanding have also been signed to carry out TC actions with Argentina, Chile, Uruguay and Brazil. Despite the small number of triangular projects carried out to date, in Portugal there seems to be “a clear understanding of the comparative advantages and therefore strategic value of this modality”, resulting in “TC mentions in its official documents” and identification of numerous specific objectives of this modality (ibid.).

On this point, it is interesting to note the disparity in the data available on TC in European countries, specifically Spain and Luxembourg, which shows once again that one of the remaining challenges is the systematisation of information with uniform criteria, as will be described in detail later. In the case of Spain, while the OECD repository includes less than one hundred triangular projects, the SIDICSS reports its participation in more than 150 experiences, placing it almost at the level of Germany, with 160 projects in the SIDICSS. Luxembourg appears as the second provider in the SIDICSS database in more than thirty TC projects with Ibero-American countries, information that does not appear in the OECD repository.

Commitment of European institutions to Triangular Cooperation

In addition to verifying the diversity of the Member States regarding interest in this modality (at least, formally expressed interest), TC actions with Latin American and Caribbean countries, budget effort, etc., of interest is the analysis that the ERI carries out on the institutional work of the European Union. Although there is confirmation of greater focus by the authorities on TC “as a new modality of partnership and cooperation with middle-income

countries (especially in LAC) [...] This has been accompanied by a greater focus too by the ODA of the EU on other regions such as Africa, both because of its greater development needs and because of the merger of the EU’s development objectives with other strategic objectives of its foreign policy; among them the control of migratory flows” (ibid).

At the regulatory level is the importance of the *New European Consensus on Development* approved in 2017, embodied in the Joint Declaration of the Parliament, the Council and the Commission “Our world, our dignity, our future”. This document adopts the principles of the 2030 Agenda:

Innovative engagement with the most advanced developing countries

The most advanced developing countries have significant impact and influence in their regions, including as sources of regional stability. Their cooperation with other developing countries is expanding rapidly and represents an important part of the international cooperation package. The EU and its Member States will develop new partnerships with the most advanced developing countries, to favour the implementation of the 2030 Agenda, through a wider range of forms of cooperation. At the heart of this cooperation is the dialogue on public order and reform. Political dialogues will promote mutual interests and identify common priorities, partnerships and cooperation principles for the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which facilitate a common and integrated framework for cooperation. These new partnerships will strive to promote the sharing of best practices, technical support and knowledge sharing. In addition, the EU and its Member States will work with these countries to promote South-South and triangular cooperation consistent with the principles of development effectiveness.²⁰

As can be seen, the European Union’s commitment to Triangular Cooperation in the Latin American and Caribbean region is linked to the political and instrumental obstacle that the *graduation* of

²⁰ Official Journal of the European Union (30/06/2017). *Joint statement by the Council and the representatives of the governments of the Member States meeting within the Council, the European Parliament and the Commission*. 2017/C 210/01. Full document: [https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:42017Y0630\(01\)&from=ES](https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:42017Y0630(01)&from=ES)



Random Institute, Unsplash

many countries in the region has meant, after reaching a middle income level that disqualifies them from continuing to receive Official Development Assistance (ODA). The EU calls them “most advanced developing countries” and, as pointed out in the aforementioned report, calls for “innovative partnerships” with them “which, beyond ODA, consider a broader range of tools such as, for example, the promotion of SSC and TC in accordance with the principles of development effectiveness” (Malacalza, 2022, p. 35).

It is clear that the questioning of the very concept of *graduation*²¹ and the uncertain future of ODA as a source of financing in the EU-LAC relationship

21 This is revealed in the report Notes for an Ibero-American ecosystem of Decentralised South-South and Triangular Cooperation: “The transition of countries from situations requiring ODA to situations where it ceases to be relevant does not seem to correspond to a transition as simple or as clear as the per capita income indicator seemed to suggest”. Other authors share this analysis; for example, in a document published by the EU-LAC Foundation advocating for a new approach to development cooperation between the two regions, Jonathan Glennie defends “gradation” versus “graduation” to “link aid transfers with contextual issues beyond just GDP/capita” (Glennie, 2019).

The questioning of the very concept of graduation and the uncertain future of ODA (...) are key elements to understand the origin and impetus that TC has received in recent years

are key elements to understand the origin and impetus that TC has received in recent years, particularly in the bi-regional scope.

Based on its research work and analysis of specialised literature, the ERI considers TC as a “complementary modality to other forms of cooperation, and is structured through a series of ad hoc incorporations into other development projects, the call for proposals for triangular

projects and the delegation in MS (Ramos Rollón and López Cabana, 2020, cited in ERI, 2022).

Instead of considering that the confluence of a greater complexity of the global reality and a reduction in development aid could lead to the disappearance of spaces for North-South collaboration, some experts see in this situation an opportunity for TC as a modality of cooperation that helps to “build bridges between the EU and Ibero-America, either by opening spaces for plural, inclusive and balanced partnerships, or by enabling a discussion on the necessary transformation of the development cooperation system towards a more horizontal, inclusive and supportive one” (Malacalza, 2022).

This also seems to be understood by the European Commission’s Directorate-General for International Partnerships (DG INTPA), which considers that “Triangular Cooperation offers the opportunity to build an innovative development approach that is consistent with the universalist spirit of the 2030 Agenda” (Adelante 2).

Although the EU has been developing programmes under the logic of TC for years (EUROCLIMA, PAcCTO, EUROsocial or SOCIEUX), it was in 2015 when it took a more significant step in TC with the creation of the Regional Facility for International Cooperation and Partnership, which later became the ADELANTE Programme,²² to which reference has already been made and which is specifically dedicated to TC with Latin America and the Caribbean, and which [ADELANTE 2 2021-2024](#), currently underway, has continued. This experience reaffirmed the interest in incorporating TC into the European toolbox of development cooperation instruments and “institutionalised the TC relationship between the European Union and the region” (Malacalza, 2022).

The Agreement signed between the SEGIB and the EU in 2019, within the framework of the preparatory meeting for the Ibero-American Summit

²² In its first edition, the ADELANTE 2016-2020 programme co-financed eight large projects with a budget of 10 million euros. ADELANTE 2 2021-2024 is currently underway, involving more than 80 actors that are part of 15 projects through all types of partnerships (stable, specific, previously existing or created ad hoc, from SSC or North-South Cooperation, etc.). In total, 63 entities are members of partnerships and another 15 are involved in different ways (providing knowledge, hosting an internship, facilitating a specialist, etc.). Of the latter, 17 are sub-national governments and 17 companies.

Both the EU and the Ibero-American space share the notion that the approach to governance and financing of cooperation must transcend ODA and encompass multiple logics, including SSC and TC

in Andorra, to carry out the project *An Innovative Triangular Cooperation for the new Development Agenda*, of which this publication forms part thereof, reports on the bi-regional commitment to explore how TC can broaden the availability of tools to contribute to sustainable development.

It is also recognition of the Ibero-American General Secretariat, both in its work to systematise and make visible this form of cooperation in Latin America and the Caribbean (which makes it possible, on the one hand, to support political analysis and decision-making in a consistent database and, on the other, identify the gaps and challenges that need to be faced in order to take advantage of the potential of TC to achieve a more effective contribution to EU/LAC bi-regional relations), as well as in its role as a privileged technical-political interlocutor in the region.

In conclusion on the state of affairs regarding the role of TC in relations between the European Union and Latin America and the Caribbean, the cited report states the following: “both the EU and the Ibero-American space share the notion that the approach to governance and financing of cooperation must transcend ODA and encompass multiple logics —including SSC and TC— and actors —international, regional and national—, as well as an adaptation to horizontal cooperation principles that includes different levels of government and that exceeds the traditional donor-recipient framework” (Malacalza, 2022).

1.5. The information systems of Triangular Cooperation

One of the unanimously recognised challenges of Triangular Cooperation, as concluded by all the reports produced within the framework of the EU-SEGIB project, is the lack of systematised information on the exact number of TC projects, their sectoral and geographical distribution, the resources they mobilise, etc. Common forms of recording are therefore necessary to quantify Triangular Cooperation and generate, in turn, regional, global and sectoral reports.

The work carried out by the SIDICSS and the SEGIB in this matter is also unanimously recognised, as well as the value of the repositories and reports on a global scale of the OECD, UNOSSC and the GPI. Equally noteworthy is the information bank of the European ADELANTE programme, prepared from the lessons learned in the eight projects that were carried out during its first phase. However, the diagnosis is clear: the data are incomplete, disaggregated and difficult to compare (Malacalza, 2022).

In this vein, the ERI warns that there are no “common methodologies established to address this lack of information”. In addition to the lack of a clear definition that facilitates their identification and classification, he points out as possible causes “the difficulty in isolating the resources allocated to these projects (since they interact with other modalities of cooperation), the investment required, the different monitoring practices of the actors involved, the lack of institutional capacity to consistently monitor these projects and the high levels of fragmentation of the TC”.

Another major obstacle to systematisation is the difficulty in collecting information on the transfer of knowledge, capacities, technologies, etc., key aspects in TC beyond the associated monetary flows.

And, finally, as the research on Decentralised South-South and Triangular Cooperation shows, there is a wide range of institutions and entities that have a huge wealth of information that needs to be processed, ordered and systematised in order to reliably know the cooperation actions (including TC) carried out by sub-national and local governments (thus, for example,

Decentralised Cooperation does not appear as a category in the Ibero-American SSC reports).²³

Added to the multitude of actors is horizontality, an essential principle of Triangular Cooperation, which entails a non-hierarchical system of interrelationships in which different visions and practices coexist: a “polycentric space in which there is no central governing body that establishes rules and assigns priorities and budgets, which makes the challenge greater and above all different” (Martínez, 2022). This fact, which affects the institutionality (or lack thereof) of the TC, also explains part of the difficulties in establishing optimal information recording methodologies and systems.

The consequences of this lack of systematic information are multiple:

- It contributes to the imprecision and widespread ignorance of the actions and their results by the group of actors that make up the system.
- It generates mistrust regarding the actors and their results.
- It is given little political importance in relation to other modalities of cooperation and therefore has a small budget. It is illustrative to compare the lack of complete TC references to go to with “the capacity of reports based on ODA to occupy with their data and references the political centre of the public agenda in matters of cooperation” (Martínez, 2022).

As both this author and the ERI point out in their work, the concatenation of causes for which systematised information is not obtained and the consequences resulting from it form a vicious circle that prevents the implementation of viable and long-term knowledge generation processes, so it is very difficult to identify and make visible the added political value of this type of actions, all of which results in the different institutions lacking incentives to commit politically to TC, providing resources and financing.

²³ This research has analysed the databases of the SEGIB, SIDICSS; United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG) good practice repositories and other related platforms; articles on the three phases of the Urb-AI programmes of the European Union; publications on the trilateral cooperation of the German cooperation, and the proposed methodology of the Barcelona Provincial Council to evaluate the international action of local governments (Martínez, 2022, p. 58).

In addition, the lack of a complete information system on Triangular Cooperation makes it extremely difficult for new actors to become aware of this modality and be able to get involved in it in different roles. Thus, the research focused on SSC and Triangular Cooperation and indigenous peoples reveals the specific difficulties in determining which TC projects are related to them and what role they play, due to the non-existence of specific information fields to identify them.

The aforementioned research concludes that either there are no lines of action or initiatives for or with indigenous peoples or these projects are invisible, being “subsumed in other themes or categories, as very often happens with vulnerable or poor populations” (Zúñiga, 2022).

Analysis of the available information systems

The *Research on the databases and information quality of South-South and Triangular Cooperation* was carried out within the framework of the EU-SEGIB project. The objective of this study is to help facilitate the future building of a planned information system capable of collecting the different initiatives of Triangular Cooperation in which the countries of Latin America and the Caribbean participate together with the European Union and its Member States.

This study analysed various multinational and national information frameworks, focusing on variables such as:

- Specific aspects of TC (form of identification of TC, identification and classification of roles, cross-checking of information between partners, compatibility of record fields, redundancies, etc.).
- Information management cycle (trigger for the recording or reporting process, phases of the cycle, form of interaction between administrators and the system and reporting actors, visualisation tool, form of quality control, etc.).
- System governance model (methodological decision-making process, governance formality, link between information systems, etc.).
- Linking of the statistical framework or information system with the strategy (record of qualitative information, linking with knowledge and learning management processes or institutional improvement, limitations to reflect the information of interest of TC, degree of use of the information or relevance of the system to monitor initiatives or programmes, challenges in sending/exchanging information to feed multilateral information systems, etc.).

The research carried out an exhaustive analysis of the different international frameworks that include Triangular Cooperation data and its distinguishing features (Table 8):

TABLE 8: International information frameworks with Triangular Cooperation data

OECD Creditor Reporting System (CRS)
<p>Its key objective is to record the financial flows from the member countries of the Development Assistance Committee (DAC) of the OECD to developing countries that are part of the list of recipients of Official Development Assistance. This type of measurement reflects the interest of traditional donor countries in having data that makes it possible to verify and compare “the effort made in public finances to support the development of other countries” measured in terms of the percentage of Gross Domestic Product allocated to ODA based on “internationally suggested goals”. In general, it corresponds to a cooperation model which has traditionally functioned in geopolitical terms “as a foreign policy and international development tool that has been used to confirm global influence and presence, build partnerships, ensure diplomatic and commercial channels or ties, international security and global sustainability processes among many other nuances” (Vega, 2022). https://stats.oecd.org/Index.aspx?DataSetCode=crs1</p>

Total Official Support for Sustainable Development (TOSSD), whose secretariat is at the OECD

This framework is greatly focused on financial flows, but provides more complete data on alternative resources mobilised in “official interventions in support of sustainable development and the SDGs”; it includes the ODA itself, other official flows, SSC, TC, expenditure on global public goods and private resources as measurement components. <https://www.tossd.org/>

TC projects repository, hosted by the OECD

It is a database with only ten fields. Its simplicity could, in principle, facilitate a higher number of records and thus allow a broader look at the “triangular partnerships in which countries of different levels of development participate”, instead of exploring each of the contributions. Its structure is closer “to the recording formats of the countries of the South” and its unit of measurement is the project instead of the disbursement (Vega, 2022). It facilitates the identification of the partner countries, the title of the initiative, sector, budget range, project period, start date and if the project costs are shared. <https://www.oecd.org/dac/dac-global-relations/triangular-co-operation-repository.htm>

Methodology, reports, Platform and Integrated Data System of Latin America on South-South and Triangular Cooperation (SIDICSS)

Its objective is “to report SSC and TC exchanges in the region from the characteristics of the initiatives and the relations between the member countries”. The purpose of this framework is “to understand between which countries cooperation exchanges are taking place in the region, in what areas, the nature of these exchanges and what these initiatives involve”, beyond the financial obligation (which is also part of the data set). From the point of view of the roles of the participants, a valuable aspect of the Ibero-American space is “the combination of actors considered donors or net providers and developing countries, which have had different roles in SSC and TC” (Vega, 2022). <https://www.sidicss.org/sidicss/>

Working Group on Measurement of Development Support of the Inter-Agency and Expert Group on SDG Indicators (IAEG-SDG)

This Working Group represents a proposal for a conceptual framework that includes the financial and non-financial contributions of the countries of the South (both those susceptible to monetisation and others that will be measured in non-monetary units, such as work hours, individuals, etc.). This proposal aims to contribute to the monitoring of indicator 17.3.1. “Foreign direct investment, official development assistance and South-South cooperation in proportion to the total national budget”.²⁴ The United Nations will safeguard this new indicator through its Statistics Division and the Conference on Trade and Development, “while cooperating countries from the South will perform voluntary pilot tests”. <https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/iaeg-sdgs/>

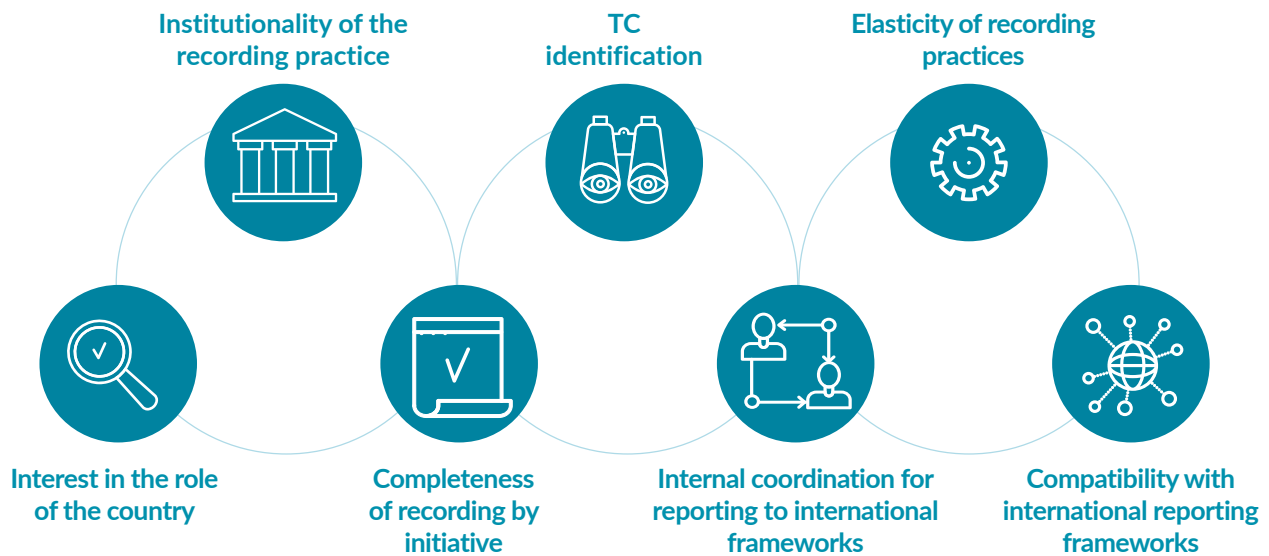
National recording practices

These practices were analysed based on the existing data both in the SEGIB and in the OECD, taking into account the most active countries in TC in the bi-regional sphere: ²⁵ Germany, Brazil, Chile, Spain, Mexico, Peru and the European Union itself. Firstly, it should be noted that national recording practices are highly influenced by the international frameworks outlined above, in particular by the CRS. Secondly, the research detects characteristics shared between the different types of actors and others specific to two separate groups of countries: on the one hand, the countries called “facilitators” and, in particular, those that are members of the OECD DAC; on the other, the countries of the South, whether they are first suppliers, pivot countries or beneficiaries (Vega, 2022).

²⁴ According to the resolution approved by the General Assembly on 6 July 2017: 71/313. Work of the Statistical Commission pertaining to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, including the annex Global indicator framework for the Sustainable Development Goals and targets of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. https://ggim.un.org/documents/A_Res_71_313_s.pdf

²⁵ Although the research is focused on TC with LAC countries and the EU, in line with the spirit of learning, Norway and Japan were identified as particularly active extra-regional actors in TC initiatives, for which both were consulted, although only Norway responded to the invitation for a semi-structured interview for the research referred to here.

The following dimensions have been analysed in each of these frameworks:



The analysis of these dimensions makes it possible to draw a map of the current situation in different countries participating in TC initiatives and projects and, therefore, to propose some recommendations (see chapter 4) in order to improve national information systems, aligning them with international systems and, finally, propose a series of ideas for the building –if applicable– of an EU-LAC bi-regional TC information system.

A. Institutionalality of the recording practice.

According to the results of the study commissioned by SEGIB, the facilitating countries have recording practices more established over time, aligned with the OECD guidelines and have at least two types of information systems that are “clearly identified and robust”: one related to the follow-up of the financial implementation and one for the management of development cooperation. The first offers reliable data on ODA disbursements, but it lacks details regarding the discussion of the policy and management of international development cooperation (to the point that it may even lack data on the recipient). The second has the handicap that it does not always work “for the entire ecosystem of institutions that participate in the implementation of ODA”, since it can leave out ministries or sectoral institutions; when this happens, “templates with records to be updated are sent to report to the OECD”.

For their part, the information systems of the countries of the South are more recent and less indebted of the CRS model. Since many of them were net ODA recipients until recently, they are in a position to “perform monitoring and accountability tasks”. In any case, in them data are also separated between different information systems.

Upper-middle income countries, which have a longer history as cooperation providers, have developed numerous attempts and proposals for information systems or databases. Far from constituting a completely homogeneous block, there are differences between some countries and others, such as the existence or not of mechanisms to feed a specific national information system for cooperation, whether legal or otherwise. Thus, Mexico is an example of a country with specific legislation that establishes the obligation to report to the Mexican Agency for International Development Cooperation (AMEXCID), which has allowed “feedback cycles for the improvement of recording tools and directives”. By contrast, Brazil has four information systems and the final aggregation of data is carried out by a research organisation other than the institution that coordinates the cooperation and that “receives the monetisation calculations”.

The research commissioned by the SEGIB to investigate the information systems on TC, indicates

that “countries of the South rely on legal pillars and collegiate bodies where all the institutions that participate in one way or another in SSC and TC exchanges are represented. There are functional spaces that facilitate feedback and communication processes between sectors and national cooperation agencies or institutions, such is the case of the AMEXCID Advisory Board. Meanwhile, in Brazil a proposal for an Inter-Ministerial Committee on Measurement of International Cooperation has been generated to coordinate the integration of information on the cooperation that Brazil offers”.

Some conclusions can be drawn from the analysis of the national information systems:

- Methodological discussions on the creation of information systems and visualisation tools do not necessarily result in the generation of formal guidelines.
- Information systems by themselves do not generate systematic and efficient processes and conceptual frameworks that are constantly updated to ensure that information is collected rigorously.
- Some countries that are beginning to play the role of providers –the research commissioned by SEGIB cites the specific case of the Dominican Republic– could be interested in recovering the systems or processes they used to monitor cooperation when they were net recipients of traditional donors.

It is interesting to observe how this finding is related to the encapsulation of TC at technical levels, which is one of the main challenges for this modality to deliver its potential

- Although the process to define the methodology of the SSC and TC Report in Ibero-America has allowed, to a certain extent, standardisation at the regional level of the information systems of the new provider countries, it cannot be considered a minimum common framework because not all countries have the information or internal processes necessary to provide the required information. In addition, according to the study, “it is not the only guidance for the design of recording frameworks and the monitoring of cooperation initiatives” (Vega, 2022).

B. TC identification

Either in databases or in information systems, the countries of the South have contemplated fields to identify the modality of the cooperation project (bilateral, regional or triangular). The reason seems to be their experience in various development cooperation processes, which do not fit into the bilateral framework, which explains their interest in showing the variety, nature and role played by project partners and their contributions, as well as the legal and programme frameworks that support such initiatives, among other aspects.

Meanwhile, the facilitating countries do not include a way to identify the modality in the information management system; this information is usually kept by those responsible for the geographical unit, from whom it is requested for the annual ODA report. According to the research commissioned by SEGIB, “in general, TC programme managers or those responsible for the country’s participation in TC discussions have generated alternative tools for recording and monitoring details relevant to TC initiatives, particularly for knowledge exchange processes between practitioners of this modality of cooperation”. It is interesting to observe how this finding is related to the encapsulation of TC at technical levels, which is one of the main challenges for this modality to deliver its potential.

As proof of the multiplier effect that the initiatives of organisations, countries and multilateral spaces can have, as a result of the decision to identify Triangular Cooperation in the CRS and the holding of the Second United Nations High-Level Conference on South-South Cooperation (BAPA+40), Germany decided to “generate an unequivocal TC identifier and apply it in German development cooperation” (DEval, 2020). This is a binary marker (yes or no) to identify TC projects

or initiatives.²⁶ The German experience revealed, in addition to the challenge of modifying the information system to include a new marker, the difficulty of identifying as TC the exchanges in which the partnership involves non-governmental actors, which has to do with the need to move forward in a shared conceptualisation of TC, already mentioned in the previous section. This experience is also related to the next dimension.

C. Elasticity of recording practices

As revealed by the research referred to here, the information systems or methodology that have been operating for a long time —as is the case with traditional ODA donor countries, for example as mentioned with Germany—, there is less flexibility to make changes and these must come from political decisions which, in turn, have more possibilities of materialising when they start from the work of multilateral spaces, such as the aforementioned BAPA+40, the Working Party on Development Finance Statistics (WP-STAT) of the OECD-DAC or the meetings of those responsible for Cooperation in the Ibero-American space.

D. Interest in the role of the country

The analysis of the information systems observes “a direct link between the motivations, the policies, the metrics and the monitoring systems and the way of recording the information”. This would explain why traditional ODA donor countries measure their contribution to the economic and social development of another country in terms of financial disbursement. And also, why the information systems of countries of the South are built to recover the multiple roles they can have and their effort to collaborate despite the fact that their resources “are extremely limited and their purposes are not equivalent to the geopolitical purposes of the main traditional donor members of the DAC”. This political motivation results —according to the study— in investment in human, financial, time and institutional capacity resources, in processes and adjustment of practices to recover “data useful for the political purpose”.

26 For a project to be identified as TC, at least one of the following statements must be true, reflecting different degrees of contribution to TC:

- If the project itself implements or supports TrC preparation.
- If the project prepares partners through capacity building for TrC by strengthening partner country systems and agencies.
- If the project promotes transnational South-South exchange by facilitating learning platforms and information exchange, policy dialogue on TrC. (Vega, 2022).

The countries of the South in particular those from Latin America that are the object of this study, are interested in showing that they are not only recipients of ODA

Ultimately, the countries of the South and in particular the Latin American ones that are the subject of this work, are interested in demonstrating that they are not only recipients of ODA, but that they can also contribute to sustainable development by providing “seriousness as a partner, influence and regional or sub-regional leadership and capacity to influence multilateral processes”.

To show the direct relationship of this political interest with the principles of Triangular Cooperation as a complementary modality in the international development cooperation system, the study states that: “This interest arises from a long-standing struggle to recognise the versatility of the countries of the South, the wealth of capacities that exist among developing countries, the relevance of knowledge-based contributions and the differences that exist in the way of interacting with other developing countries in terms, for example, of solidarity, horizontality, relevance and ownership, among other aspects of the exchanges (although even among the countries of the South, based on the evidence, there are also examples of subordination, imposition and being motivated by their own benefit). Additionally, this struggle has been vigorous in seeking complementarity, not competition or subordination with ODA” (Vega, 2022).

E. Completeness of recording by initiative

The research lists several factors that explain why the TC data is incomplete:

- Limited access by countries of the South to data on annual effective disbursements made by donor countries.
- Degree of centralisation or decentralisation and frequency of information recording.

- Lack of systematic information on non-financial contributions or monetary equivalences of “poorly traceable” non-financial contributions.²⁷
- Lack of fields enabled to record results or effects of the initiative (as already indicated above, “records generally remain at the input and design level”).

F. Internal coordination for reporting to international frameworks

The existence of several multilateral frameworks that collect information on TC generates a certain dispersion and lack of consistency in the data provided to each other. This is because the countries have different representatives in different international spaces, because the political decision to provide information varies or may vary depending on the identity assumed by the cooperating country, and because of the overload involved in reporting to various frameworks.

The consequence is the difficulty in monitoring the evolution of TC, even within the same country, which “limits internal learning and feedback to international frameworks” (Vega, 2022).

G. Compatibility with international reporting frameworks

Each country decides on the data structure, fields of interest, etc. based on their own interests (complying with, for example, internal obligations on transparency and accountability). Hence the great diversity and limited homogeneity of the resulting data:

- Different sectoral or thematic classifications.
- Incompatibility in the data structure.
- Different information recording and disaggregation levels.
- Disparity in the degree of accuracy of the contributions (in terms of the specific disbursements from which a country benefits, for example).
- Different terminology to name the collaboration or financial frameworks that are established in TC projects.

²⁷ The research indicates that this traceability problem worsened as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.

- Invisibility of TC initiatives that are recorded as multilateral due to a data structure “focused on the disbursement instead of the initiative” (which occurs, for example, when certain international organisations manage funds from a country which, for legal reasons or otherwise, cannot be implemented directly and that appear reflected as voluntary donations when, technically, they could be classified as TC).

The research findings on information systems summarised here are a snapshot of their current state. As can be seen from this work, the reality of triangular experiences has led to certain adaptations to allow the recording of contributions other than financial transactions and, in a certain way, the cross-checking of data between different actors.

However, it can be stated that, in general, –with the exception of the SEGIB framework, which places the project at the centre– a “fundamental dissonance” persists, an input approach that does not correspond to the essence of TC, which is “the partnership created between the actors that allows the integration of different kinds of resources –financial, experience and technical capabilities– for the benefit of another country” (Vega, 2022).

Another characteristic is the relevance of the countries as sources of information and that would be framed in the state-centrism that some authors point out as a challenge for TC to deliver its full potential. With an added peculiarity, which generates a bias that must be taken into account in the available information: today, much of the data comes both from entities which, like the OECD, bring together traditional donor countries, as well as from these countries.

As can be seen, the analysis of information systems has made it possible to identify structural decisions and particular views of the different actors that determine the systematisation process in each of the frameworks analysed. The coincidences, divergences, potentialities and areas for improvement that have emerged as a result of this analysis and that have been set out in this section are intended to “stimulate the international conversation” with regard to the possible implementation of an information system of interregional TC.

As a continuation of this analysis, Chapter 4 brings together a series of recommendations based on these findings.

2

Challenges and potential of Triangular Cooperation

Despite its long and intense journey, the debates on Triangular Cooperation will foreseeably continue for the next few years. This is revealed by the research carried out within the framework of the EU-SEGIB project, which agrees on the need to explore its conceptualisation, methodologies, evaluation, its relationship with other forms of cooperation (North-South, South-South, Decentralised), the enabling of new public and private actors and their performance in different roles, etc.

In light of what has been stated so far, the multiple challenges that hinder a more determined political commitment to promote TC in the International Development Cooperation System and, in particular, to reinforce the bi-regional partnership between the European Union and the Ibero-American region are evident.

It is equally evident that TC is a matter of interest throughout the world and, especially, in the Ibero-American region and also in terms of relations between the EU and Latin America and the Caribbean. The UE-SEGIB project also arises from

this interest, which has made it possible, through extensive analysis and debate,²⁸ to organise the reflection to propose ideas and tools that contribute to the following objectives: a) realise the potential of TC to continue making progress in achieving the 2030 Agenda, strengthening the relationship between the EU and Latin America and the Caribbean, and doing this by promoting the relevance of the Ibero-American region; b) reduce the gap between normative and empirical concepts that affects both the TC and development agendas, and c) recognise and confront the challenges that TC faces.

The work of generating knowledge developed during the first phase of the EU-SEGIB project,

²⁸ As indicated in the introduction to this document, along with the publications reviewed on 10 March 2022, the workshop “Innovative Triangular Cooperation for a new development agenda” took place, in which members of the European Commission, the Adelante Programme, SEGIB and experts in cooperation participating in the research carried out for this project participated.

which culminates with this text as a summary, and which will continue in a second phase already underway, has the purpose of explaining through research and dialogue what these challenges are, analyse their scope and propose actions. With this, we would be closer to meeting the first two objectives.

But what are those challenges of Triangular Cooperation? Below are some of those identified as a result of the analytical work of this project, which affect TC both globally and in the area of EU-LAC relations:

- Lack of a consensual, shared and clear definition of TC and, in line with this, of a narrative that offers solid arguments for political decision-making. All this makes it difficult to communicate the nature and achievements of the TC.
- Lack of political prioritisation.
- Lack of a common information system that offers verifiable data and allows monitoring and subsequent evaluation of triangular actions, which makes it difficult to verify and show their impact.
- The predominance of traditional cooperation modalities (bilateral and multilateral) with vertical, hierarchical operational approaches and logics.
- *State-centrism*: TC initiatives correspond mainly to Governments.²⁹
- Instrumental nature of the modality of bilateral South-South Cooperation (as mere “support or escalation”).³⁰
- High concentration of the roles of first and second provider in a few countries, which results in an excessive dependence on the leadership of the

29 66% of the TC projects recorded between 2012 and 2019 were carried out by Governments, while only 20% were initiated by international organisations and only the remaining 14% were jointly provided by non-state actors (Malacalza, 2022 p. 40).

30 According to the recorded data, most of the TC initiatives involve 2 Middle Income Countries (MICs) together with a traditional donor (42%); in 22% there is a developed country, a MIC and a low-income country (a relationship therefore equivalent to that of traditional North-South cooperation). There are TC initiatives that are carried out between three developing countries for which there is no information due to the deficiencies of the recording systems; this does not conceal the clear predominance of the bilateral cooperation framework itself (Malacalza, 2022, p. 40).

Middle and High Income Countries of the Ibero-American region as well as on the financing of donor countries outside the region, apart from Spain and Portugal.

- Excessive sectoral concentration.
- The encapsulation of TC at technical levels, “without a clear location in institutional structures, with an uncertain mandate and with a small human team” (ERI, 2022).
- The need to improve organisational, human or material capacities.
- An underdeveloped institutionality (in legislative and organic terms)
- High transaction costs, a perception that research carried out by the ERI suggests could be wrong (many of the people interviewed agreed that TC transaction costs are high at first, but tend to decrease over time and with experience, so it would be more appropriate to talk about investment than cost or expense, and it is even suggested to consider it as a result of development).
- Perception of lack of alignment of the TC with the aid effectiveness agenda. This challenge is mentioned once again as a perception, because according to the research carried out, a high degree of alignment is appreciated thanks to the fact that TC facilitates ownership and promotes the shared assumption of development responsibilities. However, there is also a wide margin for improvement in this area.

TC is a matter of global interest, especially in the Ibero-American region and also in terms of relations between the EU and Latin America and the Caribbean



- The limited experience of the TC to promote political dialogue at the bi-regional level (according to the study carried out by the ERI, this potential of the TC is more identifiable up to now in bilateral contexts).
- The small scale of TC projects limits their impact on development and their transformative capacity.
- At a European level, the research of the ERI also points to the heterogeneity of visions and processes among Member States.

Having set out the main challenges, it is time to address the undoubted potential offered by Triangular Cooperation to strengthen the bi-regional partnership between the European Union and Latin America and the Caribbean; the EU-SEGIB project has identified two key areas in which it is considered necessary to focus on reflection and systematisation to seek common political guidelines: its relevance to contribute to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals of the 2030 Agenda and its suitability to articulate new spaces for political dialogue.

2.1. Relevance for the achievement of the 2030 Agenda

As already indicated, the linking of Triangular Cooperation with the 2030 Agenda and its Sustainable Development Goals is manifested in its express recognition by the text of the Agenda as a means of implementation. However, the mechanisms through which this formal declaration can be translated into concrete results in terms of the contribution of the TC to the achievement of the 2030 Agenda has yet to be better understood.

As proof of the link between the two, it is worth remembering here the definition of TC offered by the OECD (which appears in full in section 1.2 of this document) and which specifically identifies as its objective “achieving the Sustainable Development Goals”.

Certain authors identify several factors that contribute to the potential adaptation of Triangular Cooperation to the 2030 Agenda:

- Simultaneous strategic vocations of the countries involved, with the partnership as a valuable objective in itself.
- Adequate identification of the added value provided by each partner.
- Precise definition of roles and decision-making processes.

- Establishment of flexible learning and common work processes.
- Predominance of a medium-term vision that goes beyond a single project (Alonso and Santander, 2021, cited in Malacalza, 2022).

This author identifies the potential which, in his opinion, the adaptation of the TC to the 2030 Agenda offers and also the risks that non-adaptation entails (Table 9):

TABLE 9: Potentialities and risks of adaptation of TC to the 2030 Agenda

Potentialities of adaptation to the 2030 Agenda	Risks of non-adaptation to the 2030 Agenda
▲ It offers, in a scenario of budgetary restrictions, handy and effective solutions at a reasonable cost.	▼ It is not always capable of breaking the hierarchical and unilateral structures typical of ODA in favour of a more horizontal and cooperative action between partners.
▲ It promotes the exchange of experiences and capacities among developing countries, also strengthening their capacities, ownership and confidence.	▼ Doubts are raised about the leadership of a TC intervention, given the presence of several decision-makers and the high probability of overlapping and lack of clarity of roles.
▲ It makes it possible to strengthen the dual character, as recipients and, at the same time, potential providers of cooperation of the MIC.	▼ It may mean an increase in transaction costs resulting from the negotiation and agreement processes between the partners involved.
▲ It acts as a great promoter of partnerships between countries, between cooperation actors and in the combination of instruments that it promotes.	▼ The involvement of the first provider may merely be instrumental for the second provider.
▲ It is detached from the concept of income and graduation: it places emphasis on the exchange of experiences and the search for shared solutions.	▼ The receiving partner does not always lead the process, which makes ownership of the development difficult.
▲ The participation of different actors, from different countries, in the identification of a project, in its formulation, implementation and follow-up generates a relationship of mutual trust and knowledge of the other's perceptions and approaches.	▼ Given the asymmetries of power between countries, the second provider can impose its leadership role as the main provider of resources, thus reproducing the deficiencies of the more traditional North-South cooperation.
▲ It uses a traditional donor to provide precisely what is most scarce (financial and technical resources) in the poorest countries, making interventions on the required scale possible.	▼ The first provider can try to consolidate its regional power or use the resources of the second provider to maintain hierarchical relations with the receiving partner.
▲ It encourages interaction and exchanges of learning and innovation (co-creation) in all directions, in accordance with the increasingly shared and complex nature of development challenges.	▼ A supply-induced cooperation could be favoured, damaging the principle of ownership and the demand-oriented approach.
▲ It establishes bonds of trust and collaboration between countries, generating partnerships that can last beyond the timeframe of a specific intervention.	▼ It can generate an increase in the levels of fragmentation of development cooperation, since the world of TC actors tends to be large and disparate.
▲ It provides greater proximity in the conditions and experiences of the partners.	▼ It can help reproduce traditional donor formulas and one size fits all development narratives, which are not viable in developing countries.
▲ It is more adapted to multidimensional approaches of development and is therefore better prepared to successfully fulfil SDG 17 and the current 2030 Agenda.	▼ The response to COVID-19 may be rooted in the interests of the donors rather than the needs of the recipients.

Source: *South-South and Triangular Cooperation and the Sustainable Development Agenda in Ibero-America: Critical nodes and horizons in the response to COVID-19* (p. 57).

In the report on the DSSTC ecosystem, the contribution of TC to the 2030 Agenda is considered conditional on the TC principles, starting with horizontality, permeating IDCS as a whole. “The 2030 Agenda and the SDGs represent both a challenge and a horizon for the transformation of the international cooperation system. A challenge to its foundations based on ODA, to its donor-recipient logic and to the consideration of income as a measure of national development. And, at the same time, a horizon of transformation based on multiple partnerships, on the horizontal logic of partnership and on multidimensional measures, which incorporate environmental, social and governance development indicators. For several analysts, the 2030 Agenda is already an expression of certain recognition of the change in the conceptualisation of development and in the way of addressing it from an international cooperation perspective” (Martínez, 2022 p. 28-29).

The report on TC and SDGs makes similar pronouncements, pointing out the existence of a gap between the narrative of the 2030 Agenda and the practice of the IDCS, a gap that affects Triangular Cooperation too: “From the regulatory point of view, there is an increasingly present narrative in international forums that presents TC as transformative. From this perspective, TC is consistent with the 2030 Agenda, as it promotes the gender perspective, environmental protection and the fight against climate change in production and consumption patterns, digitisation and multi-stakeholder partnerships. However, from the empirical point of view, it is noted that TC still maintains asymmetric logic, respect for hierarchies, verticality and high transaction costs. At the same time, there is a disconnect between the international development cooperation system that is actually in force and the narrative and principles promoted by the 2030 Agenda. It is essential to close that gap” (Malacalza, 2022).

In the opinion of this author, TC practices at a global level are characterised by a marked state-centrism, for being instrumental to bilateral SSC, dependent on the leadership of Middle Income Countries and highly concentrated geographically and sectorally, all of which implies “that there is still a long way to go in adapting practices to the 2030 Agenda” (ibid.). Further proof of this, as this author also points out, is the high concentration of TC contributions to the SDGs in SSTC practices in Ibero-America in SDG 13 (Climate Action) and SDG 16 (Peace, justice and strong institutions) (ibid.).

However, the idea prevails that “TC is the modality with the greatest potential to generate innovation mechanisms from the North to the South, from the South to the South and from the South to the North”, for which some innovative mechanisms of the SSTC are listed that could enhance the fulfilment of the Sustainable Development Goals in Ibero-America (which are addressed in greater detail in section 4.4, which contains the recommendations to improve the impact on development and its transformative capacity):

- Combined interventions of development cooperation and cooperation in science and technology.
- Digital transformation of TC (and, in general, digitisation of development cooperation).
- Cross-cutting initiatives to reduce social inequalities based on the consideration of digitisation as a public good that helps fulfil the objective of leaving no one behind.
- Strengthening of the gender perspective, taking advantage of the knowledge and experiences generated; to achieve this, by way of example, the principles set forth by the German Society for International Cooperation (GIZ) are cited to incorporate the gender perspective into all cooperation and the experiences of the EU in various cooperation projects.
- Provision of digital global public goods, essential to promote “governance of multiple levels, actors and sectors (SDG 17)”, in line with the recognition of Internet access as a basic human right, for the purposes of [Digital Public Goods Alliance](#) of the United Nations and the EU strategy “[Shaping Europe’s digital future](#)”.
- Territorialisation of the 2030 Agenda, thus acknowledging that in order to comply with this Agenda, multi-stakeholder and multi-level work is imperative, which means involving “different sectors of society anchored in a territory” (ibid.).

At the European Union level, the ERI report indicates that the link between Triangular Cooperation and the 2030 Agenda is reflected in the *New European Consensus on Development* of 2017, “whose principles arise from the 2030 Agenda and the idea of working with everyone. TC is considered, in the EU, as a “complementary modality to other forms of cooperation, and is structured through



Hugo Kruij, Unsplash

a series of ad hoc incorporations into other development projects, the call for proposals for triangular projects and the delegation in MS (ERI, 2022).

The commitment to the 2030 Agenda is also reflected in the objectives of the TC stated by the EU and a part of its Member States, previously developed (see section 1.4.), among which is cited “the dialogue for the 2030 Agenda” (Malacalza, 2022).

The construction of an innovative model of EU-Latin America Triangular Cooperation aligned with the 2030 Agenda depends on recognising the crucial importance of local actors and territorial approaches

Triangular Cooperation and *glocal* governance

The 2030 Agenda has meant profound changes in the very conception of development and, consequently, its intervention policies, banishing old patterns such as the traditional North-South dynamics, the separation between domestic and international policies, changing priorities and establishing a “cross-sectoral and mainstreaming mandate”. It is in this scenario that the role of Triangular Cooperation (understood in a broad sense, also as SSTC and DSSTC within the IDCS) is being analysed as a possible transformation vector to advance sustainable development goals, conceived as a way to improve the lives of all people, those who inhabit the planet at this time and those who will do so in the future.

The building of an innovative model of EU-Latin America Triangular Cooperation aligned with the 2030 Agenda requires recognition of the crucial importance of local actors and territorial approaches, in line with the new development paradigm demanded by the Agenda, which requires in turn a “profound renewal of international cooperation” (Martínez, 2022). It is in this regard that the DSSTC ecosystem in Latin America must be understood as one of the proposals launched within the framework of the EU-SEGIB project.

“It is often rightly stated that the main problems to initiate the transformations established by the SDGs and the 2030 Agenda will be governance-related issues: both the global governance of common and transnational problems, as well as their territorial correlation in which tensions are expressed and contradictions and difficulties crystallised in different ways. The 2030 Agenda has explicitly stated that its goals can only be achieved with the cooperation and participation of all actors in a series of change processes that effectively integrate the issue of sustainability. These two pillars of transformation, sustainability and the links between global dynamics and their expressions in the territory, require new forms of governance that simultaneously and coherently address the multidimensional key review of our visions and progress projects, on the one hand, and at the same time generate and reinforce the mechanisms of *glocal* governance³¹ to redirect the articulation between dynamics and transnational pressures and territorial responses, on the other” (ibid.).

Given that the issue of development is inextricably linked to global urbanisation, in this DSSTC ecosystem it is contemplated that large and medium-sized cities will become prominent actors in international cooperation.

Such prestigious institutions as the United Nations Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) agree in pointing out the importance of coordinating global-local governance spaces to address compliance with the Sustainable Development Goals in Latin America and redoubling efforts in the form of larger policy interventions to meet the SDGs and overcome structural problems that the pandemic has made even more evident. ECLAC warns that the region is the “most unequal, the most urbanised, the one that supports the greatest violence and the one in which the post-COVID-19 economy will fall the most”. This organisation therefore understands that “the strength to guide the recovery will be in the awareness of the need for a green, sustainable and resilient systemic change, from the local to the global perspective and from the global to the local perspective [...] The planetary crisis should be an opportunity to *reset* international cooperation and

³¹ *Glocal* governance is understood as any articulation attempt that addresses the management and governance of development problems from a dual global and local perspective (Martínez, 2022, p. 24).

redirect its horizons towards models of cities that are less unequal and concentrated, healthier and more sustainable”. (CEPAL, 2021, cited by Malacalza, 2022).

The study on the DSSTC ecosystem proposes starting from the defining elements of Decentralised Cooperation practices in relation to the 2030 Agenda: multilevel articulation of competencies and responsibilities, exploration of forms of co-government and building of mechanisms and spaces for global governance. The objective is to go beyond the recognition of their role in the *localisation* processes of the SDGs so that they can display the responsibility and prominence that correspond to them in the achievement of the SDGs, as proposed by some leading specialists and institutions in the scope of action of local governments such as UCLG (Martínez, 2022).

Accepting the territorial nature with which inequalities and the rest of the problems addressed by the 2030 Agenda materialise involves promoting the key role of local governments, not only to manage the territorial impacts that directly affect them, but also to participate in governance of the transnational dynamics that cause them (ibid.).

In the area of DC, as this author points out, how to incorporate the principles of the 2030 Agenda in cooperation policies beyond the merely declaratory is being reviewed. For this, it is necessary to rethink the foundations and practices “as they were conceived in the traditional framework of cooperation to redirect them towards a multidimensional vision of development framed in an integrated perspective of

Accepting the territorial nature with which inequalities materialise and the rest of the issues addressed by the 2030 Agenda means promoting the fundamental role of local governments

domestic and international aspects (multilevel in a global key, ultimately)” (ibid.).

But how can this integration be achieved and what role can cooperation, particularly Triangular Cooperation, play in this task? In addition to proposing the usefulness of applying the Policy Coherence for Sustainable Development (PCSD) approach, in the opinion of this author, “it is time to undertake a review and redefinition of the scope of the DC that does not consider as incompatible or autonomous the SDG localisation processes and local cooperation policies. Quite the opposite, the differential potential that the DC has been building over the years should be seen as a progressive approximation to what reality now imposes: cooperative and sectorally and territorially integrated collective action based on a plural and horizontal consideration of power relations between countries and institutions that face shared, albeit different, challenges. It is precisely this differential potential that TC can explore at the heart of its proposals, with the objective of integrating the actors into this renewed framework of collective action, rather than with the purpose of adding actors to rigid relationships” (ibid.).

Agenda 2030, strategic horizon for indigenous peoples

The *South-South and Triangular Cooperation and Indigenous Peoples* study proposes to optimise the potential of South-South and Triangular Cooperation by incorporating the social purposes of indigenous peoples and the Sustainable Development Goals of the 2030 Agenda, supporting its famous mandate to “leave no one behind”, not as recipients of policies but, above all, as main actors in them.

The 2030 Agenda is in fact one of three foundational pillars³² of “the current agenda of issues of interest to indigenous peoples [...] that can be addressed through the exchange of capacities, knowledge, resources and practices in the framework of SSC and Triangular initiatives for, with, of and/or between indigenous peoples” (Zúñiga, 2022).

The 2030 Agenda and its Sustainable Development Goals serve as a strategic horizon for the aspirations

³² The other two are *Good Living* as a philosophy and meaning and the recognition, protection and exercise of the rights of indigenous peoples as a strategy and as a means for its achievement (Zúñiga, 2022, p. 60).

The differential potential that DC has been building over the years should be seen as a progressive approach to what reality now imposes: cooperative and sectorally and territorially integrated collective action

of indigenous peoples: “around which global efforts are organised and articulated to achieve a world that can grow sustainably and without forgetting anyone, incorporating indigenous peoples based on the uniqueness of their needs and problems, but also on the role they can play as possessors of cultures, world views, knowledge and practices whose potential to contribute to the achievement of the Agenda, the SDGs and their respective targets is widely recognised today. For this reason, the SSC and Triangular strategy and instruments that are designed should include initiatives to facilitate the institutional spaces and conditions so that the SDGs are implemented with the broad participation of indigenous peoples and their own development perspectives and priorities are included” (ibid.).

Banishing the traditional pigeon-holing of indigenous peoples as vulnerable groups, this report highlights that the enormous diversity of the more than 58 million people who are part of more than 800 indigenous communities challenges on the one hand, “public policy and cooperation processes and strains the efforts to build agreements and commitments to address issues of common interest, represented today in the 2030 Agenda for sustainable development”, but, at the same time, “it entails a tremendous opportunity for SSC and Triangular Cooperation, in the form of a varied and vast reservoir of capacities, knowledge, experiences, world views, cultures and resources that can be put at the service of regional and global challenges” (Zúñiga, 2022).



This author considers that, among the objectives of a possible SSC and Triangular Cooperation for, with and between indigenous peoples, it must “contemplate initiatives to facilitate the necessary spaces and institutional conditions so that, through dialogue and the building of agreements and commitments between the parties, the proposals for the implementation of the SDGs are made with the broad participation of indigenous peoples and their own perspectives and development priorities are relevantly included” (ibid.).

To achieve this, the report proposes the inclusion in the United Nations Cooperation Frameworks for Sustainable Development, as the main instrument for planning and carrying out actions for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda at the national level, of issues of interest to indigenous peoples in the planning and carrying out of activities, as well as the coordination of capacities and resources on the design and implementation of DSSTC initiatives related to issues of interest to indigenous peoples and the incorporation of actors and institutions representative of indigenous peoples in the processes of preparing or adapting these Frameworks.

To conclude this section, the commitment and degree of compliance with the road map proposed by the 2030 Agenda in relation to the TC should be looked at in the current context, particularly in terms of the

region’s electoral political landscape. It is important to remember that, between 2021 and 2024, there will be a busy electoral cycle “in which all countries, except Bolivia and Cuba, will renew or re-elect presidents, in a context of high political polarisation and fragmentation, economic uncertainty and a heavy social legacy as a result of the economic crisis caused by the pandemic” (ERI, 2021,³³ cited in Cánepa, 2022).

In the opinion of this author, “the intense political movement that each country will experience will in turn have an impact on the internal institutionality and of course on the institutionality involved in development cooperation. Even so, there seems to be a certain consensus at the regional level regarding the achievement of the 2030 Agenda, an agenda that will add interests and promote cooperation with other regions. In this regard, the promotion of multilateralism, interdependence and cooperation is a necessary condition to promote and strengthen South-South Cooperation and Triangular Cooperation” (Cánepa, 2022, p. 3).

33 Malamud, C. and Núñez, R. *Una América Latina fragmentada y polarizada afronta un intenso ciclo electoral (2021-2024)* [A fragmented and polarised Latin America faces a heavy electoral calendar (2021-2024)]. <https://www.realinstitutoelcano.org/analisis/una-america-latina-fragmentada-y-polarizada-afronta-un-intenso-ciclo-electoral-2021-2024/>

2.2. Articulation of new public dialogue spaces

There is a broad consensus on the potential of Triangular Cooperation to create “spaces for dialogue to share development responsibilities and achieve joint innovative solutions”. This seems to be confirmed by the fact that the government and civil society sector is the one that dedicates more TC actions (between 24 and 30%, depending on the source consulted) and that in 66% of the projects worldwide, according to GPI data, the supplier partner is a Government (ERI, 2022).

However, a gap is also perceived between theory and practice, and as the ERI points out: “the experience accumulated to date makes [this potential] more identifiable in bilateral rather than bi-regional contexts” (ibid.).

Among the most innovative approaches to Triangular Cooperation that are proposed in the research carried out within the framework of the EU-SEGIB project is that of the DSSTC ecosystem in particular, which is committed to understanding TC as one of the attempts of the international cooperation system to adapt to the current complexity and the pressures to which it is subjected: “If the first TC initiatives were envisioned as a way for traditional donors to socialise and reinforce emerging SSC by providers from the South, this perspective has evolved and now looks beyond cost sharing, focusing on the generation of political dialogue that would include the exploration of transformations in the system” (Martínez, 2022).

This author relates the evolution of SSTC with that of SSC and DC and its potential to generate new spaces for political dialogue. Both SSC and DC, he points out, have in common that “they are responses to the international cooperation system in some of its main foundations” and that both “demand new distributions of power, which is why they place more emphasis on the form of relationship than on the content of relationships. In this regard, studies are already appearing that explore the evolution of SSTC from a modality of cooperation towards a partnership that enables a political space” (ibid.).

Along the same lines, although based on the consideration of TC as a modality, the OECD DAC proposes to integrate it “more broadly, promoting its mainstreaming and encouraging the options of including triangular components in bilateral cooperation frameworks” (ibid.).

These theoretical disquisitions on whether TC is a modality or a cross-cutting and transformative element of the International Development Cooperation System —which have a lot to do with the challenges of TC in terms of conceptualisation, information systematisation and evaluation—, evidence the need to generate new spaces for political dialogue and multi-stakeholder and multi-level co-government, a need expressed by the 2030 Agenda (ibid.).

In this vein, this report echoes the evaluation performed by the German Cooperation Agency of the almost two hundred triangular initiatives carried out between 2006 and 2019. This evaluation distinguishes two dimensions in SSTC relations: political-strategic and programmatic-thematic that suggest interesting modifications in the usual spaces for political dialogue in the field of international cooperation. Although limited to the relationship between States, this evaluation points out the potential of SSTC “to renew the political relationship between countries and strengthen the role of providers of the countries of the South”, while involving a “challenge for traditional donors who have to place themselves in a different role to the one they have usually played”.

For its part, the ERI report also concludes that “TC presents a new form of partnership between countries (Alonso and Santander, 2021), through which the participants —particularly donors— maintain or forge new relations of trust —rather than competition— with certain countries that they are interested in having as partners for geostrategic reasons, especially as traditional North-South relations evolve (Piefer, 2014; Alonso et al., 2011). TC can help create a space for political dialogue and negotiation in which the narratives of traditional donors meet and harmonise

There is a broad consensus on the potential of Triangular Cooperation to create “spaces for dialogue to share development responsibilities and achieve joint innovative solutions”

with those of the countries of the Global South and vice versa (Zoccal, 2021; BMZ, 2022). In addition, TC promotes the sharing of development responsibilities with countries of the South (Zoccal, 2020a) and fosters regional cooperation (Alonso et al., 2011)”.

Returning to the evaluation of German cooperation, it points to another great challenge in the type of political-strategic relationship proposed by SSC (and which, it goes without saying, would be applicable to TC or SSTC too): that “it includes objectives that refer to political areas other than those of cooperation that also make up the international scene, which constitutes an incentive to overcome the excessive compartmentalisation of public policies, a constant theme in the organisation of governments”, in addition to a clear convergence with the cross-sectoral and mainstreaming mandate arising from the 2030 Agenda (Martínez, 2022). All of this suggests a potential influence of SSTC in enabling new spaces for political dialogue on development in the countries, not only in the foreign action of governments, but also in its internal organisation and its coordination with different levels of government.

Similar views are expressed in the 2016 regional report for Latin America and the Caribbean of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), published shortly after the approval of the 2030 Agenda. The UNDP echoes the need for a new governance and, “focusing part of its analysis on the problem of inequalities which it is going through and, in a certain way, characterises the panorama of the region, warning that the expression of inequalities in LAC requires something more than adopting SDG 10 and its targets. It appeals to a new policy architecture clearly focused on a multidimensional aspect and therefore strengthens the cross-sectoral work of these policies, while underlining the need to generate responses among different levels of government” (ibid.):

“Multidimensional problems require multidimensional solutions. A new policy architecture needs to be developed that goes beyond sectoral focus, that articulates territorial strategies –among different levels of government–, that builds policies that cover the different stages of the life cycle of people and that encourage greater citizen participation” (UNDP 2016, p. 132 et seq., cited by Martínez 2022 p. 25).

Triangular Cooperation is conceived as one of the innovations contributed to the International Development Cooperation System in order to meet the new challenges and opportunities in Latin America and the Caribbean

EU-LAC bi-regional political dialogue

Within the framework of the EU-SEGIB project, Triangular Cooperation is conceived as one of the innovations contributed to the international development cooperation system in order to meet the new challenges and opportunities in Latin America and the Caribbean and, in particular, to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals of the 2030 Agenda. This contribution is based on the dialogue on TC that the European Union and its Member States and LAC have maintained for years.

The different publications produced as part of the first phase of the EU-SEGIB project report on this fruitful dialogue. Hence, the report *South-South and Triangular Cooperation and the Sustainable Development Agenda in Ibero-America: Critical nodes and horizons in the response to COVID-19*, includes on its pages a compendium of the “documents on Triangular Cooperation resulting from the Latin American euro space” from 2009 to 2020, a compilation that shows the European Commission’s interest in establishing a dialogue with Latin America “on issues of strengthening TC” (Malacalza, 2022, p. 32-33).

This interest arises from the conception of the TC as “a modality of cooperation that can help build bridges between the EU and Ibero-America, either by opening spaces for plural, inclusive and balanced partnerships, or by enabling a debate on the necessary transformation of the development cooperation towards a more horizontal, inclusive and supportive one” (ibid.).

In the opinion of its author, “the bridge between the effectiveness agenda and TC” has been “one of

the main driving factors of the Euro-Latin American space for dialogue on development cooperation” (ibid.). In any case, beyond technical or purely methodological considerations on TC, it seems that the political will of all the actors involved will determine whether this modality can act as an innovative tool, able to open space to horizontal, multisectoral and multilevel networks or, if instead, it reproduces and contributes to establishing vertical or welfare relationships (for example, if the first provider acts as a mere subcontractor of the second provider and the interests of the latter prevail).

Likewise, it should be remembered that several European countries have participated in this regional dialogue at a bilateral level. “The cases of Germany, Spain, France, the Netherlands, Sweden, Italy and Luxembourg (to which Norway should be added, as a non-EU country, as one of the most active in TC) are expressly cited in the report.

The study carried out by the ERI confirms that, among the representatives of the cooperation of the European Union and the Member States, one of the strengths of TC is clearly identified as “its ability to create new partnerships between actors, which, potentially, can lead to stronger political dialogue between traditional donors and other cooperation partners”, particularly in relation to the Latin American and Caribbean region (ERI, 2022).

The reason for this potential, as the study concludes, is because the TC is perceived by many of the partners of the South “as a natural extension of the SSC, being a modality of cooperation that they feel as their own and aligned with the nature of their external insertion”, this makes it easier “for them to engage in a deeper political dialogue than with other modalities of cooperation, which they perceive as more alien” (ibid.).

According to the survey of EU donors, the advantages of the political dialogue potential offered by TC would be:

- Allow the EU to enter the Global South conversation.
- TC may be one of the few or the only communication channel of the EU and/or some of its MS with certain countries.
- Simultaneous political dialogue in various fields facilitates greater policy coherence for development.

- TC is able to circumvent the rigidities of the dialogue between institutionally predefined blocks, facilitating a kind of variable geometry in TC, in which different blocks can be configured for different TC initiatives (ibid.).

Although a priori the people surveyed in the framework of this study “identify more clearly the potential of TC for bilateral dialogue” (between an EU donor and any of the partners, whether first provider or recipient) and although “some form of bi-regional dialogue” is also considered possible, in practice there is still little experience of this type of multilateral initiatives in the modality of TC; other difficulties in establishing dialogue at the bi-regional level in TC actions could have to do with “the difficulties in dialogue between bordering countries in some Latin American sub-regions or, according to another expert, with the limitations of dialogue between blocks” (ibid.).

Regarding areas of public policy in which it is perceived that TC can promote or strengthen political dialogue, the social sphere stands out first, followed by the environmental and political spheres. Significantly, the authors of the study observe “a notable difference with the dialogue on economic policies”, which could be more related “to the sectoral specialisation of TC than a kind of intrinsic limitation to the dialogue on economic policies through this form of international development cooperation. And what is true is that, in general, political dialogue in the economic sphere takes place, both in LAC and in the Global South as a whole, within the framework of financial cooperation and with international financial institutions” (ibid.).

Beyond technical or purely methodological considerations on TC, it seems that the political will of all the actors involved will determine whether this modality can act as an innovative tool

3

EU-LAC Triangular Cooperation: possible sources of innovation for the International Development Cooperation System

Triangular Cooperation contributes or has the potential to contribute three major sources of innovation to the International Development Cooperation System:

- Who: multiple and diverse new actors with flexible roles.
- What: themes and sectors for which TC can be an optimal modality.
- How: specific instruments.

The research carried out within the framework of the EU-SEGIB project has detected interest to better understand and develop the potential of TC between the EU and its Member States with LAC to achieve a wide variety of cooperation objectives by diversifying their sectoral priorities, broadening their scope —still very limited— and increasing the number of partners and projects.

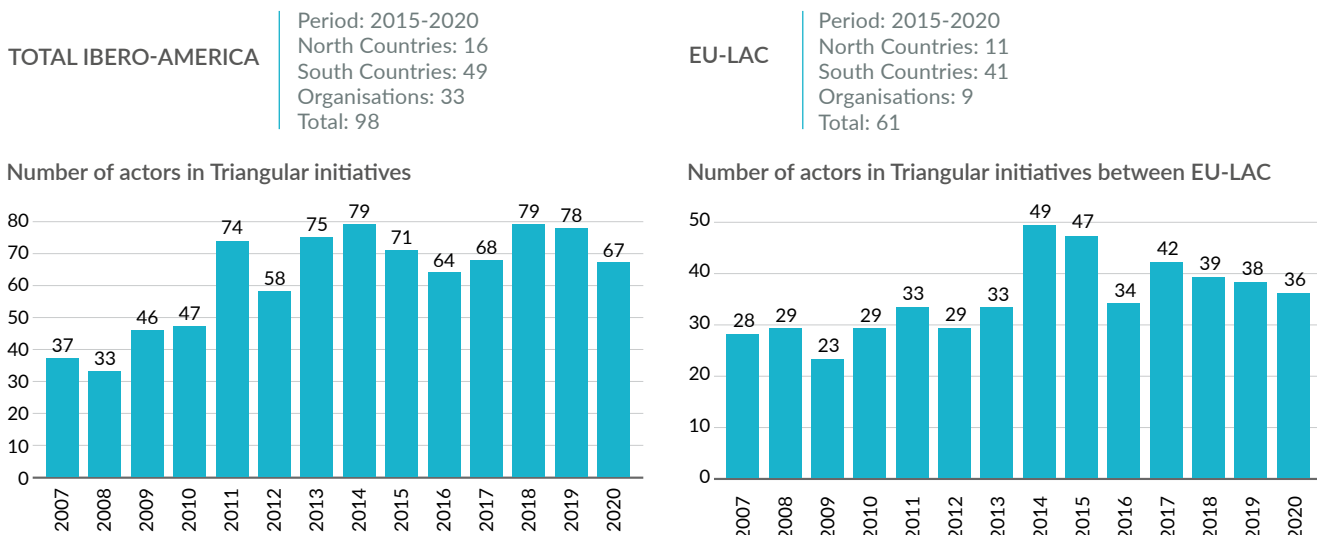
Between 2015 and 2020, a large number of actors, almost 100, carried out triangular initiatives in the Ibero-American region. Of these, almost half are actors from the EU and its member countries

3.1. Map of actors of the EU-LAC Triangular Cooperation

Between 2015 and 2020, a large number of actors, almost 100, carried out triangular initiatives in the Ibero-American region. Of these, almost half are actors from the EU and its member countries. The predominant actors are the States, particularly in the case of the EU-LAC TC, which could be due both to the inertia of the traditional forms of cooperation and to the lack of detailed information on actions carried out by sub-national governments and other actors considered until recently as “minors” of the international cooperation system.

During that same period, and according to the analysis of the SIDICSS data (Integrated Ibero-American Data System on South-South and Triangular Cooperation), a total of 170 TC initiatives contained information on the participating institutions. The main actors were national governments and cooperation agencies. They were followed by civil society, local governments and universities (which are important actors in terms of knowledge management) and, to a lesser extent, international organisations and the private sector.

FIGURE 6. Actors participating in Triangular Cooperation in Latin America and between the EU/LAC. Participation of an increasing number of actors



Source: SEGIB based on Agencies and Directorates-General for Cooperation.

There is consensus on the need to make progress in a shared measurement of TC between the EU and LAC to obtain information from actors other than national governments³⁴ overcoming *state-centrism* and taking advantage of synergies both from multiple levels of government and from other types of social actors. This would allow a homogeneous accounting of topics or sectors. In any case, the research carried out agrees that there is room to expand the type and number of

actors, thus obeying the letter and spirit expressed in the 2030 Agenda, specifically in SDG 17: Partnerships for the Goals.³⁵

Among the international organisations that participate in TC in Ibero-America, the document, *Analysis and quantitative and qualitative characterisation of the operations (institutionality and instruments) of Triangular Cooperation*, highlights the following:

TABLE 10: International organisations that participate in Triangular Cooperation in Ibero-America

United Nations international organisations	Other international organisations
■ World Bank	■ Inter-American Development Bank (IDB)
■ Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO)	■ Organization of Ibero-American States (OEI)
■ International Labor Organization (ILO)	■ Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture (IICA)
■ World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO)	■ Central American Secretariat for Economic Integration (SIECA)
■ Pan American Health Organization (PAHO)	■ International Monetary Fund (IMF)
■ World Food Programme (WFP)	■ European Union
■ United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)	■ Development Bank of Latin America (CAF)
■ United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP)	■ Central American Bank for Economic Integration (CABEI)
■ United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA)	■ Inter-American Center of Tax Administrations (CIAT)
■ United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF)	■ Southern Common Market (Mercosur)
■ International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD)	
■ International Organization for Migration (IOM)	

Source: *Quantitative and qualitative analysis and characterisation of the operations (institutionality and instruments) of Triangular Cooperation* (Ortiz de Taranco, 2022, p. 6).

34 Given that up to now national governments are the ones responsible for recording and facilitating the data of TC actors and that the recording of actors other than the national governments themselves is optional, there are actors for whom there is no information (sub-national governments, international agencies, NGOs, etc.). The existence of invisible actors makes it impossible to draw a real, complete map of participants in TC. Making them visible in the concept itself and in the recording is therefore a pending task.

35 Sustainable Development Goal 17 expressly proposes "Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the Global Partnership for Sustainable Development" in the following terms: "It requires different sectors and actors working together in an

integrated manner by pooling financial resources, knowledge and expertise. In our new development era with 17 intertwined Sustainable Development Goals and 169 associated targets as a blue-print for achieving the sustainable future we want, cross-sectoral and innovative multi-stakeholder partnerships will play a crucial role for getting us to where we need by the year 2030. [...] Goal 17 further seeks to encourage and promote effective public, public-private and civil society partnerships, building on the experience and resourcing strategies of partnerships". Source: <https://sdgs.un.org/es/goals/goal17>



Lesly Derksen, Unsplash

As described in Chapter 1, the current context is marked by the intersection of extremely serious problems: climate change, inequality and concentration of wealth and power, massive migration, financialisation of the economy, lack of effective mechanisms against tax evasion and avoidance, overflow of natural cycles and ecosystems, pandemics, rise of authoritarianism, etc.

Faced with the transnational and interdependent nature of these problems, we confront the paradox of a weakened multilateral system, which “has not been able to consolidate solutions based on the foundations and usual practices of the international cooperation system” and is also threatened by “some nationalist excesses that seek to question its validity” (Martínez, 2022).

There is a consensus which, in order to strengthen multilateralism and international cooperation so that they can adequately address the systemic crisis, it is necessary to promote new relationship models in line with the principles of Triangular Cooperation: multiple partnerships, horizontal partnership logics, etc. TC would therefore be an opportunity to integrate new actors that were not part of the traditional cooperation and donor-recipient framework that has characterised ODA management for decades.

“The emergence of new actors in the system, particularly the so-called ‘new donors’ —large emerging countries, philanthropy from private sector giants, transnational networks of civil society organisations, and a renewed dynamism of sub-national governments— do not find their place in a system still too rigidly anchored in the conception of ODA on which it was founded and deployed for decades” (ibid.).

To increase the number and diversity of actors that participate in Triangular Cooperation beyond the categories identified so far by the Ibero-American Integrated Data System on South-South and Triangular Cooperation (SIDICSS)³⁶, the research set within this project suggests some actors, particularly —although not only— sub-national governments, especially medium and large cities (Martínez, 2022) and indigenous peoples (Zúñiga, 2022), as detailed in Table 11.

³⁶ National governments, cooperation agencies, civil society, local governments, universities, international organisations and the private sector.

In the case of indigenous peoples, the study conducted on SSTC in relation to them indicates that since the 1980s “they have been very dynamic in the creation of broad networks and coalitions to act jointly and increase their advocacy capacity in national and international spheres”. The multiplicity of national, regional, sub-regional organisations

and thematic networks have also woven “a dense network of cooperation relations with various types of international organisations, and influenced issues that are part of the global agenda such as climate change, the Amazon Basin and the health crisis triggered by the COVID-19 pandemic and its consequences” (Zúñiga, 2022).

TABLA 11: Propuesta de nuevos actores de la Cooperación Triangular UE-ALC

	<p>Sub-national governments</p>	<p>This category means the different levels of Government between the State and the municipality and local levels, particularly medium and large cities, due to the weight of urbanization in global dynamics in demographic, ecological, economic, social and political terms.</p>
	<p>Networks of local actors</p>	<p>E.g. FLACMA or the Association of Dutch municipalities working in cooperation.</p>
	<p>Indigenous peoples</p>	<p>Indigenous peoples, communities and populations must be recognised as actors in SSTC initiatives for indigenous peoples; with indigenous peoples; of general interest and indigenous impact, and with indigenous implication, with the corresponding representation in each case.</p>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ International organisations (FILAC). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Supranational, regional and/or subregional indigenous organisations of LAC: Coordinator of Indigenous Organizations of the Amazon Basin (COICA), Central American Indigenous Council (CICA), Andean Coordinator of Indigenous Organizations (CAOI).
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Specific organisations of indigenous women: Continental Network of Indigenous Women (ECMIA), Indigenous Women Network on Biodiversity from Latin America and the Caribbean (RMIB-LAC). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Specific indigenous youth organisations: Network of Indigenous Youth of Latin America; Global Indigenous Youth Caucus (GIYC).
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Other articulation and advocacy platforms: Indigenous Peoples Major Group, Abya Yala Indigenous Forum. 	
	<p>Transnational thematic networks</p>	<p>E.g. the Global Environment Facility.</p>
	<p>Transnational networks of social/civil society organisations</p>	<p>To incorporate their vision on transnational issues, existing interdependencies and shared responsibilities.</p>
	<p>Volunteer organisations</p>	

	<p>Development banks E.g. The Development Bank of Latin America (CAF), which has been the leading financing bank in the pandemic, and the Islamic Development Bank, which finances a study on TC, beyond the bi-regional reality.</p>
	<p>Philanthropic organisations The case of Peru, the country that receives the most funds from this type of organisations in the world, illustrates the importance of these actors.</p>
	<p>Unions and social movements E.g. The Landless Movement of Brazil carries out cooperation projects in Africa.</p>
	<p>Civil society sectoral organisations E.g. representatives of the LGTBI population, older adults and other groups affected by various inequalities.</p>
	<p>Academia Universities, research centres, etc.</p>
	<p>Private companies Actors involved in production and consumption dynamics directly related to the development model.</p>

3.2. Triangular Cooperation as a differential approach to interconnected themes/sectors

According to the data of the Ibero-American General Secretariat of the Triangular Cooperation projects registered in the whole of Ibero-America between 2007 and 2020 –although with certain yearly variations–, the main sectors were agriculture and fishing and the environment. Other important issues were the strengthening of public institutions and policies, “other services and social policies” and legal, judicial and Human Rights development (the latter is the one with the fewest projects accumulated during the entire period).

Regarding TC between the EU and Latin America and the Caribbean, the sectors targeted for projects were:

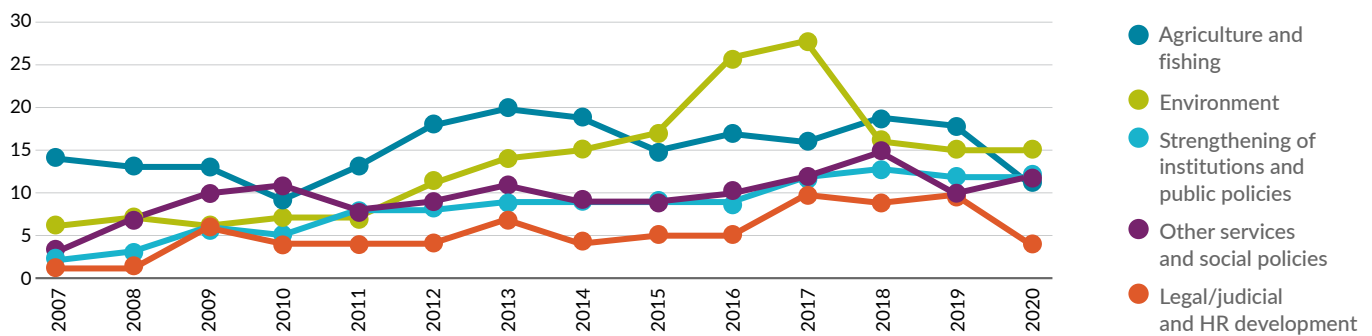
environment, strengthening of institutions and public policies, agriculture and fishing, other services and social policies, and energy (the latter does not appear as a prominent issue throughout Ibero-America).

Of the Triangular Cooperation projects registered in the whole of Ibero-America between 2007 and 2020 –although with certain yearly variations–, the main sectors were agriculture and fishing and the environment

FIGURE 7: TC themes in Ibero-America, and specifically between EU/LAC

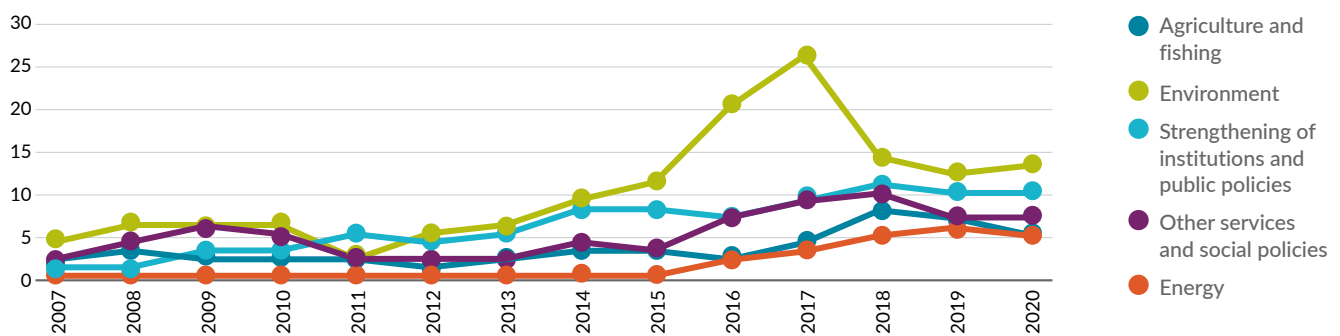
TOTAL IBERO-AMERICA

Evolution of 5 main sectors in Triangular projects*. 2007-2020



EU-LAC

Evolution of 5 main sectors in Triangular projects EU-LAC*. 2007-2020



*The first 5 sectors of the year 2019 were taken to show the evolution

Source: SEGIB based on Agencies and Directorates-General for Cooperation.

The change experienced in sectoral priority can be seen as a noteworthy trend: “from issues promoted by Northern donors” to “an agenda more akin to bilateral SSC”. This explains why, from the leading role of institutions and public policies between 2007 and 2008, there is a more prominent number of actions on the environment (especially on emergency assistance, disaster management and risk assessment and monitoring systems), the agricultural and fishing sector and other social and health policies since 2012 (Malacalza, 2022).

The focus on the environment reveals a perception, more pronounced in TC than in other forms of cooperation such as SSC, that we are facing a shared problem. Following this same logic, it will be interesting to analyse the systematisation of information in the coming years, after the

pandemic, to see whether health becomes an attractive topic for TC as a matter of planetary significance and that reveals interdependencies.

The study conducted by the ERI is based on the OECD’s TC projects repository to identify which sectors are the subject of TC initiatives by the EU and its Member States. The authors conclude that the most active countries in TC do not primarily focus on certain sectors (Table 12).

The most favoured sector in triangular actions is governance and civil society, which brings together most of the triangular projects in the Netherlands, Portugal, Sweden, Germany, Austria and Spain. Other significant sectors are agriculture and food security; social infrastructure and services and environmental protection; energy; education, and support for the productive fabric (RIE, 2022).

TABLE 12. Main sectors of Triangular Cooperation by country according to the OECD Triangular Cooperation repository

	Governance and civil society	Environment	Agriculture and health safety	Social infrastructure and services	Energy	Education	Support to the productive fabric	Health	Disaster risk management	Forestry	Fishing
Germany	■	■		■			■				
Austria	■	■			■					■	
Belgium	■			■			■				
EC	■		■	■			■		■		
Spain	■	■	■			■		■			
Hungary		■	■				■				
Italy	■	■	■	■	■	■		■			
Luxembourg*								■			
Netherlands	■		■		■			■		■	
Portugal	■		■	■							■
Sweden	■			■		■			■		

Source: ERI (2022) based on OECD data. * The TC data for Luxembourg are incomplete in the OECD repository.

From this distribution the authors of the study deduce two different visions of CT as a tool. While, in some cases, it seems to be significantly associated with one or several sectors (Portugal, Sweden, Austria, Belgium and Hungary concentrate their triangular experiences in no more than two or three thematic areas), in other cases it is perceived as a modality in broader terms and not necessarily targeting a small number of sectors. Italy and Spain are the sample donors that cover a wider range of thematic areas in their triangular action (ibid.).

Based on the reality of TC so far in terms of its sectoral approach, the research carried out as part of the EU-SEGIB project shows the need to make progress in several key sectors:

The report *South-South and Triangular cooperation and the Sustainable Development Agenda in Ibero-America: Critical nodes and horizons in the response to the COVID-19* proposes a thematic agenda integrated into a series of “innovative mechanisms, multipliers of effects and amplifiers of intersecting agendas in compliance with the SDGs” (Malacalza,

2022), conceived as a way of adapting SSTC to the transition between development agendas.

Although reference will be made to the innovative mechanisms identified in the report in chapter 4 on Recommendations, which refer to both the sectors in which intervention is carried out and the modalities of intervention, the themes covered in these innovative SSTC mechanisms to achieve the SDGs in the new context generated by COVID-19 and the global crisis in Latin America are specifically listed below:

- **Science and technology, digitisation and provision of digital global public goods.** TC actions in this area should help strengthen the region's capacities for its application in key sectors for the achievement of development objectives: health, education, productive sector, etc.

In the internal workshop held at the beginning of 2022 as part of the dialogue and analysis actions of the EU-SEGIB project, the need was expressly cited to undertake TC projects on the so-called "general purpose" technologies: biotechnology, nanotechnology and Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs), which make a difference due to their multiplier effect. These themes involve agendas (since sophisticated and inaccessible knowledge is shared) and various actors (scientists, entrepreneurs, etc.) with a different negotiation logic.

The report Notes for an Ibero-American ecosystem of Decentralised South-South and Triangular Cooperation proposes in its pages the construction of an ecosystem that requires capacity-building

Digital transformation, built around the concept of "open social innovation" is understood as "a process compatible with the principles of TC, since it contributes to the co-creation of alternative solutions and enables the commitment of multiple actors (SDG 17)" (Malacalza, 2022).

Addressing this type of issue in TC actions can help not only reduce the digital divide and guarantee access to basic services (social, health, educational, etc.), but also promote other essential objectives, such as economic development and environmental sustainability (ibid.).

In addition, TC can help raise awareness, through "minilateral or multilateral" dialogue on the role of global digital public goods to tackle the challenges of globalisation; among them are digitisation and the development of a connectivity infrastructure, two goods that are considered essential to reduce inequalities in Ibero-America, contribute to the recovery from COVID-19 and to promote "a new social contract that promotes governance of multiple levels, actors and sectors (SDG 17)" (ibid.).

- **Strengthening of the gender perspective.** TC can contribute to gender mainstreaming in all policies. The author relies on the description of the European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE) with this meaning: the "(re)organisation, improvement, development and evaluation of policy processes, so that the gender quality perspective is incorporated into all policies, at all levels and at all stages, by the actors normally involved in policy formulation" (EIGE, 2012, cited in ibid. p. 53).
- **Territorialisation of the 2030 Agenda.** This matter is further expanded on below, included in the item "Multilevel Governance" developed in another of the reports produced within the framework of the EU-SEGIB project.

The report *Notes for an Ibero-American ecosystem of Decentralised South-South and Triangular Cooperation* proposes in its pages the building of an ecosystem that requires the development of capacities so that horizontality, understood as a theoretical principle or aspiration, becomes reflected in a series of dynamics and processes of political dialogue adapted to the reality of the different actors and territories involved. It is described below under the generic heading "Multilevel Governance".

- **Multilevel governance:** developing multilevel governance spaces must be the subject matter and content of Triangular Cooperation, since it is a type of governance yet to be built, different from what is known as multilateralism or decentralisation processes. It implies co-responsibility and co-government and demands coordination of powers, but above all shared visions and political programmes that focus on shared problems (responsibilities) instead of on powers. This requires coordination of powers, but above all shared visions and political programmes. Achieving public policies and that cooperation institutionally strengthens multilevel governance spaces is the content of cooperation; it is not a means of implementation.³⁷ This cooperation content would be centred on the four convergent principles or values that the author points out as key elements for the Ibero-American ecosystem of DSSTC:

- **Horizontality** in the relationship between the ecosystem actors and between other participants in the cooperation actions that base their action on other principles, understood as a process-based dynamic.

- **Translation into public policies** to respond to “the needs to strengthen the capacities of public administrations to undertake and consolidate the guarantees and obligations to meet the demands and resolve the vulnerabilities of citizens” (Martínez, 2022, p. 51).

- **Territorial and regional approach**, understood as an “openness to the plurality of diagnoses, priorities and visions regarding the solutions to be implemented and to which cooperation relations are intended to contribute” (ibid. page 51). In the aforementioned workshop, the author also referred to this dimension as the “bioterritorial perspective” of multiple actors with different roots in the territories, a wealth of knowledge

³⁷ Reflections shared by Pablo José Martínez Osés, author of the report on the DSSTC ecosystem at the internal workshop held on 10 March 2022 as part of the actions planned in the EU-SEGIB project. Diego Cánepa, author of another of the reports of the EU-SEGIB project, took the same view when he affirmed that “development cooperation in general, and south-south and triangular cooperation in particular, requires technical and political skills to generate certain regional consensus in the multilateral sphere, as well as sound technical skills maintained over time to implement these initiatives and a defined cooperation instrument” (Cánepa, 2022, p. 10).

Development cooperation in general, and South-South and Triangular Cooperation in particular, requires technical and political capacities to generate certain regional consensus in the multilateral sphere

that would facilitate understanding of how global dynamics are related to the phenomena they cause in the territories.

Finally, as part of the specific research on SSTC and indigenous peoples, the report outlines the series of issues that specifically affect indigenous peoples. From these arise not only possible optimal themes or sectors to carry out Triangular Cooperation actions, but also to refocus the set of cooperation policies incorporating the perspective of indigenous peoples and communities as prominent actors in the Ibero-American region.

Therefore, the issues/sectors stated as optimal to carry out TC actions are (Zúñiga, 2022):

- **COVID-19 pandemic and management of its impacts** on indigenous peoples. These impacts have been both negative (impact on health, economic activity, food security and the relaxation of safeguards regarding industrial and extractive activities on their lands and territories), and positive (isolation and care protocols based on traditional practices, cooperative efforts to support highly disadvantaged communities, such as the Amazon Emergency Fund).

- **Environment, climate emergency and protection of biodiversity** to preserve the twofold link of indigenous peoples with ecosystems: their subsistence depends on the conservation of their habitat and their traditional way of life is linked to the territory and its diversity, both in economic and symbolic and spiritual terms. Therefore, this fundamental thematic focus for the entire planet must consider the special impact of the climate crisis on indigenous peoples, since it compromises both their livelihood and their culture. SSC and TC initiatives are proposed for or with indigenous

peoples, promoting the exchange of capacities, knowledge and practices in relation to:³⁸

- Strengthening the collective rights of indigenous peoples to land.
- Compensation to indigenous and tribal communities for the environmental services they provide.
- Facilitation of community forestry management.
- Revitalisation of traditional cultures and knowledge.
- Strengthening territorial governance and indigenous and tribal organisations.
- Extractive activities, large-scale projects and threats to indigenous lands and territories, as well as legal and extrajudicial persecution of leaders and activists.
- Indigenous women and the fight for their rights, based on the review of the proposals made by indigenous organisations, government representatives before FILAC and the recommendations for the design of policies and the implementation of actions contained in the regional report *Rights of indigenous women 25 years after the Beijing declaration* (FILAC-ORDPI and UN Women, 2020, cited in Zúñiga, 2022).
- Young indigenous people, very active in local, national and international spheres through the creation of extensive work networks.
- Knowledge, wisdoms and cultural heritage of indigenous peoples, which includes their sciences, technologies and cultures, including human and genetic resources, seeds, medicines, knowledge about the properties of fauna and flora, oral traditions, literature, traditional designs, sports and games, and visual and performing arts.
- Recognition, protection and promotion of indigenous languages in:
 - Education, through inclusive and equitable learning environments.
 - Justice and public services.
 - In relation to climate change and biodiversity.
 - In the digital sphere, promoting digital empowerment, language technology and indigenous media.
 - Health, social cohesion and humanitarian response.
 - Safeguarding cultural and linguistic heritage.
 - Equal employment opportunities for speakers of indigenous languages.
 - At the service of gender equality and empowerment of women.
- Education, to ensure the capacity and adaptation of the educational system to the goal of facilitating the survival and reproduction of indigenous cultures and languages (intercultural bilingual education, etc.); indigenous peoples' capacity to influence the education they receive; access to all levels of formal education; education to prevent discrimination and promote diversity, and recognition of the social, cultural, religious and spiritual values and practices of indigenous peoples and their institutions.
- Health: promotion, protection, fostering and recognition of indigenous medicine practices and institutions and, at the same time, guarantee of access to services and benefits of the public health system.
- Justice: activities with a twofold dimension are also considered here, firstly, for the recognition, revitalisation and application of customary law and the proper forms of administration of justice, together with the recognition of indigenous jurisdiction in certain matters; secondly, to guarantee access to justice and the pertinent, timely and effective administration of justice, with measures to protect human rights, particularly among indigenous defenders of human rights and the environment.

³⁸ These initiatives are based on the measures, investments and policies proposed in the Joint Report of FAO and FILAC *Forest governance by indigenous and tribal peoples. An opportunity for climate action in Latin America and the Caribbean*. Cited in Zúñiga, 2022, page 62.

3.3. Institutional and specific instruments of Triangular Cooperation

The analysis of the experiences of SSC and Triangular Cooperation in terms of the EU-LAC bi-regional relationship shows that the building of an institutional framework, with specific instruments and clear operating rules, is a key aspect to promote effective cooperation and enable spaces for fruitful dialogue.

The *Quantitative and Qualitative Analysis and Characterisation of the operations of Triangular Cooperation (institutionality and instruments)* report indicates that “institutional strength is extremely important for the implementation of TC initiatives” and associates the degree of strength with the existence and participation of agencies of cooperation, whose participation throughout the implementation cycle “is relevant in three ways: a) due to its intervention throughout the initiative management cycle to ensure that the established mechanisms and guiding principles of this modality are respected; b) because they have professional technical teams in cooperation to provide guarantees

of the above and, c) because they often manage their own budgets and make financial contributions” (Ortiz de Taranco, 2022, p. 27).

This document exposes how the “particularities” of TC (participation of three or more actors) make it necessary to generate specific regulatory frameworks that go beyond what is provided for in Bilateral Scientific and Technical Cooperation Agreements, whose content can be very varied: “in the vast majority of cases, these are documents with a political emphasis, where the most important thing is to highlight the willingness to enter into partnership to carry out TC. There are also documents which, in addition to expressing the political will, introduce technical aspects that determine how the TC operates or how it is managed” (ibid.).

The three main types of existing frameworks are “Funds, Programmes and Memorandums/Cooperation Agreements” (ibid.), which are associated with the TC initiatives recorded in the SIDICSS as shown in Table 13. As can be seen, most of the initiatives (61%) are supported by cooperation programmes. Funds and agreements are the other prominent categories.

TABLE 13: Distribution of Ibero-America TC initiatives according to the regulatory frameworks

Regulatory frameworks	Initiatives
Fund between Spain, Portugal or Andorra and an LA partner	36
Cooperation Programme between Spain, Portugal or Andorra and an LA partner	35
Cooperation Memorandum/Agreement between Spain, Portugal or Andorra and an LA partner	74
Fund between a non-Ibero-American partner (country or international organisation) and an LA partner	50
Cooperation Programme between a non-Ibero-American partner (country or international organisation) and an LA partner	446
Cooperation Memorandum/Agreement between a non-Ibero-American partner (country or international organisation) and an LA partner	122
Fund between two LA partners	21
Others (specify)	173
Cooperation programme between two LA partners	14
Cooperation Memorandum/Agreement between two LA partners	3
Fund of a country or international organisation	83
Cooperation programme of a country or international organisation	124
It is not covered by any framework	87
It is unknown	87

Source: *Quantitative and qualitative analysis and characterisation of the operations (institutionality and instruments) of Triangular Cooperation* (Ortiz de Taranco, 2022, p. 6).

Based on its extensive experience within the scope of South-South and Triangular Cooperation in Ibero-America, the Ibero-American General Secretariat has recognised and committed to “the joint construction of instruments that are politically relevant and technically effective to coordinate our cooperation regionally” (SEGIB, 2019).

Thus, some of the instruments which have contributed the most to date to the development of TC have been promoted from the institutional framework of the SEGIB. This is the case of the Ibero-American Programme for Strengthening South-South Cooperation (PIFCSS), the Ibero-American Integrated Data System on SSC and TC (SIDICSS) and the application of the Ibero-American methodology to guide and highlight the potential alignment of SSC and TC with the SDGs (SEGIB, 2020).

Both the SSTC annual reports and the joint SEGIB-European Union project of which these pages are a part should be interpreted in this way, as part of the joint construction effort of conceptual frameworks, methodologies, systems, exchange of experiences, etc. to coordinate an ecosystem of Triangular Cooperation that strengthens both regional cohesion and the EU-LAC bi-regional relationship, enabling new spaces for political dialogue.

As the research carried out within the framework of the EU-SEGIB project shows, in the case of TC, the creation of specific instruments is even

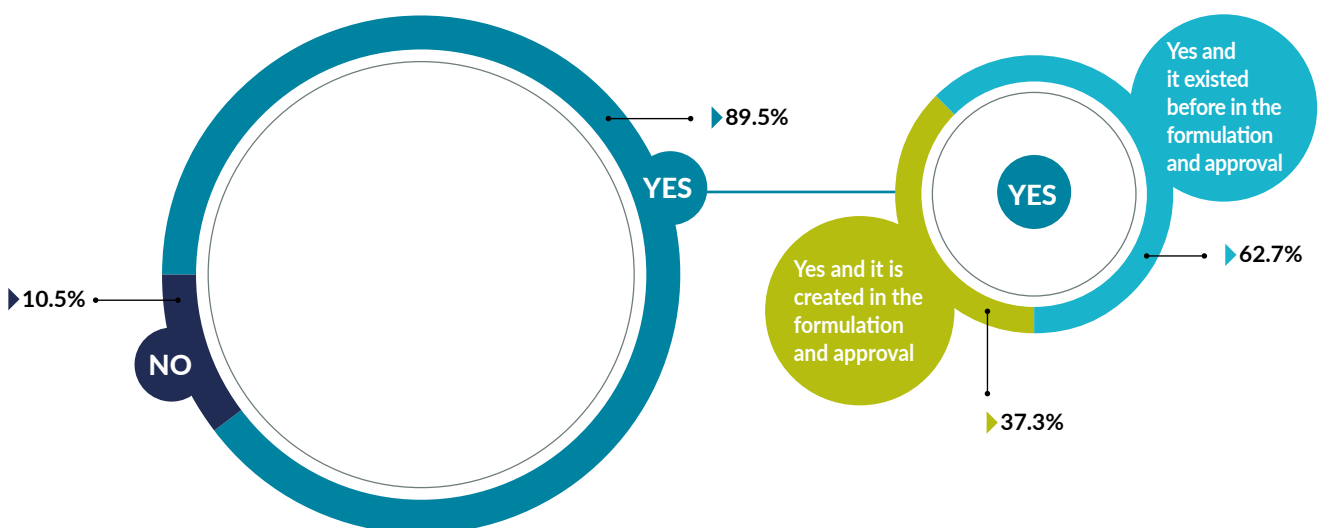
more decisive to articulate the great diversity of actors that are called to participate and given the complexity and interdependencies that characterise the development challenges that triangular initiatives, aligned with the 2030 Agenda, face.

In fact, the existence of instruments to promote triangular initiatives even pre-dates the coining of the term “Triangular Cooperation”. An example can be found in 1975, with the Third Country Training Programme promoted by JICA and designed for the transfer of practices, sending of experts and promotion of international courses. As of 2002, this agenda is channelled through Partnership Programmes with countries such as Argentina, Brazil, Chile and Mexico (Malacalza, 2022).

Germany and Spain have also been pioneers in this type of cooperation; Germany since the 1990s through bilateral North-South cooperation projects with recipient countries and Spain, “through bilateral agreements, technical instruments, joint funds, memorandums of understanding and other instruments”. In the case of the Spanish TC, the support provided “to Ibero-American countries that begin their gradual process of transition from purely receiving actors to providers is a fundamental feature, maintaining a dual role (Malacalza, 2022)

The importance of the prior existence of some instrument or the decision to create it as part of the triangular initiative is evident in figure 8:

FIGURE 8: Distribution of Triangular Cooperation projects and actions, according to whether they are carried out under mechanisms that regulate triangulation (in percentage). 2016

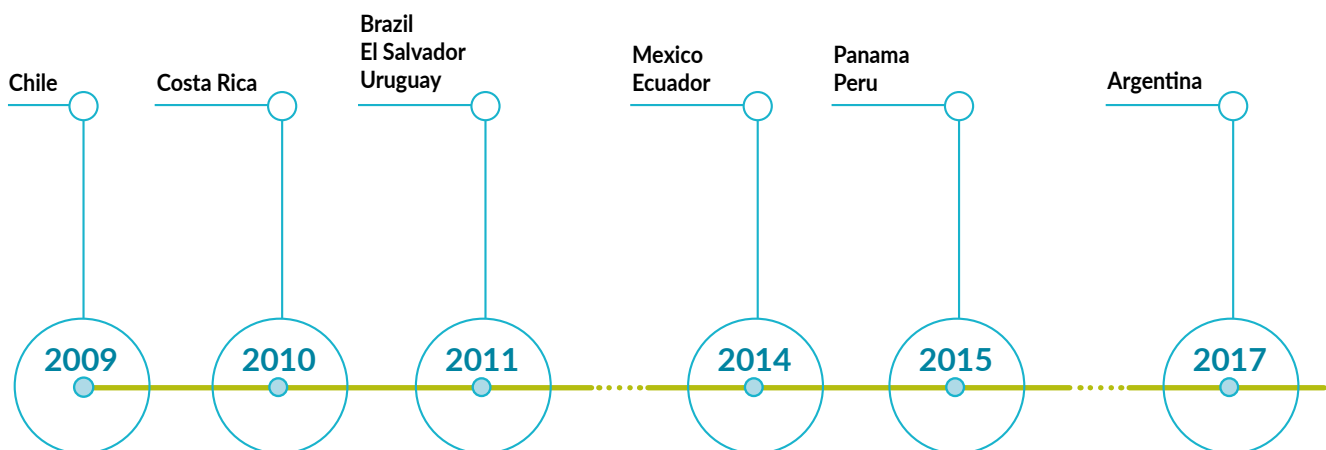


Source: SEGIB based on Agencies and Directorates-General for Cooperation.

The Ibero-American TC, as a global benchmark for this modality, has used a wide range of instruments: “technical cooperation projects to test new ideas, implement MoU agreements³⁹ or build a new partnership; activities to make use of the experience and centres of excellence of the South through training, seminars and sending of experts; open tendering for project proposals in joint funds; escalation from bilateral SSC to TC towards other countries, regions or partners, or integration of trilateral initiatives into broader programmes of development cooperation with multiple actors” (Malacalza, 2022).

Within the extensive experience of Ibero-America in terms of TC, the SEGIB SSC reports provide three examples that perfectly illustrate the importance of generating instruments to articulate triangular projects. The aforementioned case of Spain, which between 2009 and 2017 launched various instruments such as Memorandums of Understanding, New Generation Agreements, Joint Funds and Technical Cooperation Programmes, etc. in ten countries of the region (see Figure 9).⁴⁰

FIGURE 9: Chronology of instruments signed by Spain together with other partners in the region and that help promote Triangular Cooperation



Source: SEGIB from www.aecid.es (2020).

Within the framework of the TC of Spain, “MoUs are a political instrument whose negotiation and approval requires that the two donor partners agree on content and work from the start with a horizontality approach”. Thus, in addition to the general political framework, they include “technical aspects for each TC operation [...] with procedural aspects (identification, formulation and management mechanisms, monitoring, evaluation and accountability processes)”, while explaining the role of each of the partners in each phase of the project (Ortiz de Taranco, 2022).

In the specific case of TC with Chile and Mexico, these MoUs contemplate the creation of “Joint TC Funds, with contributions in equal parts from the partners and the governance of a bipartite committee” (ibid.).

Portugal is another paradigmatic case of the establishment of instruments for cooperation with multiple partners and themes, “thus diversifying pre-established actors and partnerships. Among these, worth highlighting are those signed with other Ibero-American countries, to promote Triangular

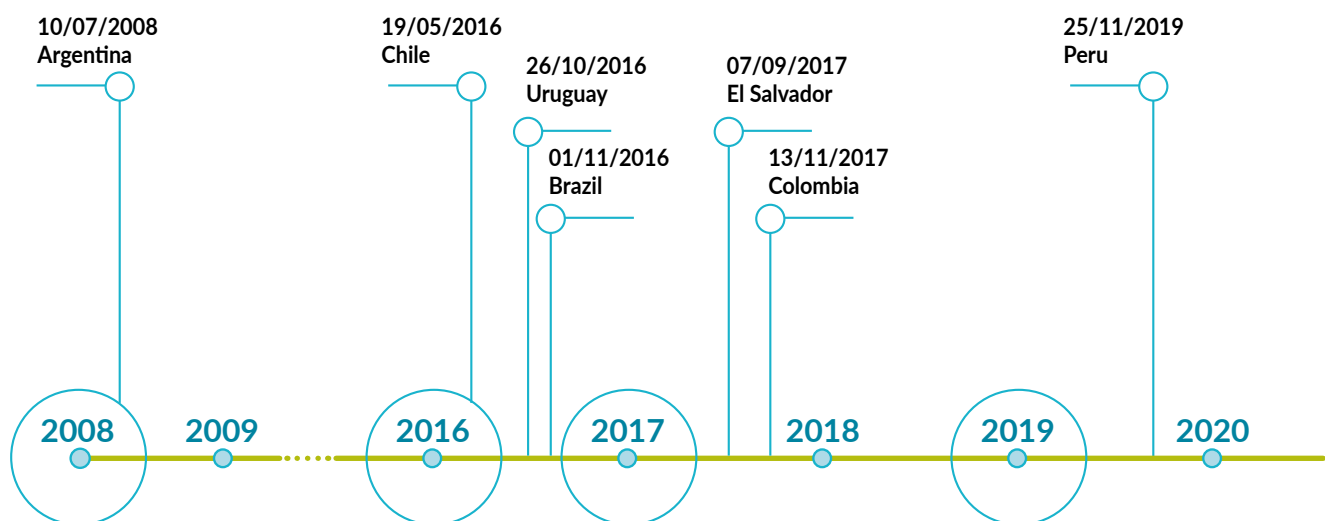
³⁹ Memorandum of Understanding.

⁴⁰ The TC instruments deployed by Luxembourg and the United States in Central America are also noted as significant (Malacalza, 2022).

Cooperation, understood as a way of leveraging additional resources and sharing experiences and added value of different actors in favour of development". Figure 10 summarises the institutional

framework that Portugal has built for this purpose, based on the chronological succession of the signatures of the memorandums of understanding on TC signed with different countries.

FIGURE 10: Chronology of TC cooperation instruments signed by Portugal and some Ibero-American countries



Source: SEGIB from Instituto Camões (2020), reproduced in SEGIB 2021.

Chile is one of the most significant cases in terms of the deployment of different modalities of partnership for Triangular Cooperation. In 2019, the year in which 130 TC initiatives were recorded in Ibero-America, "up to 103 different partnership combinations were identified between those who acted as first providers, second providers and recipients". Chile was indeed the most active country, with "40 initiatives involving more than

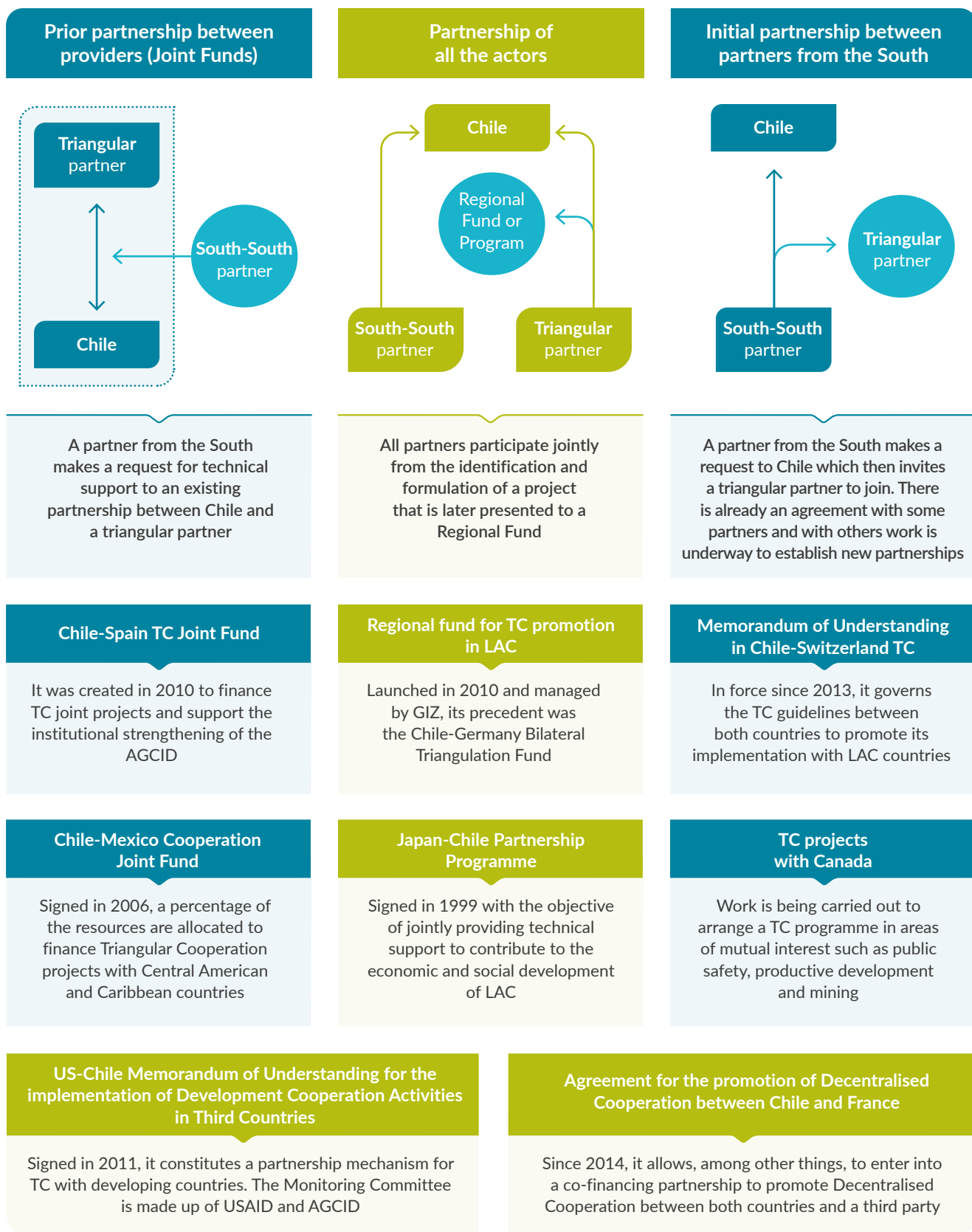
thirty different actors, including almost all Ibero-American countries" (SEGIB, 2021).

The prevalence of partnerships between countries that act as first and second providers is not due to chance, but rather the existence of strategic partnership frameworks or agreements conceived precisely between the partners involved to promote the promotion of TC initiatives towards third countries. That is, they are based on a previous institutionality.

The prevalence of partnerships between countries that act as first and second providers is not due to chance, but rather the existence of strategic partnership frameworks or agreements

Figure 11 shows the series of agreements that have allowed Chile to have an "institutional architecture for the promotion of Triangular Cooperation with strategic partners and towards third countries" (SEGIB, 2021). This architecture confirms that we are dealing with "a country that understands Triangular Cooperation as a tool through which it reaffirms and deepens its commitment to all its strategic partners" (International Studies, 2020, p. 163, cited in SEGIB 2021).

FIGURE 11: Mechanisms of Triangular Partnership: the case of Chile



Source: SEGIB from AECID (2015) (SEGIB 2021).

Along with the examples of these countries, the innovative tools developed within the framework of the PIFCSS are equally significant, such is the case of the Structured Mechanism for the Exchange of South-South Cooperation Experiences (MECSS). Given the close link between SSC and Triangular Cooperation in the Ibero-American region, both tools, although largely based on bilateral partnerships, have also led to significant progress in TC.

As a sign of the strengthening of the management of South-South and Triangular Cooperation promoted by the PIFCSS through the MECSS, the Report on South-South Cooperation in Ibero-America 2019 reviews the initiatives carried out under this Mechanism during 2017 and, among them, several contemplate the strengthening of TC through the exchange of experiences for the strengthening of capacities and relations between Uruguay and Andorra, Peru and Costa Rica, Ecuador and Peru (in this case for the management and evaluation of the SSTC), Chile and Panama, and Chile and the Dominican Republic (for the management of the project cycle and the identification of good SSTC practices). (SEGIB 2020, pages 148-149).

As important as the identification of this array of instruments, and regarding the previously mentioned SEGIB thesis that it is necessary to have politically relevant instruments, the report *Notes for an Ibero-American ecosystem of Decentralised South-South and Triangular Cooperation*, makes an appeal to the need to observe in these instruments “the signals that may be configuring what could end up guiding a transition of the system as a whole” (Martínez 2022).

The Study conducted by the ERI points out that, in addition to the European Commission, only three Member States (Germany, Spain and Luxembourg) “have provided themselves with specific instruments, programmes or funds dedicated to TC”

This call to action refers to the political value of the instruments beyond their purely technical usefulness (either for the formulation of programmes or for the generation of new discourses). The instruments are therefore conceived as levers to generate spaces for political dialogue in order to achieve more horizontal relationships, which facilitate the implementation of “multi-stakeholder actions, on a small scale, from a human and sustainable perspective and with increasing emphasis on the territorial scale of development”. (ibid. page 26).

Institutionality and instruments in the European Union and its Member States

The *Study on the strategic value of triangular cooperation with Latin America and the Caribbean for the countries of the European Union* prepared by the ERI as part of the EU-SEGIB project reviews the institutional framework that exists at Community level to identify the potential of Triangular Cooperation in the bi-regional relationship.

Firstly, as the Study points out, there is an “unequivocal commitment to greater integration and coherence” between development cooperation policy and other areas of EU external action, in short, “a greater geopoliticisation of development aid of the EU” (RIE, 2022).

Regarding the establishment of specific instruments to provide institutionality to the development cooperation policy, this greater integration materialised in 2021 with the creation of [Global Europe or the Neighbourhood, Development and International Cooperation Instrument \(NDICI\)](#), which groups together the powers of cooperation previously spread between several instruments.⁴¹

The NDICI has a budget of 79.5 billion euros for 2021-2027. However, as the ERI states in its report, this strengthening of development aid as a broader, political, multifaceted area of action growing in resources, has not been accompanied by

⁴¹ The previous instruments now included in the NDICI are: Development Cooperation Instrument (DCI); European Neighbourhood Instrument (ENI); Partnership Instrument; European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights (EIDHR); European Fund for Sustainable Development (EFSD); Instrument contributing to Stability and Peace (IcSP) More information: https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/find-funding/eu-funding-programmes/global-europe-neighbourhood-development-and-international-cooperation-instrument_es



Alain Bommardeux, Unsplash

a geographical perspective, until now focused on Africa and the Neighbourhood, which extends to a greater prioritisation of LAC”.

In budget allocation terms, this means that “of the 60.38 billion euros that Global Europe has for geographical programmes, 29.18 billion are allocated to sub-Saharan Africa, 19.32 billion to the Neighbourhood countries, 8.48 to Asia and the Pacific and only 3.39 billion to the Americas and the Caribbean (European Commission, 2021). In other words, the European cooperation budget explicitly dedicated to LAC represents 4% of the Instrument (or 6% of the geographical programming), 12% of that allocated to sub-Saharan Africa and 17.5% of the aid for Neighbourhood Countries”.

Regarding the instruments more specifically related to Triangular Cooperation, until the Adelante Programme (2015) –described in the previous part of this document– several EU cooperation programmes had included TC elements, although they cannot be considered purely triangular programmes (this is the case of Eurosoci, PALOP, Socieux or Bridging the Gap).

Despite the projection of the Adelante programme in its two editions, the ERI says that the institutional profile of TC, the European Union and the Member States is still discreet. While some countries consider it as part “of their identity as donors”, for others it is “a more tangential element within their development action” (RIE, 2022). Likewise, it confirms one of the circumstances commonly identified as an obstacle for TC to deliver its potential: its scant consideration as a political or strategic tool and, hence, the encapsulation of this modality in the technical levels of the Administration (both in terms of cooperation agencies and ministries).

The Study conducted by the ERI points out that, in addition to the European Commission, only three Member States (Germany, Spain and Luxembourg) “have provided themselves with specific instruments, programmes or funds dedicated to TC”. Table 14 shows the disparity in the degree of institutionality of TC in the European Union, not only from the point of view of the formally established instruments, but also from the express mentions in the strategic documents and websites of the cooperation agencies.

TABLE 14: Institutionalization of Triangular Cooperation in the EU*

Countries	Specific programme or financing	Mention	
		Strategic documents	Website
Germany	Regional fund for Triangular Cooperation in Latin America and the Caribbean	Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> Agency <input type="checkbox"/> Ministry
Austria	-	No	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Agency <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Ministry
Belgium	-	No	-
European Commission	Adelante Programme	Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> Commission/DG INTPA
Spain	Joint funds or bilateral TC programmes with specific countries (Chile, Mexico, El Salvador, Costa Rica)	Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> Agency <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Ministry
Hungary	-	No	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Government
Italy	-	No	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Agency <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Ministry
Luxembourg	Support to the Salvadoran Fund for South-South and Triangular Cooperation	Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> Agency <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Ministry
Netherlands	-	Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Ministry
Portugal	-	Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> Agency <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Ministry
Sweden	-	No	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Ministry

*The grey colour refers to minor mentions, such as press releases or publications on other issues or those in which the importance of TC is highlighted.

Source: Study on the strategic value of triangular cooperation with Latin America and the Caribbean for the countries of the European Union (ERI, 2022).

The Regional Fund for Triangular Cooperation in Latin America and the Caribbean with Germany is, without a doubt, one of the most significant instruments at the TC level. It is a “competitive fund that has two annual calls. It works based on the express demand of the beneficiary country, in accordance with their respective development strategies and priorities. The planning and implementation of the projects is carried out jointly by all the partners”. This framework requires that “both the first provider and the recipient country must have the necessary institutional structures (project counterparts) and all cooperation governing bodies (cooperation agencies or equivalents) must be involved” (ibid.).

Outside the scope of the European Union, Japan and the United States stand out as partners in TC initiatives with Latin America. Regarding the instruments used, Japan used the so-called Partnership Programmes (JPP), formalised with Chile

(1999), Brazil (2000), Argentina (2001) and Mexico (2003). The objective of the JPP is to “strengthen bilateral technical cooperation and expand joint technical cooperation to provide technical and scientific support, particularly to less developed countries. They also support the institutional and governmental efforts of the countries of the region”, especially in Central American countries, through technical and scientific transfer.

From the operational point of view, the JPPs “are implemented through the planning of the three countries involved and the most important aspect to formalise the request for cooperation is the consultation and coordination of the national institution interested in the beneficiary country with the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) and with the focal point of international cooperation of the third partner country”. Generally, a mission of experts from JICA and the provider country to

the recipient country is scheduled and, frequently, an executive committee of the project is set up for management and decision-making (ibid.).

Finally, the United States bases its TC partnerships on specific regulatory frameworks, usually MoUs, which do not include funding (funding comes from bilateral cooperation programmes) (ibid.).

The SSTC and indigenous peoples: the need to strengthen the institutional framework through new instruments

As part of the work to provide political and technical inputs to the Triangular Cooperation strategy between the Ibero-American region and the European Union, the *South-South and Triangular Cooperation and Indigenous Peoples* report, within the EU-SEGIB project, had the specific objective of “helping to build the bases of a strategy that included the definition of basic instruments to work in Triangular Cooperation with indigenous peoples and communities”.

The need to generate these instruments is evident, since barely 1% of the initiatives recorded in the SIDICSS in the last twenty years were developed for or with indigenous peoples.

The report, based on surveys carried out on 17 cooperation officials from the Ibero-American community, concludes that only three countries state that they have “policies or guidelines” to guide their actions on SSTC for or with indigenous peoples, although not even in these cases is it clear

that these policies are little more than “generally applicable guidelines that also apply in the case of indigenous issues”. The data on the instruments are equally poor: 3 of the 16 cooperation managers surveyed stated that they have specific instruments or lines of action to promote SSTC initiatives for or with indigenous peoples (Zúñiga, 2022).

The following instruments are listed from among those available:

- Dissemination of information on South-South and Triangular Cooperation opportunities.
- Facilitation of dialogue processes and creation of agreements and commitments for the design and implementation of sectoral initiatives of South-South and Triangular Cooperation for or with indigenous peoples.
- Channelling of resources for the financing of actions, efforts and investments.
- Information on experiences and good practices of South-South and Triangular Cooperation regarding matters of interest to indigenous peoples.
- Socialisation of opportunities through member institutions of the National Commission for International Cooperation (CNCI) led by Panama’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs through the technical support and accompaniment offered by the Directorate for International Cooperation (Panama).

Another of the notable conclusions of this report is the apparent disconnection between the programmes or lines of action for or with indigenous peoples and the programmes, areas, instruments or lines of action supporting SSC and TC of a general nature. Given the specificity of indigenous peoples and the unavoidable need to recognise their role and promote their participation as cooperation actors, the author considers that “efforts can be aimed at introducing adjustments to this range of programmes, so that they can meet the requirements and challenges that SSC and Triangular would entail for indigenous peoples” (ibid. page 31).

Added to the encapsulation of cooperation in general –and of the TC in particular– at the technical levels of the Administration is that which affects the treatment of matters of interest to indigenous peoples: “The low density of relations

Another of the notable conclusions of this report is the apparent disconnection between the programmes or lines of action for or with indigenous peoples and the programmes, areas, instruments or lines of action supporting SSC and TC of a general nature



between state cooperation agencies to cooperate on issues of interest to indigenous peoples can also be explained by the status that these issues still have in the public management of countries, often being handed over to specialised state institutions and agencies, in which the States leave encapsulated the management of indigenous issues” (ibid. page 27).

The same disconnection seen in the countries of the Ibero-American region is reproduced in numerous intergovernmental organisations, called upon to play an important role in bi-regional Triangular Cooperation. Of the twenty organisations analysed in the report, none have specific programmes, lines or instruments to support SSC and TC for or with indigenous peoples.⁴²

⁴² The international organisations cited are: SEGIB/PIFCSS, FILAC, UNOSSC, ILO, FAO, UN Women, WFP, UNICEF, UNDP, UNESCO, WHO-PAHO, IFAD, WB, UN-HABITAT, UNEP, UNFPA, IOM, OECD, IDB AND EU (Zúñiga, 2022, page 32).

The report urges the generation of new cooperation frameworks and reshaping the existing ones in such a way that they allow “promoting and sustaining SSC and Triangular processes and initiatives over time with and/or for indigenous peoples”



Pending the development of the institutionality of the TC for or with indigenous peoples, with more defined rules and instruments, the case of the ten regional SSC initiatives for or with indigenous peoples recorded from 2007-2019 can be taken as a reference, in which, in addition to state actors, intergovernmental organisations (FAO, SEGIB and OEI) participated. In these cases, the initiatives have been based on “different kinds of cooperation platforms, such as regional integration mechanisms; intergovernmental bodies; sectoral multilateral agreements and conventions, and thematic-sectoral networks, such as Mercosur, SEGIB itself, the Mesoamerican Cooperation Programme or the OEI, among others” (ibid. page 43).

Likewise, the report urges the generation of new cooperation frameworks and reshaping the existing ones in such a way that they allow “promoting and sustaining SSC and Triangular processes and initiatives over time with and/or for indigenous peoples” through:

- The incorporation or development of guidelines on matters of interest to indigenous peoples that make it possible to build agreements on SSTC modalities as alternatives to achieve them.
- The participation of indigenous peoples in the processes of political and technical dialogue to adopt cooperation frameworks committed to the implementation of SSTC initiatives for or with indigenous peoples, safeguarding their interests and the exercise of their rights throughout the process.
- The inclusion of content on joint lines of action in all public institutions for or with indigenous peoples, as well as the possibility of promoting SSC and TC initiatives in framework agreements and other cooperation instruments among countries of the Ibero-American community and with other actors.
- Action on the United Nations Cooperation Frameworks, to which reference has already been made in section 2.1. on Relevance of the TC for the achievement of the 2030 Agenda.
- The incorporation into the EU *Roadmaps* of the matters of interest to indigenous peoples, as well as the implementation mechanisms and SSTC initiatives likely to be supported by the EU, and enable spaces for dialogue with indigenous actors to channel their considerations, priorities and visions in the preparation processes of these *Roadmaps*.⁴³
- The inclusion in the deliberations of the joint committees or in the cooperation agenda of the countries, in the United Nations cooperation frameworks and in the EU *Roadmaps* of each country, of the objectives and goals of the Ibero-America Action Plan for the Implementation of the rights of Indigenous Peoples and the strategies, means or initiatives of SSTC to achieve them (ibid.)

⁴³ The objective of these *Roadmaps* is “[...] to develop a common strategic framework for the engagement of EU Delegations and MS with civil society in partner countries, in order to improve the impact, predictability and visibility of EU actions” (EU, 2014, cited in Zúñiga, 2022, page 52).

4

Recommendations to promote EU-LAC Triangular Cooperation in the International Ecosystem of International Development Cooperation

The research carried out within the scope of the EU-SEGIB project has resulted in a set of recommendations to help promote EU-LAC Triangular Cooperation, both with the aim of strengthening and generating new spaces for bi-regional dialogue, and to contribute with political and technical inputs, from the bi-regional level, to the transition that the international development cooperation ecosystem is experiencing.

The recommendations of each of the publications are strongly focused, as could not be otherwise, on their respective objects of study. Thus, the report on SSTC in relation to the 2030 Agenda and the response to COVID-19 proposes four courses of action to contribute to a transformative TC:

- Promote TC strategies and initiatives that contribute to a way out of COVID-19 based on the implementation of the SDGs.
- Promote an Ibero-American and European perspective on TC in international forums that helps transform the cooperation system towards a more horizontal, inclusive and supportive one.
- Generate awareness and give visibility to a TC narrative consistent with the principles of horizontality and non-conditionality of the SSC which, at the same time, promotes open, multi-actor and evidence-based management methodologies.
- Implement innovative TC mechanisms that make progress in achieving the SDGs, exploiting the advantages offered by the digital world in the new context of the pandemic and the global crisis (Malacalza, 2022).

For its part, the report on the DSSTC proposes a series of guidelines for the possible formation of an ecosystem of Decentralised South-South and Triangular Cooperation.⁴⁴ The building of this ecosystem requires a series of “interconnected pillars with reinforced feedback loops between them, which coexist and complement each other without a specific hierarchical order to maximise the contribution of SSTC to regional development”. These components are: political will; a national SSTC strategy; information bases: interconnected actors; the SSTC Agency, and financing and performance

⁴⁴ This idea is based on a proposal from the Islamic Development Bank adapted to the Ibero-American regional context (Martínez, 2022).

In the case of SSTC and indigenous peoples, the report provides “proposals for guidelines and directives for the structuring, development and/or empowerment of SSC and TC with and/or for indigenous peoples”

management mechanisms (Martínez, 2022). The recommendations are aimed at generating or strengthening these components.

In the case of SSTC and indigenous peoples, the report in question provides a series of “proposals for guidelines and directives for the structuring, development and/or empowerment of SSC and TC with and/or for indigenous peoples”. These proposals are based on a series of basic principles: building upon what exists and appraising it; recognition and respect for difference, diversity, suitability and relevance; rights approach; participation of indigenous peoples; recognition of the full exercise and enjoyment of the rights of indigenous peoples; the recognition of indigenous peoples as subjects of collective rights and cooperation actors; the consideration and protection of the general interest, and the mainstreaming of indigenous issues (Zúñiga, 2022).

The reports on the analysis of the information systems and the institutionality and the instruments of the TC, offer recommendations in general much more limited to their respective objects of research.

Finally, the *Study on the strategic value of triangular cooperation with Latin America and the Caribbean for the countries of the European Union* of the ERI looks at the main weaknesses and strengths of Triangular Cooperation and, to negate the former and to develop the potential of TC to the full, opts for measures that improve the measurement of TC, raise its political profile and enhance its impact and transformative capacity. Broadly speaking, this framework helps structure the set of recommendations in this chapter, which are detailed below.

4.1. Make progress in conceptualisation

As previously indicated, the lack of a clear and common definition of Triangular Cooperation is the cause and effect of some of its weaknesses, such as the existence of practices labelled as TC which, in fact, do not differ greatly from traditional cooperation by not clearly complying with the principles of horizontality or being more motivated by interests of a policy of internationalisation of the new emerging donors.

To build a technical-political consensus around TC, at least within the framework of EU-LAC relations, it would be necessary to agree on specific standards for cooperation relations included in this category which, due to their very nature, must be very flexible to adapt to diverse territorial and political contexts and favour ownership.⁴⁵

The ERI advocates making progress in conceptualisation, focusing on the following purposes:

- Create an agreed and common definition of Triangular Cooperation, at least for the whole of the EU [consensus with the Ibero-American region is understood as implicit]. This definition should contain the vision and horizon of the objectives pursued, aligned with the 2030 Agenda, together with a limited set of operating principles and criteria, as well as a nomenclature and certain basic notions of the conceptual architecture of this modality of cooperation (instruments, sectors of activity, roles of the actors, etc.), with a view to its reporting in the SIDICSS (Zúñiga, 2022, p. 45).⁴⁶
- Differentiate TC from other forms of cooperation, such as bilateral and multilateral, something that “would also facilitate the creation

⁴⁵ It is revealing how the report on a possible ecosystem of DSSTC expressly avoids “treatment of DSSTC based on a statutory definition that complies with the purpose of distinguishing and discriminating by its specificities” and suggests as an alternative “the consideration of the DSSTC as a plural and diverse space which, however, is characterised by having in common a series of practices and principles with which it seeks not only to achieve greater efficiency in its cooperation actions, but also tries to influence the pillars of the international cooperation system”. (Martínez, 2022).

⁴⁶ In the report, the author refers to both SSC and Triangular.



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of positive political incentives for the correct collection of information about TC activities, which, in addition, will facilitate their subsequent monitoring and evaluation”.

- Reflect upon and discuss in depth the transaction costs of TC, “clearly differentiating them from what could be considered development results or medium and long-term investments”.
- Assess the progress made in measuring development progress within the framework of the 2030 Agenda and its Sustainable Development Goals.
- Incorporate advances in TC measurement made by UNOSSC, the OECD, the EU, some specific EU donors, such as Germany and SEGIB.
- Take into account the OECD statistics of aid or total support for development to take advantage of the experience and potential of TC in other regions.
- Make progress, as far as possible, on a common definition and measurement for traditional donors and the whole of the Global South, including Africa and Asia.
- Commit to continuous learning that builds on the “lessons learned in a process of constant trial and error”, given the novel nature of TC for several traditional donors (RIE, 2022).



The fact that there is no agreed definition that facilitates identification and recording is added to the disparity and lack of common criteria among the different current recording systems

4.2. Keys for the systematisation of information

The difficulty of having accurate information on Triangular Cooperation is one of the biggest challenges to delivering its potential. The fact that there is no agreed definition that facilitates identification and recording is added to the disparity and lack of common criteria among the different current recording systems. Despite the recognised efforts of different organisations, such as the SEGIB and the OECD, gaps persist that prevent a clear picture from being obtained of the TC reality.

To help overcome this obstacle, the EU-SEGIB project commissioned the Research on the databases and information quality of South-South and Triangular Cooperation, whose general objective is to provide knowledge to “help facilitate the future building of a planned information system that includes the different Triangular Cooperation initiatives (TrC) in which the countries of Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC) participate together with the European Union (EU) and/or its member countries” (Vega, 2022).

These are the key elements and recommendations to move “towards an interregional tool for TC monitoring and visibility” in EU-LAC (with the possibility of replicating it in other regions), based on the analysis of current systems (ibid):

- Establish as a strategic objective of this tool “to contribute to improving the information available

on international development cooperation in order to learn and to improve results and collaborative relationships between partners” (Vega, 2022).⁴⁷

- Change the approach of the recording: move from a recording based on contributions (input) to one based on results (output). The tool would therefore be used to show the initiatives in which the partnership is the essential element, that is, those that are only possible through the collaboration of various partners. This implies going beyond the accounting of financial flows between provider and recipient countries as a systematisation criterion, since “the essence of TC [...] is not the financial transaction, but rather the partnership created between the actors that allows the integration of different kinds of resources —financial, experience and technical capabilities— for the benefit of another country. In short, it is about the recording systems telling “the story of what this partnership has achieved or can achieve”, not so much exclusively reporting the monetary flow which, moreover, when the chains of actors are long, is difficult to follow.
- The research openly proposes that this tool “function as a space for experimentation for the discussion of ordered information about the

⁴⁷ The author warns of the importance of adhering to this strategic perspective to prevent the development of a technological tool from becoming an objective in itself, thus confusing the instrument with the goal.

different partner countries, the roles they hold and the contributions they make. That presents a history of TC relations between both regions (horizontal coverage), even if the degree of depth of each initiative is modest (vertical coverage) in a first round. It is preferable to achieve 90% of exchanges with a general layer of information than 10% of exchanges with a great amount of detail on unique initiatives” (ibid).

- Take advantage of the capacities, advantages and gaps of existing systems to make progress:
 - Ibero-American framework: the search to supplement the data provided by different partners in each initiative.
 - OECD: the existence of information on financial disbursements (at least, from the facilitating countries).
 - Proposal to measure indicator 17.3.1. of the SDGs: the opportunity to experiment with units of measurement different to the financial resources.
 - National recording practices (especially in facilitating countries): lack of information to record specific TC information.
- Use the initiative (with a specific development objective/result) instead of the programme, the financial disbursement or the role played by the different actors of the partnership as a unit of record.
- Design a simple format, which can be adjusted later to facilitate recording for those partners who do not have instruments to record initiatives based on the partnering and integration of resources. In other words, it is about applying horizontality to the design of the tool as well. Research on information systems underlines the need to find an “equilibrium” between horizontality and the need to obtain data that meet the characteristics that ensure a certain quality standard: “precision, validity, consistency, completeness and timeliness” (ibid.).
- Promote cross-cutting dialogue at the domestic and international level:
 - Among the representatives of the countries before different international organisations that have recording frameworks (at least those that

Include Africa and Asia in the definition and measurement efforts to achieve a model of Triangular Cooperation that can be extended to other regions of the planet

have been under analysis described here), in order to promote knowledge and coherence of them. In this way it will be possible to share and update what each country has shared and what each framework offers.⁴⁸

- Among different countries, beyond those that regularly carry out TC actions (the “convinced”), to understand and systematise data from different partnerships, which depart from the frameworks of bilateral and multilateral ODA or traditional SSC. This could include actors who, for whatever reasons, do not consider from the outset that their initiatives could be triangular.
- Develop a common strategy between SEGIB and the EU to generate and strengthen information systems, accompanied by sufficient human and financial resources to deploy it as a priority. The social cohesion and SSTC area of the SEGIB has the experience, political relations and consistent political dialogue to accommodate this task of strengthening information systems.
- Create a roadmap that broadens the participation of sub-national voices and commits them to co-govern in a responsible, shared and differing way an Ibero-American ecosystem of Triangular and Decentralised Cooperation.

⁴⁸ In the interviews conducted out within the framework of research of the information systems, the author detected “affirmations or judgements about the frameworks analysed here that are based on erroneous or not up-to-date perceptions, either due to ignorance or internal lack of coordination” (Vega, 2022).

- Modify the collection sheets used by the SIDICSS, at least so as to introduce the participation of sub-national governments in the initiatives. The report *Quantitative and qualitative analysis and characterisation of the operations (institutionality and instruments) of Triangular Cooperation* also provides a series of recommendations on the SIDICSS:

- Make the requirements to enter the information in certain fields more specific (e.g., the one that refers to how it originates).

- Reproduce in the record almost exactly the information contained in the project formulation file. Since this file does not exist as such in many cases, it is also proposed to design a specific file for TC with the relevant elements of this modality.

- Expand the default options that define the regulatory frameworks in which the initiatives are covered, since the fourteen available are considered insufficient. Or, if considered more appropriate, agree that they only “refer to TC Funds, Programmes or Agreements”. It is also advisable to separate the country options from those of international organisations.

- Assess the continuity of the “none” option in the field referring to regulatory framework if it is intended to record all types of regulatory framework and not only those that refer to TC. Modify the “specify” tab to include the exact name of the mechanism or framework (which would make it easier to obtain a map of TC financing mechanisms and leave less room for interpretation).

- Improve the information in the “specify” tab, for example, by adding complementary options that refer to how the idea came about (e.g., if it is the result of a bilateral SSC or bilateral NSC; if it is an innovative/original/new idea; if it considers the experience of a recognised public policy, and if it intends to broaden and enhance the effects of a specific experience).

- Modify the tab on procedures/bodies since the analysis of the information it contains seems to indicate that it causes confusion. It is proposed that the question “how is the initiative coordinated?” be asked as an open question or with some predetermined answers (e.g., “1. centralised in agencies/governing bodies”; “2. led by sectoral/implementing institutions”;



“3. led by second providers”; “4. combination of any of the above”, and “5. all the above mechanisms”.

- Modify the field on participating institutions to clarify what type of institutions must be registered (it now seems that countries register different things and some institutions may not be properly registered); for this, it is proposed to predetermine some options and associate them with the three roles.

- Adapt the requirements to record the information related to the evaluation, to ensure that it is carried out between peers.

- Simplify the information on contributions and costs (associate it with the roles and record it globally and not by year and allow information for more than three contributions, bearing in mind the growing complexity of the TC partnerships (Ortiz de Taranco, 2022, p. 28-29).

- Include Africa and Asia in the definition and measurement efforts to achieve a model of Triangular Cooperation that can be extended to other regions of the planet.

Recommendations regarding the systematisation of information to generate an ecosystem of Decentralised South-South and Triangular Cooperation

The lack of information on the DSSTC is one of its fundamental weaknesses, despite “the notable work carried out by the SIDICSS and the SEGIB over the last decade”. It is considered crucial to close the “DSSTC systematic information gap [...] to build and consolidate the governance of a DSSTC ecosystem” (Martínez, 2022).

There is a “circular causality” whereby the reasons that explain why progress has not been made in systematisation are related to the consequences of not having it. “The relative or scant political weight that cooperation actions have in organisations and public administrations, mistrust of results and actors, and general ignorance often prevent agreements, resources and sufficient capacities from being obtained to undertake a long-term process for the systematisation of the information on DSSTC”. The challenge is even greater in the absence of a central governing body (ibid.).

This preamble helps to frame and understand the rationale and scope of the recommendations listed below:

- Generate a space that deals with the reinforcement of the information systems of the DSSTC. For its political relations, accumulated experience, results obtained and consistent political dialogue, the social cohesion and SSTC area of the SEGIB fulfils the conditions to be that space.
- Modify the SIDICSS collection sheets to contemplate, at least, the participation of sub-national governments in DC initiatives in the region, by incorporating criteria and categories for such collection.
- Broaden and categorise the information related to local capacities according to a variable geometry that incorporates different roles and, very importantly, experience in actions and relationships with international networks.
- Ensure a certain balance between autonomy and coordination so that the information obtained and collected for systematisation is broader and more enlightening: whereby the dialogues and mechanisms implemented for its collection move from subsidiary and dependent perspectives

among the levels of the administration towards multilevel articulations of shared competencies and generation of experiences of co-government of development policies.

- Develop –within the framework of EU-SEGIB relations– a specific common strategy aimed at generating and strengthening information systems for the Ibero-American DSSTC ecosystem, which has sufficient human and financial resources to deploy it as a priority.
- Build a long-term process that increases the participation of sub-national voices, including a roadmap that commits them to co-govern in a responsible, shared and differing way in the DSSTC ecosystem (ibid.).

With regard to the generation of a model for the systematisation of DSSTC information, the author proposes as a model the work carried out by the Barcelona Provincial Council in collaboration with the Montevideo City Hall (Intendencia de Montevideo) in the first phases of the European Urb-AI programmes, within the framework of the EU-LA Decentralised Cooperation Observatory; the specific methodology that they designed for the collection and categorisation of the experiences was abandoned due to lack of financial resources a few years later. However, it is considered that both its methodology for the compilation and the criteria selected for its categorisation included elements of great interest that may constitute an excellent complement to expand the proposal that is currently underway and being discussed internally by the PIFCSS and the SEGIB. Among these criteria, the influence in public policy processes, the willingness to generate alliances of multiple actors in the territory and the transformation itineraries of capacities and technical and political resources stand out (ibid, p. 59).

The lack of information on the DSSTC is one of its fundamental weaknesses, despite “the notable work carried out by the SIDICSS and the SEGIB over the last decade”



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4.3. Raise the political profile of Triangular Cooperation

One of the challenges of the TC is to put an end to the encapsulation of this modality of cooperation at the technical levels and raise its institutional status. To this end, the ERI Study proposes that progress should be made in the following aspects:

- **Generate a new narrative of TC** that highlights its strengths (ownership, horizontality, capacity) to form unlikely partnerships in other modalities of cooperation, capillarity, inclusiveness, innovation and political dialogue. In the internal workshop “An Innovative Triangular Cooperation for a New Development Agenda”, to which reference has already been made, some key ideas around which such a narrative could revolve were discussed:

- Global public goods as a pillar of global development. This concept, halfway between idealism and geopolitics, would help overcome the dichotomy between the achievement of development objectives and the donor’s interests as two opposing poles, while reducing the gap between discourse and practice, which often represents an obstacle when the official discourse is perceived as a way of masking the interests of cooperation.

- Commitment to a renewed multilateralism as the most effective way of dealing with the global risk society.
- Provision of sovereignty spaces: the TC narrative should convince the cooperation actors themselves, especially traditional donors, of the need to provide sovereignty spaces to generate truly horizontal relations.
- The need to *triangulate* the cooperation as a whole to achieve more horizontal relationships as a more coherent formula with an interpretation of the 2030 Agenda that includes development (in its material dimension) in terms of crystallisation of transnational dynamics in the territories.

The articulation of a shared narrative, together with the implementation of optimal information systems, would help make information on the possibilities of Triangular Cooperation more accessible to stakeholders and generate evidence that helps to make political decisions (sectoral priorities, resource allocation, etc.). In addition to helping to articulate a serious political discourse around Triangular Cooperation, it could help define an agreed definition of TC and make information on this modality transparent and more accessible.

An example that perfectly illustrates the role of a possible Triangular Cooperation narrative has to do with the firmly rooted idea that TC transaction costs are high; indeed, the ERI's research suggests that these costs are reduced over time and with experience, so they could be considered an investment. In this case, an adequate narrative should help dismantle stereotypes and invite a more determined political commitment to Triangular Cooperation.

In this vein, Bernabé Malacalza proposes in his report “to give visibility to a TC narrative consistent with the principles of horizontality and non-conditionality of the SSC which, at the same time, promotes open, multi-actor and evidence-based management methodologies” (Malacalza, 2022, p. 61).

Of interest in this regard is the reflection of Bernadette G. Vega Sánchez, author of the *Research on the databases and information quality of South-South and Triangular Cooperation*. In her opinion, the political debate has favoured “the analysis of the partnership between actors, even when unrelated to the way in which it achieves the expected result. In other words, it has concentrated on the roles that the actors play, on the transaction cost that the partnership involves, on the differential contribution of the TC without emphasising how this differential contribution is reflected in a development result. This is an opportunity to balance this conversation” (Vega, 2022, p. 35).

- **Based on the experience of Germany**, which has recently published its TC strategy, since it can serve as an interesting input for other actors, “with the intention of overcoming the niche approach that is made towards TC”.
- **Move forward in a geographically more cross-cutting conception of TC**, “taking TC from LAC, in many cases, to Africa and Asia or making the reverse journey”.
- **Provide the necessary human resources**, with the appropriate skills and specialisation (including communication and training).
- **Raise the status of TC in institutions** to go beyond the strictly technical level (the encapsulation to which much of the specialised literature refers).
- **Highlight the results and effects of the TC**, derived from the conceptual and statistical effort

Give visibility to a TC narrative consistent with the principles of horizontality and non-conditionality of the SSC which, at the same time, promotes open, multi-actor and evidence-based management methodologies

already mentioned; this would make it easier to attract the attention of the technical and political members of the cooperation staff.

This could be enhanced by “taking advantage of the existence of ‘standard bearers’ in TC to promote already proven instruments and procedures” (Ortiz de Taranco, 2022, p. 30).

- **Provide a greater volume of resources for this modality of cooperation** (because, as previously indicated, the budgets allocated to TC are very low compared to other modalities).

In financial terms, to develop its full potential, Triangular Cooperation requires mechanisms that attract and channel public and private funds. Among other possibilities, it was suggested in the internal workshop that a fund could be set up to build capacities for the creation of joint funds to guarantee the sustainability of TC beyond European financing itself.

Along these lines, Ortiz de Taranco proposes that budgets and funds, including SSC bilateral funds, contain a part reserved exclusively for TC initiatives (Ortiz de Taranco, 2022, p. 30).

With regard to raising the political level of the DSSTC ecosystem in Latin America, the author of the report made a series of recommendations:



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- **Create a specific multi-stakeholder body for the governance of the ecosystem.** The creation of a body that assumes leadership/coordination can act as a pressure group to raise the visibility of the system and coordinate the necessary actions to provide Triangular Cooperation with a differentiated and differential entity compared to other forms of development cooperation.

The author points out that “SEGIB, hand in hand with its SSC programme with the support and participation of national cooperation managers, can test the creation of a specific multi-stakeholder body for the governance of the ecosystem. Progressively, some networks with which there are already consolidated collaboration frameworks would form part of this, such as the *Centro Iberoamericano de Desarrollo Estratégico Urbano* (CIDEU), the *Unión Iberoamericana de Municipalistas* (UIM) and the *Unión de Ciudades Capitales Iberoamericanas* (UCCI), among others, as well as representatives of thematic

networks” citing, by way of example: 100 Resilient Cities, Mercociudades, Local Governments for Sustainability (ICLEI) or C40 (Martínez, 2022, p. 56).

- **Develop transparent monitoring and evaluation systems⁴⁹ on the political dialogue processes (to see to what extent it contributes to the strategic objectives of this dialogue) and public policy implementation,** as the relationship solely based on exchanging learning experiences from mutual trust can only be reproduced up to a point. For the author of the report to which we are referring, “both issues, the political dialogue on the different principles and the need to improve the culture and the monitoring and evaluation systems, are not only not incompatible, but are closely related. On both issues, the partnership relationship that constitutes the SSTC has plenty of work to do and room for improvement that should be done in an overlapping and consistent manner. Trying to impose monitoring and evaluation systems as if they were not based on certain systems of values and principles would not help advance political dialogue. And vice versa, trying to refer the SSTC to new forms of partnership and more horizontal political dialogue, without incorporating standards and monitoring systems, would severely limit the possibilities of co-learning and with it the opportunities to consolidate this type of partnerships. The challenge presents two different but interrelated itineraries, so both sides of the coin must be addressed in a consistent and complementary manner” (Martínez, 2022, p. 45).

Finally, in order to raise the political profile, it is considered appropriate to promote the involvement of international organisations:

- **Greater involvement of international organisations:** promote greater involvement of the headquarters of international organisations in TC initiatives, as well as common instruments for United Nations agencies (Ortiz de Taranco, 2022, p. 30).

⁴⁹ In relation to the issue of evaluation and, despite being “a very necessary element to draw conclusions and take decisions on the TC carried out by the countries”, of the total TC initiatives recorded in the SIDICSS, only 38% (523 initiatives) have information associated with this variable (which appears with six recording options: final external; final internal; intermediate internal; final intermediate/ external internal; final intermediate/internal internal, and none of the above (Ortiz de Taranco, 2022, p. 24).



4.4. Improve the impact on development and its transformative capacity

To fully capitalise on the development impact potential of TC, the ERI recommends in its report:

- **Increase the scale of TC projects**, without undermining their inclusive and horizontal nature. In particular, it is proposed that the European Commission promote this increase by incorporating TC into its portfolio of cooperation instruments, such as granting delegated cooperation for triangular projects or promoting blending opportunities to finance them.
- **Increase the number of TC projects and programmes**, for example by including them in EU joint programming and other TC planning initiatives.
- **Improve the replicability of projects**. This, in addition to increasing its impact, would help reduce its potential transaction costs. The ERI points out, on this point, the need to commit to a medium and long-term vision. Finally, the possibility of taking advantage of the Team Europe initiative and the joint work between Member States is suggested to combine efforts in terms

of scalability and replicability. It could also be useful to have specific TC management tools, share good TC management practices and generate support and accompaniment mechanisms for recipients/beneficiaries, as Ortiz de Taranco proposes (*ibid.*, p. 30).

In terms of the transformative capacity of TC to help achieve the 2030 Agenda, four main lines of action are proposed for innovation and adaptation of South-South and Triangular Cooperation to the 2030 Agenda in the context of COVID-19 rooted in many other dimensions:

- **Sustainable development dimension**. Promote TC strategies and initiatives that contribute to a way out of COVID-19 based on the implementation of the SDGs.
- **Political-systemic dimension**. Promote an Ibero-American vision of TC in international forums that helps to better adapt TC to the 2030 Agenda and, at the same time, promotes a transformation in the international development cooperation system towards a more horizontal, inclusive and supportive one.
- **Narrative-practical dimension** (mentioned above, see section 4.3.).

■ **Innovation dimension.** Implement innovative TC mechanisms that make progress in achieving the SDGs, exploiting the advantages offered by the digital world in the new context of the pandemic and the global crisis. This dimension includes what the author of this report calls “Innovative SSTC Mechanisms”, which have already been mentioned in this document (see sections 2.1. and 3.2.):

■ **Combined interventions of development cooperation and cooperation in science and technology.** This type of intervention would make it possible to overcome the usual disconnection between the fields of development cooperation and cooperation in science and technology. In this regard, the 2030 Agenda represents an opportunity by enabling a policy space so that science, technology and innovation can definitively become priority areas of international cooperation for the fulfilment of the proposals set out in the SDGs (Malacalza, 2022, p. 49).

TC has the potential to provide a bridge between countries with greater technological capacities and countries that need to build or strengthen their national innovation systems, which allows the transfer of technical and scientific knowledge to strengthen the capacities of the region. The impact of cooperation in this area can help reduce inequalities in issues as relevant as access to health, education, the labour market or collective action against global risks (as the COVID-19 *syndemic* has shown).

■ **Digitise development cooperation.** Digitisation cuts across development agendas and makes it possible to transform (improve) cooperation procedures. The author cites the opportunity to take advantage of the good practices which, in this regard, are offered by European countries

TC has the potential to provide a bridge between countries with greater technological capacities and countries that need to build or strengthen their national innovation systems

such as Spain, Belgium, Denmark and Germany in the form of strategies and concept papers to promote the digitisation of development cooperation and the alignment of the processes of digital innovation with the SDGs. Likewise, he points out that TC is the modality with the greatest potential to generate innovation mechanisms from North to South, from South to South and from South to North (ibid. Pages 49-50).

■ **Reduce social inequalities through cross-cutting initiatives.** The author is committed to considering digitisation as a public good, given that digital technologies are relevant to fulfilling the goal of leaving no one behind. This would allow the rapid transformations of the fourth technological revolution to improve the inclusion and resilience of society, especially after the consequences of the pandemic (ibid. pages 51-52).

■ **Strengthen the gender perspective.** Promoting gender equality in SSTC means appropriating the gender perspective in the initiatives so that women and men have the same possibilities and opportunities to access valuable resources and goods from the social point of view and be able to control them (ibid. p. 53).

■ **Promote digital global public goods.** In this area, synergies can be seen with the EU's priorities expressed in the strategy Shaping Europe's Digital Future,⁵⁰ particularly the commitment for digital cooperation to occupy a central position in its relationship with Latin America and the Caribbean, supporting the economies of both regions to benefit from new technologies by promoting innovation and digitisation (ibid. pages 53-54).

■ **Territorialise the 2030 Agenda.** It is about involving different actors anchored in the territories in the fulfilment of the SDGs, generating a model of multilevel cooperation and with social governance models between national, local and international partners (ibid. p. 54).

In this regard, it is also proposed that greater emphasis be placed on the demand for TC and not so much on the supply, for example, through

⁵⁰ Source: <https://digital-strategy.ec.europa.eu/en/policies/americas>

the creation of tools to manage demand as part of the process for identifying initiatives (Ortiz de Taranco, 2022, p. 30).

The *South-South and Triangular Cooperation and Indigenous Peoples* report proposes a series of recommendations aimed at improving the transformative capacity of the TC and its alignment with the principles of the 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals through the inclusion of indigenous peoples as cooperation actors, not only in the specific issues that concern them, but with a cross-cutting perspective in the cooperation as a whole.

It is in this regard that the following proposals (Zúñiga, 2022) related to all stages of SSTC (design, implementation, monitoring) can be interpreted:

■ **General guidelines (I). Difference, diversity, suitability and relevance.**

- Recognise the capacities, knowledge and resources of indigenous peoples to address the complexity of global problems.
- Prepare proposals and recommendations for the design and implementation of SSTC initiatives specifically aimed at indigenous peoples, as well as SSC and TC distinctions and guidelines on universal social policies (e.g. health and education) for their application to and with indigenous peoples.

■ **General guidelines (II). Rights approach.**

- Promote participation in decision-making that concerns them, both in the process of designing and implementing SSC and Triangular initiatives and in their governance and management units.
- Ensure the right of indigenous peoples to define and pursue their own priorities for development and incorporate them into policies and instruments to support SSC and Triangular for or with indigenous peoples.
- Ensure the right to the protection, conservation, revitalisation and exercise of their own political, legal, economic, social, religious and spiritual institutions, values and practices.

■ **General guidelines (III). Participation.**

- Ensure that the strategic definitions, conceptual architecture, policy principles and operational criteria of SSC and Triangular for or with indigenous peoples are the result of a political-technical dialogue process.
- Consider the opinions and proposals of indigenous peoples in the contents of SSC and TC processes and initiatives of general interest and indigenous impact, as well as those with indigenous implication.
- Recognise the right of indigenous peoples to grant or deny their consent to the use and exchange of capacities, knowledge, wisdom, practices and resources over which they hold rights within the framework of these initiatives.

■ **General guidelines (IV). Recognition of the full exercise and enjoyment of the rights of indigenous peoples.**

- Contribute from SSC and TC to implementing the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

■ **General guidelines (V). Consideration of indigenous peoples as subjects of collective rights and cooperation actors.**

- Overcome the approach (predominant in traditional North-South Cooperation frameworks) that places indigenous peoples as a vulnerable population, so that the logic of intervention based on hierarchical relationships (donor-recipient) can be overcome. Instead, it is proposed that indigenous peoples be conceived as concurrent actors in the process of establishing partnership and cooperation relationships.

■ **General guidelines (VI). Consideration and safeguard of general interest.**

- Develop the dialogue and creation of agreements processes on SSC and TC contents and management in matters related to the recognition and exercise of rights held by indigenous peoples but which, at the same time, constitute matters of general interest (e.g., management and protection of water resources and biodiversity in the Amazon basin).



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■ **General guidelines (VII). Mainstreaming of indigenous issues.**

- In line with the trend to incorporate the management of issues of interest to indigenous peoples in a cross-cutting manner in the public institutional framework, work so that these issues permeate and are duly considered in the sectoral SSC and TC initiatives that have as a target population all or broad sectors of the population.
- **Contribution of the SSTC and alignment with the strategic objectives of indigenous peoples:** Good Living as a principle, participation in the achievement of the 2030 Agenda and its SDGs and compliance with the *Ibero-American Action Plan for the Implementation of the rights of indigenous peoples*.
- **Generation and/or shaping of cooperation frameworks** to promote and sustain SSC and Triangular processes and initiatives over time with and/or for indigenous peoples (agreements, arrangements, MoU, etc.).

Overcome the approach (predominant in traditional North-South Cooperation frameworks) that places indigenous peoples as a vulnerable population, so that the logic of intervention based on hierarchical relationships (donor-recipient) can be overcome

■ **Consolidate and make visible the different types of SSC and Triangular initiatives in relation to the role of indigenous peoples.** This involves assuming different ways of conceiving the process of conception, design and implementation of the initiatives, depending on whether we are dealing with:

- SSC and Triangular initiatives **for** indigenous peoples.⁵¹
- SSC and Triangular initiatives **with** indigenous peoples.⁵²
- SSC and Triangular initiatives **of general interest and indigenous impact.**⁵³
- SSC and Triangular initiatives **with indigenous implication.**⁵⁴

■ **Adopt new types of SSC and Triangular initiatives:**

- SSC and Triangular initiatives **of** indigenous peoples.⁵⁵
- SSC and Triangular initiatives **between** indigenous peoples.⁵⁶

■ **Indigenous actor(s) and their role(s) in SCC and Triangular.** The recognition of indigenous peoples as legitimate SSC and Triangular actors, with the capacity and right to represent themselves in

political-technical dialogue processes in decision-making that affects them, involves the performance of active roles by the representative institutions of the interested indigenous peoples, communities and/or populations (ibid. pages 44-54).

Finally, and in relation to the Ibero-American region and specifically to a regional organisation, the following recommendation is included to explore in more depth the transformative capacity of TC:

■ **Develop institutional strengthening projects taking advantage of synergies.** This is the case, within the framework of bi-regional EU-LAC cooperation, of the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC) as the forum par excellence for the EU when it comes to sharing the *acquis communautaire*. This forum, an intergovernmental mechanism for dialogue and consolidated political agreement, represents an opportunity to move forward in the building of the horizontal cooperation spaces necessary for the TC to reach its full potential.⁵⁷

51 “Initiatives that address issues of specific interest to indigenous peoples, communities and/or populations and that have them as the sole and exclusive recipients, users or beneficiaries” (Zúñiga, 2022, p. 52).

52 “Initiatives that address issues of general interest and that explicitly include indigenous peoples, communities and/or populations, together with other groups or sectors, among their target population, recipients or beneficiaries” (ibid. p. 52).

53 “Initiatives that address issues of general interest and which, in principle, are aimed at the common population or groups or sectors of the population without ethnic or other distinction, also have indigenous peoples, communities and/or populations as recipients of results” (ibid. p. 53).

54 “Initiatives that do not include indigenous peoples, communities and/or populations among their recipients, but whose carrying out may entail possible effects or violations of their rights and interests” (ibid. p. 53).

55 “Initiatives in which the skills demanded are offered and provided freely and voluntarily by the indigenous peoples who are their owners and holders and who exercise the role of indigenous ‘provider’ in them” (ibid. p. 53).

56 “Initiatives in which two or more indigenous peoples exchange skills and share and exercise the roles of ‘indigenous provider’ and ‘indigenous demander’ of skills, or both” (ibid. p. 53).

57 This suggestion was shared in the internal workshop “An Innovative Triangular Cooperation for a New Development Agenda”.



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Conclusions

This publication, which concludes the first phase of the EU-SEGIB project *An innovative Triangular Cooperation for a new development agenda*, offers relevant political knowledge from both the research and analysis work on TC in the referenced publications, as well as from the ongoing political dialogue that characterises the joint work of the European Commission and the Ibero-American General Secretariat.

These pages reflect the results of a process of collective construction, based on research-action, which provides data and rigorous arguments so that actors both in the Ibero-American region and in the EU and its Member States can better understand, on the one hand, and make informed decisions, on the other, about the relevance, level of suitability and opportunities offered by Triangular Cooperation within the framework of their public policy strategies.

To support decision-making, both at a technical and political level, the historical journey of Triangular Cooperation has been described, offering the keys that help us to understand its relationship with the future of the International Development Cooperation System, in which the questioning of the operating model of Official Development Assistance, the rigidity of cooperation relations —excessively indebted to binary and hierarchical North-South, donor-recipient frameworks and rooted in a welfare vision— have lost perspective to understand and relevance to act in a highly complex global scenario.

The succession of crises that have arisen in recent years, with obvious links and interdependencies between them in their economic, social, environmental and political aspects, have forced us to rethink the very concept of development. The transition between the Millennium Agenda and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development is the result of awareness of this profoundly complex systemic crisis, in which multilateral governance systems and, as part of them, the IDCS, must find new ways to enter into political dialogue, to add new actors to that conversation and to generate co-government formulas essential for restoring to politics its ability to transform reality for the benefit of all people, leaving no one behind.

The findings described in these pages show that Triangular Cooperation still has a limited scope and faces numerous challenges, but it also offers undoubted opportunities worth exploring. This is confirmed by the recognition in the text of the TC 2030 Agenda as a means of implementing the Sustainable Development Goals —especially, but not only, SDG 17 related to Partnerships for the Goals— and the numerous experiences carried out to date, with the Ibero-American region as a world exponent in TC.

In particular, the legitimacy gained in these experiences, in terms of their contribution to the SDGs and, above all, in the empowerment of new partnerships able to increase the impact and transformative capacity of cooperation actions

based on triangular frameworks, that is, more horizontal, plural, fair and flexible and, ultimately, more suitable for identifying, designing and implementing cooperation projects understood not as a complement, but as a substantial part of public policies at all levels of government.

The commitment of numerous actors in Latin America and the Caribbean, the European Union and its Member States to Triangular Cooperation has been made clear throughout the four chapters that make up this document. Despite its low political weight, which is reflected in resources as meagre as well used to date, the authors of the research provide data based on the analysis of specialised literature and on surveys and interviews conducted, which confirm the dynamism and confidence in the potential of this modality.

The question therefore is: how can that potential be developed? All the research agrees in highlighting the most important challenges for this: reaching an agreed definition of Triangular Cooperation (at least in terms of EU-LAC bi-regional cooperation), developing information systems that allow adequate recording and, with this, make it possible to assess the impact of TC, overcome state-centrism and incorporate new actors, generate new forms of relationship based on principles such as horizontality, relevance, ownership, etc., remove TC from encapsulation at technical levels and develop around TC an institutionality and some specific instruments that aid its deployment.

Regarding the incorporation of new actors, in this phase of the EU-SEGIB project the focus has been placed on two types of actors: sub-national governments —especially medium and large cities— and indigenous peoples, in line with the development paradigm of the 2030 Agenda, which gives a crucial role to territorial actors and approaches. In this way, the value of Triangular Cooperation is recognised as an optimal tool to coordinate policies that respond to global problems, which are common but which manifest in each territory. In this regard, TC appears as a model of co-governance.

This publication includes in its final chapter a series of recommendations consistent with the respective research work and that are rigorous in their approach. These recommendations propose lines of action to make progress in the conceptualisation and in a narrative of Triangular Cooperation,

The commitment of numerous actors in Latin America and the Caribbean, the European Union and its Member States to Triangular Cooperation has been made clear throughout the four chapters that make up this document

improve the systematisation of information, raise the political level through the development of institutionality, instruments and adequate resources and, finally, to improve its impact on development and its transformative capacity.

Far from being closed guidelines, these recommendations should be used as an input to continue collectively building a model of Triangular Cooperation that is able to strengthen the relationship between the European Union and Ibero-America and, at the same time, propose new coordinates for the International Development Cooperation System.

The knowledge generated in this first phase of the project, which is now coming to an end, will give way to a subsequent stage that will explore further the key pertinent aspects for better and greater Triangular Cooperation between the European Union and its Member States and Latin America and the Caribbean, with special emphasis on strategic sectors for the achievement of the 2030 Agenda. It is also expected that in this second phase all this theoretical flow will be put into practice through pilot experiences of Triangular Cooperation (for example, at the regional level focused on indigenous populations).

This is only a break point in the EU-SEGIB project *An innovative Triangular Cooperation for a new development agenda*, which continues to advance in a process of collective construction that has already generated a fruitful space for technical and political dialogue between both regions.

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