

Promoting Sustainable Urban Development through Associations of Municipalities

PARTNERSHIP



Background

Extremadura is a region with a long history in the field of mancomunidades (associations of municipalities or municipal communities), which are essential figures in the provision of basic services to citizens, thanks to economies of scale. The **Fondo Extremeño Local de Cooperación al Desarrollo** (Local Fund for Development Cooperation of Extremadura - FELCODE) in Spain is a key player in promoting and harnessing Extremadura's experience in other countries. FELCODE has been working together with several Latin American entities since 2011, responding to their growing interest in knowledge and expertise to promote

partnerships between local governments, effectively supporting the establishment and advancement of municipal communities throughout the region. Within this context, work began in 2018 with the **Mancomunidad de Cordillerita** (Municipal community of Cordillerita) in Paraguay and the **Congreso de Intendentes** (Congress of Mayors) in Uruguay, and since then, a permanent line of dialogue and cooperation has been in place.

As a result of the joint work and mutual trust, in 2022 both entities conveyed their interest to FELCODE in taking an important step forward, considering it very important to learn about and establish ties with similar experiences in Latin America. Because of its regional ties, FELCODE identified the **Asociación de Municipios de Honduras** (Association of Municipalities of Honduras - AMHON) and the **Mancomunidad La Montañona** (Municipal community of La Montañona) in El Salvador, as potential knowledge providers, both of which were willing to share not only their own particular knowledge and expertise, but also all of the lessons learnt from the institutional and political experiences in their respective countries. From that moment on, the Triangular Cooperation Partnership was established.

In order to make the most of the experience in Extremadura, two of the most active municipal communities in the Spanish region joined the Partnership as collaborating entities, both with a clear commitment to extending their knowledge and expertise to their partners in Latin America: the *Mancomunidad de Tentudía* (Municipal community of Tentudía) and the *Mancomunidad de la Sierra de San Pedro* (Municipal community of Sierra de San Pedro). Both municipal communities have the capacity to provide a special added value in terms of active employment policies at the local level, especially those linked to green and digital jobs. In addition, *Gestión Local*, a local association in Paraguay, is a key player in the debate on the proposed law on associations of municipalities, which is currently under discussion in the Chamber of Deputies of Paraguay.

All of the Partnership member entities have experience working with the European Union and also specifically in Triangular Cooperation. The active participation of the Congress of Mayors in another initiative of the ADELANTE Window (Strengthening cross-border governance of water basins) is worth noting, as well as the participation of the Association of Municipalities of Honduras and the Mancomunidad de La Montañona in Triangular Cooperation projects between Spain and Latin America.

Entities and roles

BENEFICIARY ENTITIES



[Mancomunidad de Municipalidades de Cordillerita](#) [Congreso de Intendentes](#)

Paraguay

Uruguay

FIRST PROVIDER ENTITIES



[Mancomunidad La Montañona](#)

[Asociación de Municipios de Honduras](#)

El Salvador

Honduras

SECOND PROVIDER ENTITIES



[FELCODE](#)

Spain

COLLABORATING ENTITIES

Gestión Local, Paraguay

Mancomunidad de Sierra de San Pedro, Spain

Mancomunidad de Tentudía, Spain

Development challenges

This Triangular Cooperation Initiative will harness the knowledge and expertise of the Partnership member entities in the field of municipal associations (with a focus on 'joint municipal management of public services', which goes far beyond the joint management of projects), in order to respond to the challenge of consolidating associations of municipalities that provide services in certain areas of Paraguay and Uruguay. It also aims to contribute to the current debate on the development of a model for each of the countries, which can also be replicated in other countries in the region.

By pursuing inclusive and sustainable development within the framework of SDG 11, the Initiative aims to help 'ensure access to adequate, safe and affordable housing and basic services for all people', as well as 'upgrade slums, enhance inclusive and sustainable urbanization and capacity for participatory, integrated and sustainable human settlement planning and management', and 'reduce the adverse per capita environmental impact of cities', among other challenges.

INITIATIVE

This Triangular Cooperation Initiative aims to foster capacity building among the Partnership entities in order to create a management model for municipal communities, based on the models of joint management of essential public services of the Provider entities, characterised by inclusive and sustainable development.

Triangular approach

There is a strong consensus that associations of municipalities, based on sharing resources and efforts and by harnessing economies of scale, are a key strategy for local governments to meet their service delivery requirements (urban planning, water supply, electricity supply, solid waste management, risk prevention and management, among many others, depending on the policy framework of each country).

In the case of Paraguay, although the political-administrative structure is still quite centralised, steps are being taken towards decentralisation and the promotion of municipal associations. As far as Uruguay is concerned, these types of municipal structures are still an emerging figure (they were created in 2010), and are undergoing an important process of defining and shaping their role. In this regard, the role of the municipal coordination bodies that can lead this process is particularly relevant. In both cases, international benchmarks are needed to encourage reflection and contribute to decision-making at the national and local level, so that they are able to develop their own models.

At the same time, Honduras and El Salvador are countries with well-established decentralisation processes and significant experience in associations of municipalities, in which the Partnership member entities have played a leading role. The Association of Municipalities of Honduras has been operating for more than 60 years and has long had a specific department for supporting and strengthening municipal associations, while the La Montaña Association, which has been operating for more than 20 years, has proven to be a national leader in tackling the challenges faced by its member municipalities in a joint manner. In Spain, and especially in Extremadura, due to its particular characteristics such as a low population density, there is already well-established expertise in this area at the political, technical and operational levels. Moreover, the associations of municipalities are recognised by citizens as an essential instrument.

Through this Triangular Cooperation Initiative, the knowledge and experience of the Partnership member entities in Honduras, El Salvador and Spain in associations of municipalities will be used to strengthen municipal services in certain areas of Paraguay and Uruguay, and to contribute to discussions on the development of a model for each country.

The pilot exercise of consolidating certain associations of municipalities in Paraguay and Uruguay, if proven successful, could be replicated immediately in other territories in these countries, thus broadening the impact of this Initiative beyond the territories that were originally targeted. In turn, the development of models for this purpose will have a strong impact in both the participating countries and in other countries with which FELCODE and the other Partnership entities have established direct ties.

Sectoral approach - Contribution to the 2030 Agenda

PRIMARY SDG



Goal 11.1 By 2030, ensure access for all to adequate, safe and affordable housing and basic services and upgrade slums

Goal 11.3 By 2030, enhance inclusive and sustainable urbanization and capacity for participatory, integrated and sustainable human settlement planning and management in all countries

Goal 11.6 By 2030, reduce the adverse per capita environmental impact of cities, including by paying special attention to air quality and municipal and other waste management

SECONDARY SDG



Goal 8.2 Achieve higher levels of economic productivity through diversification, technological upgrading and innovation, including through a focus on high-value added and labour-intensive sectors

Goal 8.9 By 2030, devise and implement policies to promote sustainable tourism that creates jobs and promotes local culture and products

ADELANTE SDG



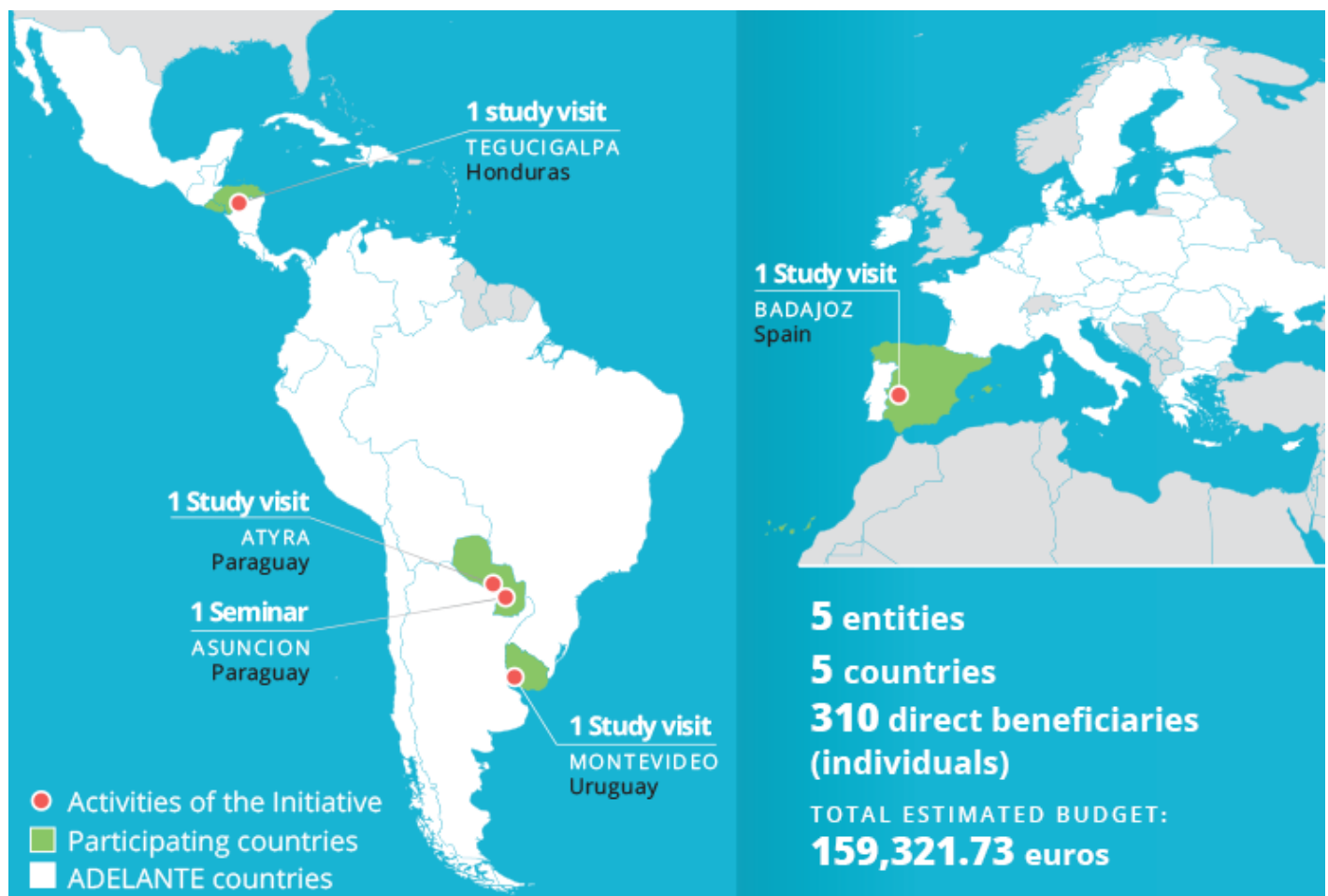
Goal 10.B Encourage official development assistance and financial flows, including foreign direct investment, to States where the need is greatest, in particular least developed countries, African countries, small island developing States and landlocked developing countries, in accordance with their national plans and programmes



Goal 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

Goal 17.16 Enhance the global partnership for sustainable development, complemented by multi-stakeholder partnerships that mobilize and share knowledge, expertise, technology and financial resources, to support the achievement of the sustainable development goals in all countries, in particular developing countries

Territorial approach



Intervention methodology

This Initiative seeks to 'connect' the various experiences in the field of local government associations in Paraguay and Uruguay on the one hand, and in El Salvador, Honduras and Spain on the other. The work will be coordinated through **four study visits, a consultancy and a seminar**.

The itinerary will begin with **study visits to Spain and Honduras**, the Provider countries. Both activities have a similar structure: an initial day of contextual introduction and theoretical training, and four days of visits to different associations of municipalities in Extremadura and Honduras to learn about specific experiences.

Subsequently, **study visits will be made to Paraguay and Uruguay**, the Beneficiary countries, which will enable the implementation of practical aspects in the territories where associations of municipalities will be established. In addition, a specific agenda will be developed to raise awareness of the concept of associations of municipalities in other territories and to encourage reflection on this issue at the national level, with a view to promoting high-level political dialogue to this end.

In parallel, a **specialised consultancy** will be carried out to produce a publication or methodological guide for the establishment and management of associations of municipalities. The publication will consist of two parts: the first part will feature the requirements and keys for establishing and implementing associations of municipalities, while the second part will offer tools and practical elements for the management and operation of these associations, presenting several models for the service provision and coordination with other levels of government.

The Initiative will culminate in a **seminar on associations of municipalities as instruments for the management of public services at the local level**. It will be an open seminar to present the progress and lessons learnt throughout the Initiative, and at the same time, to lay the foundations for cooperation with actors from the participating countries as well as the entire region, with sights set on the creation of a stable working network. During the seminar, the aforementioned methodological guide will be presented. The insights shared during the seminar and the content of the guide will be of particular use to the Mancomunidad de Cordillerita and the Congress of Mayors, in their role as key players in the national debate on municipal associations, thus contributing to the definition of a model for the management of associations of municipalities in each country.

Throughout the Initiative, work will be carried out within a gender-based, environmental and climate change approach, both in terms of highlighting and sharing specific experiences in this area, and in terms of presenting and reflecting these approaches in the joint work and the methodological guide in particular.

Direct beneficiaries (individuals)

According to Rule 9 of the Guidelines for Applicants: all persons participating in the activities of the Initiative.

Approximately **60 direct beneficiaries** will participate in the Initiative, all of whom are authorities and technical staff of the Partnership member entities. In addition, **more than 250 people from various local governments and communities of municipalities in the partner countries are expected to participate** in several of the planned activities, especially in the study visits to Paraguay and Uruguay and in the final seminar, which is also scheduled to take place in the city of Asunción. While they are not members of the Partnership, these participants will play a key role in the activities.

Budget

EU contribution: 116,566.73 €

Co-financing - Triangular Cooperation Partnership: 42,755.00 €

Total budget: 159,321.73 €