



DEVELOPMENT CO-OPERATION TIPS TOOLS INSIGHTS PRACTICES

In practice

PORTUGAL PROMOTES TRIANGULAR CO-OPERATION THROUGH ADVOCACY AND PARTNERSHIPS

Key messages

Portugal is an active proponent of triangular co-operation, organising international events, mobilising high-level political engagement, and actively engaging in multilateral organisations that span developed and developing countries (such as the Community of Portuguese-speaking countries). Its work has enabled valuable sharing of experiences among countries and the wider recognition of triangular co-operation. International advocacy efforts could gain further from a larger project portfolio.

Keywords

[Multilateral institutions](#) | [Partner countries](#) | [Partnerships](#)

Key partner

[Portugal](#)

Challenge

Portugal sees triangular co-operation as a way to move beyond traditional donor-recipient relations and foster horizontal partnerships for sharing knowledge and experiences. While support for triangular co-operation is growing, it still remains a relatively minor mode of development co-operation compared to traditional bilateral and multilateral co-operation partnerships. Building on Portugal's self-perception as a bridge builder between Europe, Africa and Latin America, it is promoting the potential of triangular co-operation internationally and in its own co-operation.

Approach

Since 2012 Portugal has been increasing its emphasis on triangular co-operation, especially following the adoption of its Strategic Concept for Development Co-operation 2014-2020. Portugal's approach combines international advocacy, strategic engagement with multilateral institutions, and partnerships with pivotal countries who share their experience, knowledge and resources.

- **Advocating for triangular co-operation at an international level**, by ensuring consistent high-level participation and strong political engagement and regularly convening international conferences and events, in partnership with the OECD, the UN, and others.
- **Supporting dialogue, sharing experiences and developing joint policy positions** among countries at different stages of development. Portuguese ministries engage substantively on numerous policy areas – especially in the Community of Portuguese-speaking countries (CPLP) – but also in the Ibero-American Conference (CIB). In this engagement, partners appreciate Portugal's efforts to encourage active participation and leadership by other members. Portugal is also promoting closer collaboration between CPLP and CIB.
- **Increasing Portugal's own triangular co-operation** by actively engaging potential pivotal partners in Latin America and the Mediterranean, having concluded memoranda of understanding (MoU) with 10 such partners.

Results

- **The recognition of triangular co-operation, supported by Portugal's high-quality international advocacy**, for instance at BAPA+40, as well as in OECD and EU fora. By regularly convening partners, Portugal has also helped to create an international community of practice, whose exchanges have deepened the mutual understanding of triangular co-operation and fostered new partnerships.
- **Dialogue and learning between partners through Portugal's active participation in CPLP.** Members shared technical advice on their COVID-19 responses and co-ordinated policy positions, for example at the World Water Forum, on climate at COP 26, and on child labour. Under Portugal's leadership, two co-operation projects on civil engineering and statistics are bringing together the full CPLP membership.
- **Projects which demonstrate the added value of triangular co-operation, despite the current limited portfolio.** For example, a [sustainable coffee production project](#) is combining complementary expertise from partners in Portugal, Brazil and Mozambique, who all also mobilise financial resources, and create synergies with bilateral projects. Portugal has launched an initiative on global citizenship education in the Ibero-American General Secretariat (SEGIB) – an area in which it has strong expertise. However, by October 2021 several of Portugal's MoUs had not yet evolved into concrete partnerships and the number of projects does not match Portugal's ambition.

Lessons learnt

- **A larger co-operation portfolio could bolster international advocacy efforts that can draw more on practical experience and partnership networks.** Portugal has opportunities to expand its portfolio in line with its ambition: growing ties between Portuguese and partner institutions, notably through CPLP and CIB, could help generate new project ideas. Brazil, who is very active in triangular co-operation, is interested in deepening its partnership with Portugal. Determining a strategic focus and goals for triangular co-operation could help guide Portugal's efforts, and in turn, insights from a larger project portfolio could feed into this.
- **Triangular co-operation can expand the geographic scope of co-operation partnerships despite resource constraints.** Portugal has a foreign policy interest in collaborating more with partners in Latin America and the Mediterranean. Rather than establishing co-operation

programmes in these countries, triangular co-operation is allowing Portugal to strengthen its bilateral ties while mutualising resources for the benefit of its African partner countries.

- **Including civil society in triangular co-operation provides new opportunities to mobilise additional expertise, resources and networks.** While Portugal's triangular co-operation often involves public and research institutions, civil society organisations are less frequently involved. Building on its experience in implementing multi-stakeholder projects, Portugal could explore associating civil society more in its triangular co-operation. In Mozambique, Portugal has joined forces with the Foundation Calouste Gulbenkian. CPLP has started convening civil society exchanges on dedicated topics, which can help identify opportunities for new partnerships.

Further information

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OECD, *Toolkit for identifying, monitoring and evaluating the value added of triangular co-operation*, <https://www.oecd.org/dac/triangular-co-operation/TOOLKIT%20-%20version%20August%202018.pdf>.

To learn more about Portugal's development co-operation see:

OECD (2021), "Portugal", in *Development Co-operation Profiles*, <https://doi.org/10.1787/12c61cf7-en>.

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