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Spanish Association launches drive to build the field of community foundations



Rosa Gallego

As the [Spanish Association of Foundations \(AEF\)](#) embarks on an initiative to support the development of community foundations in Spain, Rosa Gallego reflects on the commitment required and challenges ahead. She describes this opportunity as ‘a privilege’ and shows she has the enthusiasm, but also recognises the value of connections and being part of the movement in Europe.

“Innovation is driven first by people's energy, time, and capabilities, but it also needs financial capital, and finally enough authority to penetrate established structures; only in this way the transformation is consolidated, and it becomes part of the air we breathe.” (Wesley *et al.*, 2007).

For over a year now the Spanish Association of Foundations has been gathering some of the five elements needed to drive innovation. In our case innovation is about bringing to light the power of community philanthropy.

We know that it exists, but many times it is a hidden reality that lacks the institutional form that ensures recognition, agency and sustainability. But the innovation does not consist only in shedding light on existing practices, it is about promoting a specific culture of giving, that is based on the resources each community has, a practice of listening to communities, a diverse and inclusive decision making process to decide on the needs of communities and how to address them, and a new and powerful mechanism to help donors achieve impact while providing non-profits with additional resources - be those money, time or knowledge.

This is what we are set to do now. Since 1st September, AEF has officially launched a programme to support the development of community foundations in Spain, it feels like a major task that involves the most mundane things, such as setting up a team, procedures, working plans... to the most exciting ones, that is, to start communicating about the concept, to engage other stakeholders, to find extraordinary people with the vision and energy to embark in the process of setting up a community foundation.

I can't wait to start meeting all those people that already make an impact in their communities, because I want to learn from them, to know what it takes to help communities to thrive, to learn about what is important for diverse groups, to

understand the many ways in which needs can be tackled. I know this is the enormous privilege I will have in the months, hopefully years to come. In exchange we will devote our time, energy, knowledge and connections to support those individuals first, the community foundations that will be set up, and hopefully a network of Spanish community foundations embedded in the European movement.

It is a privilege to start a project for which we already have some of the ingredients needed to guarantee that innovation happens. There is one more I would add to the definition, innovation is also driven by the connections and the support of peers, and that I have it too, as part of the ECFI community.