Meeting our commitments

Accountability report of the Government of Spain

July 2021

Appendix I.

Methodology

GOBIERNO DE ESPAÑA

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Part I. Methodological bases

I. Purpose of the methodological bases

This document contains the theoretical and methodological ideas underpinning this accountability exercise by the Presidency of the Government of Spain, updated as at 30 June 2021.

These bases have been submitted to the scrutiny and consideration of a group of experts in different fields related to accountability and public policy analysis, constituted as a **Methodological Analysis Group** (Analysis Group), in order to verify the validity, applicability and accuracy of the methodology's design. The document incorporates the changes made to the bases in this exercise, which stem from the reflections of the Department for Planning and Monitoring Government Activity (DPM), together with the Analysis Group.[1] The constitution and dynamics of the Analysis Group, as well as its conclusions and recommendations, are detailed in Part II of this Appendix.

Moreover, the methodology described herein was presented and analysed in different forums during the first half of 2021, which led to suggestions and recommendations that have also inspired its updating in this second edition. The meetings held are listed in Part III of this Appendix.

The accountability exercise, therefore, has been conceived with **an aspiration of continual improvement, framed within a process of constant review and enhancement.**

II. Preliminary considerations: theoretical framework of the accountability exercises

1. Concept

In the academic sphere, there are different definitions of accountability: the issue is not devoid of controversy, nor has it been resolved.

Schedler (2004) states that "A is accountable to B when A is obliged to inform B about A's actions and decisions, to justify them, and to suffer punishment in the case of eventual misconduct."

This definition includes the two essential components of accountability. Firstly, **answerability: making publicly available the data**, arguments, and explanations regarding the Government's past, present and future activity, identified through a monitoring mechanism. This results in the right to request an explanation, and, correspondingly, the obligation to provide it, as well as the right to receive said explanation and the duty to justify the exercise of power. Secondly, **enforcement: the**

[1] To guarantee the transparency and traceability of the changes made to these bases, the La Moncloa microsite (www.lamoncloa.gob.es) hosts the original version of the bases used in the accountability exercise of December 2020.

punitive dimension, whereby authorities and officials must assume the consequences of non-compliance, including possible negative penalties.

Both of these dimensions of accountability may be present to varying degrees in the design of an exercise, without this determining its consideration as such.

As regards answerability, the argumentation or explanations may be made or given in different forms, as long as they are coherent, and the substantiation of the exercise of power may also have different levels of depth. And as regards enforcement, the lines are blurred between what may be considered a system for ensuring that the goals of government activity have been met, focusing merely on monitoring, and accountability itself, which includes reflective, deliberative and punitive elements. We cannot refer to pure, distinct forms, but rather to a continuum where we can find hybrid systems.

In this regard, Bovens (2005) defines the essential elements of accountability, making it possible to check whether an exercise complies with these standards:

- It must be **public**.
- **Explanation and justification** of conduct are essential aspects, different from propaganda or giving general information to the public.
- Explanations must be **addressed to a particular forum** or group of actors.
- Actors accounting for their actions must **feel under the obligation to do so**; it cannot be at their discretion.
- The possibility of **debating** and judging actions carried out must be offered.

Accountability can be **horizontal** when it occurs between separate spheres or powers that have the legal standing to exercise different actions ranging from oversight to criminal penalties. This is the case of the control over the executive exercised by both the legislative and the judiciary bodies, deriving from the separation of powers and the system of checks and balances that is a hallmark of modern democracies. It can also be vertical, when it occurs, for example, between the State itself—or its governing bodies—and citizens or social groups.

Accountability comprises three dimensions: **structure, processes and results.** Structure, inasmuch as it has rules and institutions that are responsible for informing, explaining, and submitting government action to public scrutiny. Processes such as the sequence of actions to identify commitments, monitor government initiatives and determine the extent to which the commitments have been met. And results, such as offering information to the public so that they may judge government action and thus enrich decision-making.

However, accountability is not public policy evaluation. Even though both terms are often cited together, and even indiscriminately, they are not synonyms.

Evaluation is one of several possible accountability instruments, but as a discipline it has specific, characteristic features: (i) it involves evidence-based interpretation and judgement; (ii) it is action-oriented, because it is closely linked to its purposes and usefulness; and (iii) it analyses, using its own criteria, the relevance, internal and external coherence, effectiveness, equity, sustainability, or any other aspect, of a public action.

However, the manner and purpose of addressing accountability is different: (i) it is a result of monitoring; (ii) it involves the duty and the obligation to submit information about the activities carried out; and (iii) it has a strong component of public visibility, which links it to transparency. Therefore, unlike evaluation, **accountability does not include judging the appropriateness, effectiveness, and efficiency of political action; however, it may include occasional references to the results of evaluations carried out as part of government commitments.**

Lastly, it should be noted here that implementing and developing accountability processes must also take into account some of its potential negative aspects (which may be the same as those of evaluation), such as overloading monitoring and performance systems; the accountability paradox, where greater visibility of government action does not necessarily entail better government (Halachmi, 2002 and Dubnick, 2003); and the fact that meeting accountability requirements does not necessarily translate into the better functioning of public services (Van Thiel and Leeuw, 2003).

2. Comparative experiences

Most countries like ours have structured accountability instruments. Their significance and development have increased, in recent decades, in line with the demand for transparency in government action and, as a consequence, the demand for tools enabling more effective control thereof. However, we are faced with a variety of cases depending on the different political cultures and structures of States and of government, which leads to a wide diversity in accountability procedures as regards their scope, the sphere in which they take place, and the institutions promoting them.

As regards accountability systems within the executive itself, a particularly noteworthy example is the experience of the United Kingdom, which structured accountability for the first time in the Prime Minister's Delivery Unit, aimed at analysing to extent to which the government programme had been achieved. This unit was eliminated in 2010, and replaced by the Prime Minister's Implementation Unit, responsible for implementing the Government's priorities and monitoring compliance with the programme. In Canada, the Results and Delivery Unit was created in 2016, implementing a monitoring and accountability system that quantified and published the extent to which goals and guidelines had been met, through the Ministerial Mandate Letters. And the USA has a long-standing tradition of strategic planning, monitoring and accountability, particularly

through the White House Office of Management and Budget, which is responsible for promoting and achieving the implementation of government programmes, and for carrying out accountability exercises, in addition to its budget-related tasks.

Noteworthy in the European Union is France's recent creation, in 2019, of the Interministerial Directorate for Public Transformation, reporting to the team of the President of the Republic and of the Prime Minister. This body monitors government transformations, reforms, and planning at the ministerial level. Moreover, in early 2021 France implemented a monitoring system of public action results. In the case of Italy, there is a Government Programme Office that is part of the Presidency of the Council of Ministers. Its Programme Oversight Service undertakes the duty to monitor the application of the government programme and commitments.

Lastly, in Latin American countries, Colombia has a noteworthy tradition regarding monitoring the extent to which the goals of the Presidency are met; there is a National Planning Department, and a Presidential Advisory Office for Compliance Management, both of them reporting to the Presidency of the Government.

Spain has also promoted accountability mechanisms in different regional, provincial and local administrations. However, to date there have been no previous nationwide accountability experiences which, promoted by the national Government itself, address all of its actions, using the approach of analysing the extent to which the commitments adopted have been met.

III. The accountability exercise undertaken by the Presidency of the Government of Spain

1. Background and regulatory framework

The representation system replaced or supplemented the preceding imperative mandate, thus freeing representatives from the precise instructions of their constituents (which could be institutions or individuals) and also from accountability for direct non-compliance with those instructions. Under the representation system, representatives obtain the trust of their constituents, as well as free, open powers to manage and safeguard the interests of all their constituents in the most appropriate and favourable manner, with the aim of protecting the general interest.

At present, there seems to be a more or less generalized consensus that the representative mandate makes it possible to better address States' complex political action. However, it is **just as important to emphasize that this system of government may eventually lead to a certain feeling of distance between those with that mandate and their voters**; voters may feel that their interests have not been channelled or addressed properly, calling into question this critical feature of representativeness and, by extension, of democracy.

To mitigate this risk, **accountability exercises are based on the recognition that the legitimacy of public decisions does not solely stem from the electoral process and from respect for and application of rules and procedures, but, rather, that it is necessary to strengthen the ties between constituents, representatives, and the executive branch.**

The Spanish Constitution sets forth that the political form of the Spanish State is that of a parliamentary monarchy (article 1.3) and effectuates the principle of representative democracy by stipulating that the Parliament [Congress of Deputies and Senate] are the "representatives of the Spanish people" (article 66.1), in whom sovereignty is vested (article 1.2), while attributing thereto the legislative power and scrutiny over the Government's actions (article 66.2).

The election of the President of the Government stems from a candidate winning the confidence of the legislative body, specifically that of the Congress of Deputies, to which the candidate presents the Government's political programme in order to be inaugurated (article 99). This confidence-based relationship, which must be maintained throughout the term of office, means that Parliament must exercise scrutiny over the Government's actions. Parliament's scrutiny of the executive is, therefore, inherent to our parliamentary system. To undertake this duty, the Spanish Parliament has recourse to a number of instruments regulated in Title V of the Constitution (questions, inquiries, requests for information, investigation committees, etc.).

In addition to this form of scrutiny, our legal and political system has a great many other mechanisms aimed at the need to scrutinize the public authorities in general, and the Government in particular. Examples of these include:

- Instruments deriving from the Constitution:
  - The judiciary as a guarantor of prevailing law.
  - Institutions reporting directly to Parliament, which are entrusted with specific scrutiny-related duties, such as the Ombudsman and the Court of Auditors.
  - Bodies, such as the Council of State, that advise the Government.
  - Other mechanisms deriving from the implementation of the right of access to public information set forth in article 105 of the Constitution, such as the Council on Transparency and Good Governance.
- Network of mechanisms, also set forth by law, to scrutinize the activity of the Government and of the Public Administration:
  - The State Administration Comptroller General's Office, entrusted with verifying, *ex ante,* that the State public sector's economic and financial activity complies with the principles of legality, economy, efficiency and effectiveness.
  - Bodies that carry out public policy evaluation.

In addition, **this exercise adds a new form of accountability whereby the Government voluntarily offers information directly to the public regarding progress made towards meeting the commitments undertaken from its inauguration and throughout its entire term of office. An initiative adapted to the constitutional framework, aligned with the values and principles of enhancement of democracy that are enshrined in the Constitution and with the fundamental right to political participation.**

Therefore, the accountability presented herein complements the possibilities of a system geared towards scrutinizing the executive, in this case as a self-imposed obligation. Its defining elements, which we will describe later, make it a unique instrument that does not overlap with those that already exist. And even though it is not part of the executive-legislative relationship (unlike many of the others mentioned above), still, it does not ignore said relationship. Quite the opposite, **it offers instruments to strengthen Parliament's scrutiny possibilities**, and in no case does it undermine the significant scrutiny carried out by the other pre-existing mechanisms, nor does it limit the possibility of establishing new mechanisms to address related, but different, needs.

Moreover, the information made public through this new instrument makes it possible to **enhance the direct relationship between the executive and the public**, thus connecting with the current forms of governance of the most participatory representative democracies, in order to respond to the demands of ever more educated

and informed societies. This means bringing government action closer to the public, and realizing citizens' right to participate in public decision-making. Its fundamental premise is better scrutiny of political leaders through greater transparency, greater public responsibility, and submission to public scrutiny of all decisions adopted.

In short, open government as governance culture, fully aligned with the political and legal values and foundations of the European Union, whose primary law stipulates that institutions are required to give their citizens the opportunity to make known and publicly exchange their views in all areas of action. These institutions, moreover, shall maintain an open, transparent and regular dialogue with civil society (article 11 of the Treaty on European Union).

2. Origin and purpose of the commitment to be accountable to the citizenry

The commitment to accountability implemented through the ***Meeting our commitments*** report and all of the accompanying informational documents and instruments was **affirmed by the President of the Government at the press conference following the first Council of Ministers meeting of this term of office, held on 14 January 2020, at which he stated the following:**

> "**One new development I would like to share with you is that over the course of these 1,400 days, we will be giving regular account of the advances made in each area, in each ministry, and we also intend to give regular account of the progress made by the new Government in these lines of action** [...] sharing the advances made by our country towards each of these five major transformations, and explaining, whenever necessary, the obstacles that we encounter along the way to setting and meeting these objectives."

The main purpose of this statement is to reaffirm the value of promises kept, as a driver of and planning horizon for Government action. Consequently, what this exercise aims to do is to identify and publicize progress made towards meeting the commitments undertaken, as well as to contribute to the Government's strategic planning.

Moreover, this exercise is also intended to form part of a wider process for strengthening the quality of our democracy, of open government based on transparent reporting, on access to information and on assuming responsibilities. In terms of public governance, the goal is to address the concerns of a citizenry that is increasingly well informed, demanding and engaged, and to submit government actions to public debate and judgement by the citizenry and social intermediaries. **We are certain that this will strengthen trust in our democratic institutions, through mechanisms and structures making it possible to learn about, understand and examine the work of public representatives.** And as the President of the Government affirmed in his inaugural address, "we must combat the public's political disaffection with clear exercises in transparency, strict control mechanisms, and accountability guarantees."

In sum, the aim of implementing this system is to **contribute to the process of democratic enhancement of our country, not only by implementing it but above all through its continuity and regularity.**

Lastly, it also must be highlighted that the exercise also forms part of an institutional learning process which enables the President of the Government and the different ministries to generate knowledge, understand their environment and learn (Hedberg, 1981), while also making changes and adapting to new social, political and institutional paradigms and circumstances. In this regard, there is no doubt that **the monitoring on which accountability is based, as well as the debate that it may incite, will enable improvements to be made to the actions of the Government**, especially in the areas of planning and oversight, contributing highly relevant information on governmental action.

3. Definition and characteristics

In this exercise, **accountability is understood as the process whereby the President of the Government regularly submits the achievement of commitments undertaken, as well as the forecast for the next period, to public scrutiny.**

- **INITIATIVE.** This accountability exercise **is launched by the President of the Government**, who, upon taking office, undertook the explicit commitment to give regular account of the advances and progress made by the Government.
- **IMPLEMENTATION.** The accountability process is undertaken by the Office of the Presidency of the Government, and is **promoted by the Secretariat-General of the Presidency of the Government, through the DPM** (which was created for this specific purpose), with the active collaboration of all ministries. The funding of the accountability exercise comes from the DPM budget, under the Secretariat-General of the Office of the Presidency of the Government.
- **PURPOSE OF THE ACCOUNTABILITY EXERCISE. The accountability exercise analyses the extent to which the commitments undertaken by the Government of Spain and implemented, mainly, by the General State Administration, have been met.** This accountability report also references the main actions undertaken to manage the pandemic, but for information purposes only; such actions are not analysed from the perspective of assessing the achievement of the commitments described herein.

  No analysis whatsoever will be conducted of activities undertaken by other actors belonging to the multi-level structure of the Spanish State, such as the regional administrations of Spain's self-governing Autonomous Communities, or of provincial or local entities.

— **TERRITORIAL SCOPE. This accountability exercise encompasses the entire territory of the Spanish State**, irrespective of the scope of each commitment, which may be international, European, national, regional, provincial or local and municipal.

— **TARGET AUDIENCE.** This accountability report is addressed to the entire citizenry and, therefore, also to Parliament, political parties, academia, the media, civil society and any social intermediary interested in the analysis, evaluation and scrutiny of the Government's action.

4. Principles

This accountability exercise is founded on the following principles:

— **COMPLEMENTARITY. It complements the existing instruments to scrutinize the work of the executive**, due both to its aims and to its subject matter.

— **GLOBAL AND SHARED NATURE. It encompasses the action of the Government of Spain as a whole** and, although it is promoted by the Presidency through the DPM, it draws on information shared by all of the ministries.

— **COMPREHENSIVENESS. It seeks to include all the commitments undertaken** by the President of the Government and by the ministers from their inauguration and throughout their entire term of office.

— **DYNAMISM. It follows the course of events as they unfold, and aims to monitor the entire formulation of commitments** from adoption to achievement or, where applicable, reformulation or relinquishment, identifying their status at all times, as well as the reasons underlying any changes.

— **TRACEABILITY. It makes it possible to know the achievement status of the commitments at any given moment** of the term of office.

— **PROVEN METHODOLOGY. It is carried out taking as a reference the best standards used internationally in comparative experiences, and its design was submitted to the scrutiny of the Analysis Group**, which comprises experts of recognized prestige, expertise, and accredited know-how in analysing public policies and accountability, from different universities and academic institutions.

— **PUBLIC NATURE. The results are set forth in different outputs that are presented publicly to the citizenry and may be consulted.** Noteworthy among these outputs is the *Meeting our commitments* report, the sectoral and territorial accountability reports, a series of documents and materials which, as part of an open data policy, facilitate knowledge of all of the commitments and related initiatives, in line with the principles of transparency and access to information.

— **SUBMISSION TO PUBLIC SCRUTINY.** Throughout the term of office, different activities and forums are being organized to ensure that both the citizenry as a whole, and the most representative actors and stakeholders, can attain in-depth knowledge of and discuss the reports submitted. Their contributions are also included in the update of the methodological bases.

— **ONGOING AND PERIODICAL NATURE.** The exercise shall be conducted over the entire term of office, thus contributing to laying the foundations for its future permanence. Foreseeably, reports will be published twice-yearly regarding the extent to which the commitments have been met, together with detailed information about the government action (in terms of commitments and initiatives), and any other information considered relevant.

— **GENDER PERSPECTIVE.** The principle of equality between men and women has been taken into account both in designing the methodological processes and in the composition of the teams working on accountability and the Analysis Group.

— **LOW INFORMATION TRANSACTION COSTS.** Efforts are being made so that requests for information from the ministries and public bodies regarding commitments and the initiatives undertaken to meet them are not excessive, and do not represent high costs for these bodies at management level (monitoring overload), or in terms of time and energy. This is one of the principal responsibilities of the DPM.

— **EXTERNAL VERIFICATION.** Work is being done to ensure that the methodology designed by the DPM has been duly and rigorously applied in achieving the results contained in the published reports.

— **MITIGATION OF THE RATCHET EFFECT.** This effect, in general, entails an undesirable incentive to curb targets or commitments so that performance indicators are higher or more favourable, either by lowering targets or by omitting any new commitments that have been undertaken. This effect is mitigated by continually incorporating any new commitments undertaken, as well as individually identifying and substantiating the reasons for any commitments having been relinquished.

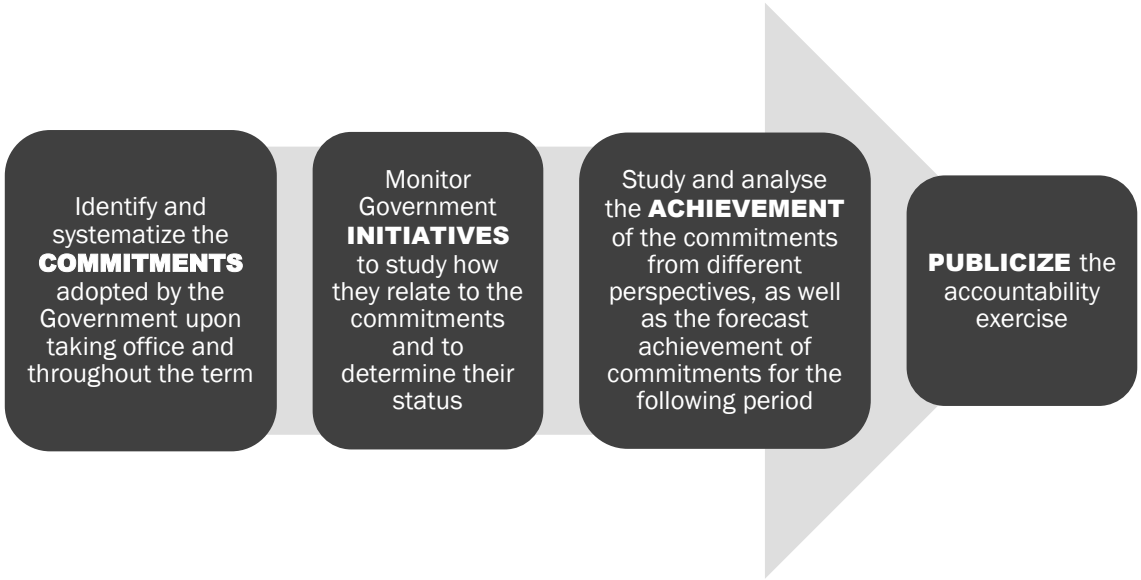
— **AVOIDANCE OF THE GAMING EFFECT.** Typically, any accountability system in which the attainment of results is linked to positive or negative incentives for those tasked with implementing or managing activities deriving from commitments can cause the units responsible to modify their conduct or tamper with the actual results achieved. This accountability system mitigates this undesired effect by making accountability dynamic, comprehensive and shared, which establishes a system of checks and balances in incorporating commitments and determining their status.

5. Work system and tools

The system adopted to structure the accountability exercise is as follows:

STEP 1: ESTABLISH THE THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK, by analysing comparative experiences and the possible ways of fitting the accountability exercise into Spain's constitutional and administrative framework.
STEP 2: DETERMINE THE PURPOSE OF THE ACCOUNTABILITY EXERCISE. In this regard, it has been considered that the programme to be implemented by the Government is that presented in the inaugural address of the then candidate for the Presidency of the Government, extended by the additional content of the agreements formalized between political groups that made the positive outcome of that vote possible. In addition, the purpose of this exercise also encompasses those commitments formally undertaken by ministers when addressing Parliament to present the strategic lines of action of their ministries. Lastly, it also includes the commitments undertaken by the Government throughout its term of office.
STEP 3: DESIGN AND IMPLEMENT THE METHODOLOGICAL PROCESSES AND TOOLS FOR MONITORING THE GOVERNMENT'S ACTION, always with a view to institutional learning and continual improvement, so as to strengthen the system in a way that is compatible with the continuity (and comparability) of the analysis over the course of the entire term of office.

This work gives rise to the definition of the following sequence of methodological processes, which will be analysed in detail in subsequent sections:



To facilitate the process, **the DPM has designed and implemented a software tool called TELEOS which (i) serves as a repository of all the information obtained in the identification and monitoring of commitments and initiatives; (ii) enables it to be shared with the ministries so that they may correct, clarify and complete it, in a secure manner that guarantees the integrity of information; (iii) offers the possibility of rapidly analysing the results; and (iv) provides formats for displaying the information to others.**

6. Analysis of commitments

6.1. What is a commitment?

Generally speaking, a commitment could be defined as the expression of an intention to carry out an initiative, or a set of initiatives, in order to address a need or solve a problem. It is, therefore, an obligation undertaken voluntarily by the party expressing the commitment.

Using this definition as a starting point, **for the purposes of this accountability exercise, a commitment is any statement, obligation, promise, or declaration expressly made by the Government to respond to a specific public need or problem and, to a certain degree, to convey the will to transform reality. A commitment, therefore, generates an expectation in third parties, and in return, a responsibility and obligation for the Government to respond,** materialized in a formal process in which actions may be judged by the citizenry.

However, the announcement of actions, measures, plans, programmes, or strategies to be carried out as part of the ordinary activity or management of ministries or bodies attached thereto is not considered a commitment, as they do not involve the will to effect change that is intrinsic to government action.

6.2. Where do commitments come from?

The sources of commitments are:

- the President of the Government's inaugural address;
- the Coalition Agreement for a Progressive Government formalized between PSOE and Unidas Podemos;
- the agreements formalized between PSOE and other political groups that voted in favour of the coalition government, or other agreements of a similar nature that may be subsequently formalized; and
- and public addresses by the President of the Government and the ministers in Parliament, as well as public declarations made by them.[2]

Moreover, in the first half of 2021, the Recovery, Transformation and Resilience Plan (RTRP) was approved, a Plan whose significance and cross-cutting nature require updating the global map of commitments with the measures contained therein. The criteria used for this purpose are explained in section 6.3.

In all of these cases, to understand that we are facing a new commitment, it is necessary to have an accurate and specific source of verification, either oral or written, in order to identify who formulated it, when and in what terms.

6.3. How are commitments updated?

Reality is not static, but dynamic and changing, and so are public needs and problems. Therefore, the Government's actions and its capacity to respond to new challenges require updating its commitments, incorporating new targets and lines of action in addition to the promises made at the beginning of the Government's term of office, and reformulating those already existing.

A tangible example of this is the Covid-19 pandemic, which has led to government action in every sphere. The Government undertook new short- and medium-term commitments seeking to respond to the consequences of the pandemic and to mitigate its effects, mostly its social and economic impacts.

In all cases, the exercise incorporates the traceability of all commitments, enabling the clear identification of new commitments and of those that have been modified, so as to know (i) when they were created or incorporated into the accountability exercise, (ii) what their status is at any given time, (iii) when they have been met, and (iv) where

[2] Those formulated by the State-owned business sector shall not be considered commitments. However, if a member of the Government formulates a commitment that a State-owned company is responsible for implementing, this shall be incorporated into the exercise.

appropriate, when they have been eliminated or relinquished. Doing so will guarantee the integrity of the information and the possibility of detailed monitoring and analysis.

Furthermore, in each edition of the report disaggregated achievement results are offered regarding (i) the commitments formulated at the beginning of the term of office, (ii) the commitments existing until the previous edition, and (iii) the total number of commitments undertaken as at the reporting date.

INCORPORATION OF NEW COMMITMENTS

The criteria for incorporating new commitments are the following:

- They must have been **expressly formulated and be verifiable**, which requires that they be included in a written document or public declaration.
- **A certain period of time also needs to have passed between the formulation of the commitment and the materialization of the initiative. Therefore, an announcement** of an initiative that is already underway and that will materialize imminently **cannot be considered a new commitment**.
- **They may be identified by the DPM in its monitoring of ministries, or by the ministries themselves.** In all cases, both teams will jointly analyse the need to include them, following the criteria set forth herein.

Generally speaking, the approval of a plan or strategy does not mean that the commitments or goals contained therein are automatically incorporated into this exercise, for several reasons, including (i) the fact that doing so would increase the volume of work relating to very specific commitments in highly specific areas, thus distorting the image of government action priorities, and (ii) plans and strategies usually set forth internal mechanisms for monitoring and analysing results.

Similarly, meeting any commitment that requires establishing an agenda for subsequent action will not mean that the content of said agenda gives rise to new commitments.

However, as mentioned above, the case of the RTRP is different, because it has been conceived as a fundamental instrument for the Government of Spain between 2021 and 2023, aimed at achieving sustained recovery and transformation, and resilient development.

Indeed, **the significance and cross-cutting nature of the RTRP requires that its 212 measures (investments and reforms) become integrated into an updated map of commitments**, because, moreover, they fully respond to the definition of commitment, as they are expressions of intent explicitly stated by the Government, through the approval of an agreement at the Council of Ministers meeting of 27 April 2021, and have the clear aim of transforming the country's economic, social and environmental reality.

However, part of the investments and reforms of the RTRP were already present among the Government's commitments. Therefore, and given that the RTRP has its own monitoring system, linked to the requirements set forth by the European Union, its 212 have not been directly and automatically incorporated into this exercise, but, rather, applying the following criteria:

- Those measures that fully coincide with existing commitments have not generated new commitments, to prevent overlapping.
- When a measure addresses the same reality as an existing commitment, but offers a different solution, the commitment has been reformulated.
- If the measure is in part included in an existing commitment, a new commitment has been generated to include those aspects not envisaged previously.
- If the measure is absolutely new, an identical commitment has been incorporated.

SYNTHESIZING EXISTING COMMITMENTS

Exceptionally, and in very specific circumstances, **it may be necessary to eliminate commitments, for two main reasons: because there are duplicates; or because new, broader commitments have appeared, encompassing previous commitments that had a narrower scope.** Commitments that have been eliminated are identified in an appendix, which will include the reason for their elimination.

6.4. Classifications used

As shown above, commitments vary greatly as regards their source, content, characteristics, and degree of complexity, which has an impact on how ministries must act in order to achieve them.

Therefore, it is necessary to analyse the status of commitments, not only globally but also by grouping them according to different criteria.

For the purposes of the accountability report, the following are understood to be the most interesting parameters for classification:

- The **origin or source**, because it makes it possible to prioritize commitments, offer partial results (especially interesting in the case of agreements formalized between different political groups), and compare the evolution of commitments formulated at the same moment in time.
- The **strategic lines of the President of the Government's inaugural address**, because they make it possible to analyse the extent to which the commitments are aligned with the goals outlined in the programme presented at the beginning of the term of

office. This is especially significant from the standpoint of the confidence vested by Parliament.

— The **cross-cutting lines** mainstreamed throughout the measures of the RTRP, because they make it possible to analyse how the commitments are aligned with this nationwide plan's strategic priorities.

— The **Sustainable Development Goals** (SDGs), because they make it possible to analyse how the commitments are aligned with the United Nations targets as set forth in the 2030 Agenda.

— The **Classification of the Functions of Government** (COFOG), because it makes it possible to analyse commitments on the basis of an internationally standardized classification that originated in the United Nations and is widely used in analysing public expenditure, programmes and policies, according to the purpose sought.

These parameters are described in detail as follows.

CLASSIFICATION BY ORIGIN OR SOURCE

Depending on the origin or source of the commitments, as stated in section 6.2. above, there are five types of commitments:

— The President of the Government's **inaugural address.**

— **Agreements**, which include: (i) the PSOE-Unidas Podemos progressive coalition agreement; (ii) the agreements formalized between PSOE and ERC, PNV, Compromís, Nueva Canarias, BNG and Teruel Existe to obtain support for the inauguration of the President of the Government; and (iii) any other agreements of an analogous nature which may be formalized throughout the term of office, either with political groups, with other levels of the public administration, or with any third party.

— Public **statements or declarations** made by the President of the Government or by the ministers, including: (i) the first addresses by the ministers to Parliament, explaining the strategic lines of their ministry, and (ii) other addresses delivered at institutional or sectoral forums throughout the term of office.

— The **RTRP**.

— **Other sources**, such as announcements, addresses delivered by ministers at different forums, institutional declarations, press conferences, etc.

CLASSIFICATION BY STRATEGIC LINE

This classification organizes the commitments around the six areas set forth by the President of the Government in the inaugural address:

— **Economic growth**, the creation of **decent jobs** and the sustainability of the **pension** system.

— The **digitalization** of our economy.

— A **just ecological transition**.

— Real and effective **equality** between women and men.

— **Social justice**.

— Dialogue, and an understanding of **Spain as a country united in its diversity and committed to a Europe** based on human rights.

CLASSIFICATION BY CROSS-CUTTING LINE OF THE RTRP

The cross-cutting lines or guiding principles of the RTRP are the aspirations that, according to the Plan itself, guide the entire recovery process:

— A green Spain

— A digital Spain

— A gender gap-free Spain

— A cohesive and inclusive Spain

Additionally, it has been necessary to create a category ("Other") in which to classify those commitments that cannot be assigned to any of these categories.

CLASSIFICATION BY SDG

The purpose of this classification is not to offer an approach to progress regarding achievement of the SDGs (which is carried out, among other instruments, through the progress reports on the implementation of the 2030 Agenda in Spain) but, rather, to incorporate a new approach making it possible to know the extent to which the commitments are aligned with the SDGs:

CLASSIFICATION BY FUNCTION OF GOVERNMENT

The COFOG is an internationally standardized classification that makes it possible to structure commitments according to the spheres of reality in which they operate:

- General public services
- Defence, public order and safety
- Economic affairs
- Environmental protection
- Housing and community amenities
- Health
- Recreation, culture and religion
- Education
- Social Protection

7. Initiatives

7.1. What is an initiative?

An initiative is any **public measure, action, or decision that launches a process or mobilizes resources (human, budgetary, material, or organizational) aimed at addressing a public need or problem**, whether involving citizens, institutions, the environment, or any other subject or object that may benefit from government action.

This includes working on, or approving, a single action or a plan, a programme, a strategy, a bill, or any other instrument or action that may mobilize the aforementioned resources.

7.2. What are the sources of verification of initiatives?

Given that initiatives stem from the action of all of the members of the executive body, and that their nature is diverse, there is no single source of initiatives that encompasses every action and decision adopted.

Therefore, to find the initiatives carried out by the Government, it is necessary to consult different public information channels:

— **formal**, such as references to the Council of Ministers, and the Official State Gazette (BOE); or

— **informational**, such as press releases on official websites, and publications uploaded to official accounts on social networks.

In all cases, **the information obtained from these sources is checked against the different ministries, because the accountability exercise carried out by the DPM is bidirectional and shared.** This means that in addition to the DPM monitoring, the ministries are asked to review the initiatives identified, and to explain them, add any necessary nuance, and supplement them with others that have not been made public, so as to have an overview of all actions linked to commitments.

Every initiative identified must have at least one specific source of verification that corroborates its existence, as well as its coherence with the achievement status indicated in the accountability report (see section 8). And in those cases in which the initiative does not have a public dimension (because it is part of the ministry's internal work, drafts, meetings, etc.) this circumstance is expressly indicated.

7.3. Territorial breakdown of initiatives

Given that the accountability exercise aims to bring government action closer to citizens, one of the goals of this report is to disaggregate the information obtained through monitoring, so as to present in each Autonomous Community the initiatives carried out by the Government in its territory, with full respect for the Spanish Constitution and the corresponding Statute of Autonomy as regards the distribution of authority.

Therefore, the organization of the initiatives underscores their territorial scope, distinguishing between:

- International initiatives
- European Union initiatives
- National initiatives:
  - **Initiatives that can be broken down by territory:** those implemented for the entire country, but whose actions can be analysed in a disaggregated manner because they generate outputs or results at the territorial level.
  - **Initiatives that cannot be broken down by territory:** those implemented for the entire country, but whose actions cannot be analysed in a disaggregated manner.
- **Initiatives whose territorial scope is not national:** those implemented in one or several Autonomous Communities, provinces, or other local or municipal entities.

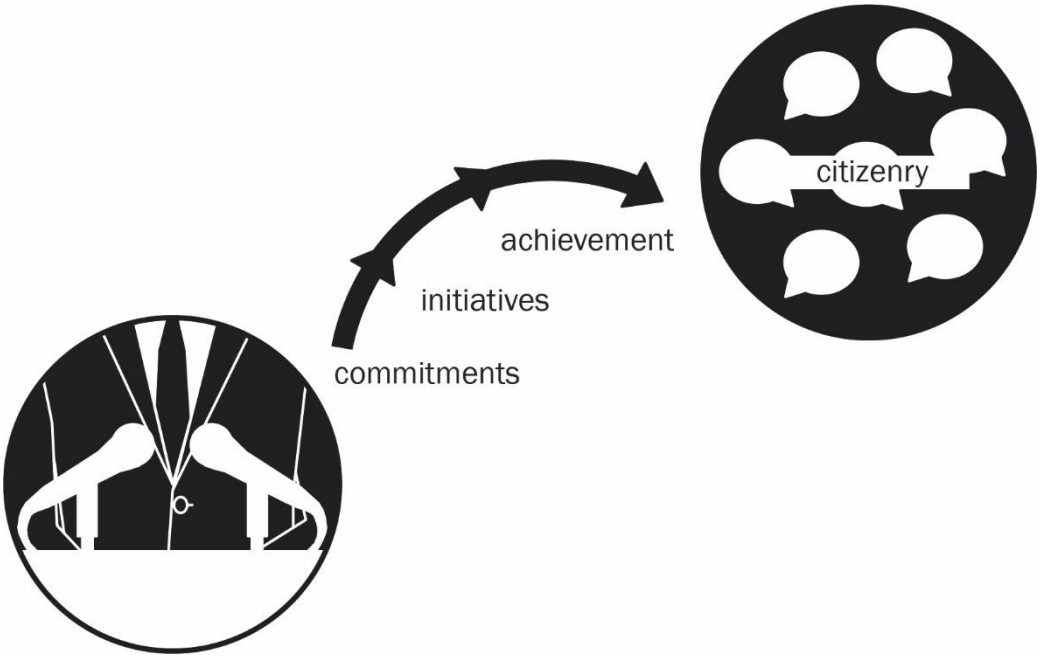
Thanks to this classification, work is being done to ensure that accountability is provided in a standardized and coherent manner, but also specifically, in Spain's Autonomous Communities, its 50 provinces and its two Autonomous Cities.

8. Meeting our commitments

Analysing whether commitments have been met consists in **determining the extent to which the promised outputs, results, or ongoing actions have been delivered or achieved**.

The following image reflects the process that determines the achievement of commitments.

Figure 1. *Process involved in achieving commitments.*



8.1. Relationship between initiatives and commitments

An initiative is understood to **"activate" a commitment when it launches the process or chain of initiatives that will, in time, result in the achievement or delivery of the promised output, result, or ongoing action.**

In certain cases, the number of actions, phases or processes required to generate a specific output or result may be small. However, meeting other commitments will entail a more complex deployment of resources and activities. Indeed, given the diversity of the commitments undertaken, a single initiative or a number of different but interrelated initiatives may be required in order to meet the expectations generated.

The opposite may also occur. An initiative may have effects corresponding to more than one commitment, either because they are related, or because the initiative involves acting in different public policy dimensions or sectors.

8.2. Status of commitments

There are three possible options regarding the status of each commitment: activated, not activated, and relinquished.

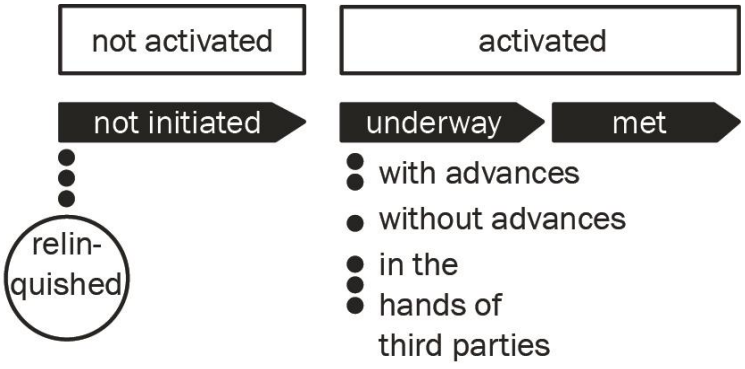
— Commitments are **"not activated"** when, as yet, no initiative has been undertaken to meet them.

— However, they become **"activated"** when such initiatives have been implemented. This, in turn, will determine whether they are **"underway"**, or have been completed, and, therefore, **"met"**.

— Lastly, commitments are **"relinquished"** when the Government expressly decides not to pursue them.

Not activated, underway, met and relinquished are mutually exclusive categorizations; a commitment cannot have more than one categorization at the same time.

Figure 2. Status of commitments.



Determining the criteria that define these different statuses is undoubtedly crucial for the government activity accountability exercise carried out by the DPM and for this reason we will now analyse the sequence in greater detail.

COMMITMENTS UNDERWAY

A commitment is considered underway when an initiative has been launched or carried out to facilitate or enable its achievement in the future. That is to say, when activities underway or measures implemented will lead to the generation of a planned output, result, or ongoing action.

The diversity of commitments and initiatives alike makes it difficult to establish a common sequence for the process that is sufficiently consistent with the characteristics of each commitment. However, to reflect the progress and dynamism of government

action, several stages have been identified, ranging from a commitment that has not been activated to a commitment that has been completed or met:

- A commitment is **underway - with advances** when, in the six-month period of reference, activities or initiatives have been carried out that have advanced the progress towards meeting it.
- However, a commitment is **underway - without advances** when no activities have been carried out in the six-month period of reference that have led to any identifiable progress, even if some have been carried out in the past.
- A commitment is **in the hands of third parties** when the action required to further or to achieve the commitment is no longer solely the responsibility of the Government, because a specific milestone or procedure falls outside the scope of its duties and authority. Although the Government has mechanisms for coordination, negotiation, and the forming of majorities, meeting the commitments no longer depends exclusively on the Government.

COMMITMENTS MET

The decision regarding when to consider that the Government has met a commitment is, understandably, another of the Gordian knots of the accountability exercise.

Intuitively, everyone has an approximate idea of when a commitment has been met. However, when we analyse each commitment on a case-by-case basis, we find nuances that complicate the matter.

To answer this question, it is important to remember that accountability is the result of planning and monitoring, and does not, therefore, constitute an evaluation, at least not in the terms most often used in public policy analysis. Consequently, as already mentioned, it is not a matter of measuring the effectiveness or efficiency of the initiatives adopted. Quite the opposite, because this exercise is on a different level: namely, it aims to determine whether the initiatives adopted can be interpreted in the framework of the commitments undertaken and, therefore, enable the Government to confirm that it has kept its word.

The key lies in setting the finishing line. To this end, different criteria have been established depending on whether the commitments are "specific" or entail "ongoing action":

- **Specific commitments** are those which identify a perfectly defined output or result clearly, directly, and unequivocally. Therefore, **they will be considered to have been achieved or completed precisely when their stated output or result has been obtained.**

For this to occur, the Government must have done everything within its authority to advance towards that achievement, and, moreover, the process itself must have been completed, regardless of whether the Government is responsible for the final phases.

— **Ongoing action commitments** are those that have been formulated in a more abstract or aspirational manner, and require sustained or repeated action over time. The problem they pose is that they do not set a specific, measurable target.

  Therefore, to make them more specific, it has been decided that **they will be considered to have been met when relevant initiatives have been carried out aimed at achieving those vaguely defined goals**. Otherwise, citizens would have the mistaken impression that, despite the efforts made, the Government is either not meeting its commitments, or is undertaking unattainable commitments, and this could be a disincentive to setting long-term goals.

To this end, the following conditions have been established regarding when a commitment or finishing line can be considered to have been met or reached:

— **When it is interpreted that the measures and actions implemented have sufficiently[3] modified the starting point for it to be considered that the public problem or need has been addressed by the Government,** and, therefore, that it would not be strictly necessary to carry out further actions in this regard.

— **In the case of commitments that refer to an activity involving promotion, preservation, maintenance, fostering, or advancing, such commitments will be considered achieved when the earmarked budget has been executed, and sufficient promotional activities, events, contracts, agreements, or any other usual activities have been carried out.**

— **Those commitments which, due to their complexity, prove difficult or impossible to achieve,** at least in a strictly literal sense, **shall be understood to have been achieved if each ministry undertakes its specific duties and responsibilities in such a way that progress is made towards achieving the goals or targets set in each one.**

In all cases, a commitment can only be considered to have been met **if the initiatives adopted are fit for purpose**; ordinary and/or management activities are insufficient. **It is, therefore, essential that actions be aimed at transforming the current situation, whether quantitatively or qualitatively.**

The above notwithstanding, when determining the extent to which these commitments have been met, **our intention is to convey the idea that they are "being met" and not so much that, strictly speaking, they have already been "met", given that in many cases they are inherently ongoing**. Moreover, once the indicator of achievement has been

[3] Sufficiency is determined depending on the objective condition for meeting the commitment.

reached, the status of the commitment may be changed (i.e. its status may go back to "underway") if there has been an evident deterioration in the problem or starting point or when it is seen that the activity of the unit responsible for implementing the necessary initiatives has ostensibly declined.

RELINQUISHED COMMITMENTS

A commitment will be understood to have been relinquished **when the Government has expressly decided not to pursue it**, whether due to a change in priorities or because it has been invalidated by a regulation, agreement or decision.

In all cases, and as with their different levels of achievement, the relinquishment of commitments will be expressly explained in the report covering the period in which this decision is taken, so that the general public is informed of the reasons for which they were adopted, pursuant to the **principle of meeting expectations or giving explanations,** by which the accountability exercise is inspired.

THE IMPACT OF GENERAL STATE BUDGET ON THE ACHIEVEMENT OF COMMITMENTS

Finally, given the significance of the General State Budget as a core instrument of the Government's actions, it makes sense to end this section on methodological bases with a brief explanation of the impact this budget is considered to have on the achievement of commitments.

A commitment can be considered to have been activated when a specific General State Budget item has been allocated to it, as this reflects a public, quantified, and definite intention to implement it within a set framework, at least a financial one. Similarly, if a commitment is underway, the allocation of a budget item indicates that the ministries are continuing to make provision for it; in this case, financially. Therefore, in both cases, the commitment will be categorized as "underway – with advances", and will be considered to have been met when the item is effectively applied.

However, when the commitment itself consists entirely in making a budget allocation, it will be considered to have been met if the General State Budget Act includes the stipulated amount or increase.

9. Presenting the accountability report

9.1. How the status of commitments is expressed

Once the commitments have been identified, the initiatives monitored, and the achievement of commitments assessed, the next step of the exercise consists in analysing the information obtained and presenting it in an accountability report for public disclosure, together with a set of appendices containing supplementary information.

The analysis of the extent to which commitments have been met reflects the questions raised throughout these bases:

- **It addresses, from a quantitative perspective, the extent to which the commitments have been met, to offer a global assessment** from three points in time that respond to the dynamism that characterizes this exercise:
  - **Firstly, an analysis is conducted of the progress made towards meeting the commitments made by the Government upon taking office;** i.e. those included in the inaugural address given by the President of the Government, in the programme agreements formalized with other political groups, and in the statements made by the ministers when first addressing the Congress of Deputies or the Senate to present their ministries' strategic lines of action. We thus obtain the percentage of commitments met out of the total commitments made by the Government upon taking office.
  - **Secondly, an analysis is conducted of the progress made towards meeting the commitments existing at the date of the report covering the previous period**, i.e. those commitments undertaken by the Government upon taking office and all the new commitments adopted until the close of the preceding period, excluding any relinquished or duplicated commitments. We thus obtain a percentage of the commitments met out of the total number of commitments existing at the reporting date of the previous period.
  - **And, thirdly, an analysis is conducted of the progress made towards meeting all the commitments existing at the date of the report covering the current period**, which includes those commitments undertaken by the Government upon taking office, those undertaken up until the previous reporting date and those added in the current six-month period, excluding any relinquished or duplicated commitments. We thus obtain the percentage of commitments met out of the total number of existing commitments at the reporting date.

- **At each of these moments in time, percentages are also obtained for commitments underway** (together with their different categorizations—without advances, with advances and in the hands of third parties), **not yet activated, and relinquished**.
- **Moreover, the results regarding the meeting of commitments are disaggregated, based on the different criteria considered the most relevant**:
  - The origin or source of the commitments.
  - The Government's strategic lines of action.
  - The cross-cutting issues or guiding principles of the RTRP.
  - The functions of government.
- **When a report is published at the same time that the General State Budget is submitted to Parliament (which is not the case with the current edition), the impact of the possible approval of the General State Budget Act on the achievement of commitments is analysed**. Specifically, a study is made of how many commitments have been activated, advanced, or even met due to the inclusion of a specific budget item.
- Finally, the accountability exercise includes **forecasting the percentage of commitments that will be met over the next six months**. This forecast is based on the information initially provided by the ministries on the status of commitments at the reporting date and how they expect them to evolve over the next six months.

9.2. Structure of the Report

The *Meeting our commitments* report sets forth the above-mentioned results regarding the achievement of commitments. It also includes other information of interest regarding the Government action accountability exercise. It is structured into the following sections:

- It is preceded by an **executive summary**, in which the main conclusions are presented.
- It begins with **introductory sections** in which each edition is contextualized and the most noteworthy innovations are presented.
- The core nucleus comprises the **quantitative analysis** of the extent to which the commitments have been met from all the viewpoints mentioned in the previous sub-section, including the forecast for the following period. It also includes information on the alignment of the commitments with the SDGs.
- Finally, it offers a **qualitative presentation** of the main initiatives carried out in the six-month period of reference, which may include specific details of initiatives

undertaken to address a specific need of particular significance (such as the Covid-19 pandemic and its healthcare, social and economic consequences).

The methodological bases of the exercise are presented as an Appendix to the *Meeting our commitments* report, together with the conclusions and recommendations of the Analysis Group.

9.3. Public disclosure

The *Meeting our commitments* report is made public to ensure that its content reaches its target audience given that **the purpose of the exercise is to make it easier for people to learn about the Government's actions, to publicize the extent to which the commitments made by the executive have been met, and to favour public debate and deliberation regarding the achievement of the commitments.**

To this end, the following disclosure actions are carried out:

- **Periodic accountability reports** are prepared (the different editions of the *Meeting our commitments* report) **and presented publicly. Moreover, these reports can be consulted on a microsite on the www.lamoncloa.gob.es website** in Spanish, English and French.
- The following can also be accessed on this microsite:
  - the Appendix containing **the methodological bases of each edition of the report and all the previous versions**;
  - a **downloadable database detailing all the commitments** identified up until the reporting date of the last period, which includes, in this order, (i) the origin, (ii) the current status, (iii) the initiatives justifying the status of each commitment, (iv) the cross-cutting lines of action of the inaugural address, the guiding principles of the RTRP, the SDGs and the functions of government; and
  - the other Appendices and **other materials summarizing the results regarding the achievement of commitments and the key ideas** necessary to understanding the accountability exercise.

  Furthermore, **tools are being developed** on the microsite **on an ongoing basis in an endeavour to improve the visualization of the results regarding the achievement of commitments** depending on the different classifications made, with a view to offering an approach to the commitments from different perspectives, to providing more in-depth information on Government action, and to enabling citizens to find information quickly and easily on different spheres of activity and lines of interest.

— Once the *Meeting our commitments* report for each period has been presented, a **sectoral accountability exercise** is produced **in which the ministries present to the citizenry the main actions carried out within their sphere of authority**. This information is subsequently uploaded onto the microsite where it can be consulted.

— Moreover, **the Government Delegations take stock of the actions carried out in the Autonomous Communities and Autonomous Cities**, so as to explain to the public the impact of Government action on the territories in which they live and to bring the principal measures into the perspective of their daily lives. Once again, this territorial accountability exercise can also be found on the microsite.

— In addition, beyond the aforementioned actions undertaken to present the results of the accountability exercise, the **DPM undertakes initiatives, both at the national and international levels, to raise awareness of the existence of the accountability exercise and to share its methodology with public institutions**, academia, media, social intermediaries and civil society groups that operate in the sphere of good governance and public policy analysis, through seminars, webinars, interviews, open government forums and conferences.

  The purpose of these actions is to put the theoretical foundations of the exercise to the test, in a process of ongoing improvement, both of the methodology and of the public disclosure of accountability. This is consistent with a core purpose of the exercise: that of developing a culture based on citizen participation and transparency as a mechanism of both government oversight and public information, in order to ensure the adoption of well-founded decisions.

  The actions carried out in this regard during the period of reference are described in part III of this **Appendix I**.

Finally, it should be mentioned that, **following the approval of the Open Government Forum Agreement on the Inclusive Communication of Open Government Values, the DPM has decided to join this initiative with respect to the public disclosure of the** *Meeting our commitments* report. The goal, in this aspect, is to foster inclusiveness, to make the information fully accessible, and to disseminate accountability in a manner that is comprehensible to all citizens, in particular the most vulnerable groups, including those with special needs or those affected by the digital gap.

9.4. Procedure

The *Meeting our commitments* report is prepared, at the President of the Government's request, by the DPM, which works together with all the ministries to monitor Government action and to consolidate the information necessary to obtain the results regarding the achievement of commitments.

Once the report has been completed, and also by decision of the President of the Government, **the General Committee of State Secretaries and Under-Secretaries is informed** of the scope of the accountability exercise **by the Secretary- General of the Office of the Presidency**.

Subsequently, **the President of the Government presents the *Meeting our commitments* report to the Council of Ministers**.

The report is announced in the President's address and published on the **website of the Presidency of the Government**, where the sectoral and territorial accountability exercises mentioned in section 9.3 and all the accompanying documentation are also made available.

10. Validation of results

Work is underway on the validation of results so that, in future editions, a third party, independent of the DPM, can accredit that the results regarding advances towards and the achievement of commitments set forth in the *Meeting our commitments* report have been obtained applying the methodological guidelines established herein. The aim, in essence, is for **an entity that is external to the Government to certify that the assignment of each commitment's status is rigorous and coherent with the initiatives carried out by the Government, in accordance with the parameters set by the methodological bases validated by the Analysis Group**.

The aim, thus, is to reinforce the credibility and objectivity of the exercise and to adapt it to the principles and goals that define accountability exercises.

This must not be confused, however, with the Analysis Group's review of the methodology applied, which verifies that the criteria and processes designed by the DPM to determine the status of each commitment are of sufficient quality to carry out a rigorous and objective accountability exercise.

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Part II. Analysis conducted by the Analysis Group

I. Methodological analysis: origin, purpose, and scope

As affirmed by the President of the Government in his inaugural address, his intention is not only to give account of the Government's actions to the public, but also to do so with the utmost guarantees. To this end, the DPM is engaged in a continuous improvement process to strengthen the methodology used and facilitate external verification.

This is the context that gave rise, in 2020, to the creation of an independent Methodological Analysis Group (the Analysis Group), comprising experts from public universities, to study and reflect on the methodology used by the DPM.

Essentially, the Analysis Group's work consists in submitting the accountability methodology designed by the DPM, and any updates thereto, to scrutiny and analysis, to ensure that it is furnished with the utmost internal coherence and rigour, including the best standards or criteria required to underpin the work, and to make it reliable, objective, and externally verifiable.

II. Composition of the Analysis Group

The members of the Analysis Group were selected applying a number of criteria:

- Active members of the university community.
- Gender balance.
- Excellent academic, teaching, and research credentials in their specialization.
- Specialization in the field of social sciences, in particular in the analysis, monitoring and evaluation of public policies and of government activity, or other related areas.
- Disciplinary plurality, enabling the inclusion of diverse, complementary perspectives.
- Territorial diversity among the universities of origin.

The Analysis Group that reviewed the methodological bases for the December 2020 exercise was created on the foundation of these criteria. Three new members joined the existing nine members of the Group to carry out the July 2021 exercise. The members of the Analysis Group are:

— Ares Castro-Conde, Cristina*
Professor of Political and Administration Science, University of Santiago de Compostela.

— Aymerich Ojea, Ignacio*
Tenured Professor of Philosophy of Law, Jaume I University, Castellón.

— Blanco-Fillola, Ismael
Director of the Institute of Government and Public Policy (IGOP). Professor of the Department of Political Science and Public Law, Autónoma University of Barcelona.

— Bustelo Ruesta, María
Professor of Political and Administration Science, Complutense University of Madrid.

— Canals Ametller, Dolors*
Tenured Professor of Administrative Law, University of Girona.

— Elías Méndez, Cristina
Professor of Constitutional Law, National Distance Education University (UNED)

— Innerarity Grau, Daniel
Full Professor of Political Philosophy, Ikerbasque Research Fellow, University of the Basque Country; Visiting Professor, European University Institute, Florence

— Lorenzo Rodríguez, Javier
Professor of Political Science, Carlos III University, Madrid

— Monge Lasierra, Cristina
Professor of Sociology, University of Zaragoza

— Ramió Matas, Carles
Full Professor of Political and Administration Science, Pompeu Fabra University, Barcelona

— Rodríguez Modroño, Paula
Professor of the Department of Economics, Quantitative Methods and Economic History, Pablo de Olavide University, Seville

— Villoria Mendieta, Manuel
Full Professor of Political and Administration Science, King Juan Carlos University, Madrid

III. Work dynamics of the Analysis Group

The functioning of the Analysis Group is based on a number of guidelines:

— Each member of the Analysis Group shall contribute their proven experience to the study of the methodology designed by the DPM for the accountability exercise, applying the utmost academic rigour.

— The DPM shall provide the Analysis Group with any documentation and explanations that it requires. Any processing of this information shall be confidential, and said information may not be disclosed to third parties outside the scope of the Analysis Group.

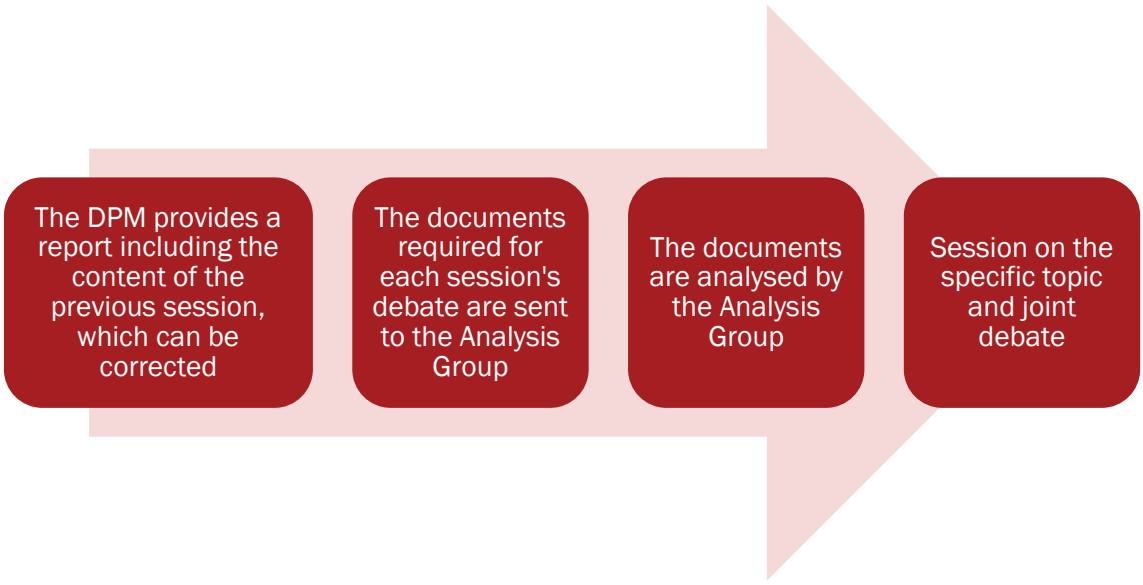
— The Analysis Group members shall undertake their work, and formulate the corresponding conclusions and/or recommendations, with absolute independence and autonomy, in a process based on free and open debate.

— On concluding its analysis, the Analysis Group shall issue a document of results (conclusions and/or recommendations) which may be attached as an appendix to the Accountability Report prepared by the DPM.

— The Analysis Group shall authorize the possible public dissemination, by the Presidency of the Government, of this collaboration.

— Beyond possible reimbursement of any travel or other substantiated expenses strictly related to carrying out the work, no financial consideration shall be offered for participating in the Analysis Group.

The Analysis Group and the DPM established a consensus-based work approach at the beginning of the sessions for each exercise that enabled them to meet the objectives and deadlines set, within a flexible schedule of meetings and delivery dates agreed previously. Each working session focused on a specific issue.



Both the criteria and the dynamic have been applied in the two exercises carried out, and were approved by the members of the Analysis Group at the inaugural meeting held on 20 November 2020.

Having completed the work, the Analysis Group delivers a single document to the DPM, with the final conclusions of the study and possible recommendations for strengthening the methodology for future accountability exercises. If the conclusions are not unanimous, the document also reflects the different members' perspectives.

The sessions between the Analysis Group and the DPM were held online and in the following order:

— 10 February. Inaugural meeting of the Analysis Group for 2021.

— 24 March. Analysis including accountability, and development of lines of work.

— 4 May. Valuation and implementation of the recommendations formulated by the Analysis Group in the preceding period.

— 27 May. Analysis of the new ideas proposed for inclusion in the exercise.

— 11 June. Analysis of the final document setting forth the methodological bases, debate and formulation of recommendations.

IV. Results of the methodological analysis

As a result of the analysis conducted, **the Analysis Group has validated the methodological bases designed by the DPM for assessing the achievement of the commitments of the Government of Spain, which ensure that the exercise is rigorous, systematic and predictable.**

The debates have focused on analysing the innovations introduced into the edition of *Meeting our commitments* covering the first half of 2021 and the possible adjustments that could enhance the information provided through this accountability exercise.

The following sections offer a response to the recommendations made by the Analysis Group in the framework of the 2020 exercise which are to be studied for their possible inclusion in subsequent exercises.

In addition, the main recommendations made in the framework of the exercise covering the first half of 2021 are summarized. As was done previously, the recommendations are included irrespective of the degree of consensus reached within the Group and their level of significance is not assessed.

a) Response to the recommendations made in December 2020 which are to be studied for inclusion in subsequent exercises

The recommendations made by the Analysis Group in December 2020 are set forth below using their original wording, followed, in each case, by the decision adopted by the DPM after the meetings held in the first half of 2021:

- "Consider including a "process" category in the categorization of commitments by their nature.
    - UNDERWAY. Work is being done to identify two types of commitments: (i) those requiring actions that must be maintained over time, whether because they establish medium- or long-term objectives, or because they call for actions that must be carried out for a prolonged period of time or that must be repeated and (ii) those calling for the delivery of an output or result. "Process" commitments are in the first of these categories.
- "Align commitments with the 2030 Agenda."
    - INCLUDED. The commitments have been aligned with the SDGs of the 2030 Agenda (see section 7 of the report).
- "Define the scope of the exercise as regards state-owned enterprises."
    - INCLUDED. The commitments may include actions to be undertaken by public state-owned enterprises. However, they must always have been

expressly formulated or formalized by the President of the Government or by the ministers to be included in the map of commitments (see section 6.2 of this Appendix).

— "Detail the measures to be adopted to publicize, disseminate, and raise awareness about the exercise."

  — INCLUDED. A specific section has been included that describes the actions carried out by the DPM in the first half of 2021 for the disclosure and dissemination of the *Meeting our commitments* report (see part III of **Appendix I**).

— "Once the accountability exercise of the Presidency of the Government of Spain has been defined, provide greater detail on the context of this exercise in terms of comparative international experience."

  — UNDERWAY. This will be analysed in the context of the cycle of seminars to be held in the academic sphere. The DPM is also holding bilateral and multilateral meetings with the aim of sharing the experience of this accountability exercise with other countries that carry out similar initiatives (see part III of this Appendix).

— "Classify the commitments into different priority/hierarchical levels, taking into account the large number of commitments adopted, and that they are not all equally important."

  — UNDERWAY. In the June 2021 edition, *Meeting our commitments* includes a specific analysis of the 20 reforms that the RTRP has considered to be the most relevant for the coming three years (see section 8.3 of the report).

  Furthermore, work has begun on different types of classifications of the commitments (see section 8 of the report) and, on this basis, the possibility of establishing a system of priorities and hierarchy for them will be analysed in subsequent exercises.

— "Provide greater detail on other dimensions of analysis, such as efficiency, or the actors involved in meeting commitments."

  — UNDERWAY. Work is being done to offer a multi-faceted vision of the commitments. The current edition includes information on their alignment with (i) the SDGs, (ii) the Government's strategic lines of action (including those of the inaugural address, and those set forth in the RTRP) and (iii) the functions of government (see the downloadable database accompanying the report). In the future, new data will be added, such as

the intended beneficiaries of the commitments, or the context in which actions are being carried out.

- "Examine the possibility of creating circular, less hierarchical, information systems. Establish a public data register where the citizenry can verify what has been done and what has not."
  - UNDERWAY. Accountability is an exercise which, by definition, requires the Government to inform citizens about the extent to which it has met its commitments and to submit to public scrutiny the actions carried out. To this end, on the occasion of the presentation of the December 2020 exercise, a downloadable database was provided through the *Meeting our commitments* microsite including all of the commitments, together with the initiatives that have been undertaken to activate them and, where applicable, to meet them. In this new edition, the volume of information provided both in the report and in the downloadable database is greater, thus enabling citizens to learn more about the commitments and the initiatives carried out. Moreover, additional instruments for interacting with citizens are being analysed and will be implemented.
- "Specify the expenses incurred to undertake the accountability exercise, both by the DPM and by the ministries."
  - UNDERWAY. This information has been included, in addition to the source of funding for the exercise (see section 3 of part I [methodological bases]).
- "Synthesize the names given to those commitments that relate to the same or similar issues, or cover similar aspects, e.g., approval of an Act/ Bill/ Draft Bill, etc."
  - DECLINED. It has been decided to respect the original formulation of the commitments, despite the diversity that this leads to, for the purpose of respecting their literal expression and to guarantee the utmost objectivity of the exercise.
- "Consider the possibility of limiting the scope of the accountability exercise to those commitments that have been formally undertaken."
  - DECLINED. One of the principles of the exercise is that the accountability must be comprehensive, given that it is intended to provide a response to all the expectations raised in third parties. Consequently, this recommendation is incompatible with the nature of the exercise and cannot be accepted. Therefore, the reports shall continue to include "formally undertaken" commitments as well as those deriving from public addresses given by members of the Government. This contributes, moreover, to avoiding the gaming effect.

— Consider the future option of evaluating the effects or impacts of particularly emblematic or high-priority commitments."

  — DECLINED. Currently, analysing the effects or impacts of commitments does not form part of the scope or purpose of this accountability exercise, which has been conceived as an exercise in monitoring Government action and not as an evaluation of public policies. However, as the term of office advances, consideration will be given to ways of facilitating such evaluation on the basis of the information provided in the *Meeting our commitments* report.

— "Consider removing sources of verification of an informational nature, such as ministry press releases."

  — DECLINED. The sources of verification are identified so that people can find out where to look for further information about the initiatives that substantiates the status of a commitment. Some are official in character, but others, due to the nature of the initiative itself, cannot be official and this means that press releases, social networks and news items must be referred to.

b) Recommendations made in the framework of the 2021 exercise

A summary is presented of the main recommendations made by the Analysis Group in the framework of the exercise covering the first half of 2021, distinguishing between those which have already been incorporated into this edition of the *Meeting our commitments* report and those which shall be considered for the following six-month period.

As was done previously, the recommendations are included regardless of the degree of consensus generated within the group and their relevance is not assessed.

RECOMMENDATIONS INCLUDED

— Delve further into the constitutional context of the exercise and its complementarity with other accountability mechanisms.

— Emphasize the idea of public debate and deliberation intrinsic to accountability, in the framework of representative democracies evolving towards becoming participative democracies.

— Incorporate accountability into the legal framework of the European Union.

— Add other classifications of commitments to the accountability exercise, to enable their analysis from different viewpoints. Said classifications, as far as possible, must be institutionalized and consolidated at the international level.

— When classifying the commitments: use the term “character” instead of “nature”; do not use the term “impact” as a synonym for “result”; and speak of "complex" rather than ”abstract" commitments.

— In the “principles of the exercise” section: (i) indicate how the gaming effect can be avoided and (ii) mention the availability of open data and the link between accountability and the culture of governance.

— Do not use examples when providing definitions.

— Incorporate visualization and interaction mechanisms that make it easy for citizens to obtain information from different perspectives.

— Highlight the relationship between accountability and open government, and incorporate the spirit of the Open Government Forum Agreement on the Inclusive Communication of Open Government Values.

— Specify what external verification consists of, to distinguish between (i) the methodological review process carried out by the Analysis Group and (ii) a possible validation of the results.

— Specifically mention the fact that the gender perspective was taken into account when undertaking the exercise.

— Enhance the presentation of the report by accompanying the discourse with graphs and tables illustrating the information.

RECOMMENDATIONS THAT WILL BE ASSESSED FOR POSSIBLE INCLUSION IN SUBSEQUENT EXERCISES

— Continue to analyse the commitments from different, complementary perspectives (for example, their relationship to the Constitution, their timeline or their territorial scope).

— Incorporate citizen participation mechanisms into the exercise (for example, to determine the sufficiency and appropriateness of the indicators established for determining the achievement of commitments, for the identification of the priorities on which the exercise should focus and, in line with the above, for the valuation of the utility of the accountability exercise).

— Align the exercise with the Government's new strategic proposals for the medium and long term, such as "Spain 2050. Foundations and proposals for a Long-Term National Strategy" or the "Sustainable Development Strategy".

— Identify the conditions for meeting commitments which enable an objective finishing line to be established.

— In the medium and long term, assess the alignment of the accountability exercise with other programming exercises carried out by the Government internally and with the European Union.

Part III. Public disclosure of accountability

The DPM has launched a **public disclosure project in relation to the accountability exercise**, at both the international and national levels. The following activities have been carried out.

a) Activities carried out at the international level

— On 17 March the exercise was presented at a specific webinar organized by the **Latin American Centre for Development Administration** (CLAD).

— Through the State Secretariat for Global Spain, the report has been sent—in Spanish, English or French, as applicable—to all the embassies and missions to permanent bodies so that they in turn can distribute it to the public administration of each country with powers in this sphere. As a result of this work, **the exercise will be presented at different international forums during the second half of 2021**.

— Work is underway with the **Ibero-American General Secretariat** (SEGIB) for the purpose of integrating the Spanish project into the preparatory agenda of the next Ibero-American Summit, which will be carried out under the presidency of the Dominican Republic.

— The DPM has also held meetings with diplomatic representatives. This has led to a proposal to organize a face-to-face meeting to present the exercise to all the ambassadors of European countries in our country.

— Contacts have been maintained with the **founding team of the Delivery Unit created by Tony Blair**.

— Throughout the six-month period, the State Secretariat for Communication has also held bilateral meetings to present the initiative to the correspondents of a large proportion of the international media present in our country.

b) Activities carried out in Spain

— On 13 May a seminar entitled "Accountability in complex democracies: role and relevance of the accountability of the President of the Government to Spanish society" was held at the **Centre of Political and Constitutional Studies** (CEPC). This seminar included the participation not only of the DPM but also of professors Manuel Villoria and Cristina Elías, who analysed the political and constitutional context of the exercise, and Fernando Vallespín, Eloísa del Pino and Helen Darbishire, who debated the impact of this type of initiative.

— On 24 March the project was presented at the Plenary Session of the **Open Government Forum**, where certain Autonomous Communities expressed their interest in working in coordination with the Government to further this type of initiative.

— On 22 April a meeting was held with the Directorate-General for Open Government and Social Innovation of the **administration of the Autonomous Community of Aragon** to share experiences.

— On 10 March a webinar was held with the citizens' political organization **Más Democracia.**

— On 5 March the exercise was presented at the **Master's Degree Course in Evaluation of Public Programmes and Public Policies** at the Complutense University of Madrid.

— Furthermore, **meetings** have been held over the course of the six-month period **with specialist academics, journalists and members of civil society** who have expressed an interest in the exercise.

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