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## Researchers downbeat about Madrid climate conference

City stepped in to host UN event after deadly protests in Chile forced relocation

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Spain's decision to host the 25th UN Climate Change Conference is likely to bring fleeting political support and boost public awareness, but not result in changes to research policy or funding in the country, researchers have told Research Professional News.

"Research has been neglected for very long in Spain and it's unlikely that the COP will increase support for either climate [research] in particular or science in general," said Francisco Doblas-Reyes, an author on the most recent UN intergovernmental climate report and a researcher at the Barcelona Supercomputing Center.

Civil unrest in Chile forced COP25 to move from its capital, Santiago, to Madrid. Chile will still preside over and share responsibility for the 2-13 December event, the UN announced on 5 November.

Spain is heading to the polls for a general election on 10 November, but Doblas-Reyes said that climate change has been "surprisingly missing" from the political conversation. He said that hosting COP25 "might increase the minutes environmental issues get during politicians' speeches, but it'll be harder to see serious and long-term support for climate or research-related policies".

Luis Cabeza, an engineer at the University of Lleida and also a UN report author, said that hosting the event should at least enable Spanish researchers to network with international colleagues. But José Moreno, another UN report author and an ecologist at the University of Castilla-La Mancha, downplayed the prospects for meaningful engagement.

"COP meetings are attended overwhelmingly by officers in governments and, as such, I do not see that it could enact a big change in the scientific community," Moreno said. "The largest change I see is the fact that the issue will be in the news continuously, which will call for more and more scientists to give their opinions."

Xavier Labandeira, another UN author and an economist at the University of Vigo, said the election was likely to lead to coalition negotiations between political parties, and that the timing of COP25 could make climate change a prominent topic of such talks.

"As long as these new policies involve more funds for related research or the need for external academic assessment, they might have positive effects on the research community working in the area," he said.

*Image: Alexandros Michailidis, via Shutterstock*

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