



ESTONIA

“ Estonia has been a DAC member since July 2023. This new status calls for a deeper examination of Estonia's data collection, processing and analysis to identify gaps in ODA reporting. ”

AKÜ

Main trends

Since the Government established the Estonian Centre for International Development (ESTDEV) in 2021, much effort has been put into improving the planning and funding of development cooperation managed through the organisation. Humanitarian aid as a separate field, as well as multilateral cooperation, have remained under the management of the MFA.

In 2023, Estonia's priority for international cooperation continued to be the Eastern Partnership (Ukraine, Georgia and Moldova) with a special focus on Ukraine. Armenia was designated as a new target country, with funding opportunities in the next action period (2024). Africa is also a target region and Estonia continued working with Kenya, Botswana, Namibia and Uganda and activities are planned in the Estonian African region strategy document. However, however budgetary and political attention remained focused mainly on Ukraine and other Eastern Partnership countries. This has negatively affected Estonian CSOs working in Africa, since budget decreases caused them to reduce or to cease operations in Africa altogether.

Since the beginning of Russia's unprovoked attack on Ukraine, Estonia has been one of the first countries to begin to physically rebuild the country. Priority Areas of Estonian development cooperation in Ukraine were: democracy and good governance; entrepreneurship; and education. In the latter, Estonia has for example built kindergartens and supported education management and curriculum development that is being coordinated by ESTDEV and implemented by CSOs, with

Reported ODA: EUR 93.3 million

0.28% GNI (↓ from 0.54% in 2022)

Non-inflated ODA: EUR 64.6 million

0.19% GNI (↑ from 0.17% in 2022)

Total inflated ODA: EUR 28.7 million

31% of total



work on the ground carried out by Estonian and Ukrainian partners from both the public and private sectors.

Government's relationship with civil society

Overall, the civil society relationship with the government of Estonia has been relatively good. CSOs have good relations with representatives of the MFA working in development cooperation and humanitarian aid and CSOs are considered as strong experts and partners in cooperation planning and implementation. The CSO national platform AKÜ has been part of all important discussions and processes led by the MFA, such as creation of the national development cooperation and humanitarian aid strategy implementation plan.

CSO relations with ESTDEV have also improved due to changes in the organisation's management and strategic re-planning. A representative of the national platform AKÜ continues to work as an advisory board member, which ensured the voice of civil society was heard at management level. There is still room for improvement in the design and transparency of open funding rounds for CSOs and this issue was raised repeatedly by AKÜ and its members.

The Estonian government should:

- **Despite the fragile economic situation and the overarching cuts in the national budget avoid major reductions of the budget allocated for development cooperation and humanitarian aid and continue with the plan to achieve 0.33% of GNI by the year 2030.**



- **Not forget the problems of tied aid in the Rebuilding Ukraine narrative. Future dependence on Estonian service providers might seem a good idea from the perspective of Estonian economic self-interest, but goes against the principles of effective development cooperation.**
- **Increase the national/governmental budget for cooperation projects funded through open CSO calls to at least 50% instead of the 20% minimum at present. This is important to ensure that in the future CSOs engage through transparent cooperation projects and less through small scale, non-transparent procurement processes within ESTDEV's own projects.**
- **Consider redesigning ESTDEV's open calls to make them clearer for all potential applicants. For example, there could be separate calls for CSOs, enterprises, academia, or at least sector preferences should be communicated. The key activity areas in the open calls could be reduced and more focused.**