**Peer Review**

**Self-Assessment of the Republic of Slovenia**

**24 November 2023**

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A Recent developments in development cooperation of the Republic of Slovenia

The policies and implementation of development cooperation of the Republic of Slovenia were subject to the first peer review by the Development Assistance Committee of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD DAC) in early 2017, with Australia and Poland participating as peer reviewers. A mid-term review by the DAC followed in October 2020. A statistical review by its Working Party on Development Finance Statistics (WP-STAT) was undertaken in February 2021.

Since the last peer review, Slovenia has made significant progress by upgrading its legislative and strategic framework and reinforcing its organisational structure, inter-ministerial coordination, and implementation system.

**Upgraded legislative and strategic framework**

Since the first peer review, Slovenia has significantly upgraded its legislative and strategic framework, taking into account most of the recommendations from the 2017 OECD DAC peer review.

In September 2017, the National Assembly of the Republic of Slovenia adopted the Resolution on International Development Cooperation and Humanitarian Aid of the Republic of Slovenia (Resolution), which sets out the basic orientations, goals, thematic and geographical priorities as well as partners of development cooperation and humanitarian aid. In adopting the Resolution, Slovenia took into account the OECD DAC recommendations about the concentration of funds and the endorsement of its official development assistance (ODA) targets.

In April 2018, the National Assembly of the Republic of Slovenia adopted the Act on Development Cooperation and Humanitarian Aid of the Republic of Slovenia (Act), which introduced the following novelties: it defined the roles of the Framework Programme in planning ODA funds and of the National Coordinator, i.e. the Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs (MFEA); it also included the private sector among development cooperation implementing partners, introduced the instrument of a strategic partnership with Slovenian implementing partners and international organisations, listed budget support as one of the forms of implementing bilateral development cooperation, and extended the possibility of providing for an advance payment to implementing partners of development cooperation and humanitarian aid projects.

In November 2018, the Decree on implementing development cooperation and humanitarian aid of the Republic of Slovenia (Decree) was adopted for the purpose of operationalising the Act. The Decree specified the forms and ways of implementing bilateral and multilateral cooperation, and the implementation of bilateral technical assistance. It also defined the criteria for co-financing development cooperation and humanitarian aid programmes or projects, building on past experience and the recommendations of the 2017 peer review.

In December 2018, the Government adopted the Development Cooperation and Humanitarian Aid Strategy of the Republic of Slovenia until 2030 (Strategy). The Strategy specifies in more detail objectives and strategic guidelines, and envisages concrete measures for coherent and effective action. It also provides the scope for strengthening bilateral cooperation and defines the concentration of aid on geographic and thematic priorities and the cross-cutting issues of development cooperation and humanitarian aid. It offers an in-depth definition of humanitarian aid and its goals, highlighting the role of awareness-raising, global education and communication, and the strengthening of the evaluation culture. The Strategy also sets out concrete actions to be taken in each area of activities and quantifiable indicators to measure the achievement of these goals.

In order to strengthen activities in specific areas, such as cross-cutting issues, participation in partnerships, etc., the MFEA recognised the need to better define activities and has therefore started to develop specific guidelines. The updated guidelines on cooperation with NGOs were adopted in May 2023,[[1]](#footnote-1) and guidelines on the inclusion of gender mainstreaming in development cooperation and humanitarian aid in June 2023.[[2]](#footnote-2) Guidelines for environmental protection are being drafted. Guidelines for cooperation with the private sector will also be developed and are expected to be finalised in 2024.

**Reinforced organisational structure**

Since the first peer review, Slovenia has made improvements to its organisational structure. With the establishment of the Directorate for Development Cooperation and Humanitarian Aid (Directorate) on 1 November 2022, the MFEA met the Resolution's requirement that a sustainable and efficient system of development cooperation requires an appropriate strategic arrangement and organisational structure that is conducive to attaining development goals.

The Directorate has two departments: the Department for Development Cooperation and Humanitarian Aid Policies and the Department for the Implementation of Development Cooperation and Humanitarian Aid.

Since its establishment, the Directorate has been strengthened in terms of staffing. However, some human resource challenges remain and can also be observed in other ministries involved in the implementation of development cooperation and humanitarian aid.[[3]](#footnote-3)

**Improved inter-ministerial coordination and expert consultation; re-establishment of the Expert Council for Development Cooperation and Humanitarian Aid**

In accordance with strategic and legal documents, the MFEA is the National Coordinator for Development Cooperation and Humanitarian Aid. It formulates policies, drafts strategic documents, develops and coordinates funding and implementation through active dialogue with implementing partners, and by drafting framework programmes and reports, and planning evaluations.

The MFEA also chairs the inter-ministerial Permanent Coordination Group as the main coordinating body between the ministries involved in the development cooperation and humanitarian aid system. The Permanent Coordination Group is expected to meet at least once a year at the level of members (state secretaries, i.e. political level) and twice a year (three times a year from 2019) at the level of deputies (usually directors-general, i.e. senior official level). Due to various circumstances, including the COVID-19 pandemic and Slovenia’s focus and commitments related to its Presidency of the Council of the European Union (EU) in the second half of 2021, the Permanent Coordination Group did not meet as often as foreseen. After the establishment of the Directorate, it has resumed regular meetings in 2023, as planned. In addition to regular coordination, there is additional coordination with some ministries, in particular key funders and implementing partners such as the ministries of finance, the economy, defence, health and the environment.

To strengthen planning and inter-ministerial coordination, the MFEA is tasked with preparing a framework programme for development cooperation and humanitarian aid for a period of up to four years. The most recent programme was adopted by the Government for the 2016–2019 period, and has been revised twice during the implementation period.[[4]](#footnote-4)

In accordance with the provisions of the Resolution, the Strategy and the Act, the Expert Council for Development Cooperation acts as an advisory body to the Minister. The MFEA has regularly appointed new members to the Council over the years, in particular recognising the increased role of non-governmental organisations (NGOs), thereby increasing the number of NGO representatives from one to three. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, Slovenia's EU Council Presidency in 2021 and limited staff capacity, the Expert Council has not met since 2019. In 2023, all the seats on the Council have been filled to ensure full operation.

**Upgraded system of implementation, including mobilising additional funds**

The strengthened strategic and legal frameworks have allowed for a greater focus on the implementation of bilateral development cooperation. On the basis of the Strategy and the bilateral agreements in force, Montenegro and North Macedonia were selected as programme partner countries. In order to increase efficiency and achieve better and more sustainable programme results, special attention was paid to focusing on a smaller number of thematically coherent multi-annual programmes. Three memoranda of understanding on development cooperation have been signed with North Macedonia, and a fourth is being coordinated for the period 2023–2024. To date, five programmes have been signed with Montenegro. A new programme for 2024–2025 is under preparation.

Slovenia is also active in other priority geographical areas – the Western Balkans, the European Neighbourhood and Sub-Saharan Africa. Forms of cooperation have so far included the implementation of projects, cooperation in higher education (tuition fee waivers), scholarships and bilateral technical assistance. In 2023, the MFEA has introduced a Development Fund for Slovenian diplomatic missions. The Fund supports projects implemented by Slovenian embassies in partner countries in cooperation with local partners.

In terms of implementation, particular attention has been paid to the Agenda 2030 and to ensuring that projects have a focus on the reduction of poverty and inequality in partner countries. To this end and based on the criteria updated in accordance with the Decree, the MFEA has introduced a mandatory reference to the Sustainable Development Goals and the poverty reduction goal in its public calls and project evaluation criteria. Furthermore, implementing partners have been invited to base their project proposal on the identified needs of partner countries, which must be clearly reflected in the project proposal.

The implementation system for humanitarian aid has also been upgraded. In addition to contributions for emergency relief channelled through international organisations, the MFEA, in January 2021, concluded a strategic partnership with the selected NGO, Caritas Slovenia, for emergency response. In October 2023, it also signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) to strengthen cooperation in the field of humanitarian aid.[[5]](#footnote-5)

The MFEA has made progress in mobilising additional resources. Its cooperation with the private sector has strengthened since 2018, when the MFEA started to successfully involve the private sector in NGO activities. Further efforts are needed to ensure that the private sector is systematically and fully engaged with all development cooperation and humanitarian aid actors.[[6]](#footnote-6)

**Development of an evaluation culture**

In line with the recommendations of the first peer review, the MFEA has strengthened the evaluation culture and the process of learning and improving the system based on the evaluations. In 2019, a strategic partnership was concluded with a selected implementing partner to conduct annual evaluations, which has accelerated activities in this area. With the call for co-financing NGO projects for the period 2021–2023, evaluations have become mandatory for the implementation of larger projects. The recommendations of the evaluations were regularly reviewed at working level and discussed in view of possible changes and improvements also at policy level.

The Evaluation Policy of Slovenian Official Development Cooperation and the Evaluation Guidelines of Slovenian Official Development Cooperation and the already adopted evaluation plan will guide the MFEA in future evaluations due in 2024.

B. Practices, challenges and opportunities

B.1 Good and innovative practices

B.1.1 Strategic coherence

Foundation A.1. Policy framework

Pillar I. 2 Achieving lasting sustainable development results

Pillar III.2 Policy coherence for sustainable development

*Reasons for selection*

Since the first peer review, Slovenia has made significant progress in adopting an appropriate legislative and policy framework for development cooperation and humanitarian aid, and upgrading the supporting documents (e.g. guidelines) to ensure effective implementation. In order to achieve sustainable results and complementarity of action, Slovenia decided to closely integrate the development and humanitarian aid architecture with other foreign policy priorities.

*Analysis*

Slovenia's activities in the field of development cooperation and humanitarian aid are in line with its foreign policy objectives as defined in the Declaration on Foreign Policy of the Republic of Slovenia and in the Foreign Policy Strategy, with the values and development orientations of Slovenian society as defined in the Slovenian Development Strategy 2030, and also with the development objectives of the international community as set out, inter alia, in the Agenda 2030, the Paris Agreement on Climate Change (Paris Agreement) and the New European Consensus on Development of June 2017.

Due to changing trends and circumstances in development cooperation, the needs of partner countries, international dynamics and the recommendations of the first peer review, the strategic and legislative frameworks could no longer adequately support Slovenia's efforts in this area. In the period since the first peer review, Slovenia has therefore comprehensively revised its legislative and strategic frameworks and adopted further supporting documents, building on complementarity with other foreign policy priorities and areas and the objectives of the Agenda 2030.

Accordingly, the Resolution and the Strategy build on the previous experiences and needs of partner countries and Slovenia's foreign policy orientations in defining the strategic thematic and geographic priorities. Coherence and synergies are particularly evident in:

* The identification of thematic priorities and cross-cutting issues:

The fight against climate change, focusing on the sustainable management of natural and energy resources, is one of the thematic priorities of the Resolution. In addition, environmental protection has been identified as a cross-cutting issue within the Strategy. This cross-cutting issue is also reflected in the legal framework and in the conditions and criteria for funding development activities, which, among other things, expressly prohibit a programme or project from contributing to the increased use of fossil fuels (Box 1).

For decades, Slovenia has been active on these issues in various forums (mainly the UN, EU, but also bilaterally), e.g. in the Green Group,[[7]](#footnote-7) where, as the initiator of the group, it promotes sustainable development, the circular economy and nature-based solutions, the transition to renewable energy sources and the protection of biodiversity. Slovenia was among the initiators of the landmark UN Human Rights Council resolution on the human right to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment. During its membership of the UN Security Council (2024–2025), Slovenia will continue to prioritise conflict prevention by addressing and eliminating the root causes of conflict and through preventive action in fragile contexts, and insisting on the security implications of climate change.[[8]](#footnote-8) The MFEA also has a special envoy for climate diplomacy.

In addition, Slovenia is very active in water diplomacy: as a member of the Blue Group, which promotes the right to safe drinking water in international forums, particularly the UN Human Rights Council;[[9]](#footnote-9) and as co-founder and chair of the Geneva Group of Friends on Water and Peace. Slovenia has also proposed the appointment of a UN Special Envoy for Water and is a member of the Transboundary Water Cooperation Coalition and the UNESCO WWAP Call for Action to Accelerate Gender Equality in the Water Domain. The MFEA has a special envoy for water diplomacy and seeks to build on its activities with transformative sustainable projects.[[10]](#footnote-10)

During its EU Council Presidency in 2021, Slovenia initiated and led the process towards the adoption of the Council Conclusions on "Water in the EU's External Action" and organised the high-level international conference entitled "Accelerating Concrete Action towards Gender Equality in Water". This is also in line with efforts to implement the OECD DAC Declaration on a new approach to align development co-operation with the goals of the Paris Agreement on Climate Change. As a member of the UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) for the period 2023–2025, Slovenia is paying special attention to the importance of water for achieving sustainable development.

The promotion of peaceful and inclusive societies, with a focus on good governance, equal opportunities, including gender equality, and quality education, has been identified as a thematic priority under the Resolution. Gender equality has thus been set as the second cross-cutting issue for development cooperation and humanitarian aid as per the Strategy. For several decades, gender equality has been a thematic priority for Slovenia as reflected in its national policies and foreign policy priorities.[[11]](#footnote-11)

In the field of humanitarian aid, specifically aid in the aftermath of humanitarian crises, including reconstruction and rehabilitation programmes, Slovenia has identified two priority areas of action in the Resolution: human security and protection, including mine action programmes and assistance to mine victims, and assistance to children in the aftermath of armed conflict. This is consistent with Slovenia's overall commitment to human security and safety. In implementing the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on Their Destruction (the Ottawa Convention), Slovenia focuses primarily on assisting mine victims and ensuring human security. Accordingly, in 1998 the Government established the ITF Enhancing Human Security fund with the initial purpose to support mine action in Bosnia and Herzegovina and Croatia, but later expanded the area and scope of its activities to include comprehensive mine action in several parts of the world, mine victim assistance, rehabilitation and broader work on human security.[[12]](#footnote-12)

Slovenia has allocated a significant share of its humanitarian aid to mine action in recent years: 23% in 2021, 24% in 2020, 40% in 2019 and 26% in 2018.

* The identification of geographic priorities with a focus on the Western Balkans:

The Resolution and other key foreign policy documents define Slovenia's geographic priorities, which include the Western Balkans,[[13]](#footnote-13) European Neighbourhood and Sub-Saharan Africa. The Western Balkans was chosen because of Slovenia's close bilateral relations with the countries of the region. Through its activities, Slovenia contributes to the social and economic development of the Western Balkans and supports the countries of the region in their efforts to join the EU. This policy is also followed by implementation, as evidenced by the share of available bilateral aid to the region in recent years (Slovenia allocated between 68% and 76% of available bilateral aid to the Western Balkans in 2018–2020, dropping to 55% in 2021, mainly due to the high value of donated vaccines, which were primarily intended for other regions). The comprehensive activities in the Western Balkans are aimed at reducing inequalities and poverty (see example in Box 2) and include the implementation of projects on thematic priorities and cross-cutting issues, such as cooperation in higher education, bilateral technical assistance, including secondments, support to the functioning of organisations and strengthening of public administration capacities , and, upon request, in-kind and emergency assistance. Montenegro and North Macedonia remain programme partner countries.

The coherence of the implementation of development cooperation with the set thematic and geographic priorities and with Slovenia's overall priorities is demonstrated by the percentage of implementation over the years. In line with the Resolution, Slovenia has set the target of allocating at least 80% of available bilateral aid to programmes and projects within either geographical or thematic priorities. The target has been exceeded every year since 2018 (2018: 87%, 2019: 89%, 2020: 87%, 2021: 91%).

Additionally, the Act and the Decree introduced changes allowing Slovenia to start implementing the priority orientations (e.g. by introducing the concept of strategic partnership). In the field of humanitarian aid, the MFEA has entered into a strategic partnership with Caritas Slovenia for the period 2021–2023 and signed a memorandum of understanding on strategic cooperation with the ICRC in 2023.[[14]](#footnote-14)

The Act and the Decree have also facilitated Slovenia's multilateral cooperation with other donors in the implementation of activities in developing countries. Cooperation is largely limited to support for individual projects, with Slovenia providing a share of co-financing for projects that are also supported by another country (e.g. Hungary in Kenya, USAID in the Western Balkans, France in Montenegro, etc.).

Slovenia has successfully aligned its development policies with other internal and external policy objectives, but needs to make further progress in ensuring that the concept of Policy Coherence for Development (PCD) is implemented more systematically. This was also one of the recommendations of the first review. To implement the concept, Slovenia has launched additional activities: an inter-ministerial group of focal points for the implementation of the PCD principle was established with the task of reviewing current policies and raising awareness, but it has not met regularly since the COVID-19 pandemic. In cooperation with the Slovenian Research Agency, the MFEA supported a research project by Slovenian experts in 2023 to review the implementation of the PCD principle and make recommendations for the future. To a large extent, policy coherence for development is already provided for in the decision-making process at the level of Government, where all the ministries have the opportunity to comment and constructively participate in the process, while the adoption of legislation foresees mandatory public consultation.

*Plans and options for future work*

In order to work more effectively and, above all, more comprehensively in the field of development cooperation and humanitarian aid, and to achieve more sustainable results, it will be necessary to:

* Strengthen inter-ministerial cooperation to further align implementation with the agreed strategic framework and objectives of development cooperation and humanitarian aid;
* Ensure adequate stable funding and financial programming for the next medium-term period, which will allow Slovenia to consistently meet its objectives in terms of concentrating resources on thematic and geographic priorities and in line with the selected cross-cutting issues (as defined in the Strategy);
* Ensure better implementation of the PCD principle and raise awareness, followed by work on policy analysis and decision-making in line with development objectives, including on the basis of the results of the research project;
* Evaluate the Strategy and examine the possibilities for enhanced action in the other two geographic priority areas in addition to the Western Balkans (i.e. the European Neighbourhood and Sub-Saharan Africa).

**Box 1: Environmental protection as a cross-cutting issue**

Slovenia ensures that cross-cutting issues are mainstreamed in the implementation of projects, through contributions to international organisations, and in general. Environmental protection, including climate change mitigation and adaptation, has been pivotal subjects in public calls for co-funding NGO projects since 2017. Since 2018, it has stood as a key selection criterion for all projects and, in accordance with the Decree, evolved into a broader independent criterion from 2020 onwards. Furthermore, environmental protection was one of the two cross-cutting issues in the 2023 Development Fund call: 5 of the 11 selected projects focused on these themes.

The Strategy outlines Slovenia's commitment to primarily make voluntary contributions to international organisations whose activities align with at least one of the cross-cutting issues. As a result, Slovenia regularly contributes to international organisations dedicated to environmental protection and climate change mitigation and adaptation: the Global Environment Facility (GEF), including the Least Developed Countries Fund (LDCF) and the Special Climate Change Fund (SCCF) for Small Island Developing States (SIDS); the International Development Association (IDA), Adaptation Fund, Green Climate Fund (GCF); and the Food and Agriculture Organization. Moreover, Slovenia contributes to the UNFCCC through regular membership fees and to the Montreal Protocol. Additionally, Slovenia provides capital to institutions such as the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (IBRD), the European Investment Bank (EIB), the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD) and other institutions pursuing environmental objectives.

According to the Strategy, the share of available bilateral aid emphasising environmental perspective (where environmental protection is an integral part of the design, implementation, and monitoring of projects; environmental protection activities are carried out within the project) should amount to a minimum of 50% in 2022 and a minimum of 60% by 2030 the share of available bilateral aid allocated to climate action should reach a minimum of 35% in 2022 and at least 40% by 2030.

**Box 2: Reducing poverty in the Western Balkans**

Since 2017, Slovenia has continuously provided support to the Caritas Slovenia project, which is dedicated to empower vulnerable, unemployed rural women in south-eastern Serbia. This project facilitates the establishment or expansion of small businesses in food processing or agro-tourism, while also advocating for the integration of a gender perspective into local policies by engaging with local politicians. The project is scheduled to continue in 2023–2025 broadening its scope to encompass other areas in the poorest parts of Serbia.

Similarly, the NGO Zavod Krog project in Montenegro aims to alleviate poverty among vulnerable women and girls. Operating from 2023 to 2025 this project concentrates on strengthening gender equality and improving the economic status of women and girls by fostering their employment.

B.1.2. Humanitarian aid

Pillar II.3 Sub-national entities in the receiving state and

Pillar III.1 Global goods and challenges for sustainable development

*Reasons for selection*

Humanitarian aid was selected as an example of best practice where Slovenia has made considerable progress in recent years compared to the first peer review. The progress can be attributed to several factors: clearly defined objectives based on the first peer review, a good strategic framework and general political support to Slovenia’s humanitarian action. Another important reason for selecting this area was also the fact that humanitarian aid had been identified as one of the key challenges in the first peer review, which provided additional impetus to ensure faster progress in the coming years.

*Analysis*

Since 2017, Slovenia’s humanitarian aid has grown to become a wide area of action with adequate legislative support and strategic basis, clear goals and effective partnerships.

In terms of legislation and strategy, the adoption of the Resolution and the Strategy along with the Act provided the grounds for:

* Defining humanitarian aid and its objectives, and dividing humanitarian aid into three pillars (emergency response, post crisis assistance in the form of reconstruction and rehabilitation, preventive action and strengthening resilience), thereby ensuring the humanitarian-development nexus;
* Identifying geographic and thematic priorities;
* Elaborating operational objectives in terms of total assistance (10% of available bilateral ODA), the share of preventive action (10% of humanitarian aid), measures to improve the effectiveness of assistance (multi-annual donations, soft earmarking, contributions to the Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF), cash-based assistance, implementation of the development-humanitarian nexus);
* Establishing effective partnerships at the national and international levels.

In accordance with the set goals and given the growing humanitarian needs around the world, Slovenia has gradually increased its humanitarian aid. According to the preliminary data, the greatest progress was made in the period 2021–2023 when the funding of humanitarian aid nearly tripled. The Government of the Republic of Slovenia decided to increase regular funding and released emergency budgetary resources in its response to newly emerged crises (especially in Ukraine and in Sub-Saharan countries affected by the food crisis,[[15]](#footnote-15) and in Sudan with the crisis escalation), natural disasters (the earthquake in Syria and Türkiye, the Morocco earthquake, the floods in Libya and Pakistan), and increased funding for other protracted crises (4-fold increase of funds for Afghanistan, 3-fold increase of funds for Yemen, doubling the funds for the Horn of Africa and the Sahel region in 2023 compared to 2022).[[16]](#footnote-16) As a credible member of the international donor community and advocate of effective multilateralism, Slovenia stepped up its efforts to narrow the humanitarian gap.

The level of aid regularly corresponded to the goal enshrined in the strategic documents (10% of available ODA). In 2018, it amounted to 11%, in 2019 to 9%, in 2020 12%, in 2021 11% and in 2022 10%. In 2023, an additional increase of the percentage of ODA for humanitarian aid is expected.

In accordance with the set objectives, Slovenia also gradually increased the effectiveness of its aid, namely:

* In 2021, the plan already envisaged a multi-annual response for 85% of crises and annual (2-3 years) contributions for 60% of crises;
* Most contributions were only softly earmarked. Slovenia ensured flexibility of contributions, including by donating funds to the World Food Programme (WFP) to ensure food safety in the face of the Russian aggression against Ukraine[[17]](#footnote-17);
* Since 2019, most of Slovenia’s emergency aid was directed towards the countries in which Slovenia was already implementing bilateral development activities, humanitarian and development, namely 62% in 2019, 54% in 2020, 66% in 2021;
* Allowing a flexible approach by proactively responding to some emergency humanitarian crises by reprogramming existing projects, for example in 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic, and in 2023, Sudan (ex. COVID-19 in Box 3);
* Since 2020, an annual contribution has been made to the CERF as non-earmarked assistance, especially in support of the cash-based assistance programme;
* Increased transparency through regular reporting, including to the Financial Tracking System of the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (FTS OCHA), the European Disaster Response Information System (EDRIS), and in 2019/20 tested the feasibility of reporting also through the International Aid Transparency Initiative (IATI);
* Involving the private sector to narrow the humanitarian gap in a more effective way by assigning additional points in public calls to NGOs that include private partners at 10% of the project value (in funding, goods or services);
* Striving to increase the share of funds for preventive action,[[18]](#footnote-18) although the strategic goal has not yet been met, mainly because of the increase in emergency aid. In 2019, these funds amounted to 12%, in 2020 to 6%, and in 2021 to 5%. Given growing number of emergencies and the need to respond to them, the percentage of preventive activities for 2022 and 2023 is expected to be similarly low;
* To address the consequences of the Russian aggression against Ukraine, Slovenia substantially increased its financial resources for humanitarian aid without detriment to the response to other crises. During the Russian aggression against Ukraine, humanitarian aid contributions were increased also in other regions (i.e. Africa);
* End of 2023, Slovenia responded to natural disasters in Libya and Morocco;
* In response to humanitarian calls, the Government increased Slovenia's contribution for Palestinian refugees by 40 times, channelled through UNRWA, WFP and ICRC in 2023;
* In August 2023, Slovenia was affected by floods which caused almost EUR 10 billion of damages (October 2023 estimates). Despite the scale of devastating floods and their consequences at home, Slovenia nevertheless remained committed to solidarity and humanitarian aid.

To increase the efficiency of action in the defined priority areas, Slovenia joined selected international initiatives (Good Humanitarian Donorship, Grand Bargain, Food Assistance Convention, Call to Action on protection from GBV in Emergencies) and regularly reports on its progress in the framework of annual reports and meetings.

During its presidency of the Council of the EU in the second half of 2021, Slovenia included the following aspects of humanitarian policies on the agenda of the Working Group on Humanitarian Aid and Food Aid (COHAFA): forced displacement, global health, international humanitarian law, and digitalisation in the humanitarian context. Slovenia also joined the working groups for development cooperation and international partnerships (CODEV-PI) and for FAO to address food security; within CODEV-PI it contributed to the drafting of Council conclusions on the importance of water in EU’s external action. Slovenia drafted a document on possible solutions to fill the gap between humanitarian needs and available resources in the EU and beyond, as well as joint EU humanitarian messages on the Afghanistan crisis.

To improve the effectiveness and responsiveness of emergency humanitarian aid, Slovenia has upgraded its partnerships in recent years:

* Establishment of a strategic partnership with a Slovenian NGO (selected through public call): in 2021, the pilot project of a 3-year strategic partnership with Caritas Slovenia was confirmed, allowing for a continuous and fast allocation of funds for emergency crisis response. In addition to emergency response, the partnership also enabled increased capacity building of NGOs (organisation of workshops on obtaining financial resources), private sector engagement (5 workshops) and advocacy. This way, Slovenia has upgraded its possibilities of ensuring emergency aid, which usually involved international organisations, with a Slovenian partner. At the initiative of the MFEA, the strategic partner implemented a total of 12 humanitarian actions in seven crisis areas.
* Establishment of a strategic cooperation with the ICRC: In 2023, Slovenia signed a memorandum to enhance humanitarian aid in the period 2023–2025 in the amount of EUR 2 million, which included emergency response and cooperation in other priority areas.

Slovenia also strengthened its partnership with Slovenia-based ITF and Slovenian NGOs, including by allocating more funds through public calls. From a total of EUR 600,000 in the period 2020–2022 for three projects (one in Sub-Saharan Africa, two in the Middle East), the funds have increased to a total of EUR 1,740,000 in the period 2023–2025 for 5 projects (three in Sub-Saharan Africa in two in the Middle East).

In addition, the MFEA regularly coordinated its humanitarian action with the Administration of the Republic of Slovenia for Civil Protection and Disaster Relief, which is competent for rescue operations and in-kind assistance. Examples of joint/complementary activities include assistance after the earthquake in Albania in 2019 (rescue operations, in-kind assistance, humanitarian and development projects), after the Russian aggression against Ukraine (extensive in-kind assistance, and humanitarian aid in 2022 and 2023), and following the earthquake in Türkiye (2023) (example in Box 4).

In the past review period, Slovenia also has made progress when it comes to public awareness-raising. In October 2023, the MFEA cooperated with its strategic partner for humanitarian response to organise the First Slovenian Humanitarian Forum in the framework of Slovenian Development Days, hosting high officials from international organisations and other partners. The MFEA will continue with awareness raising activities also in the future.

*Options for future work*

Steps for more efficient planning of humanitarian response:

* Financial programming: humanitarian funds earmarked in the MFEA's annual budget may only partially cover the needs for some protracted crises;
* Ensuring sufficient human resources to efficiently cover the humanitarian aid field in the mid-term period, including considering the possibility of establishing a special department or division for humanitarian aid and crisis response;
* Assuring a more active role and participation of Slovenia in international initiatives (of which Slovenia is a member, e.g. Grand Bargain, Call to Action on Protection from GBV), where a proactive approach could contribute more visibility and credibility of Slovenia in the international donor community;
* Strengthening action for disaster risk reduction, improving preventive measures and enhancing crisis resilience in accordance with the 10% objective of humanitarian aid for this purpose (mainly by supporting bilateral projects);
* Building capacity in partners (especially NGOs) to improve efficiency, network at the international level and secure more funding (through consortiums, pillar assessment etc.);
* Enhancing efforts to increase private sector engagement and ensure systematic cooperation both with companies and with NGOs in humanitarian crises response.

**Box 3: Flexible response to pressing needs using the re-programming of funds in the case of COVID-19**

After the COVID-19 outbreak, numerous developing countries encountered escalating needs. Consequently, the MFEA made a decision in May and June 2020 to re-programme all development and humanitarian projects. This re-programing aimed to allocate 20% of the total funds provided by the MFEA for 2020 targeted the COVID-19 response. Re-programmed action involved projects in Rwanda, Uganda, Egypt, Lebanon, Madagascar, Syria, Palestine, Jordan and Afghanistan.

**Box 4: Comprehensive response to the disastrous earthquake in Türkiye**

After a disastrous earthquake hit Türkiye and Syria in February 2023, Slovenia opted to provide a comprehensive response. Immediately after the disaster, the Slovenian Administration for Civil Protection and Disaster Relief deployed a logistics expert to join the mission by the EU Mechanism for Civil Protection. Subsequently, a specialised civil protection canine unit was also deployed to the area. In response to Türkiye's request, Slovenia provided in-kind assistance in the form of accommodation supplies to assist the affected population (tents, blankets, cabin air heaters).

Additionally, the MFEA complemented this effort with a humanitarian contribution to the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC). At the donor conference in March, the MFEA announced an additional humanitarian contribution through UNICEF. Moreover, the MFEA funded a project by strategic partner Caritas Slovenia, under which a shelter was built with provisions for fresh water, food and hygiene packages.

B.1.3. Gender equality

Foundation A.1 Policy framework

Pillar I.2 Achieving lasting sustainable development results

*Reasons for selection*

According to the Resolution, gender equality is a thematic priority for Slovenian development cooperation and humanitarian aid, and also one of the two cross-cutting issues defined in the Strategy. At the same time, gender equality is an important foreign policy priority for Slovenia, which is why it has devoted special attention to this topic in the past years, also based on the 2017 peer review recommendation. In the context of gender equality, a strategic framework has been established, strong political support was given to the topic and it was included in the implementation of projects, as well as in education processes and awareness raising. In the future, this priority will need to be given even more attention to prevent considerable fluctuation of the gender mainstreaming percentage in ODA[[19]](#footnote-19), and ensure a constant and predictable growth, which will in turn lead to the achievement of the goal.

*Analysis*

Gender equality and in particular women’s empowerment was identified as a cross-cutting issue of development cooperation and humanitarian aid as early as in 2010, but it was not fully implemented. Later on, the Resolution made it into one of the thematic priorities (promoting equal opportunities, including gender equality) and was confirmed as one of the cross-cutting issues in the ensuing Strategy. The latter also defined measurable targets.

In May 2023, the MFEA decided to operationalise gender equality by adopting the Guidelines for the Mainstreaming of Gender Equality in Development Cooperation and Humanitarian Aid, and thereby committed to ensure that, by 2030, at least 85% of all its projects feature gender mainstreaming as the main or an important goal, based on the OECD DAC methodology and the EU Gender Action Plan III for 2020–2025. The guidelines also foresee a number of other measures and activities to ensure consistent gender mainstreaming when it comes to the planning, implementation and evaluation of projects.

Slovenia has devoted special attention to gender equality also in national policies and measures[[20]](#footnote-20) and has consistently featured high on international rankings in this field.[[21]](#footnote-21) Gender equality and women’s empowerment have been a long-standing foreign policy priority in the field of human rights. They have been defined as a priority in both the Declaration of Foreign Policy of the Republic of Slovenia and the Foreign Policy Strategy. In the international community, Slovenia has thus insisted first and foremost on the elimination of all forms of discrimination against women and girls and all forms of violence against them, and also on ensuring sexual and reproductive health and rights, education and economic empowerment of women and the inclusion of women in all spheres and social processes, including in leadership positions and decision making.

Slovenia has advocated its views on this topic in discussions in international forums, through its support for gender equality movements and through activities in various informal groups of states. At the intersection of gender equality and the environment, which includes water diplomacy, Slovenia has been among the most active members of the Multi-Stakeholder Coalition for Gender Equality in Water and has financed the establishment of the Community of practice online platform.

Slovenia has played an active role within the Women, Peace and Security (WPS) agenda, including by allocating funds. All these topics feature among Slovenia’s priorities for its UN Security Council membership in the 2024–2025 term.

Through its national experts, Slovenia has been actively cooperating with partner countries on this subject. Since 2017, Slovenia has earmarked funds to this end through the UN WOMEN and the UN Population Fund (UNFPA).

In 2018, Slovenia joined the Call to action on protection against gender based violence and on the basis of this initiative confirmed two roadmaps, for the period 2016–2020 and for the period 2021–2025, for the implementation of commitments which include contributions via international organisation, the implementation of bilateral projects and organisation of training sessions on the prevention of gender based violence within the Peacekeeping Operations Training Center (POTC) (Box 5: Commitments 2021–2025).

In 2023, the MFEA supported the Women's Peace and Humanitarian Fund (WPHF) with several contributions.

During Slovenia's Presidency of the EU Council, gender equality was a cross-cutting issue in the field of development cooperation and humanitarian aid, with several events organised (on the occasion of the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women and in preparation of the Council Conclusions). In addition, Slovenia pushed for the inclusion of the link between water and gender equality among EU Council conclusions. It also paid particular attention to increased gender-based violence in the COVID-19 era and the role of women and girls in maintaining global health and food security.

Gender equality has been successfully integrated in bilateral development cooperation, both through direct substantive support to projects addressing gender equality, women’s sexual and reproductive rights, ensuring women’s well-being, and indirectly as a cross-cutting issue in the planning, implementation and monitoring of projects. Since 2017, the MFEA has consistently supported gender equality as a thematic priority for co-funding projects in the Western Balkans and/or the Sub-Saharan Africa in its public calls for NGOs; and from 2019 onwards, activities around the thematic priority of the prevention of and response to gender-based violence in the Middle East. The latter (prevention of gender-based violence) was extended to projects in the Sub-Saharan Africa in the last public call for the period 2023–2025. Compared to 2019, the value of individual projects has increased (for 3-year projects in North Macedonia and Montenegro for around 40%, and for 3-year projects in the Middle East for around 30%). Gender equality and the prevention of gender-based violence were among the topics in all three selected projects in the Sub-Saharan Africa.

The criteria for evaluating projects have included gender equality since 2017. In addition, they were upgraded in 2019, based on the provisions of the Decree, to include a specific and separate criterion relating to gender mainstreaming in projects, both in terms of content and the planning, implementation and evaluation of projects. Nine out of ten selected projects include gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls as an important or main objective.

A number of projects aimed at ensuring the well-being of women and girls are also being implemented by ITF Enhancing Human Security, namely in Jordan, Lebanon and Afghanistan (see Box 6 for examples).

The gender perspective was identified as a cross-cutting and priority theme in the call for proposals by the Development Fund for Slovenian embassies in developing partner countries. Launched in 2023, the Development Fund aims to increase the engagement of Slovenian diplomatic missions in developing partner countries and their cooperation with local partners. Eleven projects have been selected, six of which include gender mainstreaming activities.

However, despite the enhanced strategic framework and the strong political support in promoting this cross-cutting issue, it was impossible to prevent substantial fluctuation in the realisation of the objective set out in the Strategy (percentage of available bilateral assistance including gender mainstreaming). The strategic objectives stipulate that the target percentage by 2022 should be at least 40%, and Slovenia was on the right track to achieve this (23% in 2019, 39% in 2020). But in 2021, the vaccines donations had an important impact on the ODA statistical data. As a consequence, the percentage of gender equality ODA for 2021 suffered a major fall to only 8%. In 2022, the percentage increased again and reached 17%, but this is still well below the set objective. In practical terms, Slovenia has in fact enhanced its activities in this area and the percentage is expected to increase again in the coming years, particularly with a more stable funding.

After gender perspective was given more prominence as a cross-cutting issue, the MFEA increased its human resource capacity. In 2022, the Directorate welcomed a new member of staff, a gender-equality expert who is active in various international initiatives, including GenderNet, the EU expert subgroup on gender transformative approach, and the drafting of EU inequality indicator.

In the context of gender mainstreaming in development cooperation and humanitarian aid, the MFEA paid special attention also to awareness raising and to building general capacity among its staff and the implementing partners. In 2019, the flagship event Slovenian Development Days focused on gender equality awareness raising, and in all the future editions of the event, the MFEA made every effort to ensure equal representation of genders and to include these topics in other discussions. By January 2024 at the latest, the MFEA intends to organise workshops on gender mainstreaming for its staff and the implementing partners.

*Plans and options for future work*

For a more effective gender mainstreaming in the context of development cooperation and humanitarian aid, that would in turn contribute to the achievement of strategic objectives, the necessary steps include:

* Fostering increased awareness and knowledge on the gender perspective and the OECD DAC recommendations in this field among key stakeholders, which could lead to even more ambitious criteria for evaluation and enhanced activities respecting the gender perspective;
* Awareness raising and disseminating the practice of gender mainstreaming and transformative approach among other development cooperation and humanitarian aid funders (line ministries), either through the Permanent Coordination Group or separately, which would in turn contribute to faster implementation of objectives;
* Ensuring that expenditure for gender mainstreaming activities is planned in the context of project activities within the drafting of the multiannual framework programmes, which would include the activities of all ministries in this area.

**Box 5: Plan of activities related to protection against gender-based violence 2021–2025 under the Call to Action initiative**

Within its plan of activities for the period 2021–2025, Slovenia confirmed the following commitments:

1. Capacity building to address gender-based violence and strengthen gender equality through trainings on these two topics for public officials working in the ministries, NGOs, local partners, etc., both within the POTC, which operates under the Centre for European Future (CEP), and beyond.

2. Mainstreaming the prevention of gender-based violence and promotion of gender equality into operational standards, guidelines, and systemic–level actions.

3. Allocation of funds and support to projects addressing gender-based violence and gender equality. Slovenia has incorporated gender equality and gender-based violence prevention in public calls and has supported the activities of international organisations in this field.

**Box 6: Support for the Polyclinic in Kabul, Afghanistan**

Since 2016, Slovenia has continuously backed the activities of the Kabul Polyclinic, within an ITF managed project. In the framework of this project, Slovenia has ensured free medical services to deminers and their families particularly focusing on providing gynaecological and dental care for women and girls in Kabul. The ITF has implemented this project in cooperation with the local personnel, thereby ensuring satisfactory working conditions as well.

B.2 Challenges and opportunities

B.2.1. Financing for sustainable development

Pillar C Financing for sustainable development

Pillar C.1 ODA volume and transparency

*Reasons for selection*

The entire system of effective development cooperation and humanitarian aid is based on sufficient, predictable and flexible resources. Slovenia was recommended in the first peer review to prepare an action plan to gradually increase the GNI share for ODA, which should be realistic and would allow the whole system to be upgraded. This goes hand in hand with adequate human resource capacity and with increased efficiency and visibility of operations. Slovenia has experienced a steady increase in its GNI share for ODA until 2022; the global situation has forced it to be flexible, which in turn has put a heavy strain on the available human resources and limited the scope for medium and long-term strategic planning, including the achievement of targets in priority areas and structural shifts in the provision of stable funding.

To respond to several unexpected and unprecedented events (see more below) that occurred in 2021–2023, Slovenia exceeded the planned allocations for this period. As a result, its GNI share for ODA significantly increased and deviates from the planned financing. The interest cancellation on Angola's clearing debt in 2022 has statistically further increased development aid. The funds for ODA in excess of the budget allocation were provided from the emergency budget of the Republic of Slovenia. As a result, the ODA/GNI ratio is expected to return to its pre-2022 trend.

In addition to the budgetary provision of ODA, Slovenia is working to systematically integrate and further strengthen action across the broader spectrum of financing for development.[[22]](#footnote-22)

*Analysis*

In line with its international commitments, Slovenia announced its intention to increase ODA in its first strategic documents (Resolution by 2015). In view of the failure to meet this target, this commitment was reiterated in the 2017 Resolution, in line with the New European Consensus on Development of 2017. The Resolution states that Slovenia will strive to meet its international commitments by 2030. To this end, the Slovenian Government will adopt, within six months of the adoption of the Resolution, an action plan to gradually increase the share of GNI for ODA.

The available funds and their allocation are planned by the ministries in the framework programmes for development cooperation and humanitarian aid for four-year periods. The framework programmes adopted in the past largely covered the activities of the National Coordinator and some other key line ministries involved in the implementation of development cooperation and humanitarian aid. They focused on bilateral activities, and the first peer review recommended that the framework programme should be extended to cover all ODA, as well as the results that Slovenia was aiming to achieve. The last framework programme prepared by the MFEA and submitted to the Slovenian Government for adoption covered the period 2016–2019, and was revised twice. Due to limited human resources and, above all, the emergency situation caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, which required a number of immediate adjustments, as well as Slovenia's 2021 EU Council Presidency, the MFEA was not able to prepare a new framework programme to be adopted by the Slovenian Government after the expiry of the last one. However, it collected information on the plans of other ministries on an annual basis. In 2021, a draft framework programme was prepared, that included multilateral development assistance and categories of expenditure in Slovenia (tuition fee waivers, sustenance of refugees) to cover all ODA in line with the recommendations of the first peer review.

Slovenia has gradually increased its ODA over the years, both in nominal terms and as a share of GNI. Increased donations of COVID-19 vaccines helped to increase the GNI for ODA to 0.19% in 2021. The substantial rise in humanitarian aid, coupled with the interest cancellation on Angola's clearing debt and increased in-donor refugee costs stemming from the Russian aggression against Ukraine, played a pivotal role in pushing the GNI for ODA to an unprecedented 0.29% in 2022. The share of GNI allocated for ODA is expected to decrease in 2023, based on the envisaged resources outlined in the Slovenian budget and the anticipated expenditure.

Without a planned significant increase in the available budget for development cooperation and humanitarian aid, ODA is projected to fall below Slovenia’s pre-COVID-19 levels by 2025, according to current plans of relevant line ministries and GNI growth projections.

Ministries allocate resources for ODA within the framework of Slovenia's integral budget (for years t+1 and t+2). Expenditure is planned in line with allocated funds and identified activities (e.g. preparation of a call for co-financing NGO projects). Within the adopted financial plan, part of the funds is also earmarked for humanitarian projects, humanitarian contributions to international organisations and to respond to sudden unforeseen humanitarian crises.

Other ministries budget in a similar way, but they face greater constraints on the amount of ODA available and their human resources are even more limited. Occasionally, there are cuts in resources and consequently in activities at the expense of others. As a result, Slovenia had to abandon some activities in recent years (e.g. participation in the UNHCR pledging conference and announcement of contributions, activities for the provision of global health, etc.).

The limited resources and, above all, the inability to plan consistently for longer periods of time make it impossible to strengthen human resources, support larger and long-term projects, establish multi-annual strategic partnerships and strengthen the capacities of implementing institutions and NGOs. Human resources should be enhanced in parallel with the strengthening of structured medium-term planning, increasing programmable bilateral aid and strengthening the role of line ministries.

*Plans and options for future work*

To ensure the full functioning of the development cooperation system and an adequate allocation of flexible resources to meet internationally agreed commitments, the following should be done:

* Ensure the adoption of an action plan for the gradual increase of ODA;
* Ensure the regular preparation and adoption of framework programmes for up to four years, covering the activities of all ministries involved in the implementation of ODA and all categories of development cooperation and humanitarian aid;
* Ensure that the adoption of the action plan for the gradual increase of ODA is supported by a sound organisational structure and that the MFEA's human resources and skills are enhanced to keep pace with the increased resources. Adequate human resources are also needed in other ministries;
* Strengthen the operational capacity of Slovenian implementing institutions and NGOs and their partnerships with organisations in partner countries to ensure effective and result-oriented implementation;
* Explore the possibility of expanding the range of instruments (upgrading grants with additional financing modalities).

B.2.2. Cooperation with the private sector

Pillar II.5 Private sector

Pillar II.4 Civil society

*Reasons for selection*

Delays in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals of the 2030 Agenda, growing development needs and the widening humanitarian gap are increasing the role of the private sector in development cooperation and humanitarian aid. In partnership with other stakeholders, the private sector can help solve the most pressing global challenges. Slovenia is aware of this. Therefore, already at the time of the first peer review, it began to pay additional attention to private sector engagement in both development cooperation and humanitarian aid. Although the plans were well developed and the recommendations contained concrete proposals, Slovenia did not implement the measures to the extent envisaged.

*Analysis*

Slovenia has recognised the role of the private sector and included it in the strategic and legislative framework of development cooperation and humanitarian aid. The Resolution defines the role of the private sector in achieving sustainable development, in particular through investment, trade and job creation, and promotes partnerships with the private sector aimed at achieving inclusive and sustainable growth in partner countries.

The Act allows, among other things, for private sector participation, which can also be for profit. As a result, Slovenia has been able to increase the private sector’s motivation for involvement in development cooperation projects.

The Strategy clearly highlights the role of the private sector and measures to strengthen cooperation. It envisages private sector contributions in the form of transfer of technology, innovation and knowledge, own resources or goods and services not available in the local market. The Strategy also foresees measures to strengthen cooperation with the private sector by improving dialogue with it, linking it to NGOs and encouraging its participation in EU-funded projects. Particular attention is paid to Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR).

Partial cooperation with the private sector, in particular with NGOs, is encouraged by the guidelines on cooperation with NGOs, updated by the MFEA in May 2023, in which the MFEA commits itself to promote cooperation with the private sector in the context of public calls.

Slovenia has made progress in involving the private sector in project implementation, raising awareness, linking the private sector with NGOs, and networking at the international level.

Private sector involvement in development cooperation and humanitarian aid projects is still predominantly based on public calls and the involvement of the private sector in the implementation of activities. It is mostly involved in infrastructure projects identified by the Centre for International Cooperation and Development (CMSR) in cooperation with local communities in partner countries, while public calls are usually carried out by the local communities themselves. Most of the projects target the Western Balkans and the Eastern Neighbourhood.

Slovenia has also established good cooperation with UNIDO. It has been active as a donor through UNIDO since 2005, when it signed an international agreement with the organisation, including a plan to provide assistance to developing countries. A system of cooperation is in place that allows for the direct involvement of Slovenian organisations, universities, institutes and companies, while also ensuring the transfer of technology and knowledge to address the various development challenges of partner countries.

It supports projects that are consistent with the strategic orientations of development cooperation, focusing on sustainability, innovative technologies, energy efficiency, tourism promotion, renewable energy, environmental protection, green technologies, biodiversity conservation and other sustainable development projects. Slovenia has already supported several UNIDO projects in Africa through contributions by either the state, the private sector or, in some cases, other donors.[[23]](#footnote-23)

In June 2022, Slovenia signed a long-term cooperation plan with UNIDO, which foresees continued cooperation in selected priority areas: ensuring the competitiveness of the economy through productive employment and quality education, innovation and digital transformation, circular economy and environmental protection, and clean energy and energy efficiency. The implementation of joint projects is tailored to the needs of partner countries and focused on geographic priorities, as foreseen in the Strategy until 2030.

Since 2018, the MFEA has also been promoting cooperation between the private sector and NGOs through public calls. Initially, the MFEA encouraged private sector involvement only in projects covering the selected thematic and geographic priorities and to a limited extent (up to 5% of the project value).

Over the years, participation has broadened, and in the latest public call for the period 2023–2025 it was extended to all projects in developing countries and all thematic priorities, with a minimum private sector contribution (in-kind, finance or services) of at least 10% of the MFEA's funding. The MFEA has also introduced a CSR criterion in the 2021 call, awarding extra points for the inclusion of such companies.

Over the past 5 years, all NGO projects in Sub-Saharan Africa have benefited from co-financing (mostly in-kind or services), as well as knowledge and experience transfer from the private sector. This positive trend continues with the latest call for proposals for the period 2023–2025 to implement development projects in the Western Balkans and humanitarian projects in Sub-Saharan Africa and the Middle East for the period 2023-2025 for a total of EUR 3,160,000. All 10 selected projects in the geographical areas mentioned above involve private sector partners.

Some progress has also been made in raising awareness and networking. For the period 2016-2020, the Counsellor for Development Cooperation at the Slovenia’s Permanent Representation to the European Union served as the private sector focal point. Within a group of EU Member States and in cooperation with the European Commission, several sectoral seminars on business involvement in EU development cooperation were organised in Brussels with the participation of Slovenian companies.

An event for companies in the energy sector was organised in Ljubljana in 2018. All of these activities help to raise awareness among businesses and thus to connect them to NGOs, including in the context of national calls for co-financing projects.

As part of the strategic partnership for emergency response signed with Caritas Slovenia, the MFEA has identified cooperation with the private sector as one of its areas of activity. The MFEA has supported such activities to raise awareness and connect NGOs with companies to mobilise new resources. In 2023, Caritas Slovenia organised 5 regional workshops aimed at representatives of companies and NGOs and their future networking. The workshops were well received by both the private sector and NGOs.

In addition, several editions of the Slovenian Development Days and meetings between development diplomats and business representatives were partly dedicated to the involvement of the private sector in development cooperation and humanitarian aid. The last Slovenian Development Days in October 2023 presented the EU Global Gateway Strategy and opportunities for engaging Slovenian companies, along with examples of good practice from Slovenia and Norway. The area was also presented at the 5th National Conference on the Internationalisation of the Slovenian Economy in June 2023.

The latter was prepared in the framework of the Bilateral Fund project of the EEA Financial Mechanism 2014–2021 and the Norwegian Financial Mechanism 2014–2021. In the first part of the project, representatives from the MFEA visited Norway to learn about the Norwegian system of development cooperation and private sector involvement. An event on private sector involvement in development cooperation was planned for 2020, but was not held due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The MFEA organised it in 2023.

A series of articles was also published in the International Business Law Journal in 2020 to raise awareness among the private sector of its role and opportunities in development cooperation and humanitarian aid.

The private sector is particularly active in the case of major natural and other disasters, when it takes the initiative to raise funds and in-kind assistance, either on its own or in cooperation with NGOs, as in the case of Ukraine, the earthquakes in Türkiye and Syria, Croatia and Albania. On such occasions, the MFEA explores ways to further support these private initiatives, for example by providing transport or other logistical support.[[24]](#footnote-24)

Slovenia systematically supports inclusive approaches in EU development policy-making processes and advocates access to EU funds for development cooperation and humanitarian aid, including for micro, small and medium-sized enterprises. Slovenia is also planning future awareness-raising and capacity-building events for the private sector.

Despite some progress, particularly in connecting the private sector to NGOs through public calls and individual awareness-raising activities, progress has been sub-optimal. Stagnation has been observed in areas where Slovenia was making progress at the time of the first peer review:

* The Strategy foresaw increased cooperation with the Slovenian export and development bank, SID Bank, in order to seek synergies and identify projects that would have catalytic and mobilising effects and, in the long term, contribute to increasing the interest of the Slovenian business community to participate in development cooperation and to invest in a partner country. Cooperation with SID Bank remained limited to analytical support to CMSR.
* In the past, the MFEA supported many initiatives and events related to private sector engagement, including at the EU level (initiative on the integration of micro, small and medium-sized enterprises in EU instruments, the above-mentioned EU sectoral seminars). However, these activities have not been developed further since the COVID-19 pandemic;
* At the time of the first peer review, the MFEA developed a vision for engaging the private sector and started drafting guidelines.

*Plans and options for future work*

With a solid legal basis for private sector involvement in development cooperation and humanitarian aid, it is necessary to:

* Explore the possibility of expanding the mandate of SID Bank into an international development bank, which would provide public and private economic entities in the partner countries and Slovenia with various financial instruments for the sustainable economic growth of the partner countries and would be linked to the network of European Development Finance Institutions;
* Raise awareness in the private sector of the opportunities and benefits of engagement in development cooperation and the importance of creating partnerships and consortia;
* Establish more systematic cooperation with the OECD DAC and the OECD Development Centre (DEV), the World Bank, UN agencies and development agencies in other countries, and increase participation in the Team Europe and EU Global Gateway initiatives;
* Focus more on systematic communication with the private sector by providing training and workshops that highlight opportunities for private sector engagement in development cooperation, including encouraging the private sector to contribute more to development finance;
* Improve cooperation and integration between different entities in Slovenia: Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Slovenia, Public Agency for Investment, Entrepreneurship and Internationalization (SPIRIT), Slovene Enterprise Fund, regional business associations and other relevant stakeholders;
* Finalise and adopt the guidelines for private sector participation in development cooperation and humanitarian aid.

B.2.3. Human resources, capabilities and skills

Foundation B.2 Human resources, capabilities and skills

*Reasons for selection*

The area of human resource management, knowledge and capacity building, especially in the light of the planned increase in ODA, was among the key recommendations of the first OECD DAC peer review. This topic was also partly covered in the 2020 mid-term review and in the 2021 statistical review, and both confirmed high staff turnover and bottlenecks in some areas. Since then, the MFEA[[25]](#footnote-25) has stepped up some of its efforts in this respect, which is reflected in positive changes, particularly over the last year. However, to achieve sustainable and targeted development cooperation and humanitarian aid, human resource capacity should be strengthened, especially if a decision is taken to enhance multiannual programming and ensure more ambitious funding.[[26]](#footnote-26)

*Analysis*

Human resources, investing in their capacity and preserving institutional memory are important aspects of the development cooperation and humanitarian aid system. Following the first peer review, the MFEA has taken an active approach to addressing the challenges and has been partially successful in doing so over the years.

The area of human resources is included in strategic documents and other supporting documents (e.g. guidelines). The Strategy states that adequate human resources will be needed following the envisioned increase in the share of GNI for ODA. The Strategy further foresees the strengthening of the key aspects of development cooperation and humanitarian aid (effectiveness, multiannual programming, implementation of the PCD, public communication, awareness-raising and global learning, and statistics and transparency) and the appointment of responsible persons for each of these areas. The Strategy also foresees a proactive role for the MFEA’s staff in sharing good practices and standardising actions with other stakeholders (line ministries, implementing partners). In order to achieve these objectives, the Strategy foresees the strengthening of human resource capacity and ensuring the necessary conditions and incentives for long-term education and training in the field of development cooperation and humanitarian aid.

The MFEA is aware that human resources are essential to the achievement of its tasks and objectives. The MFEA currently employs 733 public employees, of whom 427 are diplomatic staff. 319 employees work in the foreign service, of whom 214 diplomats in 62 diplomatic missions and consular posts. In the short to medium term, Slovenia plans to open three or four new diplomatic missions or consular posts, all in developing partner countries.

Development cooperation and humanitarian aid is included as a priority area in the current Government's Coalition Agreement 2022-2026. Accordingly, the Directorate for Development Cooperation and Humanitarian Aid was re-established in the autumn of 2022 under the new organisation scheme, and is divided into two departments: Department for Development Cooperation and Humanitarian Aid Policies, and Department for the Implementation of Development Cooperation and Humanitarian Aid. This ensured greater visibility of the area of development cooperation and humanitarian aid within the MFEA and its greater weight in policy-making. Since November 2022, the human resource capacity of the Directorate has been enhanced in order to close the gap between needs and the available staff as soon as possible, taking into account other pressing staffing needs, particularly those related to Slovenia’s membership of the UN Security Council in 2024 and 2025.

In October 2023, the Directorate employed 20 people; six are dealing with the area of development cooperation and humanitarian policies, and eight with the area of implementation. The Directorate further employs three diplomats: Director-General, Assistant to Director-General and Ukraine Reconstruction Coordinator. The Directorate also employs two trainees assigned to the Department for Development Cooperation and Humanitarian Aid Policies. The policy department is staffed exclusively by employees with a diplomatic title; the implementation department is staffed by two employees with a diplomatic title and six employees with the title of officials or administrative and technical staff. The plan is to add at least one more staff member to each of the two departments in 2023.

Continuity, which is difficult to ensure in diplomacy because of the rotation between the foreign and internal services, is important, particularly in development cooperation and humanitarian aid, as this area requires specific tasks and skills that are acquired over the medium to long term. It is of special importance to ensure the continuity of officials and administrative and technical staff, who are not necessarily subject to the same degree of turnover as diplomatic staff. Only three out of the six public employees in the implementation department have more than 5 years of knowledge and experience in development cooperation and humanitarian aid.

Diplomats at permanent missions and bilateral diplomatic missions in partner countries also work in the field of development cooperation and humanitarian aid. Political or economic advisers are involved in the implementation, currently 18 people. In addition, the Permanent Representation of the Republic of Slovenia to the European Union in Brussels employs two staff members dealing with development cooperation and humanitarian aid. In the past, only one diplomat covered this area, but during the Slovenian Presidency of the Council of the EU an additional person was employed. It is important that the number remains the same even after the Presidency, especially in the light of the expansion of the areas of work.[[27]](#footnote-27)

Over the past years, the MFEA has partly increased its investment in human resource capacity. In 2016–2018, field visits to projects and joint missions to monitor implementation were gradually introduced. The number of visits conducted was rather low in the beginning, but increased significantly in 2018–2019. During the COVID-19 pandemic, opportunities for field visits were limited, but the visits stepped up again in the post-2021 period. The aim remains to allow as many project visits as possible in the period of the MFEA's financial support, taking into account the security element, or for each project administrator to have the possibility of a field visit at least once a year.

The MFEA enables staff training in development cooperation and humanitarian aid – in the past years mainly in the field of rescue and humanitarian aid: in 2018 and 2022, the staff attended the EU Civil Protection Mechanism basic training. In addition, one public employee from the Consular Department is scheduled to attend the training in 2023, which will strengthen the MFEA's emergency response capacity. There were no other training courses (apart from regular ones related to the functioning of the MFEA and the public administration, the content and techniques in relation to the Presidency of the Council of the EU and the topics in preparation for the UN Security Council membership, etc.).

The MFEA supports the sharing of basic knowledge of development cooperation and humanitarian aid with other diplomats. This area is also part of the learning material for diplomatic exam and higher-level diplomatic exam. In addition, every diplomat posted abroad, including ambassadors, undergoes compulsory training in development cooperation and humanitarian aid. Knowledge of the topics related to development cooperation and humanitarian aid in the foreign service can have a major impact on the successful implementation of projects as evidenced by applications to the Development Fund.[[28]](#footnote-28)

In the past, the MFEA tried to address the lack of human resources and/or specific expertise in the field by hiring external experts (NGOs, academia, think tanks, etc.); for example, a hired expert was involved in the preparation of the Strategy in 2018, NGOs were requested to assist in the preparation of the concept of strategic partnership with NGOs in 2019 and a targeted research project on the implementation of the PCD has been supported in 2023 and is being carried out entirely by hired experts. The MFEA also concluded a cooperation agreement with the European Centre for Development Policy Management (ECDPM) for the duration of Slovenia's Presidency of the Council of the EU in 2021, and employed seconded experts from the European Commission and other Member States (2 in Ljubljana for the duration of the Presidency, 3 in Brussels, 1 for the full 6-month period and 2 for a shorter period).

Although a number of steps have been taken in the past to strengthen the human resource capacity and some progress has been achieved as a result of the establishment of an appropriate structure within the MFEA in the past year, certain areas still call for improvement:

* Frequent fluctuations in the MFEA’s department responsible for development cooperation and humanitarian aid; following the dissolution of the directorate in 2015, the number of experts decreased to 12 in the 2017-2018 period. On 1 November 2022, the Directorate for Development Cooperation and Humanitarian Aid was re-established with two departments and now employs 20 staff members. Statistical reporting, communications, global education, evaluation, private sector and aid effectiveness were temporarily without desk officers or reassigned to desk officers in other dossiers. Some good practices established in the past, such as work on the PCD, have been abandoned due to staff constraints. Since the setting up of the Directorate, work on development themes has been reinvigorated, but staffing instability has prevented the continuous and effective organisation of work and progress in the field.
* Capacity building and investment in human resources: the limited number of people and the size of the field have prevented staff from being able to participate more fully in targeted training, events (including those organised by the OECD DAC) and field visits, where they could hone their skills. Also, due to staffing constraints, capacity building in the form of secondment support to international organisations and other institutions or implementing institutions, of which Slovenia is a co-founder, is not planned despite the fact that the revised legislation allows for this.
* Ensuring career development: it was proposed as early as in the 2007 Working Strategy, which formed the basis for the adoption of the 2007 Resolution. With the annual rotation of diplomats, it is common for diplomats with development expertise to leave for diplomatic missions and consular posts that do not deal with development cooperation. As a result, capacity building in the field is hampered.
* Improving knowledge and human resource capacity in line ministries, implementing institutions and NGOs: compared to the previous peer review, progress in this area is limited. Line ministries are facing staff shortages and public employees covering development cooperation and humanitarian aid are simultaneously in charge of other areas.
* The activities of NGOs applying to MFEA calls for development projects are often carried out by one to three staff members. The key implementing institutions, i.e. CEF and ITF, both of which have passed the European Union Pillar Assessment making them eligible to be entrusted by the European Commission with the direct implementation of EU budget funds, have seen staffing reinforcements, while CEP and CMSR are still understaffed and consequently have less implementation capacity. Under the new management, CMSR has drawn up an ambitious growth plan, but its implementation will depend on the stability of the allocated budget funding, at least in the medium term. In addition, new possibilities for mobilising resources may also be available after the pillar assessment.

*Plans and options for future work*

In order to make more comprehensive progress in human resource management, Slovenia will work in particular in the following areas:

* In the coming years, particular attention will be paid to strengthening and stabilising the human resource management area. The organisational structure within the MFEA will be further improved with a view to avoiding instability in staffing. The increased staffing of the Directorate will allow for uninterrupted coverage of dossiers and key areas. The possibility of setting up a training and education system for line ministries will be explored;
* Enhanced staffing will allow for regular education and training, including deployment to international organisations and secondments or training organised by development structures of EU institutions and other member states;
* Efforts will be stepped up to deploy so-called development diplomats to embassies and consulates responsible for countries in priority geographical areas for Slovenian development cooperation. In considerations regarding opening new diplomatic representations, development perspective plays an important role, just as previous activities in selected countries corresponding to geographic priorities;
* The MFEA will endeavour to staff up its implementation department to make it a hub for deliberate development of human resources and specific knowledge, required for enhanced implementation activities;
* Human resource capacity in development cooperation could be strengthened through systematic career development for development experts and efforts to minimise the number of diplomats with development cooperation skills leaving this area of expertise and maximising the number of those returning to development cooperation after postings abroad;
* Line ministries should strengthen their capacity through planning their recruitment and training with a view to ensuring the effective implementation of development cooperation projects, especially in the event of increased resources in their budgets;
* The Government will seek to ensure the strengthening of capacity of implementing institutions and NGOs through predictable medium-term financial planning, training (especially in the event of increased staffing of line ministries), technical support, networking and partnerships. The MFEA will continue to operate in a transparent and accountable manner and will strive for a realistic assessment of the needs of NGOs and their access to the necessary information. It will encourage NGOs to advocate, raise awareness and regularly evaluate programmes and projects, and to adapt in the light of results achieved and changes in the global context. It will also encourage other government bodies to do the same.

C. Additional information and previous peer review recommendations

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | Recommendation | Implemented (fully, partially, not implemented) | Activities to implement | Impact/  implementation |
| 1 | Improve the approach to eradicate poverty, especially in the immediate neighbourhood | Fully implemented | In 2017, the National Assembly adopted the Resolution, which lays down the main goal of Slovenia's development cooperation: contribute to the eradication of poverty, reduction of inequality and acceleration of sustainable development in partner countries.  In 2018, the Government adopted the Strategy that identifies detailed objectives of development cooperation and humanitarian aid, principles, and thematic and geographic priorities.  In 2018, the National Assembly adopted the Act which also sets out the objectives of development cooperation and humanitarian aid in Article 2: to contribute to the eradication of poverty and the reduction of inequality, and to promote sustainable development in partner countries; to save lives, prevent and alleviate human suffering, sustain human dignity, reduce vulnerability and risk to crises, cooperate in preventive action, and increase resilience to crises, and build capacities to respond to them.  Article 8 of the Decree on implementing development cooperation and humanitarian aid of the Republic of Slovenia (2018) lists “Contribution to eradicating poverty, reducing inequalities, and fostering sustainable development in the partner country or region as the primary goal of development cooperation” among the conditions for funding or co-funding of bilateral development cooperation programmes or projects. | Reducing poverty and responding to the needs of partner countries is also the basic guiding principle for the implementation of development cooperation and humanitarian aid activities. In this context, Slovenia supports complementarity of activities that contribute to achieving the basic objectives, e.g. project activities, higher education cooperation (scholarships), bilateral technical assistance, earmarked contributions for international organisations.  The MFEA identified poverty eradication as a key objective for all projects that receive support. This principle features in standardised forms for project application and among the evaluation criteria.  In addition, an important criterion in the evaluation of projects is the compliance with the needs of partner countries. The applicants must also indicate which SDG their project is addressing. Thus, the MFEA makes sure that all activities are directed towards reducing poverty and inequality, and comply with the actual needs in partner countries (e.g. ownership).  Before adopting the programme, Slovenia always coordinates it with the programme partner country to ensure that the activities address specific needs in the field. |
| 2 | Narrow the dispersed thematic and geographic priorities and focus on competitive advantages to increase effectiveness | Fully implemented | The Resolution and Strategy identify thematic and geographic priorities. In addition, they lay down multiple objectives: 1. Share of available bilateral aid for programme countries (30% by 2022), 2. Share of available bilateral aid for the Western Balkans (60-70% since 2019), 3. Share of available bilateral aid for thematic priorities (75% since 2022), 4. Share of available bilateral aid for thematic priorities on geographic priority areas (50% since 2022), 5. Share of available bilateral aid either for thematic priorities or for geographic priorities (at least 80% since 2022). | In shaping the activities, the MFEA took the thematic and geographic priorities into account, as stipulated by the strategic documents. The target indicators were not fully achieved, including owing to trends that had a key impact on the fluctuation of results (e.g. high share of donated vaccines in 2021).  In 2021, two of the indicators were implemented:   * Share of available bilateral aid for thematic priorities on geographic priority areas (61%) and * Share of available bilateral aid for either thematic priorities or geographic priorities (91%). |
| 3 | Assess which multilateral organisations to cooperate with in order to be more efficient in achieving the strategic objectives, including by ensuring support to the least developed countries, and define what results these contributions are expected to bring | Fully implemented | In its chapter on multilateral cooperation, the Strategy set outs goals and possible ways of cooperating with individual organisations. The chapter on humanitarian aid also lists the organisations for close cooperation. Two of the measurable criteria for progress are related to bilateral cooperation.  Article 10 of the Act lays down the legal basis for concluding agreements on strategic partnerships with international organisations to achieve individual strategic and long-terms objectives of development cooperation or humanitarian aid.    In December 2022, the MFEA established the Criteria for the allocation of development and humanitarian contributions to international organisations and other international bodies, which have already been used to determine the 2023 contributions. | An assessment of the effectiveness of cooperation with individual international organisations was carried out in the course of the drafting of strategy documents. Slovenia also meets both measurable criteria on cooperation with multilateral organisations, as stipulated by the Strategy. The proposals for allocation of contributions to international organisations are assessed against the criteria. |
| 4 | Adapt the development cooperation framework programme to establish a comprehensive and coherent approach at the level of government and its agencies, including the desired development results. | Partially implemented | The Strategy foresees for the National Coordinator (MFEA) to draft 4-year framework programmes aimed at further enhancing the representation of ministries, the thematic and geographic focus and the interlinkages between topics. | The last framework programme was adopted in 2016 for the period up to 2019 (in 2017 and 2019 the programme was updated and adapted to reflect the current situation). Due to the changed circumstances, the impact of COVID-19 and the ensuing cuts in funding, the MFEA abandoned the preparation of a new framework programme, as it would not have been feasible to adopt a credible framework programme under such circumstances.  In 2023, the MFEA started drafting a new framework programme for the period 2023–2026, but the preparations stalled after the 2023 floods. The line ministries were forced to make targeted savings according to a Government decree. The coordination of the 2024–2026 framework programme will continue in late 2023 or early 2024.  The inter-ministerial coordination is conducted on a regular basis even outside the adopted framework programme. |
| 5 | Ensure that all Slovenian development cooperation stakeholders internalise the importance of gender and environment mainstreaming in their activities and have the necessary tools for that at their disposal | Fully implemented | The Strategy identifies environmental protection and gender equality as cross-cutting issues for implementation.  The 2019 unified methodology for evaluating development cooperation and humanitarian aid projects in terms of conditions and criteria was drafted on the basis of the 2018 Decree and places a special emphasis on the inclusion of gender equality and environmental protection.  In June 2023, the MFEA adopted the Guidelines for the Mainstreaming of Gender Equality in Development Cooperation and Humanitarian Aid of the Republic of Slovenia which provide detailed definitions of objectives in the area of gender equality. The Guidelines for environmental mainstreaming in development cooperation and humanitarian aid of the Republic of Slovenia are currently in the pipeline, and due to limited human resources the drafting is not yet finished.  Awareness raising and capacity building activities for implementing partners to include both topics in their projects included workshops and discussions at Slovenian Development Days 2019. By the end of 2023 and early 2024, several workshops are planned on the topic of gender mainstreaming in development cooperation and humanitarian aid targeting various stakeholders (staff, implementing institutions, NGOs and line ministries).  In 2023, the MFEA launched a Development fund to finance activities of Slovenian embassies in partner countries for the implementation of projects carried out with local partners. In 2023, gender equality and environmental protection were selected as cross-cutting issues for eligible projects. | Slovenia established a strategic framework for gender mainstreaming, and is currently drafting an environmental mainstreaming strategic framework.  The projects financed by the Development Fund focusing on the environment and gender equality as the only priorities are currently being implemented. A total of 11 projects applied for funding.  The MFEA has stepped up awareness raising activities in both areas of gender equality and the environment. Within the activities focusing on the environment, special emphasis is placed on the importance of access to fresh water.  In cooperation with the ministry responsible for the environment and climate, the MFEA will enhance the support to development cooperation projects focusing on the environment with additional funds amounting to 1 to 2% of Slovenia's ODA (funds from Slovenia's Climate Change Funding Programme). |
| 6 | Definition of the nature of strategic partnerships with NGOs and the private sector and their practical implementation | Fully implemented | Article 10 of the Act lays down the possibility of concluding strategic partnerships with selected stakeholders in order to attain specific objectives of development cooperation and humanitarian aid.  The Strategy defines areas where strategic partnerships can be concluded, namely humanitarian aid and cooperation with NGOs.  Chapter 9 of the Strategy sets out to greater detail the possibilities of cooperation with the private sector.  For awareness-raising purposes and to lay down the necessary norms and principles, and promote wider engagement of the private sector, the MFEA started preparing the Guidelines for the inclusion of the private sector to development cooperation. | In 2019, the first (pilot) public call for the selection of a strategic partner for evaluation for the period of five years was concluded.  In 2021, the first strategic partnership with an NGO was signed to strengthen emergency response to natural disasters and sudden humanitarian crises, to improve awareness raising and enhance the inclusion of the private sector in humanitarian aid. This strategic partnership was established following multiple consultations with NGOs. The 3-year contract expired end of October 2023, so a new public call is being drafted to select a strategic partner in this area.  In October 2023, a Memorandum of Understanding for strategic cooperation was signed with the ICRC for the period 2023–2025.  In May 2023, the guidelines for NGOs were updated and include the MFEA's commitment to promote private sector engagement through public calls.  As a pilot project, a public call was published for the period 2018–2020 for NGOs partnering up with the private sector. The positive trend is pursued with the most recent public call for the period 2023–2025 for the implementation of development cooperation projects in the Western Balkans and for humanitarian projects in the Sub-Saharan Africa and the Middle East. All 10 selected projects in the above mentioned geographic priority areas have included a private partner.  Given the importance of cooperating with the private sector, special guidelines are currently being drafted. |
| 7 | Building an evaluation culture at the level of the entire government that will be observed by all evaluation stakeholders in their efforts in development cooperation | Partially implemented | A special chapter of the Strategy is devoted to evaluation and developing an evaluation culture including a variety of measures to prepare external evaluation plans, foster an evaluation culture and the learning process and include mandatory evaluation for all large projects.  In 2014, the Government adopted the Evaluation Policy of Slovenian Official Development Cooperation, and in 2015, the MFEA adopted the Evaluation Guidelines of Slovenian Official Development Cooperation.  Based on these two documents, the MFEA so far adopted two plans of evaluation activities, the first one for the period 2017–2019, and the second for the period 2020–2022.  The Strategy also foresees an evaluation of the implementation of the Strategy itself, that has to be conducted ever four (4) years. The first evaluation will be conducted in 2024, the second in 2027 and the third one in 2031. Based on the findings and recommendations of each evaluation exercise, measures will be defined to further improve the implementation of the Strategy. | In 2019, the selected strategic partner for evaluation of development cooperation in the period 2019–2024 was Deloitte svetovanje d.o.o.  The last evaluation was performed by this company in 2020 and 2021. Afterwards, no evaluation was performed due to budget reprogramming (as a consequence of COVID-19) and lack of human resources.  In 2020, a workshop on the importance of evaluation culture was planned, but had to be cancelled due to the pandemic.  The MFEA is planning to re-launch evaluations in 2024. |
| 8 | Enhance cooperation in networks for peace in fragile contexts and introduce systemic deployment of technical assistance to ensure greater focus and the acquisition of knowledge in fragile contexts beyond Western Balkans | Fully implemented | According to the Strategy, Slovenia will endeavour for a comprehensive approach to humanitarian crises and engagement in fragile contexts through increased contributions via international organisations and activities of Slovenian implementing partners (MFEA, Slovenian Administration for Civil Protection and Disaster Relief and ITF). The objective is to ensure that by 2022, at least 50% of humanitarian contributions address humanitarian crises that are also being targeted through bilateral activities. | Based on the Strategy, Slovenia attained the goal in 2021 with 66% of contributions for crises that were addressed also through bilateral activities. Examples include the Middle East region (Syria, Jordan, Lebanon), response to certain natural disasters in the Western Balkan region and beyond.  Partial attempts at introducing the triple nexus between security, humanitarian action and development have been established in the Sahel region (Slovenian representatives in the EUTM Mali), Lebanon (activities within UNIFIL by summer 2023), BiH (Slovenian Armed Forces in Althea operation), Kosovo (UNMIK, KFOR), Syria (UNTSO) and Iraq (OIR). To improve the outcome, better coordination and complementarity would be needed between all the actors (development and humanitarian) on the ground.  Progress can be observed also in awareness raising and education. Since 2020, the POTC has held a series of trainings integrating the triple nexus (on the topics of protection of civilians, gender equality, prevention of human trafficking, climate security). |
| 9 | To tackle the challenges facing development cooperation, Slovenia should enhance government coordination of the PCD, particularly by appointing the inter-ministerial working body as a coordinator and arbiter/decision maker. | Partially implemented | The Strategy identifies the PCD as one of the key principles of development cooperation and humanitarian aid. In addition, it lays down orientations for its implementation, namely the appointment of contact points at relevant ministries that form part of the inter-ministerial body, overview of practices for PCD implementation, awareness raising and other measures to enhance this principle. | In 2017, the MFEA called on other line ministries to appoint contact points to start with the overview of practices. After initial sessions of the inter-ministerial body, the PCD review partially stalled due to human resource limitations.  The newly established Permanent Coordination Group has been tasked, based on the Act, to monitor the PCD;  In 2024 and 2025, the MFEA is co-financing a review of the PCD in the framework of a targeted research project (CRP) supported by the Slovenian Research and Innovation Agency. A team of external experts will start their work in January 2024 and will continue in 2025, drafting systemic solutions and recommendations for the Government in relation to mitigating negative impacts or incoherence of public policies for development. |
| 10 | Encourage all ministries to analyse specific opportunities to achieve the PCD and submit these analyses to the inter-ministerial working body for a whole-of-government discussion. | Partially implemented | In accordance with the Strategy, the inter-ministerial group of PCD representatives was supposed to start drafting analyses in 2019 focusing on specific areas and detecting any incoherence in development cooperation and humanitarian aid policies. Contact points were supposed to report about their findings to the Permanent Coordination Group and the National Coordinator would in turn submit the findings to the Expert Council. | Due to limited human capacities of the National Coordinator and other ministries, the inter-ministerial group came to a halt.  After external experts conduct their analysis of the PCD principle implementation in 2024 and 2025, regular information sharing is foreseen at the level of the MFEA, the Permanent coordination group and the Expert Council. |
| 11 | Assess how many human resources would be required at the level of the entire Slovenian Government to ensure a growing high quality development cooperation programme | Partially implemented | In light of the foreseen increase of GNI for ODA, the Strategy envisages an enhanced institutional status and independence of the unit responsible for development cooperation and humanitarian aid. This requires adequate human resources as a precondition for Slovenia's sustainable, effective and targeted activities in this field.  The Strategy also mentions other measures indirectly related to enhancing human resources, e.g. field trips to developing countries, awareness-raising activities, development of evaluation culture and learning, etc. | Human resources of the National Coordinator and other line ministries are a key factor contributing to effective operations. Due to high fluctuation in the number of staff working in this area and external circumstances (impact of COVID-19, Slovenia's EU Council Presidency), the capacities have varied considerably since the first peer review; on several occasions, they have been minimal, which is why only limited progress was achieved in terms of increasing the effectiveness of development cooperation.  On 1 November 2022, the new re-organisation of staff re-introduced development cooperation and humanitarian aid directorate with two distinct departments which allowed the number of staff to increase again. The trend is improving, but the numbers remain insufficient.  Human resources should be increased also in line ministries and most implementing partners. |
| 12 | Reflect on how to make the flexible multi-annual humanitarian aid as effective as possible | Fully implemented | The Strategy lays down several measures and objectives with a view of increasing the efficiency of humanitarian aid: target amount of humanitarian aid, multi-annual humanitarian funding, establishing strategic partnerships with selected international organisations, increased focus, complementarity of action by Slovenian stakeholders, identifying target international organisations in individual crises/regions, inclusion of the private sector. | Slovenia has attained most of the objectives set out in the Strategy:   * Allocation 11% of available bilateral assistance to humanitarian aid; * Establishment of a strategic partnership with Caritas Slovenia (2021) for emergency response and strategic cooperation with ICRC (2023); * Pledges for multi-annual contributions for protracted crises (Syria, Yemen, Sahel, Horn of Africa, Venezuela); * Achieving complementarity of action between contributions to international organisations and bilateral aid (66% of assistance for these crises); * Allocation of contributions to CERF and cash-based assistance; * Ensuring good coordination of activities with the Slovenian Administration for Civil Protection and Disaster Relief and NGOs; * Inclusion of the private sector to NGO projects aiming to build crisis resilience and preventive action and preparedness; * Substantial increase of contributions to international organisations in 2022 and 2023 (especially WFP and ICRC) to prevent fragmentation of funds and ensure greater efficiency. |
| 13 | Expand partnerships with other donors with a view to shape common positions on policy and programmes. | Fully implemented | In Article 3, the Act allows for an expansion of bilateral development cooperation to a multi-donor partnership with the partner country.  The Strategy mentions inclusive partnerships as vital to achieving results and their durability. This may also include other donors with whom the Republic of Slovenia implements joint projects or programmes. | Slovenia ensures extensive cooperation with other donors in particular when it comes to the exchange of experience and views on programmes and projects (frequent bilateral consultations at various levels with AT, SK, DE, PT; trilateral cooperation between AT, HR, SI; coordination at the level of the EU, in particular in the run-up to the Presidency, cooperation within the Presidency trio for EU Council Presidency, engagement in groups of like-minded countries at the levels of the EU and the UN, etc.).  In the implementation, Slovenia has cooperated with HU in the strengthening of health services in Kenya. Talks have been underway concerning cooperation with HU, AT and HR in Ukraine.  In October 2023, Slovenia signed a memorandum of cooperation with the German Association for international cooperation (GIZ) within U-LEAD to support activities to build Ukraine’s capacity in the field of EU rapprochement.  In October 2023, Slovenia cooperated with France to establish the Western Balkans Cyber Capacity Center (WB3C) in Montenegro.  Slovenia encourages Slovenian implementing institutions to participate in public calls of DCP USAID in the Western Balkans, and co-finances these activities.  Slovenia also cooperates within the Team Europe Initiatives with several projects. |
| 14 | Encourage ministries and implementing partners to engage in planning and managing to achieve better results. | Partially implemented | The Strategy foresees steps to improve management to achieve better results, mainly through multi-annual framework programmes that should envisage concrete results.  In addition, the Strategy envisages result monitoring in various stages: during project proposal drafting, approval, monitoring and field visits.  The Strategy stipulates that ODA annual reports from 2021 onwards also include a chapter on the results achieved. | Slovenia has made progress in terms of project activities: as project proposals are being drafted and evaluated, one of the criteria is attaining results in relation to individual SDGs. To this end, project forms and evaluation criteria have been upgraded. In addition, the monitoring of results is also conducted in field visits (frequent up to 2019, re-established after 2022). All major projects that were granted support in the 2021 call (and ensuing) must include evaluation.  ODA reports are to some extent focused on achieving results. |

D. Contact Information

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Consulted organisations:

* MFEA Departments and Diplomatic Missions;
* Line ministries;
* SLOGA, platform of Slovenian development and humanitarian NGOs with partners

Annex 1: List of Abbreviations

Act Act on Development Cooperation and Humanitarian Aid of the Republic of Slovenia

Agenda 2030 The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development

CEF Center of Excellence in Finance

CEP Centre for European Perspective

CERF Central Emergency Response Fund

CMSR Centre for International Cooperation and Development

DAC OECD Development Assistance Committee

EBRD European Bank for Reconstruction and Development

EC European Commission

ECOSOC UN Economic and Social Council

EDF European Development Fund

EIB European Investment Bank

EU European Union

FAO Food and Agriculture Association

GEF Global Environment Facility

GENE Global Education Network Europe

GNI Gross National Income

IBRD International Bank for Reconstruction and Development

ICRC International Committee of the Red Cross

IFRC International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies

IDA International Development Association

ITF Enhancing Human Security

MFEA Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs of the Republic of Slovenia (National Coordinator)

NGO Non-Governmental Organisation

ODA Official Development Assistance

OECD Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development

PCD Policy Coherence for Development

POTC Peace Operations and Training Centre

Resolution Resolution on Development Cooperation and Humanitarian Assistance of the Republic of Slovenia

Sloga NGO platform for development, global education and humanitarian aid

SPIRIT Slovenia Public Agency for Investment, Entrepreneurship and Internationalization (SPIRIT Slovenia Business Development Agency)

Strategy Development cooperation and humanitarian aid strategy of the republic of Slovenia by 2030

UCPM European Union Civil Protection Mechanism

UN United Nations

UNFPA United Nations Population Fund

UNICEF United Nations International Children’s Emergency Fund

UNHCR United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

UNIDO United Nations Industrial Development Organization

UNRWA United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East

UN WOMEN United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women

WFP World Food Programme

Annex 2: List of boxes

Box 1: Environmental protection as a cross-cutting issue

Box 2: Reducing poverty in the Western Balkans

Box 3: Active response to pressing needs using the re-programming of funds in the case of COVID-19

Box 4: Comprehensive response to the disastrous earthquake in Türkiye

Box 5: Plan of activities related to protection against gender-based violence 2021–2025 under the Call to Action initiative

Box 6: Support for the Polyclinic in Kabul, Afghanistan

Annex 3: List of documents

Legal Framework:

1. Act on Development Cooperation and Humanitarian Aid of the Republic of Slovenia: <https://www.gov.si/assets/ministrstva/MZZ/Dokumenti/multilaterala/razvojno-sodelovanje/ZMRSHP_EN-final.pdf>
2. Decree on implementing Development Cooperation and Humanitarian Aid: <https://www.gov.si/assets/ministrstva/MZZ/Dokumenti/multilaterala/razvojno-sodelovanje/Uredba_MRS_EN-final.pdf>

Strategic Framework:

1. Resolution on Development Cooperation and Humanitarian Assistance of the Republic of Slovenia: <https://www.gov.si/assets/ministrstva/MZZ/Dokumenti/multilaterala/razvojno-sodelovanje/Resolution-on-development-cooperation-and-humanitarian-assistance-of-the-Republic-of-Slovenia.pdf>
2. Development Cooperation and Humanitarian Aid Strategy until 2030: <https://www.gov.si/assets/ministrstva/MZZ/Dokumenti/multilaterala/razvojno-sodelovanje/Development-Cooperation-and-Humanitarian-Aid-Strategy-of-the-Republic-of-Slovenia.pdf>
3. Guidelines for the Mainstreaming of Gender Equality in Development cooperation and Humanitarian Aid of the Republic of Slovenia: <https://www.gov.si/assets/ministrstva/MZEZ/Dokumenti/multilaterala/razvojno-sodelovanje/Guidelines-for-the-Mainstreaming-of-Gender-Equality.pdf>
4. Guidelines on the Cooperation with Non-Governmental Organisations working in the field of Development Cooperation and Humanitarian Aid: <https://www.gov.si/assets/ministrstva/MZEZ/Dokumenti/multilaterala/razvojno-sodelovanje/Smernice-za-sodelovanje-z-nevladnimi-organizacijami-na-podrocju-mednarodnega-razvojnega-sodelovanja-in-humanitarne-pomoci.pdf>

Bilateral Agreements on International Development Cooperation/Current Programmes and Memorandums on International Development Cooperation:

1. <https://www.gov.si/en/topics/thematic-and-geographic-priorities-of-slovenias-development-cooperation/>

Evaluations:

1. Evaluation Policy of Slovenian Official Development Cooperation: <https://www.gov.si/assets/ministrstva/MZZ/Dokumenti/multilaterala/razvojno-sodelovanje/Evaluation_Policy_Slovenia.pdf>
2. Evaluation Guidelines of Slovenian Official development Cooperation: <https://www.gov.si/assets/ministrstva/MZZ/Dokumenti/multilaterala/razvojno-sodelovanje/Evaluation_Guidelines_Slovenia.pdf>

Slovenia's International Development Cooperation reports:

1. <https://www.gov.si/en/topics/why-we-need-development-cooperation/>

Annex 4: Human Resources

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| ***Directorate for Development Cooperation and Humanitarian Aid*** | |
| Director - General | 1 |
| Administrator | 1 |
| Ukraine Reconstruction Coordinator | 1 |
| Assistant to Director-General | 1 |
| ***Department for Development Cooperation and Humanitarian Aid Policies*** | |
| Head of Department | 1 |
| Policy Officer for UN | 1 |
| Policy Officer for EU/CODEV | 1 |
| Policy Officer for EU/ACP | 1 |
| Policy Officer for OECD DAC | 1 |
| Peer Review Coordinator | 1 |
| Trainee / Humanitarian Aid | 1 |
| Trainee/ Global Gateway | 1 |
| ***Department for the Implementation of Development Cooperation and Humanitarian Aid*** | |
| Head of Department | 1 |
| Communication Officer | 1 |
| ODA Reporting Officer | 1 |
| Gender Advisor | 1 |
| Programme Partner Countries Officer | 1 |
| Project advisors | 3 |

**Headcount by gender**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Male | 6 |
| Female | 14 |

Annex 5: Organizational chart

Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs of the Republic of Slovenia (MFEA)

National Coordinator

Line ministries

Permanent Coordination Group

Expert Council

(Advisory body)

Bilateral embassies

Implementing partners

Department for Development Cooperation and Humanitarian Aid Policies

Department for the Implementation of Development Cooperation and Humanitarian Aid

State Secretary

(In the role of development minister)

Directorate for Development Cooperation and Humanitarian aid

Multilateral embassies/Permanent Missions

Line ministries

Academia

Institutions

NGOs

1. Guidelines for cooperation with NGOs in the field of development cooperation and humanitarian aid, provided in Annex [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Guidelines for the Mainstreaming of Gender Equality in Development Cooperation and Humanitarian Aid of the Republic of Slovenia, provided in Annex [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. See chapters below for more details. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. For more information on the role of the framework programme and the reasons why the Government has not adopted a new framework programme, see Section B.2.1. Securing stable funding, below. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. See separate section on humanitarian aid below. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. See separate section on private sector involvement in development cooperation and humanitarian aid below. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. Initiated by Slovenia, the Green Group brings together six countries that share a strong international commitment to the environment: Slovenia, Cape Verde, Costa Rica, Iceland, Singapore and the United Arab Emirates. The Group's mission is to promote green policies and solutions in international relations, with a special focus on climate change, water challenges, ecosystem restoration, food security and ocean protection (source: https://www.greengroupinitiative.com/). [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. In preparation for membership and for the duration of its membership in the Security Council, Slovenia also signed a Cooperation Agreement with Interpeace, an international organisation working in the field of preventive action and peace-building in fragile situations and states, particularly at the local level in African countries. This agreement is an upgrade of previous cooperation, as Slovenia has already cooperated with the organisation and contributed funds to its operations. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. This is also consistent with the inclusion of the right to drinking water into the Slovenian constitution. [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. Slovenia is also involved in the Team Europe project on transboundary water cooperation in Africa, while a transboundary water project in East Africa (Kenya, Ethiopia) is under preparation. [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. See chapter below for more on the coherence of development cooperation, humanitarian aid and external policies in implementing gender equality policies. [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. The importance of Slovenia's actions in the field of human security is also confirmed by the recently published OECD DAC analysis "Peace and official development assistance", which ranks Slovenia first among DAC members in terms of the share of its peace ODA allocated to the removal of anti-personnel landmines and explosive remnants of war. [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
13. Based on the Declaration on the Western Balkans (2010), the Declaration on the Foreign Policy of the Republic of Slovenia (2015), the Guidelines for Slovenia's Policy in the Western Balkans (2010, updated 2012), the Declaration on guidelines for the operation of the Republic of Slovenia in the institutions of the European Union in the period 2021–2024 (2021) and the Slovenian Foreign Policy Strategy (2021). [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
14. See chapter on humanitarian aid for more on strategic partnerships. [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
15. Within the ‘Grain from Ukraine’ initiative, Slovenia supported activities to ensure food supply in Kenya. [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
16. In response to humanitarian crises following the earthquake in Syria and Türkiye, the Gaza conflict in 2023 and the Russian aggression against Ukraine in 2022, Slovenia secured financing from the budget reserve. [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
17. In 2022, Slovenia earmarked EUR 1 million for the ‘Grain from Ukraine’ initiative and an additional EUR 1 million in 2023 for the same initiative and for tackling other food crises stemming from the Russian aggression against Ukraine. [↑](#footnote-ref-17)
18. Preventive action, including in relation to conflict prevention, is one of Slovenia’s priorities during its UN Security Council membership in the period 2024–2025. [↑](#footnote-ref-18)
19. The fluctuation can be explained mainly as a consequence of one-time events, such as increased migration flows, COVID-19 and the interest cancellation on Angola’s clearing debt, which all have an impact on the ODA statistics. Better financial programming could mitigate such fluctuations to some extent. [↑](#footnote-ref-19)
20. The national activities are based on the Constitution of the Republic of Slovenia and the Equal Opportunities for Women and Men Act (main legislation on gender equality). Gender equality also features in relevant sector-specific legislation. Concrete activities for enhancing the role of women and their empowerment are defined in the Resolution on the National Programme for Equal Opportunities for Women and Men for the period 2023–2030, adopted by the National Assembly of the Republic of Slovenia in September 2023 (the first Resolution covered the period 2007–2013, and the second one the period 2015–2020). [↑](#footnote-ref-20)
21. WEF: The Global Gender Gap Index 2023 rankings, SI 29nd (pp 11 at https://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF\_GGGR\_2023.pdf)

    UNDP: Gender Development Index in Gender Inequality Index 2021-2022, SI 23rd (table 4 and table 5 at https://hdr.undp.org/data-center/documentation-and-downloads)

    UN WOMEN: - Women's Empowerment Index, 2023, SI 8th (pp 51 at https://www.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/2023-07/paths-equal-twin-indices-women-empowerment.pdf) [↑](#footnote-ref-21)
22. It regularly supports the work of the Center of Excellence in Finance (CEF) on domestic resource management for development and the engagement with international organisations (international trade, debt issues, taxation, etc.). [↑](#footnote-ref-22)
23. Examples of such projects include the pilot project "Inclusive and sustainable development of the tomato value chain in Egypt", “Bringing clean drinking water to Kenya", "Feasibility study and analysis for the establishment of a water network information system in Ghana" and others. All of these projects are carried out in cooperation with Slovenian private sector partners. [↑](#footnote-ref-23)
24. In this context, companies and entrepreneurs may benefit from a special tax relief that enables a reduction of the tax base before corporate income tax or trade tax in the year in which the donation is made and for three years thereafter (Article 59 of the Corporate Income Tax Act). [↑](#footnote-ref-24)
25. In this part, the self-assessment focuses on the review of human resources, capabilities and skills at the MFEA as National coordinator for development cooperation and humanitarian aid, and also touches on the issue of human resources in other line ministries and with implementing partners. [↑](#footnote-ref-25)
26. The Resolution requires the Government to adopt an action plan to increase ODA to 0.33% of GNI by 2030, if macroeconomic conditions allow. If the Government decided to adopt such an action plan, the activities resulting from a substantial increase in finance would be difficult to implement with the existing human resources. [↑](#footnote-ref-26)
27. As of June 2021, the Working Party on Development Cooperation and International Partnerships (WP CODEV-PI) has a new mandate and two subgroups in addition to the core group: (i) Neighbourhood, Development and International Cooperation Instrument (NDICI) - Global Europe and (ii) Preparation of international development conferences. Two more working parties were established: Ad Hoc Working Party on the multi-agency donor coordination platform for Ukraine (AHWP Ukraine Platform) and RELEX HQ dealing with the implementation of the EU Global Gateway Strategy. The CODEV-PI delegate is also the Brussels focal point for humanitarian aid. [↑](#footnote-ref-27)
28. Applications by diplomats who had previously worked in development cooperation and humanitarian aid achieved higher scores. [↑](#footnote-ref-28)