

Italy

Reported ODA: EUR 6170 million
0.28 % GNI (↑ from 6.70% in 2023)

Non-inflated ODA: EUR 4407 million
0.2 % GNI (↑ from 0.01% in 2023)

Total inflated ODA: EUR 1763 million
28.05 % of total



“Italy’s 20-Year Journey in International Development Cooperation: Steady Patterns, Systemic Change, and New Political Momentum”

CONCORD Italy

Main trends

Over the past 20 years, Italy's international development cooperation has shown some steady features alongside significant changes. **Italy's ODA has persistently remained low relative to GNI, fluctuating between 0.14% and 0.33%, confirming its image as financially low-intensity cooperation.** Between 2005 and 2023, ODA relied heavily on international channels (57% multilateral, 37% via the EU) and was almost entirely grant-based (95%). Over the same period of time, debt relief and in-donor refugee costs together averaged 22% of total ODA, while CSO funding rose in 2023 constant prices from EUR 83 million in 2005 to EUR 142 million in 2023.

In 2014, a reform replaced the 1987 framework, modernising Italy's development cooperation. As noted in Aid Watch reports, it established three pillars – MAECI, the Italian Agency (AICS - launched 2016), and CDP (the financial arm) – and introduced multi-year budget planning and projections and structured consultation via the National Council. However, governments have failed to address the core issue: aligning ODA levels with the 0.7% global commitment.

At present, **Italy stands out for avoiding ODA cuts, unlike many donors– though starting from a relatively low baseline.** Since 2022, a defining feature has been the strong political leadership of Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni, who unveiled the **Piano Mattei per l'Africa**. Coming from a political tradition of the Italian right, the initiative is striking for its language, emphasising a new kind of partnership with African countries and recognising Africa's strategic importance. The plan reflects the increasingly popular notion of transactional aid, where development cooperation is closely tied to the pursuit of reciprocal political and economic gains.

Government's relationship with civil society

Relationships with institutions are stable and, in some areas, improving. CSOs have maintained leadership roles in the working groups of the National Council for Development Cooperation, generating inputs on policies including the multi-year planning process, development effectiveness, policy coherence, and evaluation. Dialogue between CSOs and the institutions of Italy's international cooperation system takes place at multiple levels, covering both structural issues – such as improving procedures – and emergency responses. It would be highly beneficial to further systematise these relationships, making them more reliable and consistent over time. Funding for CSO-led initiatives has recently increased, even though these organisations had also been under significant political pressure in the past, particularly with respect to their role in migration-related activities.

Recommendations

- **Maintain a solid ODA performance, including alignment with the 0.7% target.**
- **Enhance the effectiveness of cooperation, ensuring that partnerships are inclusive and aligned with county priorities** (notably Italy supports the 2030 Pact for Effectiveness launched at the recent FFD4 Sevilla conference).
- **Improve the planning and reporting process to ensure more strategic and predictable programming.**
- **Safeguard and enhance consultations with all stakeholders.**
- **Develop new instruments to support CSO activities beyond project-based funding and reduce administrative red tape.**
- **Strengthen the push for localisation by clearly articulating the role of local partners, while still valuing national organisations.**