

Estonia

Reported ODA: EUR 77 million
0.2 % GNI (↓ from -26.30% in 2023)

Non-inflated ODA: EUR 73 million
0.19 % GNI (from 0% in 2023)

Total inflated ODA: EUR 4 million
3.61 % of total



“Sharing reform experience through focused, values-based cooperation”

Estonian Roundtable for Development Cooperation / AKÜ

Main trends

In 2024, Estonia's development cooperation remained strongly influenced by geopolitical realities, especially Russia's war against Ukraine. Over 72% of Estonia's bilateral development aid allocated by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs was directed to Ukraine. This reflects both solidarity and a long-term commitment to reconstruction and democratic resilience. The trend from recent years continued, with projects focusing on education, governance and economic recovery. **The Eastern Partnership continues to be the main regional focus, with ongoing engagement in Moldova and renewed activity in Armenia.** However, political instability led to the suspension of bilateral cooperation with Georgia. In Africa, Estonia maintained its focus on four priority countries: Kenya, Uganda, Botswana and Namibia and aligned cooperation with its strengths in digitalisation, education and entrepreneurship. In 2024, ESTDEV launched a new digital and green transition stream in the region, supported by EUR 1.5 million of EU funding. While Ukraine remained the political and financial priority, there was a shift in Africa toward fewer but more strategic projects. Limited domestic funding, however, continued to constrain broader involvement of civil society.

Compared to earlier years, Estonia's ODA strategy has become more centralised, professional and politically guided, especially since ESTDEV was established in 2021. The new implementation plan for 2024 to 2026 reflects a more structured and results-oriented approach. At the same time, total ODA volume decreased compared to 2023, mainly due to lower in-donor refugee cost reporting.

Looking ahead, Estonia's development policy is expected to remain focused on Ukraine and the EU neighbourhood while gradually expanding global engagement. **Core drivers such**

as security, values-based diplomacy and digital expertise remain unchanged, but are now pursued with greater coordination and strategic leverage than 20 years ago.

Government's relationship with civil society

In 2024, the relationship between CSOs and the Estonian government in development cooperation remained generally stable, with no major changes compared to previous years. CSOs continue to engage constructively with Ministry of Foreign Affairs and ESTDEV representatives and actively participate in consultations on strategic documents like the Development Cooperation Implementation Plan.

At the same time, **some CSOs have expressed concerns about the increasing focus on business diplomacy and public-private partnerships (PPP), noting that this shift may affect the intended priorities of development cooperation. CSOs therefore advocate a careful balance between economic interests and development goals.** Additionally, CSOs have highlighted the importance of ongoing dialogue and transparency around funding allocation and management within ESTDEV. Clearer communication about resource distribution would further strengthen trust and enable more strategic collaboration. Overall, while the cooperation with governmental stakeholders remains positive and collaborative, these reflections **suggest areas where openness and clarity could be enhanced to support even better partnership going forward.**

Recommendations

- **Ensure the stability of the development cooperation budget and avoid major cuts, continuing the plan to reach 0.33% of GNI by 2030, despite overall budgetary pressures.**
- **Increase the share of public funding for partner projects in ESTDEV's open calls to at least 50% to strengthen civil society engagement and improve transparency in project financing.**
- **Improve the design and communication of grant calls by providing clearer advance information on upcoming calls, better defining target groups and focus areas, and supporting both grassroots organisations and larger national partners more effectively.**
- **Prioritise communication and awareness-raising related to development cooperation by requiring applicants to include a national communication plan in their proposals, reporting on its implementation, and fostering closer cooperation between ESTDEV and civil society communication managers.**