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DAC Working Party on Development Finance Statistics

Peer review on Development Finance Statistics of Estonia

The Statistical Peer Review of Estonia was carried out from 14-16 May 2024. The review team consisted of representatives from Ireland and Greece, an observer from Lithuania and four staff from the DAC Secretariat. The review covered the seven dimensions outlined in the Guidance note for statistical peer reviews, namely: statistical policy issues; domestic data collection; statistical reporting; performance on DAC recommendations and international commitments; transparency; data accessibility; and publication of statistics.

In this 'cancel and replace' version, the formatting and numbering of chapters has been corrected.

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Executive summary

The Statistical Peer Review of Estonia was carried out from 14-16 May 2024. The review team consisted of representatives from Greece and Ireland, an observer from Lithuania and four staff from the DAC Secretariat. The review covered the seven dimensions outlined in the Guidance note for statistical peer reviews, namely: statistical policy issues; domestic data collection; statistical reporting; performance on DAC recommendations and international commitments; transparency; data accessibility; and publication of statistics.

Estonia faces the challenge of striking a delicate balance between public outreach efforts aimed at highlighting its priorities (i.e. supporting Ukraine's recovery, strengthening governance structures, and promoting digital governance), and the constraints posed by limited resources in both the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) and the Centre for International Development (ESTDEV), as well as IT systems that do not fully meet the current data requirements.

Communicating effectively and engaging the public on Estonia's priorities is essential for garnering support and fostering transparency with regards to Estonia's Official Development Assistance (ODA). Finding innovative solutions to address increasing demands while ensuring efficient allocation of resources will be pivotal in Estonia's pursuit of its development objectives, public engagement and maintaining its reputation as a responsible global actor.

Key recommendations

Estonia development co-operation system

- The peer review team encourages Estonia to consider a more structured and regular whole-of-government discussion on ODA and policy coherence, in order to achieve the 0.33% ODA/GNI target by 2030. This could ensure that there is buy-in from all government bodies to be aware of ODA requirements and ensure that all ODA activities be reported, as well as provide opportunities to use ODA statistics for strategic policy decision making.
- In light of the possible budget cuts, Estonia is encouraged to consider how best to protect the share of the MFA's budget that is dedicated to development co-operation.

ODA eligibility

- Estonia is encouraged to familiarise itself with existing documentation and tools on ODA-eligibility and integrate lessons learnt and feedback into future data collections cycles. To facilitate the understanding of the criteria by government entities not directly involved in development co-operation, Estonia could develop guidance notes on specific ODA-eligibility items.
- Estonia could share concrete examples of cyber security projects with the WP-STAT and invite the Secretariat and members to provide feedback on their ODA eligibility. These examples could potentially be added to the ODA eligibility database.

- The review team recommends that Estonia communicates to the Secretariat the methodology used by all ministries to assess ODA-eligible costs and encourages Estonia to break down, to the extent possible, its in-donor refugee costs by type of expenditure and refugee category.

Use of the policy markers

- Estonia is at an early stage of marker reporting and should continue to refine its marker assessment methodologies. Estonia should consider prioritisation of planned improvements. Assignment of policy markers could be brought earlier in the project management cycle.
- Estonia could coordinate with other interested members to bring the issue of tracking digitalisation forward to the WP-STAT, potentially to be tracked through keywords.

Domestic data collection

- The review team recommends considering dedicating a full-time data analytical expert to manage the overall process of collecting, reviewing, reporting, and communicating on ODA data; this person could also focus on documenting the data collection process. It should be acknowledged that it takes time to master the ODA statistical framework and gradually improve the data collection process.
- Estonia is encouraged to calibrate the sophistication of a new data management system to the actual internal and external data needs. Furthermore, establishing a robust data collection system must respond to Estonia's national data requests as well as international reporting obligations. Estonia should leverage its existing experience in private-public partnerships in the development of IT tools to ensure that the new database management system can remain fit for purpose over the long term, retaining, where possible and proportionate to Ministry resources, the autonomy to make changes to the software independently.

Reporting to the OECD

- As part of documenting the data quality assurance process, the MFA team could consider recording recurring data issues per institution so as to sensitise reporting institutions and gradually improve reporting over time. The peer review team also encourages the preparation of personalised materials per institution to facilitate reporting. While the eventual system needs to capture all the data points, capacity building of partners and officers needs to be strategic as it takes time.

Commitments and DAC recommendations

- Estonia is encouraged to work with the Secretariat on improving the quality of the tying status reporting. Estonia is also invited to start reporting on the transparency provisions of the DAC Recommendation on Untying ODA.

Transparency, communication and dissemination

- The MFA is considering the development of tools for visualisation, analysis, and dissemination, which could provide a single, compelling narrative for Estonia's development co-operation. The review team encourages Estonia to provide annual trainings for key audience groups on how to use ODA statistics and identify the needs of the different data user groups (CSOs, journalists, politicians, etc.).
- Estonia could consider expanding its reporting on TOSSD through an incremental approach. It could, for example, start by including activities that have been assessed as not eligible to ODA but could be TOSSD-eligible and by looking at contributions to multilateral organisations that are not included in the List of ODA-eligible international organisations.

Introduction - Overview of Estonia's development co-operation

1. This section provides a brief description of the organisational structure of Estonia's development co-operation, the strategic and legislative framework and key issues around the budget preparation and ODA/GNI target.

Organisational structure and key stakeholders

2. In 2023, the year Estonia joined the DAC, it celebrated 25 years as a donor of international development co-operation. As its ODA has grown in the past years (with a peak in 2022 due to in-donor refugee costs), Estonia has had to review its development co-operation framework especially as it is committed to reaching an ODA level of 0.33% of GNI by 2030.

3. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) has the responsibility for both bilateral and multilateral development co-operation and has the role to develop aid policies, strategies and action plans for Estonia. The Ministry also represents Estonian interests in development co-operation and humanitarian aid within international organisations.

4. In order to handle the growing volume of development co-operation as well as enhance Estonia's development co-operation and humanitarian aid projects, the government established the Estonian Centre for International Development (ESTDEV) in 2021 to act as a separate agency from the MFA in order to implement strategic, wide-ranging, sustainable projects in countries and regions that are considered priority countries by the MFA. ESTDEV is responsible for implementing development co-operation activities that it defines, participating in international development co-operation projects (e.g. Team Europe) and conducting public calls for proposals.

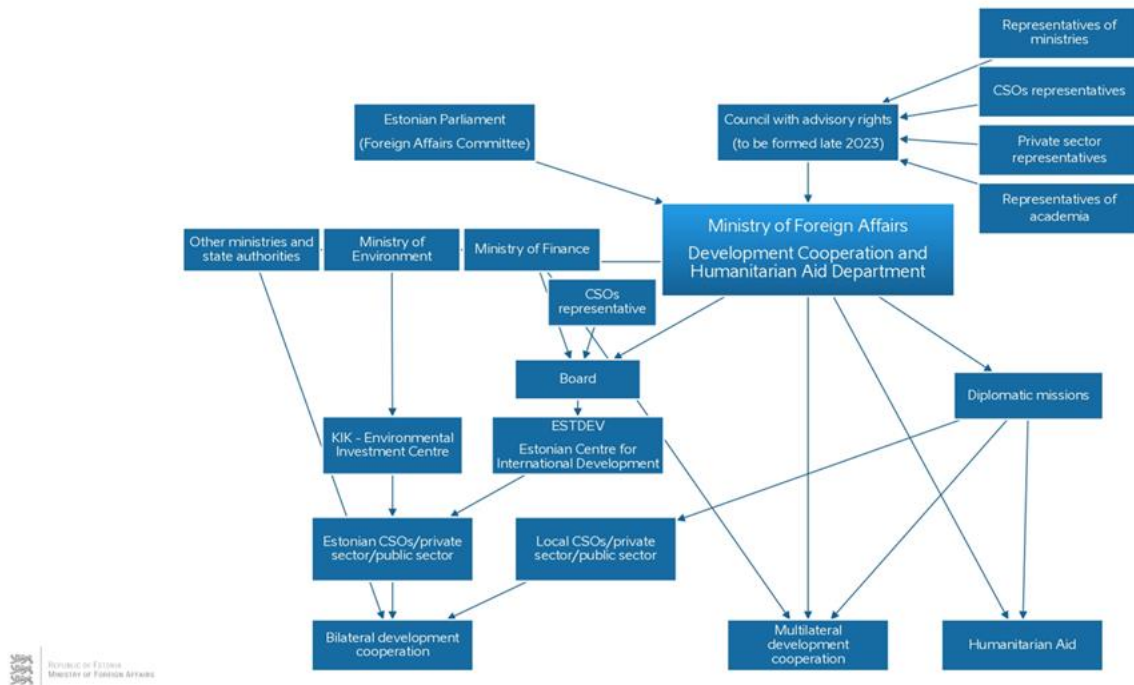
5. A government regulation, adopted in 2021, spells out the division of responsibilities between the MFA and ESTDEV and provides the methods and conditions for awarding development co-operation and humanitarian aid. Under this regulation, the MFA is responsible for allocations to multilateral organisations, humanitarian aid allocations and microfinance activities. It also has the mandate to collect official development assistance (ODA) data for Estonia, which is governed by the MFA's regulation no.1¹.

6. The MFA issues a press statement once a year to explain how the ODA budget is evolving, but it does not have the capacity to fully leverage the data. Once a year, it invites CSOs, academia, the private

¹ [Estonian development co-operation database statute.](#)

sector and other partners involved in development co-operation to raise awareness of ODA, but the approach is rather ad-hoc.

Figure 1. Development Co-operation organisational structure in Estonia



Source: Estonian Ministry of Foreign Affairs

Strategic and legislative framework

7. Estonia’s development co-operation is based on a legislative framework, which consists of the Government of Republic Act² and the Foreign Relations Act^{3,4}. Both these acts provide the mandate for the MFA to develop and implement policies with regards to Estonian development co-operation and humanitarian aid, together with other relevant ministries (e.g. Ministry of Finance, Ministry of Environment).

8. According to the legislation, Estonia is in the process of establishing an advisory Council that can rally other government departments. It also plans to modify the current legislation but first wishes to understand the necessary changes required to its data management systems and procedures before moving ahead with this modification.

9. The overarching principle of Estonian development co-operation is to “contribute to the achievement of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals and to reducing global poverty in an environmentally sustainable way”. It follows three strategic frameworks:

² <https://www.riigiteataja.ee/en/eli/ee/Riigikogu/act/503062024002/consolide>

³ <https://www.riigiteataja.ee/en/eli/ee/Riigikogu/act/514022023001/consolide>

⁴ In addition to these two acts, a government regulation was adopted in 2021 that outlines the different roles between MFA and ESTDEV, and the methods and conditions of aid - <https://www.riigiteataja.ee/akt/118122021002>. See also paragraph 5 above.

- 1) The development co-operation and humanitarian aid strategy⁵ defined for 2024-2030 (as it is linked to the SDGs), which was adopted by the government in 2024 and based on consultations with diplomatic missions, other government departments or ministries, the private sector and CSOs.
- 2) The establishment of priority countries (Armenia, Botswana, Georgia, Kenya, Moldova, Namibia, Uganda and Ukraine) as well as thematic priorities (good governance and democracy, economic development, education, environment, gender equality, and digital and cybersecurity).
- 3) The establishment of specific thematic priorities within priority countries, see Figure 2.

Figure 2. Estonia's strategic framework by country and theme

Country / Area	Ukraine	Moldova	Armenia	Georgia	Kenya	Namibia	Botswana	Uganda
Support to democracy and the rule of law; and good governance	X	X	X	X				
Supporting economic development	X	X		X		X	X	
Promoting good-quality education	X	X	X	X	X			X
Contribution to solving environmental problems	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Gender Equality	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Development of e-governance and cybersecurity	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X

Source: Estonian Ministry of Foreign Affairs

ODA figures and budget preparation

10. The Estonian ODA budget is based on a Fiscal Plan, which covers 4 years, although it is revised on an annual basis. The budget process which stems from this is based on a one-year plan whereby ministries make plans for their budgets during the first half of the year; these are then submitted to the Ministry of Finance in the month of August and result in a budget proposal which is submitted to Parliament in autumn and approved in December. The share of the development co-operation budget that is allocated to the MFA falls under the responsibility of the Development Cooperation and Humanitarian Aid Department that sits within it, which has the full flexibility to allocate this budget either to humanitarian or development co-operation activities. In 2024, this resulted in an annual budget of EUR 24.3 million for ESTDEV, which managed 70 projects (55% were managed by ESTDEV, and 45% by partners). The MFA decides on the allocation of humanitarian activities and sets aside a budget for unexpected crises. The fact that the MFA is fully in charge of the ODA budget provides it with some flexibility to determine how to reallocate resources.

⁵ <https://www.vm.ee/sites/default/files/documents/2024-04/AKHA%20strateegia%202024-2030%20inglise%20keeles.pdf>

11. For Estonian development co-operation, the MFA is responsible for the collection and compilation of Estonian ODA which means that ODA statistics are of great importance both as an accountability tool and to communicate the results achieved. It has the ambition to reach an ODA level of 0.33% of GNI by 2030, but does not have a clear strategy on how to achieve this. In 2022, and to some extent 2023, Estonian ODA was much higher than in previous years due to costs for in-donor refugees (particularly from Ukraine). These data were easy to collect because they were captured under separate budget lines by the Ministry of Social Affairs and the Ministry of Education. Moving forward however, these costs are likely to diminish and the MFA is trying to undertake an exercise to see what activities other government departments are conducting that could qualify as ODA. There seems to be some reluctance from other departments though to report data they have not submitted previously.

12. The entire development co-operation budget that the MFA is responsible for is exclusively reserved for ODA purposes and includes: humanitarian aid, country-specific bilateral development co-operation (including microfinance projects below 15 000 EUR managed by embassies) and multilateral development co-operation (UN, European Development Fund, IDA). The Ministry of Finance is responsible for contributions to the EU development co-operation budget, EIB, IBRD, IFC, CEB and EBRD.

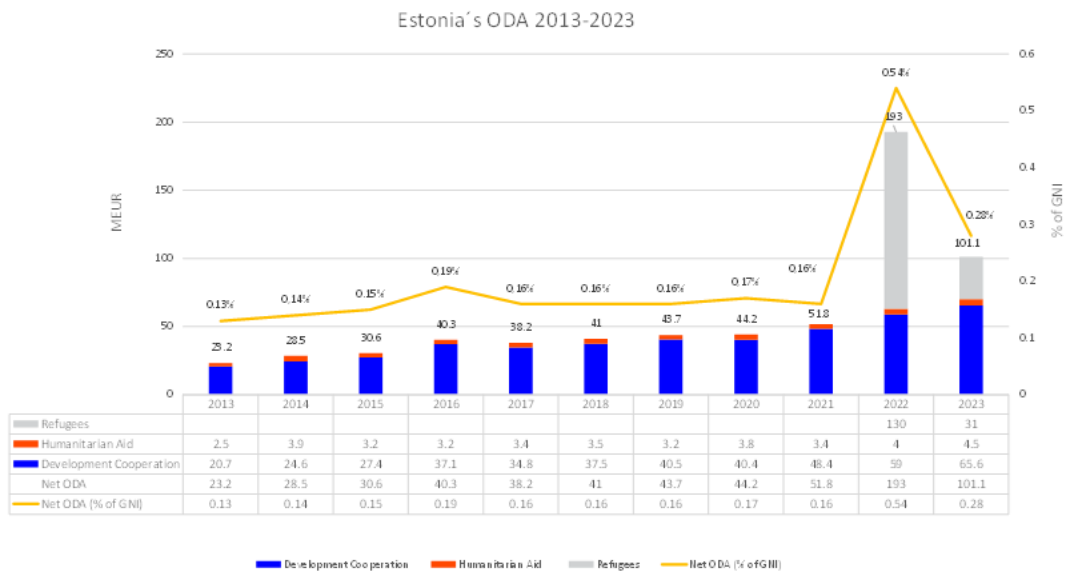
13. In 2021 figures, prior to the creation of ESTDEV, the distribution of total ODA by reporting institutions was as follows:

- Ministry of Foreign Affairs: 42%
- Ministry of Finance: 54%
- Other government departments: 4%.

14. In 2023, the distribution evolved due to a growing ODA volume and number of actors, and the fact that the share of in-donor refugee costs were still high:

- Ministry of Foreign Affairs: 20%
- ESTDEV: 8%
- Ministry of Finance: 42%
- Ministry of Education: 7%
- Ministry of Social Affairs: 15%
- Ministry of Culture: 4%
- Rest: 4%

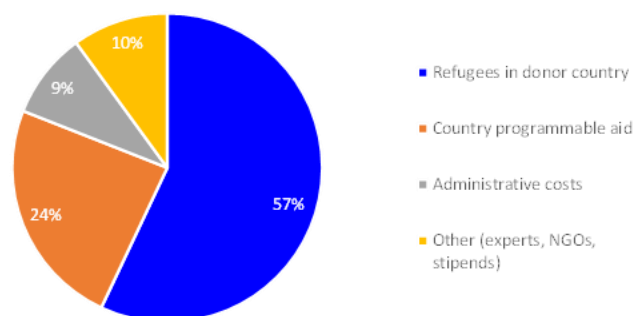
Figure 3. Estonia's ODA from 2013-2023



Source: Estonian Ministry of Foreign Affairs

Figure 4. Estonia's bilateral ODA allocations in 2023 (preliminary data)

Estonia - Bilateral ODA by type of expenditure
2023 (preliminary)



Source: Estonian Ministry of Foreign Affairs

Observations

- Estonia celebrated its 25th year of development co-operation in 2023 and has been reporting DAC statistics at activity-level since 2014 on 2013 data. Estonia has identified it was at a key juncture in its ODA programme and was taking steps to meet the evolving demands of its maturing programmes as well as best communicating on these. ESTDEV, the implementing agency, provides a key opportunity to communicate the importance of Estonia's contribution to global development to the Estonian public.
- The Ministry of Foreign Affairs allocates a yearly budget for ODA to the Development Cooperation and Humanitarian Aid Department that sits within it, and has the full flexibility to allocate this budget either to humanitarian or development co-operation activities. As a result, the ODA statistics are of great

importance both as an accountability tool and to communicate the benefits/results achieved, in accordance with the results evaluation framework that was launched at the end of 2022.

- The Review team appreciated the thoughtful approach taken by Estonia to first understand the necessary changes required to its data management systems and procedures before modifying the current legislation.
- The MFA has full responsibility to determine the core ODA budget share out of the overall budget of the Ministry. At present, a high priority seems to be given to ODA at the MFA level, with around 25% of its budget allocated to development and humanitarian aid. However, prospects for increasing ODA budgets seem limited. Government-wide budget cuts have the potential to affect ODA. The main strategy to increase ODA as a share of GNI seems to be about investigating ODA activities not yet reported (e.g., capacity building for developing countries organised by other ministries), but it is unclear whether these will have a significant impact on the overall ODA level.
- Estonia does not have an overall “ODA budget”, which is identified *ex post* through a collation of the MFA budget for development co-operation and other Ministries’ ODA-related activities. The Review team appreciated Estonia’s due attention to the level of administrative costs and refugee costs and the importance of maintaining focus on Country Programmable Aid.
- In the medium-term, it is anticipated that once ESTDEV has been pillar assessed, EU-funded projects will constitute most of its budget (EU indirect management).

Recommendations

- The peer review team encourages Estonia to consider a more structured and regular whole-of-government discussion on ODA and policy coherence, in order to achieve the 0.33% ODA/GNI target by 2030. This could ensure that there is buy-in from all government bodies to be aware of ODA requirements and ensure that all ODA activities be reported.
- Estonia should seek opportunities to use ODA statistics for strategic policy decision making, including through OECD DAC communication material.
- The MFA team is encouraged to evaluate how much ODA volume and potential TOSSD generated by other Ministries is currently not captured, in order to assess the resources required to collect this additional information.
- In light of the possible budget cuts, Estonia is encouraged to consider how best to protect the share of the MFA’s budget that is dedicated to development co-operation.

1. What are the main statistical policy issues?

15. This chapter synthesises the reviewers' observations and recommendations for Dimension 1 (main statistical policy issues).

1.1. ODA eligibility issues

16. Estonia consistently demonstrated its commitment to ODA integrity by being conservative in its interpretation of the directives and its reporting of ODA. By status, the core ODA budget allocated by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to the Development Cooperation and Humanitarian Aid Programme needs to be spent on ODA-eligible activities. The Development Co-operation and Humanitarian Aid (DCHA) Department is in charge of verifying ODA eligibility and has put in place relatively stringent *ex ante* checks. Micro grants managed locally by diplomatic missions (generally below EUR 15 000) are approved by the DCHA department before final approval. ESTDEV also screens its projects against ODA-eligibility, and in case of doubt the DCHA team is requested to provide guidance. A rather conservative approach seems to be followed, by approving only projects where eligibility can be fully ascertained. Activities collected from other ministries beyond the core ODA budget are also reported only if the eligibility can be fully determined. With regards to administrative costs, the DCHA carries out a comprehensive survey of ODA-eligible activities by the entire Ministry of Foreign Affairs staff. This list of activities is assessed and reviewed on an annual basis. It is more challenging for the other ministries (e.g. Ministry of Finance) to manually identify and assess ODA-eligible administrative costs. In addition, given the relatively small gains that are expected of such a burdensome exercise in terms of reportable flows, there are little incentives to dedicate resources to it.

17. However, addressing eligibility questions appeared to be a quite resource-intensive process. On one hand, the ODA reporting team is not yet fully familiar with the detailed ODA-eligibility rules, which are seen as complex and not entirely clear-cut in some areas. This has generally led to a rather conservative approach in determining the ODA-eligibility, as to minimise the screening cost. On the other hand, the DCHA Department is called on stepping up efforts to explore the possibility to capture ODA-eligible activities beyond the core ODA budget.

18. Given the limited prospects to increase the core ODA budget in the medium term, Estonia is actively exploring the possibility of bringing to light certain activities not yet reported but that could be eligible as ODA. The DCHA Department is exploring the possibility to report additional ODA activities related to security, research and education (imputed student costs). In this process, Estonia aims to follow a diligent approach in determining the eligibility. To this effect, Estonia has required guidance from the Secretariat on several types of activities based on concrete project examples, mainly in the security sector:

- Medical rehabilitation, treatment and transport of civilians and wounded soldiers from Ukraine. Treatment and transport of civilians is ODA-eligible, but not support for wounded soldiers.

- Protective/non-lethal equipment provided to journalists (ballistic protective helmets and goggles), the National Police of Ukraine (bulletproof vests) and National Guard of Ukraine⁶ (ballistic protective helmets) in connection with the war in Ukraine. The Secretariat noted that these activities are in principle eligible to ODA given that they do not involve lethal equipment and, in the case of police work, support routine functions.
- Provision of non-lethal equipment that may be used for dual-purpose. An example is a project in the border management sector that includes the provision of dual-purpose technical solutions (e.g. such as drones) that are primarily intended for routine border surveillance activities but also capable of serving coercive purposes. The Secretariat noted that the primary intent of the donor when supporting the activities is key. In addition, carrying out a risk assessment as part of the grant management approval process can help strengthening the developmental motive.
- Capacity-building for local governments in cyber security, an area where Estonia has a recognised expertise. The Secretariat noted that there are no specific rules on the reporting of cyber security activities; if provided primarily for civilian and developmental purposes the activities are in principle reportable in ODA.
- Research activities benefiting both donor and recipient countries, for example in relation to EU accession processes. If these activities include a capacity-building component for the recipient country, the costs related to financing this component can be included in ODA.

Request to the Secretariat

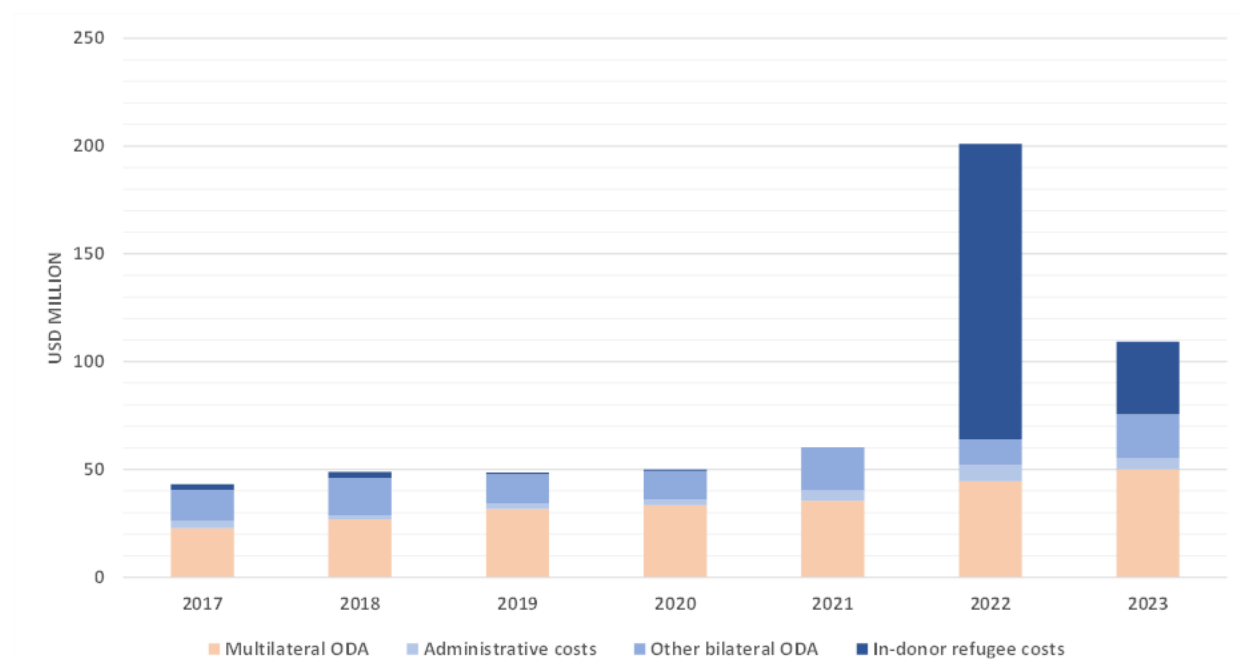
- Estonia suggested that further content on ODA-eligibility could be created for the benefit of statistical reporters.

1.2. In-donor refugee costs

19. While in-donor refugee costs (IDRC) have been exceptionally high in Estonia in 2022 and 2023, they were additional to core ODA-related budgets. The volume of in-donor refugee costs reported by Estonia increased greatly in 2022, amounting to a total of USD 137 million, which represented 68% of total ODA and 87.5% of bilateral ODA (see Figure 5). In 2023, IDRC decreased to USD 34 million, representing 31% of total ODA. The support relates to Ukrainian refugees and has been additional to regular ODA budgets. The recording of IDRC in ODA is generally well received by Estonian stakeholders, in a context of high public support to Ukraine. The CSOs have however expressed concerns that IDRC inflate ODA figures (see also section 5.2). The DCHA Department is mindful that a high level of IDRC can overshadow country programmable aid, and does not view IDRC as a sustainable long-term source to increase ODA. It is also mindful of the need to better communicate on these costs in the future, in particular vis-à-vis the CSOs.

⁶ The National Guard of Ukraine is a military force with a law enforcement mandate.

Figure 5. Composition of Estonian ODA



Note: 2023 data are preliminary

Source: Creditor Reporting System; Advanced Questionnaire.

20. IDRC reported by Estonia are spread across several government institutions, including the Social Insurance Board, the Ministry of Education and Research, the Ministry of Finance, and the Ministry of Culture. Estonia strives to follow the reporting instructions on IDRC. It follows a conservative approach in reporting and should be commended for the following:

- 12-month rule: Estonia records the date when refugees are granted temporary protection. In general, government regulations provide that if the person has stayed in a reception facility during his/her asylum process and has received positive decision granting international protection (including temporary protection) and a residence permit in Estonia, then they have the right to stay in the facility maximum up to four months⁷. The four month period is considered to be sufficient to find housing in Estonia in order to move out from the reception facilities. This means that the 12 months rule is applied by law. For new temporary protection decisions, there is a mechanism to verify that these correspond to newly displaced refugees (rather than re-applications and re-activations of previously granted cases). However, Estonia has taken the approach that even in cases of re-application or re-activation a certain level of support needs to be provided and therefore there have been exceptional cases where people have been provided with limited reception services (primarily accommodation and counselling). Given the small amounts involved, the important administrative burden required to identify and exclude these costs would not be worth the effort.
- Eligibility of specific cost items: In general, Estonia strives to include only eligible costs. Administrative costs are limited to staff that is directly involved in supporting refugees. Estonia expressed, however, difficulties in distinguishing between temporary sustenance and support for integration, for example in the area of education. It also questioned the exclusion of some activities

⁷ Exceptions apply to beneficiaries of temporary protection as the intake did not depend so much on the asylum process but rather lack of place to stay while re-starting life in Estonia.

from eligible costs items, for example tertiary education and vocational training, as the argument was made that Ukrainian refugees will eventually return to their home country. A conservative approach is generally adopted by not including cost items not fully ascertained as eligible.

- Methodology for assessing costs: Estonia would have the technical possibility to assess costs attached to individual asylum-seekers or refugees. However, to avoid excessive and unnecessary administrative burden, the costs are based on estimates. Costs are generally included only if eligibility is determined with certainty. For example, the costs of the Ministry of Interior and the Ministry of Social Affairs have been entirely excluded after a careful examination of their ODA eligibility. While Estonia does not currently report its IDRC broken down by type of expenditure (through the voluntary purpose codes) and category of refugees (through the co-operation modalities), it has the technical possibility to do so and will integrate these dimensions in its future reporting.

1.3. Policy markers

21. Some policy markers are integrated in the project management system but are used inconsistently due to limited awareness of the definitions and reporting guidelines. In the case of calls for proposals, the information system allows to inform certain policy objectives upstream during the project approval phase:

- The project management system managed by ESTDEV allows applicants to tag two markers: aid to the environment and gender equality. Information for two additional markers is collected ex-post when the information about the project is being entered into the AKTA database. These two markers are the Democratic and Inclusive Governance (DIG), and the Reproductive, Maternal, Newborn and Child Health (RMNCH) markers. In general, the policy objectives are not integrated in the general criteria provided in the call for proposals.
- The project management system managed by the Environmental Investment Centre (KIK) under the Ministry of Environment requires applicants to tag the markers on climate mitigation and climate adaptation.

22. There can be limited awareness of the definitions and reporting guidelines among implementing partners, leading to inconsistent use of the markers. Some quality checks are performed by ESTDEV and KIK.

23. Most policy markers are applied *ex post* by the data reporting team, which generates a number of practical issues affecting the quality and comprehensiveness of the data. First of all, the project management systems of ESTDEV and KIK apply only to calls for proposals, and they have a partial coverage of the policy markers. For example, the Rio markers are not integrated in ESTDEV's system. This is unfortunate given the high demand for data on support to these policy objectives. In addition, in the case of financing modalities other than calls for proposals – i.e. projects implemented directly by ESTDEV, direct grants⁸, procurement⁹ – there is no mechanism to inform the policy markers upstream during the project development phase. In all these cases, the policy markers are applied *ex post* by the reporting team – which is not composed of thematic experts – but based on the interpretation of project descriptions. This leads to a marking that is by nature imprecise, given that it relies on the quality of project descriptions.

24. In addition, the mission revealed a rather conservative approach followed by the reporting team in the application of the markers – particularly when using the value '1- significant objective'. Moreover, the statistical directives distinguish between a blank (meaning not screened) and "0" (meaning screened but

⁸ Direct grants include NGO grants provided by the MFA and ESTDEV, and government-to-government grants provided by the Ministry of Environment.

⁹ ESTDEV finances several projects that involve the procurement of infrastructure, in particular in Ukraine.

not targeted). Activities that have a blank in the marker field are excluded from the denominator when calculating the share of ODA targeting a specific policy objective. The peer review team noted that Estonia tended to report “0” for most markers even for the activities that are reviewed *ex post* by the reporting team and for which the screening is not fully ascertained. All of this means that the data reported so far by Estonia seemingly shows a “good” coverage of policy markers, but most likely underestimates both the volume and the share of ODA it provides in support to the respective policy objectives.

25. The Review team noted with interest Estonia’s internal “marker” system for “digitalisation” in the AKTA system and in ESTDEV’s project application template. The team acknowledges the request by Estonia to possibly track cyber- and digitalisation-related aspects in the CRS, and noted that these areas are also of interest to other members.

1.4. Proposed recommendations – Dimension 1

26. **ODA eligibility:**

- Estonia is encouraged to familiarise itself with existing documentation and tools on ODA-eligibility. The Secretariat is also available for any questions Estonia may have on ODA-eligibility.
- The review teams encourages Estonia to integrate lessons learnt and feedback into future data collections cycles, including passing on this feedback, or identifying relevant training, to other parts of government that contribute to the data submission.
- Estonia could develop guidance notes on specific ODA-eligibility items to facilitate the understanding of the criteria by government entities not directly involved in development co-operation. This could support the efforts in identifying existing activities currently not reported in ODA, but also potentially help designing future projects according to ODA criteria (e.g. research grants, capacity-building in the security sector). The Secretariat is available to support in the development of this guidance material.
- Estonia could share concrete examples of cyber security projects with the WP-STAT and invite the Secretariat and members to provide feedback on their ODA eligibility. These examples could potentially be added to the ODA eligibility database.

27. **In-donor refugee costs (IDRC):**

- The review team recommends that Estonia communicate to the Secretariat the methodology used by all ministries to assess ODA-eligible costs and encourages Estonia to break down, to the extent possible, its IDRC by type of expenditure and refugee category.

28. **Use of the policy markers:**

- Estonia is at an early stage of marker reporting and should continue to refine its marker assessment methodologies. Estonia should consider prioritisation of planned improvements, for example focusing on strategically important areas, such as climate and gender, for which there is a high demand from data users.
- Assignment of policy markers could be brought earlier in the project management cycle. Grant managers could be brought more fully into the coding process, making use of their project-specific knowledge. Given various interpretations of how to apply the markers, the MFA could provide guidelines/training to users on how to report the markers appropriately.
- Estonia could coordinate with other interested members to bring the issue of tracking digitalisation forward to the WP-STAT, potentially to be tracked through keywords.

- Unless the policy marking is done by the programme manager and reviewed by a thematic officer, it is recommended to adopt a more conservative approach when using the value '0 screened but not targeted'. When the assessment cannot be made with certainty, it is preferable to leave the marker field blank. It should be borne in mind that if the marker coverage falls below 50% of bilateral ODA, the OECD/DAC does not publish the data for that country.

2. How to make domestic data collection more effective and efficient?

29. This chapter describes how the MFA and ESTDEV collects and manages Estonia's development finance statistics.

2.1. Data collection

30. The Department for Development Cooperation and Humanitarian Aid of the MFA is the centre of competence for development finance statistics. It collects, verifies, and publishes statistics on Estonia's development co-operation. The MFA has two part-time staff working on statistical matters: a specialist from the humanitarian aid bureau and a diplomatic desk officer from the Development Cooperation Bureau. They are joined by two project managers from ESTDEV, who also work part-time on statistics - totalling 4 part-time staff.

31. The statistics team performs various tasks related to reporting, coordination, dissemination and capacity building (Box 1). The review team acknowledged the excellent staff in place on DAC reporting and was impressed by the staff's motivation to produce high-quality statistics, as well as their investment in improving data processes.

Box 1. Main statistical duties of staff at the MFA

Data processing

- Collecting, compiling, and processing Estonia's data on development.
- Providing statistical data to the OECD and other institutions.
- Responding to statistical queries.

Coordination

- Representing Estonia in the WP-STAT and other working groups.
- Serving as a coordination interface for reporting departments.
- Organizing annual or biannual coordination meetings for reporting.

Capacity building and dissemination

- Developing or providing input to some communication products for internal and external use.
- Providing statistical trainings.

32. However, the review team was concerned that the staff working on statistical matters had reached its limits in terms of capacity. An emphasis on sustainability and continuity is especially important as ODA statistics are already highly technical – and becoming increasingly complex. The desk officer who serves as a key correspondent for reporting is also on diplomatic rotation, disrupting the development of institution knowledge every three years. The team reports they are often overwhelmed with manual tasks, and unable to invest more in tasks requiring deeper analysis. Furthermore, although there are four part-time staff working on DAC reporting, the four staff dedicate less than a quarter of their time to statistical collections, although the workload naturally varies on the time of year and reporting timeline.

33. Different processes exist for processing data internal to the MFA, ESTDEV and from other reporting institutions. Data are collected annually, *ex post*, after the grant proposal and delivery, from January to February. The data collection solicitation is sent in early January, with a deadline of one month. The MFA and ESTDEV internally collect and report all their own activities in AKTA, the data management tool of the MFA for development finance. This represents, according to Estonian preliminary 2023 data, 186 and 83 activities from the MFA and ESTDEV respectively. The remaining 73 activities were collected from 15-20 other institutions from the Ministry of Finance, Ministry of Education, Ministry of Social Affairs, Ministry of Culture, Environmental Investment Centre (KIK) and others. Ten of the most experienced institutions fill data directly into AKTA. The remaining institutions report in spreadsheets or in an unstructured manner via email. Staff from the MFA then manually enter these data into AKTA, meaning that the statistics team often develop the CRS coding on behalf of these institutions.

34. The number of external reporting institutions and their low awareness of DAC statistics creates challenges for efficient and comprehensive data collection. Reporting institutions often do not adhere to reporting deadlines. Consideration of data reporting often happens later than it should, leading to more manual work, reduced quality, and less transparency. Furthermore, external reporters often submit the same projects year after year. According to statistical staff, this could represent a lack of clear understanding of ODA eligibility, as it is likely that some relevant activities are not being reported. In this discussion, Ireland offered to share some experience on opportunities to collect ODA from other relevant Ministries, as well as a checklist of elements to be included to maximise the meaningfulness of project descriptions.

2.2. Data management process and tools

35. The data base management tool for Estonia's development statistics is AKTA, which was originally established in 2004 as a project management system. Currently, the MFA only uses it as a data repository for ODA, utilising only a small portion of its functionality, due to planned developments of new solutions for other processes. Data are entered project by project in a series of fields and drop-down menus (see Figure 6). They are edited in a similar fashion. Projects cannot be uploaded in bulk. AKTA has the capability to export a spreadsheet with the CRS, including most columns, which is then used to manipulate the data for submission as well for any analysis and visualisation the team does. AKTA also features some limited automated coherency checks between codes.

36. However, for several reasons, Estonia would like to replace the system. Primarily, the system does not meet contemporary security standards, rendering updates difficult. Implementing more sophisticated changes, like adding a new field for a new CRS column, for example, is not possible for in-house IT staff as the system was established many years ago. The data submission component also does not fulfil the requirements for both national and CRS and DAC reporting. The system is also not reliable nor intuitive for users, which was confirmed to the review team by several stakeholders. While most obligatory CRS fields can be inputted into AKTA, it does not have the capability to collect some key information, that are of particular importance now that Estonia has entered the DAC. The platform allows the collection of the Aid to the environment, Gender equality, DIG, and RMNCH markers, but not the Rio Markers, the DRR,

Disability nor Nutrition marker¹⁰ (see Figure 6). The FTC flag, SDG focus, tying status, multiple purpose codes, and multiple country projects also cannot be collected in AKTA. Therefore, staff must add these missing details manually in an exported spreadsheet (see Chapter 3.). The platform also collects an internal marker on ICT, which is not represented in CRS reporting thus far (see section 1.3 of Chapter 1). Furthermore, the limited number of automated rules increases the reliance on manual work. Finally, AKTA lacks the capacity to interact with other databases, such as MFA’s internal document management system WebDesktop, the government-wide used accounting system SAP, the project management system used by the KIK, and others. As a result, considerable manual effort is required to transfer or re-enter data into AKTA.

Figure 6. Interface of AKTA: Estonia’s development finance statistics data management system

Source: Estonian Ministry of Foreign Affairs (2004), Estonian Development Co-operation Database (AKTA), https://akta.mfa.ee/andmed_otsing.php (accessed 25 June 2024).

37. The MFA staff has plans to create a proposal to replace AKTA with work to start on the new system in the fourth quarter of this year. The MFA emphasised the importance of doing a thorough needs-assessment and for setting clear goals for its functionalities. They plan on consulting in-government stakeholders, such as the other reporting institutions, as well as externally, for example, discussing other DAC member’s experience in updating their database. Estonia also hopes to use the present review to inform the proposal. Furthermore, the review team flagged the opportunity to join the WP-STAT Informal Network on data quality and innovation, which could represent a way to learn from other members.

¹⁰ The full names for the flags and markers are as follows: DIG (Democratic and Inclusive Governance), RMNCH (Reproductive, Maternal, Newborn, and Child Health), DRR (Disaster Risk Reduction), Disability (Inclusion and Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities), and FTC (Free-standing Technical Co-operation).

38. The MFA staff laid out several priorities for the new system. First, the system would include all the data fields needed for CRS and DAC reporting requirements along with national reporting. The system should communicate with the government wide information-sharing service, X-road, that helps ministries communicate with each other automatically. AKTA had this feature but has since lost it. The system could also automatically communicate with the budget and grant management systems of the MFA, such as WebDesktop, as well as KIK, which uses SAP, ESTDEV and various departments. The KIK has recently adopted their project management system, which could serve as an example for a new system but would need to be adapted to meet MFA's requirements. The staff envisions that the software could produce visualisations as well. As an example, Greece demonstrated its experience in developing data visualisation tools. Such a feature could increase visibility within the Estonian government and in the public – perhaps bringing more interest to ODA – a key goal for the team. Likewise, a platform where data could be accessed easily could draw more interest.

39. To design and construct the new platform, MFA IT staff would likely work with a private company. The MFA would retain some control to update the software, but more significant updates would likely need to be done by the private partner. However, working with the private sector has been done recently within the MFA and the Estonian government more generally for similar IT projects. Therefore, there exists institutional experience working with private partners over an extended period, which could help to ensure that the system remains functional in the long term.

2.3. Proposed recommendations – Dimension 2

- The current team has already invested heavily, within a relatively short time period, to better understand full ODA reporting requirements and reflect on adequate systems to be able to respond to these needs. In order to not lose institutional memory and excellent gains since the DAC accession, the review team noted that focus should be given to documenting the data collection process in order to address staff turnover. The review team encourages Estonia to acknowledge that it takes time to master the ODA statistical framework and gradually improve the data collection process.
- Given this, the review team also recommends considering dedicating a full-time data analytical expert to manage the overall process of collecting, reviewing, reporting, and communicating on ODA data.
- The review team supports the MFA's idea that project managers should gradually be empowered to assign relevant information (purpose codes, markers) rather than the central team doing it *ex post*.
- Estonia is encouraged to calibrate the sophistication of a new data management system to the actual internal and external data needs. Furthermore, establishing a robust data collection system must respond to Estonia's national data requests as well as international reporting obligations.
- Estonia should leverage its existing experience in private-public partnerships in the development of IT tools to ensure that the new database management system can remain fit for purpose over the long term, retaining, where possible and proportionate to Ministry resources, the autonomy to make changes to the software independently.
- The peer review team recommends that the MFA consider a flexible data collection methodology, like Excel, to transition to the new system. This will provide the opportunity to adapt to learnings as the systems evolve.

3. How to improve reporting to the OECD and how to consolidate quality reporting over time?

40. This chapter discusses how Estonia can improve its quality assurance and reporting to the OECD, building on findings from Chapter 2.

3.1. Quality assurance process and DAC reporting

41. Initial quality checks take place from mid-February and continue until mid-March, while data are collected from January to February. This period is quite intensive for the statistical staff as they collect, validate, and upload the data, preparing the preliminary figures for the Advance Questionnaire, which is usually due mid-March. While the MFA, ESTDEV and some more experienced reporting institutions in the Estonian government understand clearly what to report as ODA, directly entering their data into AKTA (see chapter 2.), other institutions require more support in terms of assessing ODA eligibility, what details are needed for the CRS and in uploading the data into AKTA. For example, to report in-donor refugee costs, the statistical team had to work with the Ministry of Social Affairs, Ministry of Education and Ministry of Culture, to determine what values to report and adhere to the specific eligibility rules for in-donor refugee costs. About two thirds of the work for the final submission is done in this period before March.

42. From March to July, the quality assurance is more detailed with, for example, analysing ODA eligibility more rigorously. However, there is no standardised method for quality assurance. The statistical team in this period must also add manually any mandatory missing information to the CRS before their final submission to the Secretariat due in mid-July. Notably, this includes the SDGs, markers, and tying status, which are not filled by the respective project managers (see Chapter 2). When the statistical staff receive feedback from the Secretariat, they must access the same portal and edit projects individually. Ineligible projects are deleted and not maintained in the database, for example, to be used for TOSSD. Furthermore, repeated reporting issues are not documented, as staff have little time to review processes and are more focused on managing current priorities.

43. The statistical team meets on a yearly basis across ministries to discuss the data submission and prepare for reporting. The data collection team organises awareness-raising sessions with other ministries and works with them to assist with reporting. In general, the statistics team notes that the awareness of ODA rules and eligibility is low across ministries and is looking at ways to improve this. Noticing that general solicitations have little effectiveness, they have tried to meet with potential reporters on an individual basis. Similarly, they have tried to organise small trainings, noting poorer engagement with a larger audience. While time consuming, Estonia identified that awareness raising is an important part of their work and that there are likely additional ODA projects that go unreported as when stakeholders are not confident, or faced with ambiguity, the natural tendency is to not report. To reach their goal of the 0.33% ODA to GNI ratio by 2030, Estonia is interested in broadening reporter institutions, and they envision expanding trainings to gather data from new sources, for instance, from academia working in developing countries. Expanding collection to those in ministries who do work or capacity building with developing countries is also of interest. An overall challenge the statistical team faces, however, is to find sufficient capacity to prepare and deliver trainings.

3.2. Data quality and specific reporting issues

44. In general, Estonia's reporting has minimal errors in most columns of the CRS and the high-quality of their descriptive information is commendable. As Estonia joined the DAC last year, it could improve on some aspects that are new to them such as calculating the DAC1b, markers and tying status.

45. Markers and tying status are covered in more detail in section 1.3 of Chapter 1 and section 4.1 of Chapter 4, most notably however, due to several barriers, whether that be lack of orientation with ODA or absence of the reporting fields in AKTA, markers and tying status, along with other coding, are not assigned by project managers. These fields are often assessed by statistical staff who can only review the descriptive information provided, which could not provide the full details to be able to correctly assign coding and distort reporting.

3.3. Proposed recommendations – Dimension 3

- As part of documenting the data quality assurance process, the MFA team could consider recording recurring data issues per institution so as to sensitise reporting institutions and gradually improve reporting over time.
- The peer review team also encourages the preparation of personalised materials / guidebooks per institution (e.g. with a list of the main purpose codes used, relevant paragraphs of the CRS directives) to facilitate reporting.
- While the eventual system needs to capture all the data points, capacity building of partners and officers needs to be strategic as it takes time. With regards to the reporting of CRS policy markers, thought could be given on which markers to prioritise and what type of guidance for partners could be created.
- The MFA is encouraged to provide appropriate training to data analysts, especially newcomers. The content and depth of the trainings will depend on the final options retained for the data management system and will likely include training on the OECD DAC processes (the Secretariat could help in this regard), the ODA rules, basic spreadsheet management (e.g., pivot tables), and depending on the staff profile retained, other types of training (e.g., SQL, data visualisation, etc.).
- To address the identified needs, it is recommended to organise targeted workshops focusing on specific issues relevant to Estonia's interests. These workshops should facilitate in-depth discussions and knowledge-sharing among stakeholders, fostering a better understanding of key challenges and potential solutions. Additionally, capacity building initiatives (training programs, seminars) could be implemented with the help of the OECD Secretariat in order to provide tailored support and guidance to Estonia counterparts. Furthermore, the development of training materials, such as educational videos and casebooks, can serve as valuable resources for capacity building efforts.

4. How to better monitor recommendations and commitments in the field of development co-operation?

46. This chapter synthesises the reviewers' observations and recommendations for Dimension 4 (How to better monitor recommendations and commitments).

4.1. Untying

47. Projects supported by ESTDEV are generally untied, as there are no legal barriers for companies from other countries to bid. Procurement is managed by ESTDEV rather than the partner country itself. ESTDEV can purchase public procurement services from the [State Shared Service Centre](#) (SSSC), and in that case the procurement procedures and the standard performance model of the SSSC are used. ESTDEV can also use its [own procurement procedure](#), which is based on the [Public Procurement Act](#). ESTDEV procurement procedure includes principles that address transparency, equal treatment, public access to procurement information, conflicts of interest, the use of competitive procurement procedures, and the best value for money. In order to bid, companies need to be registered in the Estonian Public Procurement Register, a free self-service platform for contracting authorities to conduct public procurement. Tenderers can submit bids from abroad by registering in the platform. However, tenders are generally published only in Estonian language and sometimes in local language (one project mentioned in Ukraine). ESTDEV has funded several infrastructure projects in Ukraine (e.g. construction of a kindergarten and a bridge). Based on the feedback provided by ESTDEV, some of these projects were awarded to contractors based in Ukraine, others to contractors based in Estonia. Projects managed by the Environmental Investment Centre (KIK) under the Ministry of Climate are generally tied to Estonian companies.

48. Given its recent accession to the DAC, Estonia is in the process of fully implementing the reporting related to aid untying, which is only required from DAC members. Estonia reported on tying status of aid for the first time in 2022 and acknowledged that it needs to learn more about the reporting instructions in this area. The mission revealed that while Estonia has a good understanding of the ODA categories that are tied or untied by definition, there seems to be some confusion on how tying status definitions apply to project-type interventions. For example, 63% of project-type commitments were reported as partially untied while they should have been reported as either tied or untied.

49. As a DAC member, Estonia is now also committed to implementing the Recommendation on Untying ODA. Part of the implementation relates to the transparency provisions, including the *ex ante* notification of above-threshold procurement opportunities in the public DAC Bulletin Board, and *ex post* reporting on procurement contract awards. Procurement is one of the three operational modalities of ESTDEV. In addition, the mission revealed some procurement contracts, in particular by ESTDEV in Ukraine, that are above the *ex ante* notification threshold. Estonia will be invited to start reporting on contract awards in 2024.

4.2. Proposed recommendations – Dimension 4

- Estonia is encouraged to work with the Secretariat on improving the quality of the tying status reporting, in particular on better allocating the various tying status options.
- Estonia is invited to start reporting on the transparency provisions of the DAC Recommendation on Untying ODA, including *ex ante* notification of procurement opportunities in the DAC Bulletin Board, and *ex post* reporting on contract awards.
- Estonia is encouraged to ensure that its aid is both de jure and de facto untied (e.g., by advertising tenders that are above the notification threshold in an international language).

5. How to improve transparency, make the data better fit for purpose, and improve dissemination?

50. This chapter synthesises the reviewers' observations and recommendations for Dimensions 5 (transparency), 6 (fit for purpose), and 7 (communication and dissemination).

5.1. Transparency, communication, and dissemination

5.1.1. Communication tools and capacities

51. Support to development co-operation in the context of Estonia remains a challenge. Estonia has the lowest awareness and support for development co-operation among EU member states, as highlighted by the [Eurobarometer assessment \(2023\)](#). In some instances, development co-operation is perceived by the public as giving money away in a context of budget restrictions. For example, at the end of 2023, ESTDEV faced very negative reactions from the Estonian Public on a EUR 300 000 tender administered by ESTDEV for a project in Kenya. However, there is general good public support for development activities in Ukraine. To achieve increased awareness and support during the implementation period of the development co-operation plan 2024-2026, ESTDEV set the following objectives:

- Contribute to the creation of a unified and strong Estonian development co-operation communication strategy to strengthen unified advocacy, educate the Estonian public, and help secure budgetary resources for development co-operation.
- Increase the visibility of development co-operation projects in Estonia, explain their importance, and how they contribute to Estonia's own development.
- Strengthen communication activities in partner countries in co-operation with local partners to increase the visibility of Estonian development co-operation.

52. Estonia has faced challenges in communicating on its ODA, explained by a lack of capacity and high staff turnover (see chapter 2.). Until recently, ODA communication by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs was limited to a press release on ODA, a few additional press releases throughout the year, and information sheets with a few graphs. ESTDEV is now working on a two-year implementation strategy, which also includes an ambitious communication strategy for which a small budget has been allocated for the first time. The strategy will include greater communication requirements at project level.

53. Currently, ESTDEV has a dedicated website and the review team commands ESTDEV on the publication of the informative project pages on this website. ESTDEV is gradually building its audience on social media and has initiated communications on several platforms (e.g. Facebook and LinkedIn). The review team commands Estonia on all these efforts, particularly in a context of government budget restrictions.

54. While the statistical AKTA database is available online, it lacks automatic visualisation tools capable of showcasing disaggregated data per country and sector. This is an important roadblock to easy dissemination and use of Estonia's ODA data by government authorities, external stakeholders (e.g. CSOs

and developing countries) and the general public. The MFA and ESTDEV are looking into data visualisation platforms in other countries (e.g. Finland and Sweden) to inform the development of a future system.

Request to the Secretariat

- Estonia appreciated existing OECD sources (e.g. DCR profiles) for communicating on ODA, but would welcome the availability of this information in euros to be able to use them for communication.

5.1.2. Data use

55. Data are not effectively used for policymaking mostly due to the difficulty in extracting them and the level of effort necessary to collate different datasets together. The MFA is aware that regular information of parliament and other ministries is critical to ensure continued support for development co-operation.

56. To the MFA's and ESTDEV knowledge, their annual ODA press release gets little traction in the media and there is limited use of the data by the public at present. The ODA statistics do not contribute to a large number of internal or external outputs.

57. The MFA and ESTDEV only respond to a few queries from users per year, which originate from various sources, including parliamentarians, staff within the MFA and other Ministries, the media, and civil society organisations.

5.2. A perspective from civil society organisations and other external users

58. The reviewers met with representatives from the Estonian Roundtable for Development Cooperation (AKÜ)¹¹, which is the umbrella organisation and coalition of many CSOs (36 members). The session focused on the accessibility and usability of Estonia's development finance statistics.

59. The Development Cooperation and Humanitarian Aid Programme 2022-2025 states that CSOs are one of the most important actors in the sector. Country-specific and thematic calls for proposals are the main modalities through which the government funds CSOs' development co-operation activities.

60. Estonia benefits from robust civil society engagement. At the policy level, CSOs are represented on both Estonia's Commission for Sustainable Development as well as on ESTDEV's Governing Board. However, CSO stakeholders, which are the most familiar with development and humanitarian co-operation, have difficulty in understanding and manipulating ODA data provided by the MFA, which limits the possibility for them to engage and contribute to the development co-operation debate. Data provided by the MFA are sent by AKÜ to AidWatch to inform their annual report.

61. CSO stakeholders notes with regret the staff rotation within the MFA but highlighted improvements in communication with the MFA since the accession of Estonia to the DAC, emphasising the increased level of competence of the staff currently in place.

62. CSOs are interested in greater transparency and would welcome an online, user-friendly tool providing real-time information to visualise the allocation of activities and resources. They currently do not use the AKTA system very much, as they find it not user-friendly enough. The MFA does not refer to AKTA or share AKTA data when engaging with CSOs or replying to their requests, which does not encourage CSOs to use this system.

¹¹ See their website at: <https://www.terveilm.ee/leht/about-us/?lang=en>

63. CSOs expressed concerns about the data published on ODA that they consider as “inflated” by the inclusion of in-donor refugee costs and about projects having to be completed within the year the grant is issued (they would wish to see this period extended, as applicable, depending on the scale of the project).

5.3. TOSSD – Total Official Support for Sustainable Development

64. Estonia has reported on TOSSD in 2019 and since then has not been in a position to report activities beyond those reported to the CRS, mainly due to staff capacities. Estonia sees potential entry points to collect and include domestic expenditures beyond ODA (e.g. research), although it may be difficult in the short term to allocate resources to this exercise. A more achievable objective could be to use the current efforts to identify ODA-eligible activities across government entities, to also assess the eligibility to TOSSD, in case the activity has been found to be ineligible to ODA.

5.4. Proposed recommendations – Dimension 5, 6, and 7

- Estonia demonstrated its excellent story telling in the 25th anniversary of its development co-operation materials. Estonia is encouraged to build on these assets to strengthen public understanding and buy-in, notably via the media and schools. The review team recommends continuing to strengthen relationships with CSOs to undertake the shared goal of development education and building support for overseas development within society. In this regard, responding in a concrete manner to some of the challenges expressed by CSOs would come a long way in further strengthening the MFA and ESTDEV’s already good relationships with CSOs (e.g. through an extended time period for implementing projects funded by ESTDEV).
- As the MFA has limited tools for visualisation, analysis, and dissemination through a broad array of products, there is high scope to consider the development of these products, providing a single, compelling narrative for Estonia’s development co-operation.
- The review team encourages Estonia to provide annual trainings for key audience groups, in particular CSOs, on how to use ODA statistics.
- To ensure ODA statistics are fit for use, the review team encourages Estonia to identify the different data user groups (CSOs, journalists, politicians, etc.) and regularly consult them on their data needs, in order to ensure that these are met. The dissemination of information should carefully consider the specific use cases for these resources and pursue a user-centred design perspective.
- Estonia could consider expanding its reporting on TOSSD through an incremental approach. It could, for example, start by including activities that have been assessed as not eligible to ODA but could be TOSSD-eligible. Another possible area of additional reporting that could be within reach related to contributions to multilateral organisations that are not included in the List of ODA-eligible international organisations. Since some of these contributions are provided by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the data could potentially be easily collected by the reporting team. In the medium term, as staff capacity allows, Estonia could also investigate the possible inclusion of some expenditures beyond ODA, including domestic expenditures for research or climate mitigation, or export-credits extended in association with development finance or explicitly designed to contribute to sustainable development. Participation in the International Forum on TOSSD, when capacity allows, could provide opportunities for learning and planning to begin engaging more with TOSSD data collection.