

MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS
2022 REPORT ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE DEVELOPMENT
COOPERATION AND DEMOCRACY PROMOTION PROGRAMME
(Statistical data updated in September 2023)

Overview

2022 was an unprecedented year marked by joint and intensive work to help Ukraine to withstand Russia's military aggression. It involved provision of humanitarian and financial aid, hosting of refugees, dealing with the global consequences of Russia's war in Ukraine, and highlighting, on the international stage, the need to mobilise resources and coordinate efforts in preparation for Ukraine's reconstruction.

Lithuania extended an unparalleled support to Ukraine in the latter's struggle for freedom and territorial integrity, as well as efforts to ensure the functioning of the state and public services in 2022. According to updated statistical data, the value of development cooperation, humanitarian aid and financial assistance exceeded EUR 45.8 million. A further EUR 70 million was spent by the state and Lithuanian municipalities to host Ukrainian refugees. Lithuania was also one of the first countries to launch projects to rebuild Ukraine's infrastructure.

It is important to underline that Lithuania extended its support to Ukraine not at the expense of its commitments towards other partner countries. In 2022, Lithuania's Official Development Assistance ('ODA') tripled compared to 2021, amounting to EUR 231.31 million, or 0.36% of Gross National Income (GNI). This figure led to achieving Lithuania's international commitment to allocate 0.33% of GNI annually in official aid by 2030. In terms of annual ODA growth, Lithuania ranked fourth among the twenty member countries of the European Union which belong to the Development Assistance Committee (DAC) of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD).

Lithuania has been actively involved in bilateral and multilateral efforts to address the global consequences of the Russia-led war. Lithuania has consistently supported Moldova, which hosted a wave of war refugees from Ukraine, with financial assistance, administrative and institutional capacity building, and other development cooperation projects. On an international stage, in its attempts to help prevent a global food crisis Lithuania has been actively raising the issue of unblocking Ukraine's ports, supporting the UN Black Sea Grain Initiative, and proposing solutions to ensure the effectiveness of the European Union's Solidarity Corridor and Ukraine's grain exports.

In the face of challenges, Lithuania continued its cooperation, strengthened partnerships, actively participated in discussions and contributed constructively to decisions on key development cooperation issues in international organisations and multilateral fora, such as the Council of the European Union, the Commission of the European Union, the OECD, the United Nations, the World Bank and other international organisations.

One example of Lithuania's international recognition is its successful accession to the OECD's DAC in autumn 2022. Membership in this committee confirms compliance by Lithuania to the high criteria for development cooperation activities, and its experience and skills recognised by international experts. By becoming a member of the OECD's DAC and participating in the peer review mechanism Lithuania plans to further strengthen the development cooperation framework.

Lithuania's contribution to EU development cooperation in 2022 was also significant and successful. Lithuania is one of the leaders of the EU Twinning Programme and has been among the top five most successful countries participating in the EU Twinning Programme for several years.

In 2022, in order to achieve a breakthrough and enhance the impact of its bilateral and multilateral activities, Lithuania completed the systemic reforms thus paving the way for the launch of activities of the Fund for the Development Cooperation and Humanitarian Aid (the 'Fund'). Concepts for 11 projects in the areas of innovation, digitalisation, education, environmental protection, administrative capacity building, and fight against disinformation were developed, targeting the EU's Eastern Partnership countries. The Fund approved 16 bilateral, regional, direct funding and national co-financing projects to be implemented from 2023 in Ukraine, Moldova, Georgia, Armenia, Belarus, Uzbekistan, Palestine, and Iraq.

Lithuania is also actively looking for innovative solutions to attract private funding to development cooperation activities. In 2022, the Government initiated the reform of the Investment and Business Guarantee Agency (INVEGA), which will provide new financing opportunities for companies seeking to engage in development cooperation activities in partner countries.

Official development assistance

Lithuanian ODA is financial assistance and humanitarian aid to developing countries and territories financed from budgets of national and municipal authorities and their subordinate institutions. The Development Cooperation and Democracy Promotion Programme (DCDPP) is an integral instrument for the implementation of ODA, financed from target budgetary appropriations allocated to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

According to the National Progress Plan 2021-2030, in order to achieve Strategic Objective No. 9 Strengthening Lithuania's Influence in the World and Relations with the Diaspora and to Strengthen Participation in Development Cooperation Policy, it is envisaged to implement Lithuania's international commitment of at least 0.33% of its GNI to be allocated to ODA by 2030. In this respect, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs seeks to ensure a consistent growth in Lithuania's development aid gradually reaching Lithuania's international commitments.

According to OECD data, Lithuania's ODA in 2022 grew three times amounting to EUR 231.31 million, or 0.36% of GNI. In comparison, over the last five years, Lithuania's ODA fluctuated between 0.12 and 0.14% of GNI (in 2021, Lithuania's ODA amounted to EUR 73.05 million, or 0.14% of GNI). In 2020, it was EUR 63.2 million, or 0.13% of GNI; in 2019 – EUR 60.45 million, or 0.13% of GNI; in 2018 – EUR 55 million, or 0.12% of GNI; and in 2017 – EUR 52.55 million, or 0.13% of GNI).

According to the OECD, most countries allocate most of their ODA to bilateral programmes, with the remainder funding going to multilateral organisations¹. Until 2021, Lithuania's bilateral aid accounted for up to one-fifth of total aid. Meanwhile, in 2022, significant additional funding going to Ukraine and state and municipal spending on Ukrainian refugees in Lithuania increased the bilateral aid figures up to 58%.

¹ OECD (2022), Comparing multilateral and bilateral aid: A portfolio similarity analysis, OECD Development Co-operation Directorate, OECD Publishing, Paris.

EU and global development cooperation policymaking

In 2022, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs ensured Lithuania's continued effective engagement in the formation and implementation of development cooperation policy at the international, EU and bilateral levels, thus strengthening Lithuania's image as a responsible and reliable donor acting in line with its national interests.

In 2022, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs was actively involved in the EU and global development cooperation and humanitarian aid policy formation and implementation, focusing on the global consequences of Russia's war against Ukraine, the global food crisis, the humanitarian and financial response of Team Europe and dealing with the war refugee crisis. Solutions and modalities were discussed on the best ways to ensure safe grain exports through Ukrainian ports under continuous threat of military attacks by Russia, as well as the functioning of the EU Solidarity Corridors. Lithuania actively raised the need to develop a legal mechanism that would allow the use of sanctioned and frozen Russian funds for the reconstruction of Ukraine.

Amidst a rapidly changing geopolitical landscape and growing influence of authoritarian regimes in developing countries, much attention was paid to preparations for the implementation of the EU's Global Gateway Strategy, announced in December 2021. The aim of this strategy is to build closer ties with partner countries between 2021 and 2027, to promote EU public and private investments into social, economic, green and digital transformation of Africa, Asia, Latin America, the Caribbean and the Pacific regions, in line with the principles of fundamental democratic values and high standards, good governance and transparency, equal partnership, green and clean energy, and security. The EU plans to spend over EUR 300 billion for the implementation of the Global Gateway strategy.

In 2022, a number of initiatives were actively analysed, and feasibility studies were carried out to identify possible ways of implementation, which formed the basis for the selection of flagship projects.

In 2022, Lithuania continued its successful participation in Team Europe initiatives in the EU Eastern Partnership countries (Moldova, Georgia, Armenia), and sought to expand geography of its activities by engaging in projects in Palestine and the Republic of South Africa. These activities have contributed to digitisation, fight against disinformation, environmental protection, strengthening of economic prosperity in the partner countries and public-private partnerships.

Lithuania's accession to the OECD's DAC is a major achievement in international development cooperation. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs, in accordance with the plan for implementation of provisions of the Governmental Programme of the Republic of Lithuania, initiated the procedures for accession to OECD's DAC. Following the successful implementation of pre-accession requirements, on 16 November 2022 Lithuania became the 31st member of this important international development cooperation forum. In preparation for membership, Lithuania submitted a comprehensive and detailed review of Lithuania's development cooperation framework, which OECD experts assessed as meeting the OECD's DAC criteria. This committee addresses issues, performs analyses and studies, makes recommendations, and sets international standards for development cooperation. By becoming a DAC member, Lithuania can participate in decision-making on international standards for development cooperation, to improve the effectiveness of its policies, to benefit from peer-reviews and to share good practices.

In the area of humanitarian aid Lithuania adheres to the following guiding principle: to deliver aid where it is most needed. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs, through its participation in multilateral funds, has provided humanitarian aid to Ukraine via the UN Ukraine Humanitarian Fund (UHF), the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC). Lithuania has contributed to the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) with humanitarian aid to Ukraine, Moldova and flood-ravaged Pakistan, and bilateral humanitarian aid to hurricane-hit Belize.

Funds and activities

EUR **6,147.63** thousand was allocated and used to finance development cooperation activities from the State budget appropriations of the Republic of Lithuania approved for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

Purpose	Funds, in thousands EUR
Voluntary contributions to multilateral funds	865,00
Projects	3,192.89
Humanitarian aid	2,030.00
Participation in activities of the EU, UN and other international organisations and programme monitoring	37,72 (missions)
Other development cooperation activities (project management, events, exhibitions, printed materials, services, etc.)	22,02
The total amount of funds allocated by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs for development cooperation activities:	6,147.63

Multilateral development assistance

In line with its international commitments, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs provided multilateral development assistance through its mandatory and voluntary contributions to foundations and international organisations involved in or coordinating development cooperation activities and thus contributed to international efforts to reduce poverty, increase the resilience of beneficiary countries and the most vulnerable groups of people, and promote democratic values. In 2022, Lithuania allocated EUR 865 thousand in voluntary contributions from the funds of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs' Strategic Action Plan measure titled Strengthening Lithuania's Participation in the Implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in Partner Countries.

Voluntary contributions	Funds, in thousands EUR
OECD Eurasian Competitiveness Programme	30
The Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights	20
The Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) Criminal Investigation and Targeting Team (IIT)	30
The UNESCO Initiative for Restoration of Mosul	15
European Humanities University Trust Fund (administered by CPMA)	200
UNESCO International Programme for the Development of Communication	20
OECD DIS/MIS Resource Hub	30
UNICEF	20
The Endowment for Democracy	300
The European Endowment for Democracy (EED)	50
The Lifeline Foundation	20
The Asia-Europe Foundation	20
The Council of Europe Action Plan for Ukraine	15
The Council of Europe Action Plan for Georgia	15
The OSCE Extra-Budgetary Support project	30
The Office of the Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict (OSRSG-SVC)	50
Total:	865,0

Humanitarian aid

In 2022, Lithuania allocated **EUR 2,030 thousand** for humanitarian aid from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs' Strategic Action Plan Measure Strengthening Lithuania's Participation in the Implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in Partner Countries.

Humanitarian aid from Strategic Action Plan Measure Strengthening Lithuania's Participation in the Implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in Partner Countries of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Lithuania	Funds, in thousands EUR
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United Nations Humanitarian Fund for Ukraine (UHF), humanitarian aid to Ukraine	300
United Nations Yemen Humanitarian Fund (YHF), humanitarian aid to Yemen	30
International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), humanitarian aid to Ukraine	200
International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC), humanitarian aid to Pakistan	30
International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC), humanitarian aid to Ukraine and the Republic of Moldova	100
Humanitarian aid to Belize	20
United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), humanitarian aid to Ukraine	100
Humanitarian aid from the Reserve Fund of the Government of the Republic of Lithuania, transferred to the measure Strengthening Lithuania's participation in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in Partner Countries under the Strategic Action Plan of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Lithuania	Funds, in thousands EUR
Reserve Fund of the Government of the Republic of Lithuania (Resolution No 157 of 28 February 2022); for the Government of the Republic of Moldova, humanitarian aid to Ukrainian refugees in Moldova	750
Reserve Fund of the Government of the Republic of Lithuania (Resolution No 766 of 20 July 2022); for the Government of the Republic of Moldova, humanitarian aid to Ukrainian refugees in Moldova	500
Total:	2,030

Bilateral development assistance by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs

In line with the Strategic Guidelines for Development Cooperation 2022-2025, priority is given to the EU's Eastern Partnership countries – Ukraine, Moldova, Georgia, and Armenia. Bilateral projects aimed at strengthening administrative and institutional capacities of these countries and transferring Lithuania's good practices of European integration through reforms in each country of the Council's 18-month Trio Programme, including further implementation of the EU-Ukraine Association Agreement (AA/DCFTA) and the EU-Armenia Comprehensive and Enhanced Partnership Agreement (CEPA). Aid was also provided to projects in the areas of strengthening civil society, combating disinformation, environmental protection, sustainable economic development (digitalisation, women's economic and social empowerment) and gender equality in these countries and in partner countries in the Middle East, Asia and Africa regions.

In 2022, 37 development cooperation projects (35 bilateral and 2 regional) worth more than EUR 2,26 million were implemented. The Fund approved 16 projects, including 12 bilateral and regional projects for EUR 809,821.52 in Ukraine, Moldova, Georgia, Armenia, Belarus, Uzbekistan

and Palestine, two directly funded reconstruction projects in Ukraine (EUR 1 mln.) and one in Armenia (EUR 49,882.00), and one co-financing project in Iraq (EUR 19,973.00), to be implemented from 2023.

The diplomatic missions of the Republic of Lithuania accredited to partner countries contributed to the implementation of Lithuania's development cooperation policy by administering 22 development cooperation projects, helping to identify the needs of beneficiary countries, being actively involved in the search for partners, contributing to the coordination of donors' activities, including involvement in the EC Team Europe initiatives. The Lithuanian Embassy to Moldova continued to contribute to the Team Europe initiative aimed at combatting disinformation, the Lithuanian Embassies to Georgia and Armenia contributed to the Team Europe initiative in the field of environmental protection, and in Palestine and South Africa – in the field of digitalisation.

Ukraine. The war launched by Russia against Ukraine on 24 February 2022 has caused a humanitarian catastrophe, affected millions of people and caused enormous damage to the Ukrainian economy and infrastructure. To help the country and its people suffering from war, Lithuania has provided Ukraine with full support and aid (humanitarian, financial, civil protection, war refugees).

Amidst on-going Russian aggression, Lithuania was among the first countries to start reconstruction work in Ukraine. On 24 August 2022 the Government of the Republic of Lithuania approved 4 reconstruction projects in Ukraine (construction of a mobile residential camp in Borodyanka; reconstruction of a bridge over the Trubizh River; renovation of a school in Borodyanka; renovation of the Radist kindergarten in Irpin).

By decision of the Government of the Republic of Lithuania, the school and kindergarten reconstruction projects are being financed from the budget appropriations through the Fund for Development Cooperation and Humanitarian Aid. The projects are implemented by the Central Project Management Agency. The project Renovation of the Radist kindergarten in the town of Irpin (Myru Str. 1-A, Irpin, Kyiv region) is scheduled for completion by September 2023 and has a funding of EUR 3,704,000. The project Renovation of School No. 1 in Borodyanka (Centralnaya Str. 222, Borodyanka, Kyiv region) is also scheduled for completion by September 2023 and has been allocated EUR 6,119,708 in funding. In 2022, the Fund allocated EUR 1 million for the technical design and conservation works for the Borodyanka school and the Irpin kindergarten.

In 2022, the development cooperation funds allocated to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs were used to continue 2 bilateral projects launched in 2021 (in education and media support).

The public enterprise Eastern Europe Studies Centre completed the project Supporting Independent Journalism in Ukrainian Regions. The aim of the project was to improve the competences of Ukrainian journalists, strengthen communication and cooperation between Ukrainian media and civil society organisations, and contribute to the financial stability and independence of individual journalists in Ukraine. Since the outbreak of the war, project funds were contributed to a project ran by its partner, the National Union of Journalists of Ukraine, and provided financial support to three journalists working in the war zone.

As part of an education project, the Lithuanian Children and Youth Centre has developed a 50-academic-hour online upskilling programme for Ukrainian teachers and a distance learning platform for teachers in the Ukrainian language.

In 2022, EUR 185,6 thousand was allocated to Ukraine through the Fund. The aim of 3 bilateral projects is to support internally displaced persons. The projects will be implemented

between 2023 and 2024 with the aim of providing opportunities for internally displaced children and youth to participate in non-formal education (NFE) activities to improve their emotional well-being and for teachers to develop inclusive NFE curricula; to improve the socio-economic situation of internally displaced people by organising entrepreneurship courses; and to implement effective measures for mental health promotion.

Moldova. In 2022, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs' development cooperation funds supported Moldovan projects aimed at implementing the objectives of the European integration agenda in the areas of good governance, environmental protection, strengthening democratic values, building a culture of historical memory, and civil society's resilience to disinformation.

The two-year project on strengthening administrative and institutional capacities and governance of the Moldovan Ministry of Foreign Affairs and European Integration (MMFAEI) aimed to share the experience of development of the Lithuanian diplomatic service model, to assess the needs for building MMFAEI's administrative capacities in the areas of European integration, economic diplomacy, hybrid threats, implementation of covert communications, etc.

In the field of environmental protection, 1 project was implemented involving transfer of the Lithuanian expertise in the implementation of a sustainable sorting system for beverage packaging.

3 projects on historical memory and the fight against disinformation and other contemporary threats were implemented to strengthen Moldovan society's culture of memory, resilience, and ability to detect propaganda. Research and dissemination of historical knowledge on the Moldovan totalitarian past was implemented by joining efforts of Moldovan and Lithuanian universities, academia, and civil society organisations. The project of the Moldovan Centre of Excellence Pro Memoria helped to foster historical memory and raise awareness of the crimes committed by totalitarian and non-democratic regimes. Conferences, exhibitions, and presentations of publications were organised, targeting the Moldovan youth. The project by the *WatchDog.MD* public organisation enabled women participating in the organisation's activities to get involved in fight against propaganda and other disinformation efforts in the country. *WatchDog.MD's* institutional capacity to fight disinformation was strengthened and training of local experts was provided. A project was also implemented to strengthen the security culture in the face of the information warfare in Ukraine, through discussions, roundtables, radio, and TV programmes on resilience to disinformation, the compilation and publication of a glossary of defence and security terms in Romanian and Russian, distributed to universities, NGOs, and social media.

In 2022, the Fund supported the implementation of 3 regional projects in Moldova in the areas of administrative capacity building for European integration (fire prevention and agriculture) and strengthening resilience to disinformation. The projects will be implemented as of 2023.

Georgia. In 2022, 5 bilateral projects were implemented with the funds allocated for development cooperation activities of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, which consistently continued Lithuania's support for the Euro-Atlantic integration of Georgia, strengthening civil society and democratic institutions, and combating disinformation. Support was also provided to promote environmental protection and small business initiatives in agriculture.

In order to raise environmental awareness by teaching the principles of sustainable development to the youth from the four municipalities of the Kwemo Kartli region (Bolnisi, Dmanisi, Gardabani and Marneuli), special waste recycling bins were installed, 150 trees were

planted, nest boxes were mounted, environmental clean-up campaigns were organised, 40 environmental assessment visits were organised with the help of volunteers, and 10 video clips were produced.

Two projects were implemented to promote the strengthening of information resilience and political culture among NGOs, civil society, and dissemination of political culture in Georgia: round-table discussions and film screenings were organised for 35 local civil society communities, and representatives of ethnic minorities. Participants were introduced to media assessment tools, fact-checking tools, strategies for combating disinformation; recommendations for local communities and municipalities were developed. A project on working experience with people with disabilities was also implemented.

The cooperation project between agricultural enterprises of Suvalkija and the Georgian Racha region that was launched in 2021 was completed: a virtual platform www.saklit.eu was developed, and a database of Georgian and Lithuanian small agribusinesses was compiled (including 20 businesses from each country).

In 2022, the Fund will be used to implement 4 regional projects in Georgia. Projects aimed at administrative capacity building in European integration (fire prevention and agriculture) and resilience to disinformation will start in 2023.

Armenia. In 2022, activities continued in traditional areas of development cooperation. 7 projects were implemented on good governance (transport safety), environmental protection and climate change, building resilience to disinformation, and developing economic and social participation of rural women.

A two-year cooperation project between Lithuanian and Armenian transport safety authorities was successfully completed, providing support for capacity building of Armenian road, rail and civil aviation professionals.

In the field of environmental protection, project activities on litter and waste sorting were continued. Lithuanian bilateral support was provided for the design and installation of modern waste sorting bins in the botanical gardens of Yerevan, Vanadzor and Sevan, as well as for environmental clean-up campaigns and educational games on sorting of waste for schoolchildren, representatives of youth organisations, volunteers, and environmentalists. The Sarukhan Community School in the Gegharkunik region of Sarukhan was equipped with a working paper recycling facility and students were trained to make new paper products from wastepaper. As part of the ongoing projects, Armenian environmental specialists visited Lithuania and participated in meetings organised for them with environmental activist groups.

Much attention was given to the building of Armenian civil society capacities and resilience to disinformation. Support was provided to the Factor Information Centre, an Armenian media organisation, whose broadcasts and podcasts featured media literacy specialists, editors, journalists, NGO representatives, education experts, historians, and psychologists. 3 information seminars on EU-Armenia cooperation under CEPA and ongoing democratic reforms were organised in Vanadzor, Armavir and Gyumri. Articles on Armenian-EU relations, Eastern Partnership issues and regional reforms were drafted and published. Virtual training was held on how to combat disinformation in real time, identify and prevent disinformation dissemination, and warn others.

In the area of strengthening rural economic and social participation, support was provided to a socially and economically vulnerable segment of society – small-scale beekeepers in the Lori

province. A two-month beekeeping training was held for 14 beekeepers from the Lori province, including 7 women, and the equipment for a beekeeping centre was acquired.

In 2022, the Fund was used to implement 2 on-going bilateral projects (good governance, transport safety and sorting of beverage packaging) in Armenia. Lithuania's experience in these areas is appreciated in Armenia and efforts are made to apply it in practice. There will also be 2 regional projects in the field of combating disinformation. The projects will start in 2023.

Belarus. In 2022, 4 bilateral projects received funding from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs allocated for development cooperation activities. The main focus was on initiatives aimed at supporting the independent Belarusian academic community, civil society, increasing its political activism and solidarity, and strengthening the European identity of Belarusians.

International scientific conferences, seminars and analytical activities were organised to empower and strengthen the community of independent social and political scientists and experts in Belarus. The projects enabled independent top-ranking Belarusian academic and cultural figures to carry out research in the humanities and social sciences, to communicate freely with each other and with foreign partners through informal networks, and to renew cultural and civil cooperation with the free world. Belarusian and Lithuanian historians jointly analysed the most prevalent historical narratives in the media and social networks.

The aim of the History and Cultural Heritage project was to promote the European Heritage Label programme in Belarus and to create preconditions for further integration of Belarus into the European cultural space, and to highlight the importance of European dimension of cultural heritage. The publication CTRL+S. Heritage as a Challenge was issued, which, in addition to scientific articles and interviews, includes a special overview of the impact of the political unrest on the Belarusian cultural heritage sector.

In 2022, the Fund allocated 1 bilateral citizenship project and 1 regional project (fight against disinformation) in Belarus (starting in 2023).

In 2022, the **European Humanities University** (EHU) in Vilnius received further support for its operation. The EHU received annual financial support (EUR 200,000), as well as free visas for students and lecturers, and premises in the Old Town of Vilnius. In addition to providing students with excellent quality studies, EHU also develops leadership skills, critical thinking, and active citizenship. The three main donors of the university are the European Commission, Sweden, and Lithuania. In 2022, EHU also received support from the Netherlands and Iceland. In 2022, the EHU Trust Fund was set up at the initiative of the European Commission and is managed by the Central Project Management Agency. The establishment of the fund will contribute to the financial stability of the EHU and facilitate estimation of operating costs. The funds for the EHU will come from the EU's bilateral assistance to Belarus.

In July 2022, EHU launched a new Bachelor programme in Informatics in collaboration with the EPAM School of Digital Engineering. Following the outbreak of the Russian war in Ukraine, the University offered Ukrainian students and faculty the possibilities to study and work at EHU. In the academic year 2022-2023, EHU enrolled 1,180 students, which is almost twice as many compared to the previous academic year. The geography of those who chose to study at EHU has also expanded, with Moldovan, Kazakh, Georgian and Lithuanian citizens joining the university community.

In 2022, 120 students graduated from EHU. Since the foundation in 1992, 3,883 students graduated from the university.

Azerbaijan. 1 bilateral project on women's empowerment in science, technology and engineering was implemented in 2022 in partnership with the United Nations Development Programme's (UNDP) Azerbaijan Country Office. Digital skills development providers *STEP IT Academy, Technest, Code Academy, Science Baku, Founder of Matrix, ID Tech, Smartnation, Femmes Digitales, Azerbaijan Woman in Science, Sabah.Lab* provided opportunities for girls and women to improve their digital skills and apply them in their lives. 8 video podcasts were also produced, and a *Welcome2STEM* public awareness event was held on successful careers for women in science, technology, engineering and mathematics.

The development of the Strategic Directions for Development Cooperation 2022-2025 focuses on supporting projects aimed at **strengthening civil society, strategic communication and capacity building to combat disinformation**. In 2022, in addition to the 7 bilateral projects already mentioned, 1 on-going regional project was implemented in the EU's Eastern Partnership countries to strengthen democracy and civil society and to develop links with the EU by consolidating the dissemination of independent information through interactive means.

272 articles and 104 video reports in Russian were released on political, social and economic issues in the Eastern Partnership countries, 99 articles denouncing aggressive disinformation campaigns by third countries, and informing of Western countries' measures to combat the spread of fake news.

The Fund selected two regional projects to strengthen resilience to disinformation in the EU's Eastern Partnership countries focusing on independent media, to be implemented in 2022 and from 2023.

In line with the strategic aim of development cooperation in 2022-2025, **namely elimination of preconditions for illegal migration, implementation of projects in the fields of sustainable economy (digitalisation), vocational education, creation of new jobs for young people**, in 2022 the Ministry of Foreign Affairs' funding for development cooperation activities was used to finance 9 development cooperation projects: 2 in Palestine, 2 in Iraq, and 1 project in Turkey, India, Bhutan, India, Nepal and the Republic of South Africa (hereafter – 'RSA') each. These projects aim at strengthening financial literacy among young people, developing vocational education, digital technology, agricultural and environmental skills.

More than 400 Indian and 280 Nepalese women were trained in financial literacy – book-keeping and management skills of personal finances, and the basics in investment.

Academic relations between Lithuania and Bhutan were strengthened, and a student of the Royal University of Bhutan was given the opportunity to study at Vilnius University in the PhD programme in ethnology.

In Palestine, engagement of girls and women studying at colleges or universities or working in technological field or seeking retraining in the technology labour market was strengthened. The Birzeit refugee camp was equipped with a smart greenhouse for sustainable use of natural resources, and sustainable farming training was provided to women and their families living in the refugee camp.

A study on the current state of implementation of sustainable energy solutions in Turkey was made. Visits of Turkish and Lithuanian experts to Lithuania and Turkey were organised, a platform was created for the exchange of ideas between experts, and a Protocol of Intentions and Cooperation was signed between the municipalities of Vilnius and Istanbul.

As part of the on-going education project Middle East Science Programme, 15 students from Iraq were awarded scholarships to study at Klaipėda LCC International University. This project was designed to support Iraqis who, due to difficult conditions in their home country, have no access to education. The project Construction and Equipping of Mahmoudiya Primary School in Karski village, South Sinjar, Iraq was also implemented. Around 200 pupils from the Yazidi community were given the opportunity to receive a good education.

RSA has implemented an information programme aimed at selecting young people able to learn coding and to prepare them for careers in the technological industry. The project contributed to reducing youth unemployment and addressed the shortage of skilled programmers needed to develop the technological industry in the RSA.

The 2022 Fund allocated part of its funds for sustainable development innovations in Palestine and ICT talent development projects in Iraq, starting in 2023.

Women's rights and equal opportunities

The implementation of gender equality programmes and projects is a priority of the Strategic Directions for Development Cooperation in Lithuania 2022-2025. This is foreseen in the Law on the Development Cooperation and Humanitarian Aid and the EU's Third Action Plan on Gender Equality 2021-2025.

In 2022, 9 projects were implemented in 8 countries (Moldova, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Palestine and Iraq, India and Nepal, as well as RSA) with the support of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs' Development Cooperation activities, with the aim of strengthening digital and financial literacy of women and girls and contributing to economic and social empowerment.

In Moldova, women's capacities to engage in countering disinformation and propaganda were strengthened. In Armenia, support was provided for economic and social development of rural areas (small-scale beekeeping businesses in the Lori region). In Azerbaijan, the aim was to reduce gender inequalities by raising awareness of the opportunities for young women living in the regions to pursue successful careers in STEM (science, technology, engineering, and mathematics).

In India and Nepal, women's financial literacy was enhanced, reducing gender inequalities in household and financial matters.

In Palestine, girls and women were trained to enter the digital labour market, women's agricultural initiatives were supported, training was provided on smart greenhouse technology management.

In Iraq, the support targeted providing educational opportunities for Iraqi Yazidi girls who are victims of ISIS. The Lithuanian funding helped to rebuild a school, furnish classrooms, and equip the school with the necessary educational tools and equipment.

In RSA efforts were aimed at strengthening women empowerment initiatives in information technologies. An information programme was implemented to identify young people, especially girls and women from disadvantaged communities, with a potential to learn programming.

EC programmes

EU Twinning Programme and Technical Assistance and Information Exchange Programme (TAIEX). In 2022 Lithuania continued its successful participation in the **EU Twinning Programme**, providing expert support to beneficiary countries. In 2022, 45 rounds of EU Twinning Programme project selection were launched. Lithuanian institutions, individually or in consortia with other EU Member States, submitted 11 project proposals and was awarded 8 projects with a total value of EUR 11,7 million.

According to the European Commission, Lithuania remains among the top five EU countries participating in the EU Twinning Programme and fourth among the leading countries (after France, Italy and Germany) with the highest number of awarded Twinning projects in 2021-2022.

In 2022, 4 programme projects were awarded in Azerbaijan, and 1 project in Tunisia, Rwanda, Jordan and Israel each. Lithuania is the leading project partner in two projects in Azerbaijan (in the areas of compulsory health insurance and pension reform implementation), and is participating in the other projects as a junior partner in a consortium of countries.

In 2022, the State Patients' Fund under the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Social Security and Labour, the State Social Insurance Fund Board (SODRA), the European Social Fund Agency, the Environmental Project Management Agency, the Lithuanian Transport Safety Administration, the Ministry of Transport and Communications, the Transport Competence Agency, the Police Department, the State Medicines Control Agency under the Ministry of Health, the Lithuanian Department of Statistics (now – the State Data Agency), and the State Food and Veterinary Service have won the selection process of the projects under the EU Twinning programme.

The project partner countries of Lithuania are Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Greece, Italy, Poland, Finland, France, Germany, and Hungary. Since 2004, a total of 133 EU Twinning programme's calls for projects have been awarded to Lithuanian institutions.

In 2022, 60 experts from Lithuanian institutions took part in trainings, seminars and expert missions using the EU **TAIEX** instrument (Lithuania is ranked 13th among EU countries). Most of the expertise was provided to Moldovan, Armenian, Georgian and Kosovo colleagues. Currently, 159 experts from Lithuanian institutions are registered in the EU TAIEX database. In terms of the number of experts registered in the database and the country's population, Lithuania is ranked 4th among EU countries after Slovenia, Croatia and Malta, and 9th among EU countries in terms of the total number of experts registered. In 2022, Lithuania's expertise was transferred in the areas of transport policy, environmental protection, public information, rule of law, justice, freedom and security.

In 2022, the Central Project Management Agency implemented EU4Youth (2021-2025), a multiannual **EC indirect management programme** in the Eastern Partnership countries, which aims to support the active participation and visibility of young people in society, economy, and politics by encouraging them to develop their leadership, entrepreneurship, and other skills, while also building a green economy and expanding digital literacy. The programme was supported from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs' funds for development cooperation activities.

Public information

The Eurobarometer opinion poll published in June 2022 showed a moderate increase in public support for aid to developing countries. 89% of Lithuanian respondents understand the

importance of helping people in developing countries, but only 46% (4 percentage points more than in 2021) think it should be the Government's priority.

The Lithuanian population believes that the top priorities for addressing the challenges faced by developing countries are as follows: peace and security (46%), health (37%), education (38%), economic growth and employment (35%). These areas are the focus of Lithuania's development cooperation policy formation, project activities and public information.

To ensure transparency of Lithuania's development cooperation activities, increase public support, trust and access to information, the Lithuanian Development Cooperation website www.ltaid.lt was launched in 2022. The website features an attractive presentation and a map, allowing visitors to easily find all information on projects implemented in Lithuania's partner countries, access to policy, legal information, statistics, calls for involvement, applications, and project selection. The design of the website is based on the recommendations of the Government of the Republic of Lithuania and the Guidelines for the Presentation of Lithuania Abroad.

The Lithuanian public is consistently informed about development cooperation activities through the LT AID Facebook account created in 2022 (over 170,000 visitors per year), press releases, various events, meetings, and conferences.

To better engage the target audiences of Lithuania's private, public sector and non-governmental organisations in development cooperation activities, and to showcase Lithuania's progress in strengthening development cooperation, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs organised an international conference Changes in Lithuania's Development Cooperation Policy: what progress are we aiming for? on 28 June 2022. The conference was attended by over 100 stakeholders, representatives of Lithuanian and foreign institutions, international organisations, civil society, and business, who discussed, shared experiences and proposals on how to achieve more progressive, transparent, and innovative solutions for development cooperation policy.

Enhancing the effectiveness of development cooperation policy

To increase the effectiveness of development cooperation policy, a systemic reform of development cooperation policy was completed in 2022, based on the adoption of the fundamental law on the development cooperation and humanitarian aid and secondary implementing legislation, to create the conditions and pave the way for the implementation of both qualitative and quantitative changes in the development cooperation policy. The main outcome of the reform is the launch of the Fund for the Development Cooperation and Humanitarian Aid (hereinafter 'the Fund') in 2022, which is not bound by annual budgeting rules, is open to other sources of funding and provides the necessary flexibility for multiannual programming, thus enabling the implementation of larger programmes and projects. The Fund's Regulations provide for the use of funds for bilateral assistance.

The Orders of the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Lithuania of 9 June 2022 approved the staff composition of the Council of the Fund for Development Cooperation and Humanitarian Aid and the Description of Activities of the Fund for the Development Cooperation and Humanitarian Aid, which set out the procedure for the use of the Fund for the Development Cooperation and Humanitarian Aid for the provision of bilateral assistance and for the provision of national co-financing for programmes and projects financed by international donors, the procedure

for the payment of the Fund's administrator and the Secretariat, the procedure for the evaluation and approval of the Fund's performance, as well as other matters relating to the Fund's activities.

In cooperation with the Office of the Government of the Republic of Lithuania and the Central Project Management Agency, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs submitted a project proposal for funding from the European Commission (Technical Assistance Instrument) for the project Strengthening Lithuania's development cooperation ecosystem: policy coherence, partnerships, impact in 2022. In March 2023, the European Commission's approval for funding was received for the two-year project, which will analyse the current situation, develop an action plan to strengthen the development cooperation system, drawing on best practices from the OECD and other donor countries, and implement three pilot projects. The focus will be on the use of existing financial instruments or the development of new ones, monitoring and evaluation system, capacity building and the involvement of the private and non-governmental sector in development cooperation.