

**MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF THE REPUBLIC OF LITHUANIA
REPORT ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE DEVELOPMENT COOPERATION
AND DEMOCRACY PROMOTION PROGRAMME 2023**

Overview

In 2023, we celebrated 20 years of Lithuanian development cooperation. Lithuania's strength as a donor country is based on a strong track record of transformation and commitment to democratic principles. Our history has repeatedly shown that the desire for freedom and solidarity can help overcome even the greatest challenges.

In 2023, we continued our consistent support to Ukraine with financial and humanitarian assistance, pioneering reconstruction projects and legislating that fines for breaches of international sanctions against Russia and Belarus and confiscated assets will be used to rebuild Ukraine through the Development Cooperation and Humanitarian Aid Fund (the Fund). Taiwan has joined our efforts to help Ukraine by making a significant contribution to the Fund.

In multilateral formats of international partnerships, we have actively raised issues of support to Ukraine, including on the transportation of its grain through the Black Sea corridor and EU Solidarity Lanes. We also advocated for the swift approval of the agreement on EU financial assistance, the Ukraine Facility.

Lithuania has been at the forefront of the EU Twinning Programme in sharing public sector expertise. In 2023, we participated in 23 projects in partner countries. Together with partners, Lithuanian institutions won five new projects in the areas of anti-corruption, environmental policy, taxation, market surveillance and statistics.

Through bilateral support, Lithuania has consistently contributed to institutional capacity building and Euro-integration reforms in the EU Eastern Partnership countries, women's empowerment, education, disinformation resilience, environment and health in partner countries.

This report covers activities falling under the competence of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Lithuania and financed from the Ministry's state budget allocations.

Official development assistance

Official Development Assistance (ODA) provided by Lithuania is assistance and humanitarian aid to developing countries and territories financed from the budgets of the state and municipalities and their subordinate institutions. The support provided from the earmarked budget allocations of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs is a component of ODA. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs has consistently sought to ensure that Lithuania's ODA increases steadily and is in line with Lithuania's international commitments – as a member of the EU, Lithuania has committed to allocate to ODA at least 0.33% of its gross national income (GNI) by 2030.

According to preliminary data by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), Lithuania's ODA amounted to €196 million in 2023, or 0.28% of GNI. Bilateral aid amounted to €111 million and multilateral aid to €85 million. The largest part of Lithuania's ODA was humanitarian and financial assistance to Ukraine - €52 million (almost one third of Lithuania's ODA - 29.3%).

Over the last five years, Lithuania's ODA has been fluctuating between 0.12 and 0.14% of GNI, rising to €231.31 million or 0.36% of GNI in 2022. In 2022, expenses for refugees accounted for as much as a third of Lithuania's ODA and was one of the main reasons for the "growth leap" of ODA. In 2023, these expenditures decreased, as only expenditures allocated to refugees during the first twelve months of their stay in Lithuania are eligible for inclusion in the ODA statistical report.

EU and global development cooperation policy making

Based on the strategic priorities, national interests and partner countries' needs, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs ensured Lithuania's continued effective engagement in the formulation and implementation of development cooperation policy at the international, EU and bilateral levels, thereby strengthening Lithuania's role as a responsible and reliable partner and donor.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the diplomatic missions of the Republic of Lithuania accredited to the partner countries participated in the implementation of Lithuania's development cooperation policy and were actively involved in the search for partners and contributed to the coordination of donors' activities, including involvement in the Team Europe Initiatives. Lithuania contributes to the Team Europe Initiative in Moldova on countering disinformation, on environment in Georgia, on socio-economic development of the Syunik region in Armenia, and on digitisation initiatives in Palestine, Kenya, and South Africa.

In multilateral formats of international partnerships, we have actively raised issues of support to Ukraine and called for a common legal solution to use frozen Russian assets to rebuild Ukraine. In the EU working groups, we have advocated for a swift agreement on EU financial assistance to Ukraine, a review of the reform of multilateral development banks to mobilise additional development finance and the involvement of the private sector in development cooperation.

Funds and activities

€27.96 million was allocated for development cooperation activities from the State Budget of the Republic of Lithuania approved for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

Purpose	Funds, in thousands EUR
Voluntary contributions to multilateral funds	1 050
Projects	2 212,54
Reconstruction and Recovery of Ukraine (contribution to the Fund)	23 000
Humanitarian aid	1 600
Participation in activities of the EU, UN and other international organisations and programme monitoring	49,27
Other development cooperation activities (project management, events, exhibitions, printed materials, services, etc.)	48,82
The total amount of funds allocated by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs for development cooperation activities:	27 960,63

Multilateral development assistance

As part of its international commitments, contributing to international efforts to reduce poverty, increase the resilience of recipient countries and the most vulnerable groups of people, and to promote the spread of democratic values, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs provided multilateral development assistance through voluntary contributions to foundations and international organisations involved in or coordinating development cooperation activities. In 2023, Lithuania allocated €1.05 million to voluntary contributions from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs' Strategic Plan measure "Strengthening Lithuania's Participation in the Implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in Partner Countries".

Thematic, regional and country-specific programmes (Armenia, Iraq, Moldova, Georgia, Ukraine) of the OECD, the OSCE, the UN and other organisations, agencies and foundations were supported. The largest contributions were made to the Democracy Support Fund (€260,000) and the European Humanities University Trust Fund (€200,000). Voluntary contributions to programmes in Ukraine have increased 11-fold and the total MFA budget for voluntary contributions has increased by more than a fifth over the year.

Voluntary contributions	Funds, in thousands EUR
Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) Development Assistance Committee (DAC)	50
OECD Ukraine Country Programme	100
OECD Eurasia Competitiveness Programme	30
OECD Dis/mis Resource Hub	30
EU-LAC Foundation	10
Endowment for Democracy	260
European Humanities University Trust Fund (administered by CPVA)	200
OSCE project <i>Ukraine Human Rights Monitoring Initiative</i>	10
OSCE Support Program for Ukraine	20
OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR)	15
International Lifeline Fund	10
Community of Democracies	5
United Nations Human Rights Monitoring Mission in Ukraine (UNHRMMU)	20
UN Women	10

UNESCO <i>Revive the Spirit of Mosul</i>	20
UNESCO Global Media Defence Fund	10
UNESCO International Programme for the Development of Communication, IPDC	20
UN Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict (OSRSG-SVC)	30
The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR)	20
The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF)	20
Asia-Europe Foundation (ASEF)	20
European Endowment for Democracy (EED)	50
Council of Europe Action Plan for Ukraine	15
Council of Europe Action Plan for Georgia	10
Eastern Europe Energy Efficiency and Environment Partnership (E5P) programmes in Armenia and Moldova	50
Anna Lindh Euro-Mediterranean Foundation for the Dialogue Between Cultures (Anna Lindh Foundation)	15
Total:	1 050

Humanitarian aid

In 2023, from the MFA Strategic Plan measure "Strengthening Lithuania's Participation in the Implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in Partner Countries", Lithuania allocated €1.6 million (€0.45 million from Government of the Republic of Lithuania's (GoL's) Reserve Fund) for humanitarian assistance to Armenia (€0.35 million to host the population displaced from Nagorno-Karabakh), Yemen, Libya, Morocco, Palestine (€0.28 million), Slovenia, Turkey, and Ukraine. With the increase in global humanitarian needs and in line with EU recommendations for quality funding, unearmarked contributions (€0.3 million) to the United Nations and Red Cross Crisis Management Centres increased but have not yet reached the 2021 level (€0.55 million). The humanitarian budget of the MFA for 2023 (excluding the GoL's Reserve Fund) increased by 47% compared to 2022.

Humanitarian aid from the MFA Strategic Plan Measure "Strengthening Lithuania's Participation in the Implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in Partner Countries"	Funds, in thousands EUR
Humanitarian aid for earthquake-hit Turkey	100

United Nations Yemen Humanitarian Fund (YHF), humanitarian aid to Yemen	50
United Nations Humanitarian Fund for Ukraine (UHF), humanitarian aid to Ukraine	150
UN World Food Programme (WFP), humanitarian aid to Ukraine	70
International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), humanitarian aid to Ukraine	50
UN Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), Humanitarian aid for Palestinian refugees	30
UNRWA, Humanitarian aid for Palestinian refugees	100
UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), Humanitarian aid to Palestine	150
OCHA, Humanitarian aid to Libya	50
International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC), Humanitarian aid to Morocco	50
Humanitarian aid to the flood-affected Republic of Slovenia	50
IFRC Disaster Response Emergency Fund (DREF)	100
UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)	100
UN Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF)	100
Humanitarian aid from the Government Reserve Fund transferred to the MFA	
Humanitarian aid to earthquake-hit Turkey (Government Decision No 84 of 8 February 2023)	100
Humanitarian aid to the Republic of Armenia for the reception of the population that has fled Nagorno-Karabakh (Government Decision No 733 of 13 September 2023)	350
Total:	1 600

Bilateral development assistance by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs

In 2023, Lithuania provided bilateral development support through the projects of Development Cooperation and Democracy Promotion Program (the Program) and bilateral, direct management and national co-financing projects of the Development Cooperation and Humanitarian Aid Fund. In 2023, Lithuania initiated 46 new projects, and another 17 projects were ongoing since 2022.

In 2023, €10.4 million was allocated to projects for the recovery and reconstruction of Ukraine and €2.21 million to other projects under the Programme and the Fund.

In 2023, fourteen Fund supported projects, totalling €988.9 thousand in financing, were launched in Ukraine, Moldova, Georgia, Armenia, Uzbekistan, Palestine, Iraq, and Kenya. The diplomatic missions of the Republic of Lithuania, accredited to the partner countries, supported 22 development cooperation projects (€338.2 thousand). The co-financed EC's indirect management project EU4Youth (€180 thousand), one ongoing project in Belarus (€22.3 thousand) and 8 reconstruction projects in Ukraine (€10.4 million) were continued.

In line with the Strategic Directions for Development Cooperation 2022-2025, priority was given to the EU's Eastern Partnership countries: Ukraine, Moldova, Georgia, and Armenia. Bilateral projects strengthened the administrative and institutional capacities of these countries, while Lithuania's good practices and transitional expertise helped to bring Moldova, Ukraine, and Georgia to EU standards, to prepare for EU membership negotiations, and contributed to the implementation of the Comprehensive and Enhanced Partnership Agreement (CEPA) with the EU in Armenia. Support was also given to strengthen civil society, combat disinformation, to the environment and sustainable economic development (digitalisation, women's economic and social empowerment), to psychosocial and physical rehabilitation (Ukraine) and gender equality in these countries and in partner countries in the Middle East, Asia, and Africa.

Ukraine

Reconstruction of Ukraine. In 2023, Lithuania continued Ukraine's recovery and reconstruction projects, which started in 2022 and were financed by the Fund. Lithuania was one of the first countries to start such projects in Ukraine. Lithuania's priority sectors are education, energy, health, and institutional capacity building in support of Ukraine's EU integration.

In 2022, €1 million was transferred to the Fund for Ukraine reconstruction purposes, and €11 million in 2023. In November 2023, a further €12 million was allocated for Ukraine reconstruction projects to be implemented in 2024.

In 2023, eight projects for the recovery and reconstruction of Ukraine were being implemented (2 projects approved in 2022, 6 projects in 2023), with a total disbursement of €10.4 million. On 12 May 2023, a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) was signed between the Central Project Management Agency (CPVA) and the Taiwanese Representative Office in Lithuania, under which Taiwan contributed USD 5 million to the Fund for the reconstruction of Ukraine. The funds are to be used for the implementation of education infrastructure projects and other infrastructure necessary to improve the economic and social situation of the population.

In 2023, two reconstruction projects in Ukraine have been completed. Reconstruction of the Rūta kindergarten was finished in Irpin (Lithuania's allocation consisting of €3 684 916 and Taiwan's contribution €857 453). On 24 August 2023, during his visit to Ukraine, the President of the Republic of Lithuania Gitanas Nausėda officially opened the rebuilt and modernised kindergarten, which has a capacity of 450 children.

The project "Modernisation of the Mykolaivoblenergo distribution network by upgrading to 20 kV" (€264,750) was also conducted: a technical study for the upgrade of the Mykolaivoblenergo electricity distribution network was prepared and handed over to the Ukrainian authorities.

Six more Ukrainian restoration projects were under implementation in 2023:

1. Renovation of School No. 1 in Borodyanka (Kyiv region) (€7 944 848, including €1 700 000 Taiwan's contribution). The project entailed the rebuilding and equipping the school building, construction of a new bomb shelter, and landscaping the school grounds. The school will accommodate 700 students after reconstruction.

2. "Future School for Ukraine: preparation of a standard technical design" (€500 thousand). CPVA, together with the Ukraine's Agency for Restoration and the Lithuanian Architects' Union, plans to develop an easily adaptable technical design for the construction of new schools suitable for the whole of Ukraine. The standard technical design will be shared with the Ukrainian authorities to speed up the reconstruction of schools and save financial resources.

3. "Strengthening the administrative capacity of the Ukraine's Agency for Restoration in line with the requirements of the European Commission's pillar-based methodology" (€300 thousand). The objective of the project is to strengthen the Agency's administrative capacity in public procurement.

4. "Indoor and outdoor equipment for Borodyanka kindergarten" (€500 thousand, including €250 thousand Taiwan's contribution). The objective of the project is to equip a kindergarten building, accommodating 120 children, with furniture, kitchen and other equipment, and install the playgrounds. The reconstruction of the kindergarten and the construction of a bomb shelter are being carried out by Project HOPE, an international NGO. This exemplifies cooperation between Lithuania and an international NGO in the reconstruction efforts in Ukraine.

5. "3D Digital Spatial Planning Tool for Ukrainian Local Authorities" (€426 thousand, including €213 thousand Taiwan's contribution). The project aims to develop a platform for 3D visualisations of cities and digital tools for urban planning.

6. "Renovation of a school in Snihurivka" (€68 thousand). The school in Snihurivka (Mykolaiv region) will be renovated by replacing the school's broken windows with windows produced and donated by the private company LTintus. This is the first example of Lithuania's public-private cooperation in the Ukraine reconstruction efforts.

In 2023, four bilateral projects on health and good governance were financed by the Fund. Complex psychosocial and physical rehabilitation services for war victims and wounded, including children, were developed and arranged. Good governance support was provided to Ukraine's judiciary to address low public confidence in the judiciary and the communication challenges.

Two bilateral projects dedicated to Internally Displaced People (IDPs) and approved by the Fund in 2022, were continued. Children and youth engaged in non-formal education activities to improve their emotional well-being; business courses were organised to improve the socio-economic situation of IDPs. In addition, 3 regional projects were carried out, focusing on the transfer of Lithuanian expertise in fire protection, building resilience against disinformation and strengthening strategic communication capacities by consolidating the dissemination of independent information in the EU's Eastern Partnership countries.

In 2023, the Embassy of the Republic of Lithuania in Ukraine supported 2 health projects under the Programme aimed at providing urogenital prosthetics services to war victims, as well as otorhinolaryngology services to the residents of the liberated territories (Chernihiv region), who suffer from hearing impairment due to constant shelling.

Moldova. The largest part of the support to Moldova in 2023 was for development cooperation projects aimed at implementing Euro-integration reforms strengthening administrative

and institutional capacity in the areas of foreign affairs and European integration, environment, health, agriculture, and fire protection. We supported projects in the areas of historical memory and citizenship education, strategic communication, and resilience to disinformation.

In 2023, five bilateral projects were implemented under the Development Cooperation and Democracy Promotion Programme. A two-year project to strengthen the institutional and administrative capacity and governance of the Moldovan Ministry of Foreign Affairs and European Integration was completed. In the context of the country's reforms and preparations for EU membership negotiations, Lithuania provided expert and technical support in the most relevant areas of diplomatic service, Euro-integration, economic diplomacy, management of hybrid threats, strategic communication, and countering disinformation. Moldovan officials benefited from experience exchange visits and trainings in Vilnius, Brussels and Chisinau. They were introduced to Lithuania's model of economic diplomacy, experience of EU integration, and learned about the coordination of EU affairs, including the LINESIS system and the EU institutional framework. Lithuanian experts shared their experience in hybrid threat management, strategic communication, and countering disinformation.

Projects on historical memory and the fight against disinformation as well as other contemporary threats were implemented to facilitate the culture of historical memory, societal resilience and the ability to detect propaganda. Lithuanian and Moldovan academia and civil society organisations have been involved in scientific research, conferences, exhibitions, presentations of publications, roundtables and a thematic summer camp for Moldovan youth. The aim was to strengthen the civic awareness of the younger generation in Moldova and to increase understanding of the crimes committed by totalitarian and non-democratic regimes. The capacity of the NGO WatchDog.MD to fight malicious disinformation was also enhanced, a glossary of security terms in Romanian was developed, and radio and TV programmes on disinformation resistance were produced.

In 2023, Moldovan environmental authorities benefited from the transfer of Lithuanian expertise in establishing a sustainable beverage packaging management system, alongside the development of comprehensive guidelines for implementing a deposit return system.

In 2023, the Fund financed two bilateral projects aimed at enhancing the capacity of the Moldovan Ombudsman's institution in healthcare and increasing resilience against harmful foreign propaganda in the context of Moldova's integration into the EU. Additionally, three regional projects, launched in 2022, were continued to strengthen resistance to disinformation, enhance dissemination of independent information in the EU's EaP countries, and to transfer Lithuania's expertise in the sectors of fire prevention and agriculture.

Georgia. Lithuania's development cooperation support and expertise in Georgia is visible and highly valued. In 2023, efforts continued in supporting Euro-Atlantic integration, reinforcing civil society, democratic institutions and independent media, as well as fostering resilience against disinformation. Additionally, there was ongoing collaboration in sharing experience on climate change and the environment, promoting small business initiatives in agriculture, and ties between Lithuanian and Georgian municipalities.

In 2023, five bilateral projects were implemented under the Programme.

To reinforce the efforts of Georgia towards EU candidacy and enhance public understanding of European values, a series of public awareness activities were organised in the

regions of Kutaisi, Telavi, Gori and elsewhere, involving local activists and journalists (around 40 people). Several virtual seminars featuring well-known EU experts and speakers from Lithuania were held, alongside hiking tours reaching out to around 800 people in the regions.

Expert support was provided to promote and expand the use of alternative energy sources in the livestock sector in Georgia.

Public resilience to Russian disinformation about Abkhazia was enhanced.

In 2023, the Fund financed one bilateral project on reinforcing relations between the municipalities of Plungė and Kvarėl, as well as the continuation of four regional projects, that were launched in 2022.

Armenia. In 2023, development cooperation activities continued in the areas where Lithuania has been working consistently for several years – good governance, environmental protection and climate change, resilience to misinformation, economic and social empowerment of rural women. Lithuania's experience in Armenia is highly valued, and efforts are being made to apply it throughout the country.

In 2023, four bilateral projects have been implemented under the Programme.

The focus was on strengthening the capacity of Armenian civil society and its resilience to disinformation, as well as enhancing communication skills. Experts from the Lithuanian NGO "Europe House" shared their experience in dealing with hybrid attacks. Civil servants and experts were introduced to the principles of strategic communication, media representatives increased their information and digital literacy competences.

The green space of the Yerevan Botanical Garden was renovated with a recreation area and irrigation system.

To promote economic and social activities in the rural areas, a contribution was made to the EU Team Europe initiative supporting the Syunik region in line with local development priorities, the territorial integrity and sovereignty of the region.

In 2023, 1 project was implemented financed by the Fund. In line with the priorities set out in the EU-Armenia CEPA agreement, the Fund provided national funding to an EU project supporting law enforcement and security reforms: modernisation of police management, state border and migration flow management.

The implementation of 2 good governance projects financed by the Fund in 2022 - transport safety and support for the introduction of a deposit system for glass and plastic containers – and 2 regional projects continued.

Belarus. In 2023, the Programme funded 1 bilateral project to support independent Belarusian researchers. The 3-year project (2021-2023) contributed to strengthening the community of independent Belarusian researchers and experts in the humanities and social sciences, through the organisation of international scientific conferences and seminars, and analytical activities. Belarusian researchers were given the opportunity to carry out research and to communicate freely with each other and with foreign partners through informal networks. Belarusian and Lithuanian historians jointly analysed the most common historical narratives in society. 3 scientific articles, 15 articles for the media and 10 articles for a collective monograph were produced.

1 project funded by the Fund was launched in 2023 to support independent Belarusian cinema.

In 2023, the European Humanities University (EHU) in Vilnius continued to receive support. The EHU Trust Fund received an annual financial contribution (€200,000), free visas for students and lecturers were issued, and premises in the Old Town of Vilnius provided. EHU students were provided with excellent study opportunities, and their leadership skills, critical thinking and active citizenship were developed. In addition to Lithuania, EHU is supported by two other major donors: the European Commission and Sweden. The Netherlands and Iceland joined the EHU donors' team in 2023. 124 students (scholarships and tuition fees) and 3 researchers threatened by the Belarusian authorities were supported by the governments of Norway, Finland, and Estonia. The Nordic Council of Ministers' Office in Lithuania also provided targeted support to the EHU to cover the tuition fees of 20 Belarusian students experiencing political persecution and 20 Ukrainian students affected by the war.

Almost 1 500 students started their studies at EHU in the academic year 2023-2024. 84% of all students are Belarusian citizens. The geography of students from other countries is also expanding, with Moldovan, Kazakh, Georgian and Lithuanian citizens joining the university community. Since the outbreak of the Russian war against Ukraine, Ukrainian students and teachers have been offered the opportunity to study and work at EHU. Currently, about 4% of the university's students have Ukrainian citizenship.

In 2023, 151 students graduated from EHU. Since the University's move to Vilnius in 2006, almost 3000 students have successfully completed their studies at EHU.

The implementation of the Strategic Directions for Development Cooperation 2022-2025 focuses on strengthening civil society, building capacities for strategic communication and countering disinformation. In 2023, 4 bilateral projects funded by the Programme (1 in Armenia, 1 in Georgia and 2 in Moldova) were implemented to build resilience and capacity of the society to fight against malicious disinformation, and to develop strategic communication skills.

In 2023, 2 regional projects funded by the Fund to strengthen disinformation resilience in the EU Eastern Partnership countries were launched, focusing on independent media. The project "Challenges of Modern Disinformation in the Face of Occupation" aims to train the media in Ukraine, Georgia, and Armenia and the wider public to choose reliable sources and create truthful narratives, and to identify and counter disinformation. Another regional project aims to strengthen disinformation resilience and strategic communication capacities by consolidating the dissemination of independent information in Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Moldova, Georgia, and Ukraine. 1 bilateral project was implemented in Moldova to improve the public's resilience to harmful foreign propaganda in the context of Moldova's integration into the EU.

In line with the 2022-2025 strategic objective of development cooperation - eliminating the preconditions for illegal migration by implementing projects in the fields of sustainable economy (digitalisation, cybersecurity), vocational education, and creation of new jobs for young people, in 2023, 8 projects were implemented with the support of the Fund - 3 in Kenya, 2 each in Iraq and Uzbekistan, 1 in Palestine. The Programme financed 7 projects - 2 in Palestine, 1 each in Turkey, India, Bhutan, the Maldives, and South Africa.

In 2023, cooperation between Lithuania and Kenya was initiated to implement innovative development cooperation projects in the areas of climate technology, public administration, digital

services. Through these projects, both countries are contributing to the shared goals of sustainable development, innovation, and economic growth.

Projects in Palestine and South Africa focused on empowering communities and promoting economic growth, strengthening women's and girls' entrepreneurial skills, and reducing social inequalities. The project "Mastering Artificial Intelligence Skills and Building the Real-Time Economy in Palestine (ART-inTELL)" provided Palestinian students with practical skills in developing artificial intelligence solutions, increased their employability, and stimulated the adoption of new digital technologies and investment attraction. The South Africa project supported technology training programmes for unemployed youth.

In Iraq, the projects aimed to modernise vocational training to create job prospects for Iraqi youth, and to establish a partnership between Iraq and Lithuania for talent development, with a focus on the digital economy. In Uzbekistan, Lithuanian University of Sport transferred good practice in organising and conducting distance sports studies to the University of Physical Culture and Sports in Uzbekistan, introducing the university's doctoral students and young scientists to the processes of scientific activity, helping them to acquire the competences and skills necessary for a scientist to independently carry out scientific research and publish scientific articles.

Lithuania and Turkey implemented a project on renewable energy and climate change. A prototype mobile app and website has been developed with more than 100 useful contacts and a list of partners for further promotion and development of the project and networking. Visits by renewable energy experts to Istanbul, Vilnius and Kaunas have stimulated cooperation between municipalities and climate change experts.

Projects in India, Bhutan and the Maldives contributed to the digital transformation of the countries by sharing best practices in Lithuania's cyber security ecosystem, raising the profile of Lithuanian high-tech in partner countries and introducing EU practices.

Women's rights and equal opportunities

Strategic Directions for Development Cooperation 2022-2025 prioritize the implementation of gender-sensitive programmes and projects. These activities are foreseen in the Law on Development Cooperation and Humanitarian Aid and the EU's Third Gender Action Plan 2021-2025.

In 2023, Lithuania supported 4 projects - 2 in Palestine and 1 each in Iraq and South Africa. Palestinian women and girls were provided with skills and resources to set up businesses or secure employment. In South Africa, a group of 26 young people from marginalised communities successfully completed coder training, secured employment or accessed further training in the technology industry.

In Iraq, Lithuanian support promoted youth unemployment reduction and gender inclusive practices, contributing to long-term economic and social development, ICT talent development, and the Iraq-Lithuania Mobility Partnership.

Digitisation projects

In 2023, 3 digitisation projects were financed by the Fund in the Republic of Kenya. The projects were designed to support the Kenyan government's efforts to digitise public services

efficiently, increase the accessibility, build institutional capacity to deploy modern technologies in public administration. In addition, a feasibility study on the provision of digital government services through post offices was completed, and support to climate technology start-ups provided.

Under the Programme, Lithuanian diplomatic missions supported 7 projects in the field of digitisation in Bhutan, India, the Maldives, Palestine (2), South Africa, and Turkey. Projects in Uzbekistan and Iraq, launched in 2022, were also continued.

European Union programmes

In 2023, Lithuania continued its successful participation in the EU Twinning Programme, providing expert support to partner countries. Lithuanian institutions participated in 6 Twinning project selections and won 5 for a total amount of €6.7 million: in Georgia (market surveillance, €1.2 million, 21/24 months), Palestine (environmental policy, €1.5 million, 24/27 months), Bosnia and Herzegovina (taxation, €1 million, 24/27 months, and anti-corruption, €1 million, 27/30 months), Cambodia (statistics, €2 million, 27/30 months). All projects were won in consortia with partners. In Georgia and Palestine, Lithuania is leading consortia with Austria, Germany and Poland, and the projects are managed by CPVA. In the other three projects, Lithuania is participating as junior Italian partner.

The European Commission's report on the implementation of the Twinning and TAIEX programmes in 2023 identifies Lithuania (with 23 ongoing projects) as the EU Member State with the most Twinning projects.

TAIEX events provide opportunities to establish or maintain inter-institutional contacts and thus start long-term cooperation. In 2023, over 100 Lithuanian experts were involved in TAIEX events. The most active were experts from the Communications Regulation Authority, the Customs and Police Departments, the State Consumer Rights Protection Service, the State Border Guard Service, the Special Investigation Service, the State Food and Veterinary Service, the General Prosecutor's Office, the Bank of Lithuania, and the Lithuanian Transport Safety Administration. They participated in 9 seminars: for the institutions of Ukraine (3), Georgia, Moldova, North Macedonia, Guyana, and Lebanon; 4 expert missions to Kosovo (2), Moldova and Palestine. 8 study visits were organised in Lithuania for guests from Moldova (3), Ukraine (2), Georgia, Palestine, North Macedonia. In September 2023, a multilateral high-level TAIEX seminar on Euro-integration was held in Vilnius, attended by delegations of Euro officials from the Baltic States, Ukraine, Moldova, and Georgia, as well as from the Western Balkan countries.

Public awareness

2023 marked the 20th anniversary of Lithuanian development cooperation. In November, an international conference, reflecting on the key achievements and addressing the challenges, – such as reconstruction of Ukraine, digital and green transformation, and building multilateral partnerships, took place. High-level representatives from the European Commission, the European Parliament, the United Nations, the OECD and other international organisations shared their insights on how Lithuania could further strengthen and develop partnerships and become a more active member of the international development cooperation community, drawing on the experience gained.

In April 2023, an international seminar introduced Lithuanian business, public institutions and NGOs to EU development cooperation opportunities and funding instruments for the implementation of the Global Gateway strategy.

Development cooperation activities have been effectively promoted across diverse channels and platforms. A video produced to commemorate the anniversary was broadcasted on Facebook (reaching an audience of 227 000 users) and was also featured during the “Nepatogus Kinas” documentary film festival (seen by more than 15 000 viewers). A colourful publication dedicated to the 20th anniversary of development cooperation was released. Through civil society initiatives, development cooperation activities in the field of environment and climate change mitigation were showcased during the National Environmental Exam campaign (engaging over 126,000 social media users). According to opinion polls, 96% of Lithuanians have a positive view of humanitarian aid to Ukraine.

Improving the effectiveness of development cooperation policy

To strengthen the effectiveness of Lithuanian development cooperation, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs initiated and launched a project "Strengthening the Lithuanian Development Cooperation Ecosystem: coherence, partnerships, impact", funded by the European Commission's Technical Assistance Instrument. Under this project, experts from the OECD and other countries help Lithuania to ensure the national coherence of its development cooperation policy, to create the conditions for effective international development cooperation partnerships and new tools to engage the private sector and civil society, and to intensify cooperation with international organisations, development finance institutions and other donor countries.

A launch event was held on 20 September 2023 and a diagnostic mission of OECD and EC experts took place in Vilnius on 2-6 October. A diagnostic report and a follow-up action plan for implementing the changes were launched.
