



## **The DAC's main findings and recommendations**

**Extract from: OECD Development Co-operation Peer Reviews  
Slovak Republic 2019**

## The DAC's main findings and recommendations

### The Slovak Republic is an active global actor and is professionalising its development co-operation efforts

**A relatively new member of the international community, the Slovak Republic positions itself strategically in international fora, where its leadership and influence are impressive for its size. It uses its European Union (EU) membership and alliances with like-minded donors to advance its priorities. Its transition experience gives it a particular comparative advantage in countries hoping to join the EU. The government has a comprehensive approach to building global citizenship, including through its formal education system.**

#### *The Slovak Republic leverages its membership of global groupings strategically and works with others to advance its key priorities*

The Slovak Republic is a committed champion of multilateral action and has demonstrated an impressive and effective leadership role in select international fora such as the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe, the Human Rights Council and United Nations General Assembly. These efforts help the Slovak Republic to gain visibility and build its capacity and credibility as a global development actor beyond what would normally be possible with a relatively small administration and budget (**Section 1.1**).

The fresh perspective which the Slovak Republic brings to the table makes it a valuable development co-operation partner. In order to leverage its aid and increase effectiveness, the Slovak Republic has developed solid partnerships with the Visegrad Group and like-minded donors. It contributes to EU dialogue and to joint programming exercises in partner countries, aligning its aid to the EU's broader common strategic objectives (**Section 1.1, 5.1**).

The Slovak Republic is committed to taking forward the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development by integrating it in its long-term strategic planning and governance framework. A Development Strategy until 2030 is currently being drafted, which will serve to implement the 2030 Agenda nationally. An updated comprehensive National Investment Plan, containing specific mechanisms to implement this strategy, is also being developed. In addition, its comprehensive approach to building global citizenship, with a particular focus on social cohesion, is embedded in its formal education system (**Section 1.1, 1.3**).

### *The Slovak Republic has made strides in putting its development co-operation on a professional footing*

Since joining the DAC in 2013, the Slovak Republic has continued to develop its legal framework and institutional structure, which support decision making in the delivery of development co-operation (**Section 2.1, 2.2**).

The Slovak Republic has been successful in supporting these structures with professional systems and staff in ministries, embassies and its development agency. Its programme is driven by young, dynamic teams that are motivated and committed. The Slovak Republic is open to new approaches for increasing the effectiveness of its development co-operation efforts (**Section 4.3**).

### **The Slovak Republic could build on its achievements**

#### *The next mid-term strategy could serve as a unifying framework across government*

The Slovak Republic's mid-term strategy for development co-operation, 2014-2018, is part of its foreign policy and specifies its geographic and thematic focus. However, as the strategy is mainly identified with the Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs and the Slovak Agency for International Development Co-operation (SAIDC), it does not benefit from full ownership across government, despite the cross-government consultation as it was developed. The new mid-term strategy will be an opportunity to re-affirm the role of the Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs as the national co-ordinator of development co-operation, while reflecting the full range of government departments involved in implementing it (**Section 2.1**).

As the Slovak Republic increases its bilateral budget, a clearer sense of its comparative advantage and what kind of development partner it wishes to become will help guide its plans in priority countries. Its limited resources can then be directed to fewer, more strategic partnerships, including with the private sector. In countries where the Slovak Republic's transition experience is in demand, high-quality technical assistance underpins strong partnerships with governments. There are further opportunities to work with other EU donors sharing transition experience so as to help the Slovak Republic identify or further refine its particular niche in this area (**Section 2.1, 5.2**).

The streamlined Slovak development co-operation system is nimble and relatively flexible, thanks in part to a light touch on strategies, documentation and guidance. Nonetheless, high turnover of staff and a rapidly evolving policy framework make it important to establish a common understanding of the principles and priorities that underpin decisions across government in a select number of policy areas. In addition, uniform implementation of the strategy across government will require robust appraisal and monitoring tools (**Section 2.1, 6.1**).

The Slovak Republic has invested considerable effort in statistical and financial reporting systems and adopting the International Aid Transparency Initiative (IATI). Public information on how the aid budget is spent is clear and publicised through the SlovakAid website. It is less easy however for outsiders to understand how funding and partnership decisions are made. This hinders a shared sense of ownership across the development system (**Section 6.3**).

**Recommendations:**

- (i) **The Slovak Republic should ensure that its next mid-term strategy is recognised as the framework for all development co-operation efforts across government and re-affirms the role of the Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs as the national co-ordinator of development co-operation.**
- (ii) **As an overarching policy statement, the mid-term strategy should:**
  - a) **make a clear link between the Slovak Republic’s development co-operation programme and the government’s long-term Development Strategy until 2030, as well as the National Investment Plan**
  - b) **explain clearly the Slovak Republic’s comparative advantage**
  - c) **identify the principles and standards, including on poverty reduction and cross-cutting issues, to be applied through all channels of Slovak development co-operation.**
- (iii) **The Slovak Republic should develop common appraisal, monitoring and reporting tools for use across government in order to ensure consistent implementation of the mid-term strategy.**

***A clear and consistent approach to strategy and decision making is needed across all channels***

The Slovak Republic is committed to engaging the private sector in development co-operation and has already achieved some successes on which to build. As it develops further mechanisms for engaging the private sector, guidance will be needed to ensure development objectives remain paramount and to make further progress on untying the Slovak Republic’s aid (**Section 2.3, 5.1**).

The Slovak Republic places a heavy emphasis on the multilateral channel – interacting with 50 multilateral organisations through 10 ministries. However, it is not always clear how it decides which multilateral organisations to support and why (**Section 5.1**).

Several of the Slovak Republic’s development activities are implemented through non-government organisations (NGOs) in fragile contexts. It will need to build its fragility policy expertise in order to be more systematic in its programme design and monitoring and to ensure better linkages with its international focus on peace and conflict prevention (**Section 5.1, 5.2**).

The Slovak Republic’s humanitarian ambitions are revealed by its commitments at the World Humanitarian Summit and its increased budget. However, its humanitarian approach is somewhat outdated. It would benefit from an overarching strategy covering all humanitarian and civil defence resources across government, which identifies when to respond and what assistance to offer. The regional approach that is currently under consideration could help the Slovak Republic to be more focused by linking its various tools and funding instruments in responding to a humanitarian crisis (**Section 7.1, 7.4**).

**Recommendations:**

- (iv) **The Slovak Republic should develop a limited number of strategies – notably for private sector partnerships and humanitarian assistance – to clarify and strengthen the implementation of its policy.**
- (v) **The Slovak Republic should strengthen transparency by publishing the criteria it uses to select its multilateral partners.**
- (vi) **The Slovak Republic should improve the links between its development co-operation and its foreign policy priorities for promoting peace and security.**
- (vii) **The Slovak Republic should review legal requirements that restrict grants to Slovak entities in order to make further progress on untying its ODA in line with its international commitments.**

***Staffing capacity could increase further***

The Slovak Republic has a relatively small pool of staff working on its development co-operation, supported by improved information and programme management systems. Hiring development diplomats in Nairobi and Chisinau has increased Slovak capacity and credibility, likely to increase further as development expertise rotates between the agency, ministries and embassies. Nonetheless, personnel numbers and skills still need to increase in order to ensure programme quality and manage risk (**Section 4.2, 5.2**).

**Recommendation:**

- (viii) **The Slovak Republic should match the growth in its ODA budget with human resources both in Bratislava and in key embassies.**

**The Slovak Republic needs to address some challenges*****The ODA budget and proportion of untied aid do not yet meet international commitments***

The Slovak Republic has repeatedly committed to devoting 0.33% of its gross national income (GNI) to official development assistance (ODA) by 2030. While its overall ODA growth is positive, there is no set plan for meeting this target, taking GNI growth into account (the ODA/GNI ratio was 0.12% in 2017, according to preliminary figures). In addition, the structure of the ODA budget limits the ability of the Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs, in its role as national co-ordinator, to ensure that all the Slovak Republic's development activities are ODA-eligible, increasingly untied (35.7% of Slovak bilateral aid was tied in 2016) and that ODA volumes are growing at a sufficient pace.

**Recommendations:**

- (ix) **The Slovak Republic should produce a plan for meeting and monitoring its commitment to devote 0.33% of its national income to ODA by 2030.**

***Programming and budgeting need to be aligned with the development effectiveness agenda***

The Slovak Republic is a member of the Global Partnership for Effective Development Co-operation and takes steps to ensure that it works in co-ordination with other donors and discusses its country strategies with host governments. However, it has many stand-alone and broad interventions outside its focus countries, limiting the scope for bilateral relations between governments and local ownership. Further, the distinction between so-called programme and project countries is unclear given the similar nature of interventions in both groups (Section 2.3).

Most interventions are implemented by civil society organisations selected through calls for proposals. As well as resulting in fragmentation and greater transaction costs, this approach limits predictability. Current plans to introduce framework agreements will allow the Slovak Republic to develop a select number of longer-term partnerships to deliver sustainable results and adhere to development effectiveness principles (Section 5.1, 5.2).

**Recommendations:**

- (x) **The Slovak Republic should identify countries for prioritising a bilateral relationship and develop country strategies to deliver a set of measurable, time-bound results based on partner country priorities.**
- (xi) **The Slovak Republic should develop modalities for providing partners with predictable finance as part of longer-term and strategic partnership arrangements, including for humanitarian work.**

***The Slovak Republic's oversight systems are not yet adequate***

The Slovak Republic's development co-operation system needs more substantial and independent risk management, audit and oversight functions, resulting in a tendency to focus on control rather than risk management. This is of particular concern as the Slovak Republic embarks on new, riskier financial instruments (Section 4.2, 5.1). A clear system of accountability would strengthen the Slovak Republic's credibility and help it to prepare for managing the risks of delivering a larger programme (Section 3.1, 4.1).

In order to ensure impact, the Slovak Republic needs to start managing for results across its programme. The current focus is on project monitoring rather than development outcomes. The OECD DAC results community can offer valuable guidance and support for this work (Section 6.3).

In the field of evaluation, the Slovak Republic has developed a policy, committee and dedicated budget. However, independent evaluation and oversight are lacking, and are not yet identified in a fully strategic manner (Section 6.2).

**Recommendation:**

- (xii) **The Slovak Republic should reinforce its systems to allow for external oversight of its programmes and policies, including independent evaluation.**

**(xiii) The Slovak Republic should introduce results-based management to ensure all strategies and interventions pursue a set of stated development results.**

## Summary of Recommendations

### List of all recommendations featured above:

- (i) **The Slovak Republic should ensure that its next mid-term strategy is recognised as the framework for all development co-operation efforts across government and re-affirms the role of the Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs as the national co-ordinator of development co-operation.**
- (ii) **As an overarching policy statement, the mid-term strategy should:**
  - i. **make a clear link between the Slovak Republic's development co-operation programme and the government's long-term Development Strategy until 2030, as well as the National Investment Plan**
  - ii. **explain clearly the Slovak Republic's comparative advantage**
  - iii. **identify the principles and standards, including on poverty reduction and cross-cutting issues, to be applied through all channels of Slovak development co-operation.**
- (iii) **The Slovak Republic should develop common appraisal, monitoring and reporting tools for use across government in order to ensure consistent implementation of the mid-term strategy.**
- (iv) **The Slovak Republic should develop a limited number of strategies – notably for private sector partnerships and humanitarian assistance – to clarify and strengthen the implementation of its policy.**
- (v) **The Slovak Republic should strengthen transparency by publishing the criteria it uses to select its multilateral partners.**
- (vi) **The Slovak Republic should improve the links between its development co-operation and its foreign policy priorities for promoting peace and security.**
- (vii) **The Slovak Republic should review legal requirements that restrict grants to Slovak entities in order to make further progress on untying its ODA in line with its international commitments.**
- (viii) **The Slovak Republic should match the growth in its ODA budget with human resources both in Bratislava and in key embassies.**
- (ix) **The Slovak Republic should produce a plan for meeting and monitoring its commitment to devote 0.33% of its national income to ODA by 2030.**
- (x) **The Slovak Republic should identify countries for prioritising a bilateral relationship and develop country strategies to deliver a set of measurable, time-bound results based on partner country priorities.**
- (xi) **The Slovak Republic should develop modalities for providing partners with predictable finance as part of longer-term and strategic partnership arrangements, including for humanitarian work.**

- (xii) **The Slovak Republic should reinforce its systems to allow for external oversight of its programmes and policies, including independent evaluation.**
- (xiii) **The Slovak Republic should introduce results-based management to ensure all strategies and interventions pursue a set of stated development results.**

Access the full report

*OECD Development Co-operation Peer Reviews: Slovak Republic 2019*

<https://doi.org/10.1787/9789264312326-en>

