



Evolution of Institutional Architecture in Europe and the Commonwealth of Independent States



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Acronyms and abbreviations

ACSH	Astana Civil Service Hub
AECID	Spanish Agency for International Development Cooperation
AIDA	Azerbaijan International Development Agency
AIIB	Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank
ASAN	State Agency for Public Service and Social Innovations under the President of Azerbaijan
BAPA+40	Second High-level United Nations Conference on South-South Cooperation
CAREC	Central Asia Regional Economic Cooperation
CEI	Central European Initiative
CEFTA	Central European Free Trade Agreement
CIS	Commonwealth of Independent States
CPD	Country Programme Document
DAC	Development Assistance Committee of the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development
ECIS	Europe and the Commonwealth of Independent States
ESCAP	Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific
EU	European Union
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
IBC	Issue-based Coalition
IFAD	International Fund for Agricultural Development
ILO	International Labour Organization
IOM	International Organization for Migration
IsDB	Islamic Development Bank
KazAID	Kazakhstan Agency for International Development
KOICA	Korea International Cooperation Agency
LDC	Least developed country
NAM	Non-Aligned Movement
NGO	Non-governmental organization
ODA	Official development assistance
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
OIC	Organisation of Islamic Cooperation
RCC	Regional Cooperation Council
RCP	Regional Collaborative Platform
RRA	Regional Roaming Agreement

SASPAC	State Agency for Strategic Programming and Aid Coordination
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
SEE	South East Europe
SME	Small- and medium-sized enterprise
SPECA	Special Programme for the Economies of Central Asia
TİKA	Turkish Cooperation and Coordination Agency
UNCTAD	United Nations Conference on Trade and Development
UNCT	United Nations Country Team
UNDCO	United Nations Development Coordination Office
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNDRR	United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction
UNECE	United Nations Economic Commission for Europe
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UNIDO	United Nations Industrial Development Organization
UNODC	United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime
UNOSSC	United Nations Office for South-South Cooperation
UN RCO	United Nations Resident Coordinator's Office
VNR	Voluntary National Review
WHO	World Health Organization
WTO	World Trade Organization
YTB	Yurtdışı Türkler ve Akraba Topluluklar Başkanlığı (Agency for Turks Abroad and Related Communities)

Foreword

Institutional frameworks and models in various countries and regions have evolved to respond to pressing development challenges, and the Outcome Document of the Second High-level United Nations Conference on South-South Cooperation (BAPA+40) acknowledges the ‘incremental institutionalization in South-South cooperation and its incorporation into policymaking by some countries and regions’ (operative paragraph 16).

As the scope and volume of South-South and triangular cooperation continue to expand, it is of paramount importance for countries to explore and develop innovative, effective and efficient ways and means to ensure long-term development impact as international development cooperation is evolving with a multitude of new actors.

It is in this context that this study explores the institutional underpinnings that drive vast and diverse South-South and triangular cooperation initiatives across the Europe and the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS). The analytical depth and insights generated from the extensive data collection underscore the dynamic and evolving nature of institutional architectures in the region. The message is clear – institutional arrangements for South-South and triangular cooperation matter.

Some countries are members of both the European Union (EU) and the Development Assistance Committee (DAC) of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), and their experience as official development assistance (ODA) providers is relatively new. Some countries in this region also benefit from the various initiatives of the Southern financial institutions, such as the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB), and regional blocks such as the Central Asia Regional Economic Cooperation and the Black Sea Economic Cooperation continue to serve as important platforms and facilitators of cooperation between the countries in the region. These and other contextual factors shape the development of South-South, East-East (as applicable) and triangular cooperation in the region. The United Nations system in the region continues to play a very important role in facilitation, building capacity and accumulating knowledge on South-South, East-East and triangular cooperation.

As the study aptly points out, the region presents a diversity of institutional architectures, models and practices of South-South and triangular cooperation at the national level. Institutional structures in place are also evolving while new structures are being set up, for which commitment at the highest possible level is essential. As the study demonstrates, each country in the region has a unique national approach and there is no ‘one-size-fits-all’ approach to institutionalization. Even in countries that both receive and provide development aid through South-South and triangular cooperation, the state institutions that are responsible for this are different. The study also notes that one of the possible ways for the countries from the region to expand South-South and triangular cooperation is through regional and sub-regional organizations.

Although the success of this form of cooperation also depends on the legal and institutional frameworks of more than one country, it is hoped that setting up dedicated institutions nationally would help the countries to ensure better coherence, coordination and synergies across multiple institutions involved in all forms of development cooperation. This, *inter alia*, would also ensure the maximization of resources, clearly defined partnership strategies, the development of monitoring and evaluation frameworks, and the carrying out of evaluations and impact assessments. Here, there are also various opportunities for cross-regional and peer-to-peer knowledge and experience sharing. Experiences also demonstrate that learning and sharing experiences can lead to greater transparency, accountability and impacts of initiatives.

Central to this study is also the in-depth studies of Türkiye, Azerbaijan and Kazakhstan, each illustrating the diverse paths and innovative strategies undertaken in institutionalizing South-South and triangular cooperation. Although the breadth and depth of each country's portfolios and its national ecosystem vary significantly, the study reveals an interesting common thread – active external engagement as the providers of South-South cooperation backed by political will and national ownership, which are two important tenets for much greater impact and better outcomes of initiatives.

Finally, this study offers some specific recommendations regarding the institutionalization agenda, such as the need to develop methodologies and tools for measurement, which can provide some further insights for countries aspiring to institutionalize and/or enhancing current arrangements.

Together, we can embark on new pathways to enhance the effectiveness of South-South and triangular cooperation in the region and beyond, paving the way for a more equitable and sustainable future for all.



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Director

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Introduction

Countries in the Europe and the Commonwealth of Independent States (ECIS) region have long-standing traditions of cooperation within and beyond the region. These countries and regional organizations participate in relevant fora and processes dedicated to South-South and triangular cooperation, together with developing countries from the rest of the world.

Yet, most countries in the ECIS region rarely use the concept of South-South and triangular cooperation to describe their cooperation initiatives, and therefore, most of their initiatives are not explicitly named, classified, recorded, and reported as such. Moreover, some countries also use the OECD/DAC term ‘official development assistance’ (ODA), while others refer to regional, cross-border and international cooperation programmes to describe their cooperation. Although these initiatives de facto fall within the definitions of South-South and triangular cooperation,¹ as outlined in the 2016 Framework of Operational Guidelines on United Nations support to South-South and triangular cooperation, and are analysed in this study, it is difficult to comprehensively map out the relevant South-South and triangular cooperation initiatives in the region and assess their impact. Therefore, the analysis of South-South and triangular cooperation in the ECIS region warrants a different approach. In general, international cooperation in the region should be analysed in the context of regional and sub-regional specificity, foreign policy priorities, development trends, and even countries’ historical path. Consequently, various activities and initiatives, which countries may define as ‘cross-border’, ‘transborder’, ‘neighbourhood policy’, ‘regional cooperation’ ‘cooperation for integration’, can be analysed under the umbrella of South-South and triangular cooperation.



South-South cooperation is a process whereby two or more developing countries pursue their individual and/or shared national capacity development objectives through the sharing of knowledge, skills, resources and technical know-how, and through regional and interregional collective actions, including partnerships involving governments, regional organizations, civil society, academia and the private sector, for their individual and/or mutual benefit within and across regions. South-South cooperation is not a substitute for, but rather a complement to, North-South cooperation.

Triangular cooperation involves Southern-driven partnerships between two or more developing countries supported by a developed country(ies)/or multilateral organization(s) to implement development cooperation programmes and projects.

Source

Framework of operational guidelines on United Nations support to South-South and triangular cooperation (2016).

¹ Definitions of South-South and triangular cooperation are drawn from 2016 Framework of Operational Guidelines on United Nations support to South-South and triangular cooperation.

Against this backdrop, the study aims to reflect on some of the developments in the ECIS region related to the ‘incremental institutionalization in South-South cooperation and its incorporation into policymaking by some countries and regions’, as noted in the Outcome Document of the Second High-level United Nations Conference on South-South Cooperation (BAPA+40). More specifically, the study aims to: (i) provide an overview of the recent developments and latest trends in South-South and triangular cooperation in the region and how countries' national interests intertwine within South-South and triangular cooperation; (ii) explore the institutional diversity in the region and outline the main elements in building institutional foundations; and (iii) provide recommendations in terms of further institutionalization of South-South and triangular cooperation for sustainable development in the ECIS region. The institutionalization process has also witnessed significant progress in other regions, thus providing further lessons learned and experiences to draw from for all future efforts in this area.

This study is illustrative rather than exhaustive in describing the institutionalization process in the region. It was prepared based on survey data collected for this exercise between May and September 2022, a review of the literature on South-South and triangular cooperation, and follow-up consultations in 2023, particularly with the countries and/or institutions of interest. Questionnaires were shared with government focal points, national institutions and regional organizations as well as with all the member entities of the United Nations Regional Collaborative Platform for Europe and Central Asia, (RCP-ECA), United Nations Resident Coordinator's Offices (UN RCOs) and United Nations Country Teams (UNCTs). Over 60 responses were received. In addition, more than 35 in-depth interviews were conducted with key informants working on South-South and triangular cooperation. The key informants included representatives of governments, regional organizations and the United Nations system; in-depth discussions were also held with stakeholders from eight countries.²

The study covers the 17 countries and one territory that are covered by the UNDP Regional Programme for ECIS region.³ Overall, it emerges that, although limited data do not do justice to the richness of cooperation experiences in the region, the region does present a diversity of institutional architectures, models and practices of South-South and triangular cooperation at the national level. The institutional structures in place are evolving, while new structures are being set up. Elements of South-South and triangular cooperation have been and/or are being incorporated in countries' strategies and legal frameworks. Commitment at the highest level is also helping to define the strategic goals that each country wishes to pursue through this form of cooperation. Some countries explicitly define South-South and triangular cooperation as part of implementing their foreign policies and strategies, or as a diplomacy tool; others emphasize it in the context of development and humanitarian needs of their partner countries.

As the study demonstrates, each country in the ECIS region has a unique national approach: there is no ‘one-size-fits-all’ approach to institutionalization. This form of cooperation also depends on the legal and institutional framework of more than one country. Coherence between the applicable national norms can be a challenge. The situation can be even more complicated when more than two countries' normative frameworks and/or international rules are applicable. This requires cooperation efforts in legislative and administrative processes for removing possible obstacles and achieving cohesion between partner countries.

Regional organizations in the region are also the effective platforms for providing South-South and triangular cooperation solutions. Although the United Nations entities in ECIS region have also been supporting governments and other stakeholders in South-South and triangular cooperation for decades, greater efforts are needed. It is also very clear that there is an increasing number of different forms of South-South cooperation, cross-border and inter-regional cooperation initiatives in the ECIS region, despite several challenges such as limited knowledge of South-South and triangular cooperation as well as regarding policy, institutions, operations and capacities. The emergence of Southern financial institutions is changing the landscape of the financing opportunities for the countries in the region. The thematic scope of the cooperation is also expanding, and areas such as green finance are gaining more prominence.

2 Azerbaijan, Albania, Kazakhstan, Serbia, Tajikistan, Türkiye, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan.

3 Albania, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Kosovo (References to Kosovo shall be understood to be in the context of Security Council Resolution 1244 (1999)), Moldova, Montenegro, Serbia, North Macedonia, Tajikistan, Türkiye, Turkmenistan, Ukraine and Uzbekistan.

The study is structured as follows:

Chapter 1

describes some of the latest developments and trends in South-South and triangular cooperation, and provides an overview of its key challenges and opportunities. It also provides examples of concrete projects and initiatives, and describes how countries have cooperated to address the COVID-19 pandemic and its socio-economic impact. Further, the chapter touches upon the progress made by countries of the ECIS region towards the attainment of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), and provides some examples of how South-South and triangular cooperation were used to accelerate it.

Chapter 2

examines the experiences of selected ECIS countries and analyses the critical choices and their possible implications in the context of building institutional frameworks and arrangements for South-South and triangular cooperation.

Chapter 3

highlights concrete examples of increasing and crystallizing role of regional organizations as an active player in promoting South-South and triangular cooperation.

Chapter 4

focuses on how the work of the United Nations entities is evolving, also bearing in mind the adoption of the 2020 United Nations System-wide Strategy on South-South and Triangular Cooperation for Sustainable Development and its Action Plan. Finally, the study concludes with recommendations to governments, regional organizations and the United Nations system on possible ways of further leveraging institutionalization of South-South and triangular cooperation for sustainable development in the ECIS region.

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Developments in South-South and Triangular Cooperation in the ECIS Region





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Developments in South-South and Triangular Cooperation in the ECIS Region

Response to the COVID-19 pandemic



During the COVID-19 pandemic, several countries from the region showed solidarity and supported each other and countries outside of the region on a bilateral and multilateral basis, predominantly through South-South and triangular cooperation. The scope of this cooperation is very broad and covers initiatives ranging from sharing vaccines and medical equipment to normative cooperation within the region. The latter included bilateral and multilateral agreements between governments for the free movement of essential goods and services.

For example, the Government of Azerbaijan, through the programme, 'Universal access to COVID-19 vaccines and a global response to end the pandemic', allocated over US\$12 million to the World Health Organization (WHO), the Islamic World Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (ICESCO), the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) to support global efforts in fighting the spread of the pandemic, especially in developing and least developed countries.

During interviews with the Azerbaijan International Development Agency (AIDA), it also emerged that nearly 60 countries in Africa, Asia, Latin America and other regions benefited from medical items and equipment provided through the WHO to enable national health institutions to deliver public health services to their citizens. Additionally, and during its chairmanship of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM), Azerbaijan initiated the

process, within the United Nations General Assembly, for the adoption of the resolution 'Ensuring equitable, affordable, timely and universal access for all countries to vaccines in response to the COVID-19 pandemic'.⁴

In 2021, Kazakhstan provided humanitarian aid to Tajikistan, Afghanistan, India, Azerbaijan and Uzbekistan in the form of food products (\$5.8 million); clothes and footwear (\$663,100), machinery and equipment (\$328,800) and medicines (\$86,800). Tajikistan was the largest recipient of Kazakhstan's humanitarian assistance (\$4.3 million), followed by Afghanistan (\$1.7 million), where assistance supported the country in addressing the humanitarian crisis, and India (\$1.3 million) to assist in curbing the devastating rise in coronavirus cases.⁵

To support partners' COVID-19 outbreak response, Türkiye provided assistance to 161 countries through a number of state bodies, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and the private sector. The support took the form of grants, in-kind support, budget support, educational and other programmes.⁶ For instance, in 2020, Türkiye provided US\$ 11.9 million for COVID-19 response, i.e. 0.1 percent of its total gross bilateral ODA. The total amount was provided as health expenditure within the COVID-19 response.⁷

Cross-border e-commerce, cross-border transportation and e-government



The pandemic also accelerated efforts in the ECIS region in the adoption of cross-border e-commerce as well as e-government services in education, healthcare, environmental management, trade, transportation, banking and finance, and other areas.⁸ For example, the Transport and Trade Connectivity in the Age of Pandemics project, which covers Europe and Central Asia, is a 'One UN' response to trade and transport connectivity challenges due to the COVID-19 pandemic.⁹ The project promotes contactless, seamless and collaborative solutions, based on United Nations standards and tools, and mobilizes advisory services and cooperation platforms. It has increased countries' capacity to preserve their connectivity during the pandemic by offering tailor-made analytical and training activities, and providing institutional measures to avoid fragmentation of digitalization and facilitation efforts.¹⁰

⁴ Interviews with the Azerbaijan International Development Agency (AIDA).

⁵ Satubaldina (2022).

⁶ Türkiye (n.d.).

⁷ OECD (n.d. a)

⁸ AIIIB, 2022, p. 20.

⁹ UNCTAD (n.d. a).

¹⁰ UN DESA (n.d.).

The Sustainable Inland Transport Connectivity Indicators (SITCIN) tool was developed under the United Nations Development Account- (UNDA) funded project, to support sustainable transport connectivity and implementation of transport-related SDGs in selected landlocked and transit/bridging countries (i.e. Georgia, Kazakhstan, Jordan, Paraguay, and Serbia). This project is being managed by the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) in collaboration with the United Nations Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) and the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for West Asia (ESCWA).¹¹

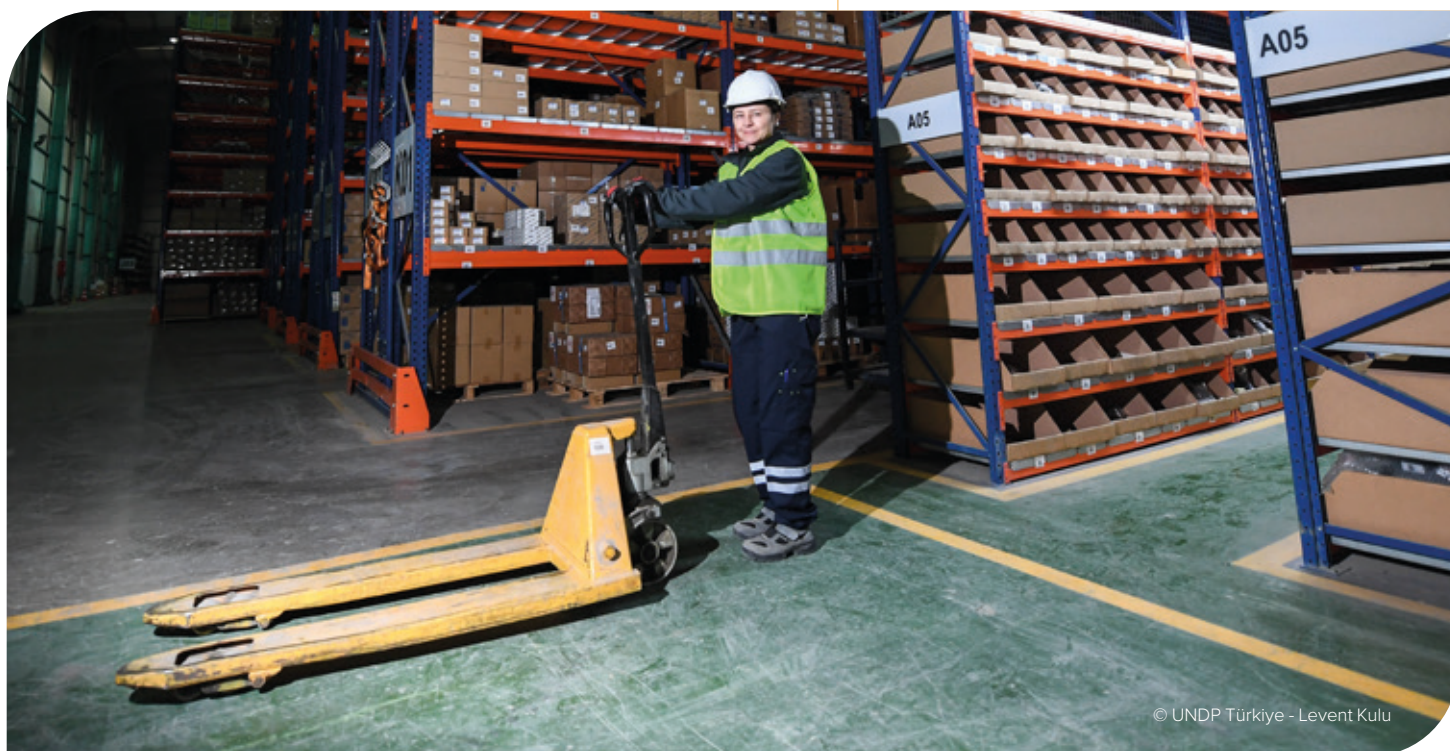
Digitalization



While the pandemic triggered the adoption of digital transition in many sectors, it also revealed the technological gap between more developed and less developed countries within the region. Some parts of the ECIS region still lag behind in digital infrastructure. For example, in some countries of Central Asia, connectivity is hindered by both their landlocked status and high mountains on their territories.

Almost half the population in Central Asia is not digitally connected.¹² Although digital access in the region remains unequal,¹³ in the recent years, there has been progress in the expansion of its digital infrastructure.

The ECIS region also has the most affordable prices for information and communication technologies (ICT) services globally.¹⁴ Countries from the region prioritize digital transformation in their development strategies. In this context, the Special Programme for the Economies of Central Asia (SPECA)¹⁵ Working Group on Innovation and Technology for Sustainable Development supported the establishment of the Digital Solutions Centre for Sustainable Development in Kazakhstan in the aim of promoting digital cooperation and integration in the sub-region.¹⁶ A peer-learning session, 'Accelerating digital development through multi-stakeholder partnerships' was also organized by UNECE and the International Telecommunication Union (ITU) for government partners, private sector representatives, academia and youth in order to seek collaborative solutions for accessible, affordable and safe connectivity.¹⁷



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¹¹ Chikhladze, Mamuka (2019).

¹² For example, in Uzbekistan, 55 percent, in Kyrgyzstan, 38 percent, and in Tajikistan, 22 percent of the population are not digitally connected. For more information, see CAREC Institute (2022).

¹³ For example, in 2020, more than 60 million women in Europe and Central Asia (ECA) had no access to the mobile internet. As a result, women were more likely than men to miss out on learning and working opportunities. Egger (2021).

¹⁴ International Telecommunication Union (2021).

¹⁵ SPECA is jointly supported by UNECE and UNESCAP.

¹⁶ UNESCAP (2022).

¹⁷ UNECE (2022).

Public administration



Innovation in public administration is another area of active collaboration that was boosted through South-South and triangular cooperation during the pandemic. One example is the joint project of the Government of the Republic of Korea, UNDP and the Astana Civil Service Hub, 'Capacity Building for Innovation in Governance and Digitalization of Public Services'. The aim of this initiative was to build the capacities of civil servants and practitioners involved in the implementation of innovations in the public administration system and in the digitalization of the public services in the countries of Central Asia (Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan) and the Caucasus (Azerbaijan, Armenia, Georgia).¹⁸

Poverty and inequality



As highlighted in the 2022 Report of the United Nations Secretary-General¹⁹ on the State of South-South Cooperation, the impact of COVID-19 pandemic on developing countries increased poverty and inequality between and within the countries. According to the World Bank, the debt in developing countries globally was pushed to a 50-year high, equivalent to more than two and half times their revenues. Some countries from the region that are facing the most drastic impacts of the crisis include Albania, Armenia, Kyrgyz Republic, Moldova, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan.²⁰

Dealing with poverty and inequality requires substantial and long-term efforts; some development strategies adopted at the sub-regional level promote development cooperation between states in the sub-region. For example, the South East Europe (SEE) 2030 Strategy, which was adopted by the Regional Cooperation Council,²¹ promotes economic growth through trade, sustainable and responsible tourism, and the enhancement of transport connectivity. It also encourages countries to explore development finance, in particular, development finance, and new green instruments to tackle poverty and income inequalities.

The potential of South-South and triangular cooperation for the achievement of Sustainable Development Goals in the ECIS region



Global challenges are expected to slow down the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for many countries in the ECIS region.²² Among other things, substantial number of developing countries might not be able to mobilize resources towards achieving the SDGs.²³ Some countries address the challenges of development finance by developing Integrated National Financing Frameworks. Such an approach could improve the efficient allocation of resources and identify the fields where scaling up development finance is needed and feasible.

According to the assessment made by UNECE, the region is on track to reach 21 targets (18 percent of measurable targets), such as reducing extreme poverty by 2030, providing access to basic services, adequate housing and energy services, and ensuring sustainable and inclusive industrialization, and sustainable and clean industries.²⁴ Most countries in the region have already achieved or are on track to meet targets related to maternal, infant and child mortality. Positive achievements have been made in targets related to technology for women's empowerment and cooperation in the field of science and technology.

UNECE states that progress needs to accelerate on 79 targets; there is an opposing trend to the desired direction for 15 targets, such as global macroeconomic stability, investment in agriculture, climate change policies, per capita economic growth, infrastructure development and human trafficking. The countries in the region are at different stages in implementing the SDGs; hence, there is significant potential for South-South and triangular cooperation.

Voluntary national reviews



Monitoring and reporting on the SDGs also provides opportunities for South-South cooperation. Countries across the region share their experiences in preparing the voluntary national reviews (VNRs). Since 2016, all ECIS countries have conducted VNRs. The Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific's (UNESCAP) Twinning Programme for implementing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the VNRs facilitate the

¹⁸ Astana Civil Service Hub (2021).

¹⁹ A/77/297, p.2.

²⁰ UNDP (2022b).

²¹ Regional Strategy document. RCC (n.d.). See Chapter 3.

²² OECD, 2020a; UN Habitat, 2021, p.63.

²³ UNCTAD, 2022, p. 52.

²⁴ Indicators show that the region is on track to achieve 21 out of the total of 169 targets by 2030. See UNECE (2023).

sharing of experiences, such as successful practices, challenges and lessons learned. For example, in the aim of establishing partnerships for sharing best practices and modalities for following up on and reviewing the VNRs, Armenia and Georgia engaged in twinning with Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan.²⁵ In addition to cooperation

regarding VNRs, there are many examples of South-South cooperation between the countries in the region in the most critical areas of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, some of which are discussed below.

1.1 → Trends and opportunities for South-South and triangular cooperation in the ECIS region

Building and strengthening the national architecture of South-South and triangular cooperation continue to be part of the development cooperation agenda in the ECIS region. Despite the diversity in institutional arrangements for South-South and triangular cooperation, in certain aspects, countries have adopted similar approaches. For example, most governments prefer to separate the mandate for governance and coordination of development aid that a country receives from the mandate for providing South-South and triangular cooperation. Even in countries that receive and provide development cooperation at the same time, the state bodies dealing with receiving development aid and providing South-South and triangular cooperation are different.

For example, AIDA and Turkish Cooperation and Coordination Agency (TİKA) are engaged in providing development cooperation, and their respective Ministries of Finance are responsible for receiving development aid. Currently, three countries in the region have development cooperation agencies, all of which with a unique approach to development cooperation. For instance, Türkiye has 30 years' experience in developing the 'Turkish model for development cooperation'. Its national ecosystem includes multiple state structures, NGOs, public and private funds, academia and the media. Both Azerbaijan and Kazakhstan have approximately 10 years of experience in development cooperation, but their institutional arrangements are different; a dedicated state body for development cooperation in Azerbaijan was established in 2011, whereas in Kazakhstan it was established in 2020.



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25 UNESCAP (2020).

In some countries of the ECIS region, the process of establishing institutional structures for development cooperation has recently gained momentum. New specialized government structures dedicated to South-South and triangular cooperation are emerging, and separate resources for their work are also being allocated (e.g. budget, human resources). Countries are also improving their management and coordination of development cooperation as recipients, or establishing institutions to implement activities as providers. For example, Albania has established a new agency, the State Agency for Strategic Programming and Aid Coordination (SASPAC), to coordinate the aid it receives, including through South-South and triangular cooperation. At the time of the collection of data, Serbia, which is increasingly becoming a provider of development cooperation, was in the process of adopting a special law on development cooperation, which is expected to prescribe the mandates and relations between the state bodies, and include provisions on financing, reporting, and recording of development cooperation.

Countries are also continuing to foster, scale up and institutionalize cross-border cooperation by establishing regional structures. This approach creates sustainable partnerships and conditions for long-term regional strategies. For example, the Open Balkans initiative,²⁶ launched in 2019 by Serbia, Albania and North Macedonia,²⁷ has contributed towards the conclusion of agreements concerning a more efficient and free movement of goods, services, people and capital, etc. It also fostered implementation of thematic cross-border cooperation initiatives such as the one supported by the Serbia ODA Challenge.²⁸ The initiative aimed to support the transfer of Serbian knowledge and expertise, and the implementation of innovative solutions in these two countries and to create a compendium of home-grown solutions in line with partner countries' local context and practices. The Challenge Call focused on areas such as new digital services and economic activities, which can be performed remotely, and health and well-being.²⁹

Regional and cross-border initiatives are also being established for specific purposes. One such example is the Regional Youth Cooperation Office (RYCO),³⁰

established by Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo,* Montenegro, North Macedonia and Serbia, with the aim to promote the spirit of reconciliation and cooperation between youth in the region through youth exchange programmes. For example, funded by the Peace Building Fund, UNDP, United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) and United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) Offices in Albania implemented a joint project from 2018 to 2021 in the six countries in partnership with the RYCO as the implementing partner.³¹

Montenegro is another country from the ECIS region that emerges as a technical assistance and humanitarian aid provider (UNOSSC, 2018). For example, the Montenegrin experience of the Social Card – Social Welfare Information System – was shared with Serbia and Kosovo* and facilitated by UNDP Montenegro. This is a home-grown development solution for more efficient, effective, and just system of social protection as well as quality service for the poor and vulnerable. Successful practices of Montenegro in the establishment of a normative and institutional framework for the provision of the legal aid services were shared with Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Kosovo,* Moldova and Serbia. The Cutting Red Tape – Public Administration Tailored to the Needs of Citizens and Businesses project (modelled after the United Kingdom's Red Tape Challenge project), implemented by UNDP in cooperation with the Ministry of Finance, financially supported by the UK Embassy in Montenegro,³² was presented in Morocco and Moldova as a good practice of tailoring the public administration to the needs of the people.³³

Central and Eastern European donors continue to prioritize the ECIS region and also play a key role in the exchange of expertise. The most common funding mechanisms are grants, technical assistance and co-funding of projects. The bilateral development cooperation from the Eastern European countries (Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Estonia, Lithuania, Poland and Slovak Republic), which have recently overcome similar problems of transition and reforms, is often perceived as horizontal.³⁴ Both Czech Republic and Slovak Republic engage bilaterally and

26 The Open Balkans initiative, which has an open-door policy, was launched in 2019 by three governments in the Western Balkans in the aim of strengthening regional cooperation and connectivity. Vlada (n.d.).

27 European Western Balkans (2022).

28 UNDP (2021b).

29 UNOSSC (2022b), p. 264–265.

30 www.rycowb.org

31 The project focussed on enhancing reconciliation in the Western Balkans countries, as measured by increasing the embracing of diversity and reducing prejudice and discrimination. In 2019, the project also included a regional component of research on youth perceptions of peace and security in the Western Balkans region, in cooperation with UNDP Istanbul Regional Hub and UNFPA Eastern Europe and Central Asia Regional Office.

32 UNDP (2016).

33 UNOSSC, 2018, p.18.

34 UNOSSC, 2018a, p.20.

multilaterally in promoting and sharing knowledge and expertise. For example, the Czech-UNDP Partnership³⁵ for the Sustainable Development Goals has also grown in scope and coverage. When it began in 2004, it focused primarily on Europe and Central Asia, and now extends its activities to Bosnia and Herzegovina, Georgia and Moldova. Another example from the region is the Slovak-UNDP Partnership, which supports public finance management, private sector involvement, innovation, and security policy in the Western Balkans.³⁶ In 2015, the Russian Federation-UNDP Trust Fund for Development was also established to support development cooperation activities, with particular focus on the CIS region.³⁷

Southern providers from outside the region are also actively involved in the new areas of South-South and triangular cooperation in the ECIS region – finance, energy and infrastructure. Support is provided mainly through loan schemes. For example, China is engaging bilaterally in trade and economic investments. Its development cooperation in the region is long-term rather than ad hoc. In addition, China's Belt and Road and 16+1 Cooperation³⁸ initiatives aim to directly benefit almost all Western Balkan countries and have an impact on the transport and energy connectivity and expanding markets. This cooperation is usually qualified as broader economic cooperation because the finance for the investment in the infrastructure and energy is provided through special loans. It should be noted that these projects have some South-South and triangular cooperation elements, especially when looked at through the prism of the South-South cooperation principle of mutual benefit, and also in the context of the China-Balkans-European Union partnership.



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³⁵ Home - CUP (undp.cz)

³⁶ [Slovak-UNDP Partnerships | United Nations Development Programme](#)

³⁷ UNDP (2020).

³⁸ China engages with 16 Central and Eastern European countries (CEECs), including 11 EU Member States and five Western Balkan countries, under the 16+1 cooperation format. China-CEEC Cooperation (n.d.). European Parliament portal (2018).

An example of the institutionalization of this cooperation is the Belt and Road Institute Belgrade, which aims to establish a strong partnership with the political, industrial, educational, cultural and other institutions from countries along the Belt and Road Initiative³⁹ with the Government of the Republic of Serbia, Chinese companies operating in Serbia, the Serbian Chamber of Commerce and Industry, and the University of Novi Sad. The Belt and Road Initiative not only strengthens the regional value chains, and also provides new opportunities for partner countries to realize their structural transformation.⁴⁰

China also supported Mongolia and Central Asian countries in developing research capacity in green investment in the water sector. The report 'Stocktaking on Inclusive Green Economy in Central Asia and Mongolia: A Sub-Regional Perspective' was produced as part of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) project titled South-South Cooperation in Mongolia and Central Asian Countries: Sharing Knowledge on Inclusive Green Economies. The project aimed to support Mongolia and Central Asian countries in developing their research capacity in the areas such as the green economy and ecological civilization, and to share this knowledge with decision-makers and technical experts by sharing knowledge between China, Central Asian countries and Mongolia. The report produced by the project identifies the priority sectors for green economy in the region, such as water management, access to sustainable energy, agriculture and food security, waste management, transportation corridor/road links as well as cross-sectoral effects that must be considered.⁴¹

Capacity building is also an important component of the Government of India's engagement in Central Asia. For example, several initiatives are already ongoing within the India-Central Asia Dialogue, such as a ministerial-level dialogue between India and Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan, launched in 2019. In 2020, India opened a \$1 billion line of credit for priority developmental projects of the Central Asian sub-region in connectivity, energy, information technology, healthcare, education and agriculture, etc.⁴²

Multilateral development banks can also foster multi-stakeholder cooperation for addressing cross-border challenges. For example, the Islamic Development Bank (IsDB) and the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) engage with countries from the ECIS region to implement cross-border cooperation. The IsDB's reverse linkage mechanism, for example, is the Bank's modality for South-South cooperation that fosters peer-to-peer cooperation to design innovative development solutions.⁴³ An example from the ECIS region is the three-year project between the Kyrgyz Republic and Indonesia for cooperation to overcome problems in enhancing livestock production in the Kyrgyz Republic.⁴⁴ Another example is matching Sudan's needs with the Türkiye's experience to enable the two countries to cooperate in promoting technology incubation and localization in Sudan.⁴⁵

Despite these important developments and initiatives, this study finds that the ECIS region can better utilize the triangular cooperation modality to respond to development challenges. According to the OECD online project repository, only 17 projects from the ECIS region are reported, which is 2 percent from 758 projects globally (OECD, 2022). And only 7 multi-regional projects are reported between ECIS and other regions from a total of 137. As highlighted in OECD reports, since there is no internationally agreed definition of triangular co-operation, each country or organization has its own understanding of it triangular co-operation (OECD, 2020b). The thematic area of the multi-regional projects of triangular cooperation spans from agriculture and food security, disaster risk and resilience to health, finance, governance and innovative solutions, predominantly in the African region (ibid., p.82).

39 <https://bribelgrade.org>

40 UNCTAD (2020), South-South Integration and the SDGs: Enhancing Structural Transformation in Key Partner Countries of the Belt and Road Initiative. Geneva. In 2021, UNCT, in partnership with the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UN DESA), developed two studies on the impact of China and EU investments on the SDGs in Serbia: 'Strengthening national policy capacities for jointly building the Belt and Road towards the SDG' and 'Potential impacts of the infrastructure investment by the European Union on the SDGs in Serbia'.

41 The project, 'South-South Cooperation in Mongolia and Central Asian Countries: Sharing Knowledge on Inclusive Green Economies and Ecological Civilization': UNEP (n.d.), UNEP (2016).

42 India (2020).

43 [Reverse Linkage | IsDB](#)

44 Islamic Development Bank (IsDB) (2021b).

45 Ibid.

The peer-to-peer review mechanism on the employment policies in the Central and Eastern European project, supported by the South-South and Triangular Cooperation Facility of the Partnership and Field Support Department (PARDEV) of the International Labour Organization (ILO), focuses on practices that would allow the employment agencies better serve the most vulnerable on the labour market by engaging not only public employment agencies of Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo,* Northern Macedonia, Montenegro and Serbia, but also representatives from Portugal, Ireland and Austria, thus reinforcing South-South and triangular cooperation.⁴⁶

Based on the above and on consultations with relevant stakeholders, there is an increasing number of different forms of South-South cooperation, cross-border and inter-regional cooperation initiatives in the ECIS region despite several challenges, such as limited knowledge of South-South and triangular cooperation as well as of knowledge relating to policy, institutional and operational levels. The emergence of Southern financial institutions is changing the landscape of financing opportunities for the countries in the region. The thematic scope of the cooperation is also expanding, and areas such as green finance are gaining more prominence.



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⁴⁶ Southsouthpoint (2018).



2

Building the Institutional Framework for South-South and Triangular Cooperation in the ECIS Region





Building the Institutional Framework for South-South and Triangular Cooperation in the ECIS Region

2.1 → South-South and triangular cooperation institutionalization and national ecosystem — general introduction and analysis

The Outcome Document of the 2019 Second High-level United Nations Conference on South-South Cooperation (BAPA+40 Outcome Document) brought to the fore the topic of strengthening national polices and increasing the capacity of national and sub-national coordination mechanisms. It underlined the importance of enhancing the institutionalization of the South-South and triangular cooperation through enhanced resources and building local capabilities, institutions, expertise and human resources, towards meeting national development priorities, at the request of developing countries (para. 17).

Operative paragraph 24 (g) encourages developing countries 'to adopt or strengthen national policies to advance South-South cooperation and triangular cooperation, and to enhance the capacity of national and sub-national coordination mechanisms, as appropriate'. The research leading up to the study underscores the need to better understand and/or contextualize as appropriate since different national conditions and the diversity and multitude of South-South and triangular cooperation activities, actors, modalities and approaches are important factors that account for the differences in institutional arrangements at the country level (IsDB and South Centre, 2019). National specificity is a complex and dynamic set of political, economic and social factors together with the factors related to the international environment. These factors make the building of the institutional architecture for South-South and triangular cooperation a 'unique journey', in which each country must find its own path.

For example, advocating for the establishment of a comprehensive national ecosystem for South-South and triangular cooperation, rather than relying on a single

institution. The IsDB and South Centre study identified the following main pillars of an effective national ecosystem for South-South and triangular cooperation: political will, national strategies, national bodies, information bases, connected actors, financing mechanisms and performance management related to South-South and triangular cooperation. The paper identifies, *inter alia*, the pros and cons of different pillars under different national contexts (IsDB and South Centre, 2019). Gulrajani (2021) suggests how a global survey on the institutional architecture of South-South cooperation could contribute to the creation of a systematic framework to account for and compare the institutional foundations of South-South and triangular cooperation and help all countries make critical institutional choices.

The following section provides an analysis of institutional arrangements supported with specific examples from selected countries in the ECIS region. Since there is no established methodology for institutional arrangements in South-South and triangular cooperation, the author developed a list of key factors to be taken into account in the institutional analysis in this study. On the one hand, these factors give common ground for the analysis of diverse institutional arrangements in the ECIS region. On the other hand, the list presents a road map for decision-makers to establish new and/or reform the existing institutional framework by translating political will into governmental actions and a legal framework.

These factors, among others, are:

- A the existence of a specialized/dedicated state body for South-South and triangular cooperation;
- B the number of the institutions in the country that have a mandate related to South-South and triangular cooperation;
- C the type of legal act that regulates the main state body responsible for South-South and triangular cooperation;
- D the place of the state body responsible for South-South and triangular cooperation in the hierarchical administrative structure of the country;
- E having or not having a separate legal status; and
- F the specifics of the procedure for providing and receiving financial aid/contribution.

The existence of a specialized/dedicated state body for South-South and triangular cooperation

A

While most of ECIS countries engage in South-South and triangular cooperation, only some have dedicated structures (e.g. Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Türkiye). Generally, countries institutionalize South-South and triangular cooperation in two ways: through dedicated national bodies, or through existing state institutions whose primary mandate is different but that can implement specific South-South and triangular cooperation initiatives according to their thematic focus. For example, cultural and educational cooperation is operationalized through the Ministry of Culture or Education in Montenegro, Macedonia and Turkmenistan and agricultural projects are implemented through the Ministry of Agriculture in Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Moldova, etc. This approach may contribute to the effective mainstreaming of South-South and triangular cooperation in various sectors and levels. In light of this, a national focal point for South-South and triangular cooperation will serve as a central repository for the accumulation of knowledge and experience on South-South and triangular cooperation and how it is contributing towards achieving development priorities.

The number of the institutions in the country that have a mandate related to South-South and triangular cooperation

B

The number of institutions with mandates related to South-South and triangular cooperation is also an important determinant of the institutional architecture. Where there is a single state body, it usually coordinates all South-South and triangular cooperation initiatives. In many countries, this is a unit within the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. For example, the Government of Montenegro established the Directorate for Development Cooperation and Humanitarian Aid in 2017 within the Directorate General for Economic and Cultural Diplomacy with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, with the aim to coordinate the development and humanitarian cooperation.⁴⁷ This was also the case of Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan and Türkiye before establishing specialized structures, as described below.

With regard to the countries that prefer to develop South-South and triangular cooperation as a multi-stakeholder activity, multiple state institutions have different mandates in South-South and triangular cooperation. For example, in Georgia, the Administration of the Government of Georgia and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs have mandates related to development cooperation. In Türkiye, several institutions operate jointly in subordination and coordination at the same time. TİKA is the main state body with coordination functions, subordinate to the Ministry of Culture. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Directorate General for International Development Cooperation at the Presidency and other entities also have specific mandates for South-South and triangular cooperation.

The type of legal act that regulates the main state body responsible for South-South and triangular cooperation

C

The existence of political will to engage in South-South and triangular cooperation is essential; however, it cannot be effectively implemented without an established legal mechanism. In this respect, another critical decision that governments usually make in establishing institutional arrangements is defining the type of legal act that regulates the mandate of the competent state body. In this regard, countries usually choose between regulating with a law or laws (i.e. Türkiye, Kazakhstan and Serbia) or regulating with secondary legislation (i.e. Albania). The laws are usually passed by the legislature while secondary legislation is adopted by the decision of the representative of the executive branch (government or president).

⁴⁷ UNOSSC, 2018, p.12.

Building partnerships requires mutual trust and understanding of the development needs of the recipient. It usually takes time for both the provide and the recipient country to analyse each other's development needs and capacities for better identification and planning of available resources to implement the activities. Therefore, the institutional arrangements of South-South and triangular cooperation, established by law, create a relatively more sustainable and predictable environment for policymakers. Clearly, another important advantage of the regulation by law is that it is underpinned by broader political support (since laws are adopted through parliamentary processes). However, consideration should be given to the slow and complicated process of drafting, adopting and amending ineffective legislative acts, especially when there is need to align the responsible government unit with the evolving cooperation. Since secondary legislation is relatively easier and faster to amend, governments have the flexibility to adjust it according to their evolving needs.

The place of the state body responsible for South-South and triangular cooperation in the hierarchical administrative structure of the country

D

The national authority responsible for South-South and triangular cooperation is part of governmental institutional framework. In the ECIS region, in most cases, the state body is a separate development agency subordinate to and overseen by a ministry: for example, in the cases of AIDA and Kazakhstan Agency for International Development (KAZAID), it is their respective Ministries of Foreign Affairs, and for TİKA, it is the Ministry of Culture and Tourism. Another model is a governmental body that is directly subordinate to a higher-level central administrative structure (i.e. cabinet of ministers or presidential offices). For example, Albania's state body for the coordination of the incoming development cooperation is subordinate to the Prime Minister.

Since South-South and triangular cooperation also entail intensive relations with other countries, regional and sub-regional institutions, international organizations, donors, funds and other stakeholders, the relative state body responsible for it is naturally subordinate to or under the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. In the ECIS region, around one-third of governmental institutions responsible for development cooperation are the Ministries of Foreign

Affairs. Some of the positive effects of having South-South and triangular cooperation institution subordinate to or under the Ministry of Foreign Affairs is that they may benefit from the resources and assistance of foreign representation offices for reaching out to partners, dialogue facilitation, communication channels, etc. However, there are also some challenges associated with this arrangement. For example, since the implementation of certain South-South cooperation initiatives require fast and short procedures or more flexible approaches, there may be some constraints due to diplomatic protocols. The Ministries of Foreign Affairs may also not be accustomed to interacting with various stakeholders such as the private sector, funds and NGOs.

Development cooperation may also include a third model, in which the South-South and triangular cooperation state body is subordinate to or placed under a different specialized ministry such as the Ministries of Finance, Economy, or Development Planning. The approach was, for instance, adopted by Türkiye, whose development cooperation agency is subordinate to the Ministry of Culture. Another important factor is the mandate of the relevant institution. Some state bodies, such as KAZAID, operate with the mandate in development cooperation only. Other institutions such as AIDA and TİKA have a broader mandate, which covers not only development cooperation, but also humanitarian assistance.

Having or not having a separate legal status

E

Bodies responsible for South-South and triangular cooperation may or may not have a separate legal status. Both types of structures exist in the ECIS region. KAZAID and TİKA have a separate legal status, while AIDA does not. Having a separate legal status can, for example, facilitate establishing and operating its own budget, thus simplifying and accelerating the management and implementation of programmes and projects.

The specifics of the procedure for providing and receiving financial aid/contribution

F

Equally important is the critical choice of how to regulate financing for South-South cooperation. Obtaining the required approval for providing and/or receiving financial contribution is among the most common challenges for South-South and triangular cooperation. Although most South-South and triangular cooperation initiatives in the ECIS region do not involve the transfer of funds, financing is important for their implementation. From the provider country's perspective, costs related to South-South and triangular cooperation should be approved in advance within the state budget approved by the legislature. At times, governments use their emergency budgets for humanitarian aid. Parliamentary approval might also be required for recipient countries, particularly when cooperation involves receiving funds.

Most South-South and triangular cooperation initiatives are agreed through memoranda of understanding (MoUs) between partnering countries, donors, etc. and in many countries, MoUs may require parliamentary approval, just as in other forms of agreements. Clearly, the budget approved by a legislative body gives the relevant initiative legitimacy but it also has some drawbacks. Receiving parliamentary approval in partner countries often requires long and complicated procedures. If not planned well, the recipient state can experience significant delays related to budgetary approval.



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Table 1

Institutional arrangements of government authorities responsible for South-South and triangular cooperation

Key factors to be taken into account for the institutional analysis	Types of institutional arrangements	Potential benefits	Potential challenges
Existence of a specialized/ dedicated national body/ structure for South-South and triangular cooperation	Presence of a dedicated national body/structure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Builds and upgrades technical and specialized expertise and knowledge → Allows open representation offices in partner countries → Facilitates the creation of national branding for South-South cooperation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Mainstreaming of South-South cooperation in various sectors and at different levels
	Although there is no specialized structure, several structures implement South-South and triangular cooperation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Mainstreams knowledge on South-South and triangular cooperation across different sectors 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Fragmentation, i.e. lack of a single national South-South and triangular cooperation knowledge treasurer and keeper
Number of the institutions in the country that have a mandate related to South-South and triangular cooperation <p>The mandate can be related to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) objectives b) competences c) responsibilities d) procedures 	Single	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Facilitates coordination → Serves as a clear contact point for partners and donors → Effectively distributes resources → Avoids duplication 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Mainstreaming of engagement in South-South and triangular cooperation → Diverse participation → Possible limited ability to access diverse resources
	Multiple	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Contributes to mainstreaming of South-South and triangular cooperation → Contributes to broader participation of various actors → Increases and diversifies access to resources 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Possible overlapping and conflicting mandates → Coordination → Possible duplication
The type of legal act that regulates the main state body responsible for South-South and triangular cooperation	Law	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Ensures sustainability → Protects against rapid changes based on political decisions → Provides broader political support 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Relative slowness and greater complications in adopting/ amending and implementing the legal act
	Secondary legislation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Is relatively easy and fast to adopt/amend and implement 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Sustainability, especially in the context of changing administrations → Engagement in South-South cooperation becomes more dependent on political decisions

The place of the state body responsible for South-South and triangular cooperation in the hierarchical administrative structure of the country	Under or subordinate to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Has access to a network of foreign representation offices in other countries → Shortens the administrative procedure for approvals, consultations and missions/ operations abroad 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Possible slowing down of the processes → Possible impediment in interaction with non-government stakeholders
	Under the Ministry of Economy, Finance or Culture, or another central administrative body	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → As the national body for South-South and triangular cooperation, may capitalize on the capacity of the ministry of other central administrative bodies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → A possible reductions in field missions abroad or impediments in participating in such missions → Slowdown of the decision-making process where coordination with the Ministry of Financial Affairs is required → Overlapping of mandates/ duplication with the Ministry of Financial Affairs
	Directly under the Cabinet of Ministers, Presidential Office	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Presents opportunities to engage in large-scale initiatives 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → South-South and triangular cooperation may be further subject to the political priorities of the administration
Having or not having a separate legal status	Having own legal status	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Facilitates establishing and operating its own budget, and makes the management and implementation of programmes and projects faster and easier 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → The requirement of more complex procedures in its establishment in order to fit in the overall national system of administration and governance → The requirement of more resources and capacity building
	Whether or not it has a legal status	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Has simplified procedures for establishment → Receives direct support for operations by the host institution 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Possible impediments in, and slowing down of, autonomous decision-making → Complex financial management

The arrangements for providing or receiving financial aid or a contribution	Legislative and administrative approval needed	→ Has broader political support for involvement in South-South and triangular cooperation	→ Obtaining the required approval for providing and/or receiving a financial contribution for South-South and triangular cooperation initiatives; this is the most common challenge for South-South and triangular cooperation initiatives → Possible impediments in and slowing down of the process → Not appropriate for programming with tight deadlines
	Only administrative approval needed	→ Has faster and more flexible procedures for financing of South-South and triangular cooperation	→ Broader political support for South-South and triangular cooperation

Note: Elaborated by the author.

South-South and triangular cooperation depend on the legal and institutional framework of more than one country. The possible lack of coherence between applicable national norms and international regulations can be a challenge, especially when there are more than two countries involved.

This requires cooperation efforts in harmonizing legislation and administrative process in order to remove possible obstacles and achieve cohesion between partner countries.

2.2 → Building the institutional South-South and triangular cooperation architecture – **Case study of Türkiye**

Türkiye is the largest non-DAC provider from the ECIS region, which is very closely engaged in South-South cooperation through various state institutions, NGOs, the private sector and academia.⁴⁸ Türkiye has been a provider for more than 35 years, and its institutional architecture for South-South and triangular cooperation has been evolving over time. Prior to establishing a dedicated state body in 1992 – the Turkish Development and Coordination Agency (TİKA)⁴⁹ – South-South cooperation was operationalized through the Under Secretariat of the State Planning Organization. At the beginning, TİKA's

mandate covered coordination and implementation of the development cooperation in cooperation with state institutions and organizations, universities, non-profit organizations and the private sector. Gradually, the mandate of TİKA expanded to include programme and project implementation. This broader mandate was regulated by a normative act,⁵⁰ which included the principles and procedures regarding the projects to be carried out by TİKA.

TİKA's place within the government structure changed several times,⁵¹ as well as its mandate, structure and

⁴⁸ See TİKA (2018, 2019, 2020).

⁴⁹ TİKA (n.d.a).

⁵⁰ 2001 Regulation on Project Determination and Implementation of Presidency of the Turkish Cooperation and Development Administration (the former name of TİKA).

⁵¹ Primary subordinate to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, later attached directly to the Office of Prime Minister

decision-making process.⁵² In accordance with the restructuring in 2018, TİKA is currently a public institution affiliated with the Ministry of Culture and Tourism.⁵³ All of these changes indeed reflect the country's efforts to find the most suitable institutional arrangement for its international development cooperation engagement. TİKA's establishment, corporate structure and mechanism for financing are regulated by a law.⁵⁴ The Agency has a separate legal status and its own budget. This allows for faster and autonomous decision-making, and facilitates and maintains relationships with various partners and NGOs, both in country and abroad. This also allows it to implement projects independently and in coordination with other stakeholders. Furthermore, TİKA can also be an independent party to a MoU with various national and international partners.

One of the distinguishing features of TİKA is that its organizational structure consists of a central headquarters in Ankara and a total of 62 Programme Coordination Offices in 60 countries.⁵⁵ TİKA and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs closely cooperate in overseas work. TİKA has a significant number of overseas offices for a Southern provider, which gives the impression that this may be a costly set-up. However, during the interviews, TİKA officials explained that the large number of overseas offices reduces costs because this increases the effectiveness and sustainability of its work.⁵⁶ TİKA's presence on the ground in partner countries helps build long-term partnerships and improves coordination, monitoring and evaluation of results.



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⁵² Statutory Decree Law No. 656 of 24 October 2011.

⁵³ Decree No. 4, Article 521.

⁵⁴ Presidential Decree on the Organization of the Institutions and Organisations Affiliated with Ministries and Other Institutions and Organizations, Decree No. 4, Article 522, 15 July 2018.

⁵⁵ TİKA (n.d.a).

⁵⁶ See, for example, official reports on administrative costs for developing coordination.



Box 1

The engagement of Türkiye in Somalia

The engagement of Türkiye in Somalia started in 2011 with humanitarian aid provided in cooperation with *Kızılay* (Red Crescent Association) and various Turkish non-governmental organizations (NGOs). Together with the short-term objective of coordinating of emergency deliveries to people in need, the medium- and long-term goals of the engagement of Türkiye were to implement projects that would contribute to Somalia's sustainable development. To this end, TİKA's Programme Coordination Office (PCO) in Mogadishu opened in 2011. Since then, several projects in various sectors have been implemented, many of which were long-term, related to knowledge and technology transfer, and designed in a way to include Somalia's human resources. TİKA's PCO usually cooperates with other Turkish stakeholders. For example, the projects for providing clean drinking water are implemented in cooperation with Türkiye's General Directorate of State Hydraulic Works. The rehabilitation of the Mogadishu Airport was carried out jointly by TİKA and Türkiye's General Directorate of State Airports Authority. Subsequently, TİKA organized training programmes for Somali experts to further enhance the civil aviation infrastructure.

In 2013, TİKA cooperated with one of the Turkish NGOs, Humanitarian Relief Foundation (İHH),⁵⁷ in establishing the Mogadishu Agricultural School, which offers training courses to farmers in soil cultivation, seedling, weeding, irrigation, seed production and conservation, apiculture and animal husbandry. In 2015, the school became the Faculty of Agriculture of Zamzam University of Science and Technology, aiming to spread modern agricultural methods within Somalia.⁵⁸ Training courses and exchanges of experts in different agricultural fields are organized with the support of the Turkish Ministry of Agriculture.

In 2014, the Turkish Housing Development Administration (TOKİ) built the Training and Research Hospital in Mogadishu, which TİKA equipped. The Turkish Ministry of Health contributed to the financial management and training of personnel for five years to ensure project sustainability. As a next step, TİKA in cooperation with Doctors Worldwide⁵⁹ carried out a project on medical specialization training in order to meet the needs of local medical workers. In 2015, and with aim to build solid foundations for development of Somalia civil aviation, TİKA implemented a project to build the Mogadishu Civil Aviation Training Centre.

* Karahan, 2020, p. 73.

** <https://ihh.org.tr/en>

*** TİKA Somalia, TİKA (n.d. b).

**** <https://doctorsworldwide.org>

The increasing number of activities and projects, the diversity of countries, sectors and modalities, as well as Turkey's increasing influence in the international arena created a need for new institutions. Gradually, newly established institutions started conducting their own South-South and triangular cooperation programmes. Their mandate and activities are regulated also by law. For example, the Presidency for Turks Abroad and Related Communities (YTB), although not explicitly in its mandate, is one of the main state channels for South-South cooperation in the field of education. According to an official document, the YTB 'provides scholarship support to students who

continue their education in Türkiye and most of whom come from underdeveloped and developing countries'.⁵⁷ YTB works in close collaboration with academia in Türkiye and partner countries.⁵⁸

Another government decision related to the institutionalization of South-South and triangular cooperation in Türkiye was to create public bodies, which are not state institutions, and entrust them with mandates that enable the implementation of South-South and triangular cooperation projects and programmes. For instance, Yunus Emre Institute (YEİ) facilitates South-South cooperation in

⁵⁷ TİKA, 2020, p. 54.

⁵⁸ Examples include the Balkan Youth School programme for eight Balkan countries, the surgery training programme for specialists from Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan organized in 2020 in collaboration of University of Health Sciences Health and Social Research Center in Türkiye, and the 14th of March Medical Students Association and Islamic Development Bank.

the field of academic exchanges on priority areas such as cultural, scientific, educational cooperation. It was established as a separate legal entity in 2009 by law.⁵⁹ Having the status of a public foundation makes it easier to attract funding from private donors, allows the institute to be an implementer of various programmes, and ensures a high degree of flexibility in its operations. YEI also has a broad network of over 63 overseas centres.⁶⁰

Another feature of the Turkish South-South and triangular cooperation is that in some sectors, such as humanitarian aid, disaster and emergency response, infrastructure, health, agricultural and other projects, Türkiye is represented by several national stakeholders that collaborate as providers. Türkiye has established coordination mechanisms through MoUs between institutions, and operationalized them by establishing joint operations of mixed teams in field. For example, two state institutions, the Disaster and Emergency Management Agency (AFAD) (subordinate to the Ministry of Interior) and TİKA, as well as one organization with special status, the Turkish Red Crescent Society (Kızılay) closely collaborate in conflict zones and in providing assistance during disasters.⁶¹ Their intense collaboration is referred to as ‘the TİKA–AFAD–Kızılay triangle’⁶²: TİKA implements long-term projects; AFAD is in charge of emergency relief during conflict, crises and disasters; and Kızılay works on the humanitarian aspects of relief operations. The medical aid provided during the response to the COVID-19 pandemic, for example, was carried out through cooperation and coordination between the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of National Defence, the Ministry of Trade, Kızılay, TİKA, AFAD, YTB and Turkish Airlines.⁶³

Yet, having so many institutions implementing activities in South-South and triangular cooperation could be challenging for coordination and coherence, and in avoiding duplication. To avoid experiencing such issues, in 2005, the Government issued a decree to officially declare TİKA as the single government institution responsible for coordination of development cooperation. Later, in 2011, the Law on TİKA expressly stated that public institutions and organizations engaged in technical, cultural, social, humanitarian and similar aid activities abroad, as well as other

organizations using public funds for development cooperation should perform these activities in cooperation with, or supported by, the Agency.

Although TİKA is often seen as representing the Turkish South-South and triangular cooperation abroad, de facto a number of Turkish institutions continue to engage in South-South and triangular cooperation programmes, projects and initiatives either directly or through TİKA. For example, in the last few years, TİKA has cooperated with the Turkish Ministry of Internal Affairs in capacity building and training on topics such as cyber-crimes, combating of money laundering and the financing of terrorism, and measures against domestic violence in a number of ECIS region countries such as the Kyrgyz Republic, Albania, Kosovo,* Serbia and Ukraine.⁶⁴

In cooperation with the Turkish Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry, and various agricultural institutes,⁶⁵ TİKA has implemented projects in Western Balkans, Central Asia and South Caucasus sub-regions.

Other state institutions that are part of the ecosystem for South-South and triangular cooperation and that work in coordination are the Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, which is responsible for setting the policy direction for cooperation and the Directorate General for International Development Cooperation at the Presidency.⁶⁶ The latter was established in 2018 and is the main institution for strategy making and planning (including budgeting) in the field of development cooperation. One of the main functions of the Directorate is the preparation of the relevant parts of the country’s National Development Plan. Türkiye is among the countries that incorporated South-South and triangular cooperation in their National Development Plan.⁶⁷

The latest NDP was preceded by a preparatory report⁶⁸ prepared by the technical cooperation and development aid working group that covers issues related to South-South and triangular cooperation. This working group serves as a mechanism for consultation and stakeholder participation related to South-South and triangular cooperation strategy formulation. It facilitates communication and interaction among governmental departments and

59 Yunus Emre Institute Law no. 5653.

60 <https://www.yee.org.tr>

61 For example Afghanistan, Rohingya, Syria and Yemen.

62 Karahan 2020, p.42.

63 Türkiye (n.d.).

64 [TİKA - Türk İşbirliği ve Koordinasyon Ajansı Başkanlığı \(TİKA.gov.tr\)](https://www.tika.gov.tr), [TİKA - Türk İşbirliği ve Koordinasyon Ajansı Başkanlığı \(TİKA.gov.tr\)](https://www.tika.gov.tr), [TİKA - Türk İşbirliği ve Koordinasyon Ajansı Başkanlığı \(TİKA.gov.tr\)](https://www.tika.gov.tr)

65 Alata Garden Cultures Research Institute in Mersin, Ordu Beekeeping Research Institute, Niğde Melon and Potato Research Institute, etc.

66 The Presidency of Strategy and Budget, Türkiye.

67 NDP Türkiye, 2019, Section 2.5.2.6.

68 11th National Development Plan of Türkiye, 2018, xii, Technical Cooperation and Development Aid Working Group Report.



© UNDP Türkiye

agencies, independent public bodies, professional organizations, universities, the private sector, NGOs and other stakeholders.⁶⁹ The objectives and the policy measures of the Turkish NDP with regard to South-South and triangular cooperation are identified at all levels – national, regional and global (NDP Türkiye.2019, Articles 818–841). Attention to all these levels reflects the country’s effort to ‘generate a spill-over effect ... and foster new bridges at the national, regional and multilateral levels’.⁷⁰

Together with the laws and strategic documents, the legal framework of the South-South and triangular cooperation in Türkiye consists of cooperation agreements, which enable South-South and triangular cooperation to go beyond ad hoc collaboration. For example, partnership protocols were signed between TİKA and partner organizations such as: the *Agencia Presidencial de Cooperacion Internacional* (APC, Presidential Agency of International Cooperation of Columbia) in 2012;⁷¹

69 A ‘[g]radual transition to a strategy-based aid model has also started to be achieved without compromising Türkiye’s comparative advantage in areas such as flexibility and responsiveness. It is seen that institutional specialization in development cooperation has increased and this contributes to the implementation of more effective policies.’ 11th National Development Plan of Türkiye, 2018, xii Technical Cooperation and Development Aid Working Group Report.

70 IsDB and South Centre, 2019, p.27.

71 Discussions on collaboration activities between TİKA and APC Columbia are found here: APC-Columbia (n.d).

the Mexican Agency of International Cooperation (AMEXCID) in 2014; with the African Union Commission in 2021;⁷² the Palestinian International Cooperation Agency (PICA) in 2018; and the Agency for International Cooperation of El Salvador (ESCO) in 2022.⁷³

With regard to Türkiye as a recipient of development cooperation, there are various competent institutions responsible for the management of the incoming support. For example, the Directorate for EU Affairs under the Ministry of Foreign Affairs is responsible for EU funds, and the Ministry of Treasury and Finance is responsible for development cooperation provided in the form of loans.

During a period of over 30 years, the Turkish institutional system for development cooperation underwent significant changes. The evolution of the South-South and triangular cooperation ecosystem is a natural and organic process during which many governmental decisions have been tested. Some of its elements worked well; others had to be reformed.

The current institutional framework established by Türkiye represents a complex and broad vertically and horizontally integrated network of institutions and public bodies from different levels and areas of competence. The normative framework, which integrates South-South and triangular cooperation in state policy and activities, is also diverse, consisting of international agreements, the NDP, strategies, laws and regulations. In addition to the 'whole-of-government' approach, Türkiye uses a 'whole-of-society' approach through its regulatory framework that enables NGOs, the private sector, academia and think tanks to engage in various forms of South-South and triangular cooperation. This broad stakeholder engagement in development cooperation also ensures broad public support of Turkish citizens and is defined as one of the main features of the Turkish development cooperation model.



Box 2

Small and Medium Enterprises Development Organization of Türkiye

The Small and Medium Enterprises Development Organization of Türkiye (KOSGEB) was established in 1973 under international treaty between the Government of Republic of the Türkiye and the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO); it is currently affiliated with the Ministry of Trade and Industry. **KOSGEB is an example of an institution that is both recipient and provider** of development cooperation. Cooperation activities with other countries where there are KOSGEB-equivalent organizations/institutions are carried out within the framework of Cooperation Agreement Protocols and Action Plans. For example, cooperation agreement protocols are signed with Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia, Angola, Cambodia, Rwanda and others.* Examples of KOSGEB cooperation with its partners include capacity-building activities for small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in Türkiye and the transfer its know-how to other Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) member countries. KOSGEB is also a recipient under various European Union (EU) initiatives such as the EU programme for the Competitiveness of Enterprises and Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (COSME).

* KOSGEB (2019).

⁷² TİKA (2021).

⁷³ TİKA (2022).

Since regaining its independence, Azerbaijan has been actively engaged in South-South, East-East and triangular cooperation. At the start, it was mainly a recipient country, but after experiencing rapid economic development⁷⁴ in the beginning of the 2000s, it began to engage in development cooperation as a provider.

From interviews with AIDA, it emerged that, from the early years of independence, Azerbaijan had ‘confronted with foreign aggression and illegal occupation of its sovereign territories’ and that the conflict had taken ‘tens of thousands of human lives and displaced around one million Azerbaijanis’. Nevertheless, due to its successful domestic and foreign policies, sustainable progress and dynamic economic development, Azerbaijan overcame the obstacles and successfully transformed into a donor country. Closely involved in the global development process, it successfully carries out its donor mission, delivering aid to people affected by natural and man-made disasters across the world, as well as to the countries facing economic difficulties.

Until 2011, South-South, East-East and triangular cooperation were initiated on an ad hoc basis and operationalized through the relative various state structures according to the cooperation aim. For example, the Ministry of Finance engaged when the South-South cooperation initiative included the provision of financial contribution or donation. In 2005–2022, the Ministry of Emergency Situations, which is responsible for providing humanitarian aid and disaster and emergency relief, delivered humanitarian aid consisting of food products, medical supplies, shelter, heating and lighting equipment, and water and sanitation services to Iran, Pakistan, Afghanistan, Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Djibouti, Bangladesh and Ukraine.

To respond to increasing appeals and implement its donor mission in a timely and well-coordinated manner, the national donor institution, i.e. AIDA, was established within the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Azerbaijan in 2011. Since its inception, through multiple mechanisms AIDA has contributed to poverty eradication and sustainable development in numerous countries by building human and institutional capacity, and sharing experience and best practices. AIDA develops and implements international assistance projects within the framework of cooperation

with international organizations and development agencies of other countries.

As an integral part of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, AIDA is not a separate legal entity. To date, rapid decision-making is ensured by the strong political will of the Government to support South-South, East-East and triangular cooperation.

International aid policy



International aid policy is an intrinsic part of the foreign policy of the Republic of Azerbaijan, which contributes to international efforts in promoting global prosperity for all, in the aim of strengthening friendly relations among countries and contributing to international cooperation and peace.

Azerbaijan has implemented bilateral and multilateral humanitarian and development projects in more than 140 countries of the world, half of which have repeatedly received assistance. Specifically, 43 out of the 46 least developed countries (LDCs) as well as 53 out of 54 African countries have received educational, technical, financial, healthcare and humanitarian assistance from Azerbaijan. These are concrete practical contributions towards the achievement of the goals of the Istanbul Action Plan as well as the SDGs. From 2020 to the end of 2023, approximately \$300 million in international assistance was provided to alleviate human suffering and to prevent fragile situations following disasters.

As Chair of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM), Azerbaijan’s donor activity reached its peak. The Government successfully supported the global fight against the COVID-19 pandemic through a number of important activities, namely:

- setting the international agenda to combat COVID-19;
- providing financial support to a large number of countries, both directly and through international organizations; and
- donating medical items, equipment and vaccines.

⁷⁴ <https://www.devex.com/organizations/azerbaijan-international-development-agency-aida-117592>

In its capacity as Chair of NAM, it also proposed the resolution, 'Ensuring equal, affordable, timely and universal access to vaccines against COVID-19', which was adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in December 2021.

To support the fight against the COVID-19 pandemic, Azerbaijan provided financial and humanitarian assistance to over 80 countries, including 25 LDCs, and provided around one million doses of vaccines to 14 countries, half of which were LDCs. To date, Azerbaijan has allocated over \$25 million for combating COVID-19 and its negative impacts throughout the world.

At the Summit of the NAM Contact Group in Response to COVID-19 held in Baku in 2023, the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan unveiled two global calls to support the post-pandemic recovery of Africa and of Small Island Developing States (SIDS); as the primary donor, Azerbaijan allocated \$1 million for each.

Major contributions in 2023



In 2023, Azerbaijan's major international contributions consisted of: over \$45 million to meet the immediate humanitarian needs of the victims of the earthquake-hit Kahramanmaraş region of Türkiye on 6 February 2023, and around \$60 million for supporting reconstruction works (building high schools, kindergartens, cultural centres, apartment buildings, etc.) in Türkiye's earthquake-affected region; over \$16 million for humanitarian aid to support for reconstruction works in Ukraine in 2023 (over \$34 million since February 2022); \$2 million to the Islamic World Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (ICESCO) for strengthening international cooperation on education, science and culture; \$2 million to the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) for supporting its activities; \$2 million to United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) to provide humanitarian aid for civilians in the Gaza Strip; an additional \$2 million for flood-affected people in Pakistan in 2023 (\$2 million were granted in 2022); and \$1 million to UN-Habitat for expanding cooperation on sustainable development and strengthening peace and security.



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Successful projects



Scholarship programmes were launched by the Government of Azerbaijan in 2018 for the members of NAM and OIC member states for a period of five years. During the 2018–2022 period, students from around 100 countries received full scholarships to study at the universities of Azerbaijan. In continuation of these scholarships, the Heydar Aliyev International Education Grant programme was established in 2024 to provide scholarships for the students from OIC, NAM and Small Island Developing States (SIDS).

In partnership with ADA University,⁷⁵ AIDA provided support for human capital development in several developing countries. Since 2018, middle-career and senior foreign diplomats from nearly 70 countries have participated in the programme.

One of the significant triangular cooperation projects supported by Azerbaijan is the Alliance to Fight Avoidable Blindness (AFAB) in 13 African countries initiated by the Islamic Development Bank.⁷⁶ Azerbaijani doctors engaged in addressing avoidable blindness across Africa. Since 2012, Azerbaijan has allocated almost \$1.5 million to the campaign to support the delivery of eye health services in Benin, Burkina Faso, Chad, Cameroon, Côte d'Ivoire, Djibouti, Guinea, Libya, Mali, Mauritania, Mozambique, Niger and Somalia. Within this campaign, over 300,000 people undertook eye examinations, 60,000 patients who had partially or fully lost eyesight underwent cataract surgery free of charge and regained their vision, and 245 medical personnel received training on the field.

Other forms of South-South, East-East and triangular cooperation are also provided directly by the relevant state institutions. For example, the State Agency for Public Service and Social Innovations under the President of Azerbaijan (ASAN)⁷⁷ has been implementing the new public service delivery model since 2012, which provides a one-stop shop for over 400 services, delivered by 15 state and 30 private entities. Over the course of many years, ASAN Service has become Azerbaijan's unique intellectual property that has garnered considerable interest in the international arena.

To date, ASAN has concluded over 20 MoUs with various countries and international organizations to share and implement the model of the ASAN Service in their domestic contexts. These countries are Türkiye, Indonesia, Italy, Montenegro, Morocco, Uganda, Uzbekistan, Afghanistan, the United Arab Emirates, Republic of Korea, United Kingdom, Estonia and Belarus. Several of these countries, namely Uganda, Uzbekistan, Afghanistan and Indonesia, have already implemented the model and use it to ensure that citizens have easy access to public services.

In addition, the Agency for Sustainable and Operative Social Provision (DOST), established within the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection of Population,⁷⁸ aims to improve the quality of services provided to citizens in areas of employment, labour and social protection as well as the provision of products and materials in order to increase transparency, and to ensure the application of innovative solutions, an accelerated transition to e-services, the prevention of bureaucracy, and the enhancement of citizen satisfaction. For the development of the DOST concept, experiences of 14 countries were used as benchmarks, including from Chile, Brazil, Uruguay, China, India, Pakistan, Cambodia, Mongolia, Tajikistan and Rwanda.

Azerbaijan has built a significant global development cooperation portfolio within a decade. Its development cooperation is closely related to its foreign policy and to its role within the NAM. The thematic focus of the development cooperation of Azerbaijan is also closely related to understanding the comparative advantage of the country (e.g. e-government solutions). Azerbaijan's interest in increasing and diversifying its engagement in South-South, East-East and triangular cooperation is confirmed by all national respondents to this study.

⁷⁵ Legal heir of the Azerbaijan Diplomatic Academy (ADA) and Information Technologies University. <https://www.ada.edu.az/en>

⁷⁶ southsouth-galaxy.org (n.d.), Azerbaijan (n.d).

⁷⁷ www.asan.gov.az

⁷⁸ DOST - Dayanıqlı və Operativ Sosial Təminat Agentliyi

Building the South-South and triangular cooperation Institutional architecture – **Case study of Kazakhstan**

The institutionalization of development cooperation in Kazakhstan is built on solid policy and legal foundations that significantly evolved over the past decade. In 2013, the Concept on Official Development Assistance was published by Decree of the President of 9 April 2013. A year later, the Government adopted the Law on Official Development Assistance,⁷⁹ which defines the main objectives, principles, competencies and sectoral priorities for development cooperation. The Law clearly defines development cooperation concepts such as donor partner, partner country, technical assistance and external partner.

Importantly, the Decree of the President ‘On approval of the main directions of state policy of the Republic of Kazakhstan in the field of official development assistance for 2017– 2020’ demonstrates the country’s high-level commitment to development cooperation.⁸⁰ The institutional framework, as defined in the Decree, consists of multiple state bodies that have a mandate for development

cooperation. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs is entrusted with the mandate to implement the strategic aspects of Kazakhstan’s development cooperation policy, including coordination and planning. KazAID is under the auspices of the Ministry, and its mandate is defined as an operator in the field of development cooperation. The Agency implements the development cooperation policy according to a plan, developed by the Ministry. KazAID does not have its own offices or representatives abroad. The country’s foreign representatives in partner countries play an important role in identifying and developing relevant projects, including in their implementation and monitoring; they are an important contact point for governmental and other institutions of partner countries.⁸¹



⁷⁹ Adilet (n.d.).

⁸⁰ President Decree 415 of January 2017, Ibid.

⁸¹ Ibid.

The engagement of other state bodies in development cooperation is clearly regulated in the Decree, which states that other ministries will also be involved according to the sectors of cooperation. The structure of KazAID was established at the end of 2020, a few years after the regulations entered into force. The Government preferred to regulate the status of KazAID with secondary legislation.⁸² This provides flexibility to adjust the structure as needed. The legal status of KazAID is non-profit joint-stock company with 100 percent participation of the state in its authorized capital. The status of KazAID represents a unique model, which highlights its focus on project development and implementation. Compared to state bodies, its status as a non-profit joint-stock company makes it easier to receive and provide funding, implement projects and ensure effective aid delivery.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs defines Kazakhstan's state policy on development cooperation in line with the strategic documents of the country: On the Concept of Foreign Policy of the Republic of Kazakhstan for 2020–2030,⁸³ the Kazakhstan 2050 Strategy,⁸⁴ the Strategy for development of the Republic of Kazakhstan until the year 2030,⁸⁵ and the National Development Plan of the Republic of Kazakhstan until 2025.⁸⁶

It should be noted that the regulatory framework enables various state institutions to participate in formulating the state policy on development cooperation. A number of other institutions such as the Ministries of Education, Health and Interior also engage in South-South and triangular cooperation through various programmes and projects. Each of these structures has its own budget for relevant cooperation initiatives. For example, humanitarian assistance and cooperation in disaster preparedness and response are regulated by the rules for the provision of humanitarian assistance,⁸⁷ and the competent authority is the Ministry of Emergency Situations.

In order to ensure coherence and coordination between all stakeholders, the Minister of Foreign Affairs issued Decree in 2015 'On approval of the Rules of interaction between state bodies and organizations in the field of official development assistance'.⁸⁸ Kazakhstan's mainly project-based approach towards development cooperation is confirmed by the Decree 'On approval of the form of the project proposal of official development assistance'.⁸⁹ As a relatively new structure, KazAID naturally faces challenges in coordination, overlapping mandates and insufficient visibility. The process of integration and achieving coherence within the established institutional framework is ongoing.

In addition, the legal framework is expanding with agreements signed by KazAID. For instance, MoUs on the implementation of joint projects were signed with the Korea International Cooperation Agency (KOICA), the Agency for International Development Cooperation of Israel (MASHAV), the Turkish Cooperation and Coordination Agency (TİKA), the Spanish Agency for International Development Cooperation (AECID) and the United States Agency for International Development (USAID). At the time of writing, an agreement with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Kyrgyz Republic was in preparation.

In formulating its national South-South and triangular cooperation policy, Kazakhstan benefits from the work of think tanks. For example, the Foreign Policy Research Institute under the Ministry of Foreign Affairs⁹⁰ provides comprehensive scientific and analytical support to the implementation of foreign policy of Kazakhstan including the South-South and triangular cooperation dimension. The Institute cooperates with other think tanks in the country and abroad.⁹¹

82 The Government Resolution On the establishment of a non-profit joint stock company, Kazakhstan International Development Agency (KazAID) can be accessed here: <https://adilet.zan.kz/rus/docs/P2000000861>

83 Kazakhstan (2020).

84 Kazakhstan (n.d.).

85 Ibid.

86 Sanchez (2021).

87 8 October 2019, <https://adilet.zan.kz/eng/docs/P1900000743>

88 6 February 2015, <https://adilet.zan.kz/rus/docs/V15IY010431>

89 6 February 2015, <https://adilet.zan.kz/rus/docs/V15IY010430>

90 <http://sszi.kz/en>

91 See, for example, the Memorandum of Understanding Between the Kazakh Institute for Foreign Policy Studies and the Scientific Centre for Strategic Studies of Turkmenistan (2022). АО 'Институт внешнеполитических исследований' при МИД РК (sszi.kz) and the 2022 International Conference on 'Central Asian Cooperation in the New Geopolitical Context: Challenges and Prospects (Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan), where participating countries from the region discussed the further development of cooperation between countries, including identifying effective points of convergence in the development of trade and transport communications and food security, as well as a common approach to global challenges.

In establishing its institutional framework, the country also received support from UNDP, USAID, Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) and other international partners.⁹² UNDP also supported the establishment of the Astana Civil Service Hub,⁹³ which, within a short timeframe, has become a significant facilitator in the area of public services.

While Kazakhstan has been acting as provider of South-South cooperation for a long time, the dedicated structure was set up only recently. The Kazakhstan's approach of building institutional architecture gives priority to the strategy and concept development, engaging actively with more experienced international actors and focusing on triangular cooperation. In any case, the approach of intensive partnership building and interaction with various stakeholders helps utilizing the know-how transfer and enriches the national capacity on South-South and triangular cooperation.



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⁹² President Decree 415 of January 2017.

⁹³ <https://www.astanacivilservicehub.org>



Box 3

The Astana Civil Service Hub

The Astana Civil Service Hub (ACSH) is a flagship initiative of the Government of Kazakhstan and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). It provides a knowledge, capacity building and networking platform for countries of Central Asia, Europe and beyond. Currently, the geographic scope of the ACSH extends from North America to Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) countries, comprising 42 participating countries and also cooperating with more than 80 institutional partners. The ACSH has established an active partnership with the United Nations Office for South-South Cooperation, South-South Network for Public Service Innovation (SSNPSI), the Asian Association for Public Administration, Eastern Regional Organization for Public Administration, the Association for Middle Eastern Public Policy and Administration, as well as the African Association for Public Administration and Management, the South Asian Network for Public Administration and others.

As part of its capacity-building pillar, the ACSH promotes training and experience-sharing initiatives based on the peer-to-peer (P2P) principle. These initiatives are implemented through launching P2P Learning Alliances. The Alliances' activities adhere to the P2P Learning Guide, developed by the Effective Institutions Platform (EIP), whose Secretariat is hosted by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD). The ACSH has successfully launched three P2P Alliances on 'one-stop shop' public service delivery, on e-government development, on transformation and innovations in governance; and the Virtual Alliance of Practitioners.

The Alliance is a digital platform, accumulating more than 40 practical materials and useful resources, research, and innovative technological solutions utilized by the participating countries and partners of the ACSH.

In 2021, the ACSH, UNDP in Kazakhstan in partnership with the Ministry of the Interior and Safety (MOIS) and the National Information Society Agency (NIA) of the Republic of Korea launched a joint project 'Capacity Building for Innovation in Governance and Digitalization of Public Services' to enhance the capacity of civil servants and practitioners involved in the implementation of innovations in the public administration system and digitalization of the delivering of public services in the countries of Central Asia (Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan) and Caucasus (Azerbaijan, Armenia, Georgia).

2.5 →

Recent developments in the Western Balkans

Some recent institutional arrangements that could have a positive impact on South-South and triangular cooperation can be observed in the Western Balkans. For example, Albania strengthened its coordination of foreign aid it receives (including South-South cooperation) and Serbia is preparing its institutional arrangements to provide development cooperation more systematically.

The Government of Albania recently took measures to improve alignment of different resources allocated from development partners with country's development strategies and priorities. To improve the management of development cooperation, a new state entity, State Agency for Strategic Programming and Aid Coordination (SASPAC),⁹⁴ was established in 2021. In this process, Albania benefited from the experience of Croatia. SASPAC is an example of an institution established with secondary legislation (Government decision) and placed under the Prime Minister.

⁹⁴ Decision of Council of Ministers of Republic of Albania No. 642, of 29 October 2021.

The Agency is a public budget legal entity, organized at the central level and collaborates with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. It is funded from the state budget and contributions from development partners. The mission of SASPAC is to ensure:



the coordination of foreign aid for development programmes and projects, the assistance of decision-making bodies for the drafting of the National Strategy for Development and Integration (NSDI), the monitoring of its implementation, and the provision of methodological support in drafting cross-sectoral and sectoral strategies. It also aims to harmonize the latter with the NSDI, as well as monitor their implementation, coordinate the management of projects of national interest, and provide support to state administration institutions to increase capacity in the field of programmes and projects development.⁹⁵

The newly established SASPAC is expected to not only coordinate foreign aid for development programmes and projects, but also to support countries' strategic planning and alignment of development cooperation to national priorities.

Serbia is emerging as one of the advanced actors in South-South and triangular cooperation in the ECIS region. Since the country is transitioning from the role of recipient to the role of development cooperation provider,⁹⁶ and in accordance with its commitment under the EU Negotiation Chapter 30 (External Relations), the process of development of a normative basis for development cooperation has already begun. According to the Bill (Draft Law) On International Development Cooperation and Humanitarian Aid, the key state bodies with a mandate in development cooperation will be the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the General Secretariat of the Government. While the Ministry will be acting at the policy level, the General Secretariat will be entrusted with operational and executive functions (coordination, registration, reporting, collecting information etc). The consultation and participation during the drafting of the strategy drafting and planning will be ensured through the International Development Cooperation Council that is expected to be established once the law enters in force. It is very clear that Serbia is taking firm steps towards institutionalization of its development cooperation and improving governance of this field.



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⁹⁵ Ibid, Article 4.

⁹⁶ According to a joint analysis carried out and recommendations by GIZ and the Government of the Republic of Serbia, it was estimated that development and humanitarian aid consisted of around 0.1 percent of gross national income on average since 2010.

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Regional Organizations: Platforms for the Implementation of South-South and Triangular Cooperation





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Regional Organizations: Platforms for the Implementation of South-South and Triangular Cooperation

Regional and sub-regional organizations (both referred to as 'regional organizations') in the ECIS region continue to be one of the main modalities for implementing South-South and triangular cooperation.⁹⁷ Due to the diversity of the ECIS region, many of these regional organizations involve both developed and developing countries. This creates a conducive environment for sharing experience among members, collaborating on normative issues and triangular cooperation, addressing development challenges of the region.

The Central European Initiative (CEI) and the Regional Cooperation Council, for example, are among the

organizations where member countries engage in triangular cooperation at the regional level. Formed over 30 years ago, the CEI⁹⁸ states its mission as 'promoting regional cooperation for European integration and sustainable development'. To this end, the CEI complements its traditional work on fostering policy dialogue and multilateral diplomacy, at both the intergovernmental and inter-parliamentary levels, with a result-oriented approach. The organization supports triangular cooperation through funding and by implementing regional projects (transnational, cross-border and interregional ones) with the aim of contributing to enhancing social, economic and territorial cohesion in Central, Eastern and South-Eastern Europe.

At the operational level, the CEI acts both as a donor for small-scale projects, with its own financial resources, and a beneficiary of resources provided by external donors, mainly the EU through CEI's participation in calls issued by the EU funding programmes. This two-track approach is a unique feature of the CEI, which allows the organization to promote concrete cooperative actions with both EU and non-EU countries participating in implementation. Translating political priorities into regional projects is one of the main features of CEI's working methodology, such as CEI Support for Strengthening Energy Regulatory Authorities in the Western Balkans (Box 4).



Box 4

CEI support for strengthening Energy Regulatory Authorities in the Western Balkans

This project is implemented under the Central European Initiative (CEI) flagship instrument, the Know-how Exchange Programme. The aim is to support the integration between the European and the Balkan regional electricity markets by strengthening the capacities of the Energy Regulatory Authorities to manage the market coupling process among their national electricity markets and the neighbouring EU electricity markets in accordance with EU Regulations and best practices. The goal was to create a level playing field between EU and non-EU National Regulator Authorities through knowledge transfer on specific topics of common interest. The activities were implemented from 2018 to 2021 over three phases and were based on the principle of peer-to-peer know-how transfer and sharing best practice through interactive workshops. The project was led by the Italian Regulatory Authority for Energy, Networks and Environment (ARERA), and the Bulgarian Energy and Water Regulatory Commission (EWRC) joined the project activities in the third phase and targeted the National Energy Regulatory Authorities/Agencies of Albania, Montenegro, North Macedonia and Serbia as project beneficiaries. Western Balkan countries had the opportunity to discuss and share knowledge and experience of the work of their National Regulator Authorities. One of the long-term outcomes of the project has been its contribution to the creation of the Balkan Energy School as a result of the will and commitment of all project partners to establish a new and permanent entity devoted to knowledge transfer and capacity-building activities in the region.

⁹⁷ For regional organizations supported by the United Nations, see Chapter 4.

⁹⁸ Informed by input by CEI (<https://www.cei.int>), interviews and questionnaires. Since its very inception in 1989, as the first attempt to overcome Cold War bipolarism through the tool of regional cooperation, the CEI has supported cooperative actions between and among countries holding different positions on the international stage. Following the fall of the Berlin Wall, Austria, Hungary, Italy and the former Yugoslavia agreed on the establishment of the Quadrilateral Initiative, the initial core of the organization then renamed the Central European Initiative in 1992.

Established 20 years ago, the Regional Cooperation Council⁹⁹ implements triangular cooperation between a number of developing countries from the ECIS region and EU countries. The main focus of cooperation is providing support from EU countries to other members of the Council during their EU accession/association processes. This also involves implementing thematic initiatives at the

regional level that provide tangible benefits to citizens, for example, the Regional Roaming Agreement (RRA) and Roam Like At Home (RLAH) regime initiatives (Box 5). One of the main benefits of engaging in regional initiatives is that they 'can assist states in identifying common causes and strategic alignments among regional partners'.¹⁰⁰ Another example is Green Lanes/Green Corridors (Box 6).



Box 5

Regional Cooperation Council Regional Roaming Agreement and the Roam Like At Home regime

The aim of this roaming initiative is to reduce roaming charges between Western Balkan countries as well as to further align roaming policy in the region with that of the European Union (EU). The Roaming Policy Working Group, which consists of the representatives of Western Balkan relevant ministries and National Regulatory Authorities. This group served as the negotiation group for the Regional Roaming Agreement (RRA).

The RRA was signed on 4 April 2019 during the second Western Balkans Digital Summit in Belgrade by the information and communications technology (ICT) ministers from the region. It stipulates significantly lower roaming tariffs within the region from 1 July 2019 and the introduction of the Roam Like At Home (RLAH) regime between the economies from 1 July 2021, using EU's RLAH rules and caps of 2017. The ultimate goal of the RRA to introduce RLAH regime as of 1 July 2021 in the region was successfully achieved and a roaming free Western Balkan region was established, hence, Western Balkan consumers do not currently pay extra charges for calls, SMSs and mobile data while roaming, compared to what they pay at home. The Regional Cooperation Council has been facilitating the whole process, starting with the preparations of RRA as well as monitoring progress in the implementation of the agreement and carrying out an information campaign to help end-users to understand better the application of the RLAH regime.

Some sub-regional groups and organizations include only developing countries as members. For instance, the Central Asia Regional Economic Cooperation (CAREC) Programme,¹⁰¹ an initiative supported by the Asian Development Bank, serves as an important platform for sub-regional collaboration. Established in 2001 as a partnership of 11 countries and development partners, the programme aimed at promoting regional development through cooperation. Reducing poverty through accelerated development is an overarching objective of the programme. The programme acts as a proactive facilitator of practical, results-based regional projects, and policy initiatives critical to sustainable economic growth and shared prosperity in the region.¹⁰²

Another example is the Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO), which is implementing South-South Cooperation in its work. Established 37 years ago, the ECO provides a platform for South-South cooperation solutions for promoting intra-regional trade as well as building investment links for 10 countries from West and South Asia, the Caucasus and Central Asia.¹⁰³ While fostering the economic relations among its member states is an integral part of the work of ECO, the work of the various committees enables sharing of knowledge, experience and know-how among various government representatives. Therefore, enhancing facilitation of information exchange and technical assistance could be a pragmatic

⁹⁹ Informed by input by the RCC, interviews and questionnaires.

¹⁰⁰ IsDB, 2020, p. 9.

¹⁰¹ <https://www.carecprogram.org>

¹⁰² Since its inception in 2001 and as of December 2021, CAREC has mobilized \$41 billion in investments that have helped establish multimodal transportation networks, increased energy trade and security, facilitated the free movement of people and freight, and laid the groundwork for economic corridor development.

¹⁰³ Afghanistan, Azerbaijan, Iran, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyz Republic, Pakistan, Tajikistan, Türkiye, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan. According to ECO data, its region has a combined population of over 440 million people.



Box 6

The Regional Cooperation Council's Green Lanes/Green Corridors initiative

As an immediate response to the pandemic outbreak in 2020, three regional organizations – the Regional Cooperation Council (RCC), the Central European Free Trade Agreement (CEFTA) and the Transport Community Treaty (TCT) – jointly initiated the Green Lanes/Green Corridors Initiative in the Western Balkans to enable the faster and smoother free flow of essential goods. The objective of the Green Lanes initiative is to allow for priority treatment at national borders of specific types of goods through an electronic exchange of information between border authorities in order to allow for 24/7 operations of border agencies at specified border crossing points (BCPs) along main corridors.

The Green Lanes initiative is an indispensable part of Common Regional Market (CRM) agenda. The main objective until 2024 is to maintain the Green Corridors/Lanes and streamline BCPs and common crossing points (CCPs) as well as to expand Green Lanes to the BCPs with the EU. The overarching aim is to accelerate the movement of goods within the region, mirroring EU practices and common standards. To date, nearly two million trucks have used Green Corridors.

The exchange of pre-arrival data on freight movements between the custom offices involved constitutes a key element in the initiative. An agreement between the customs, phytosanitary, veterinary and food inspections was reached to receive pre-arrival information through the Systematic Exchange of Electronic Data (SEED), not only for goods of first necessity, but also for goods that require phytosanitary, veterinary and food inspections. This has contributed to improving the efficiency of clearance procedures and accelerating the flow of goods at the crossing points, subsequently leading to a reduction of waiting time and a cut in costs for businesses.

The initiative has also yielded indirect medium-to long-term results for the region. For example, the communication between customs administrations and different agencies involved in the clearance of goods has been upgraded and substantially improved. The economies in the region have also strengthened their mutual cooperation and intensified the dialogue with EU Member States that similarly see this initiative as beneficial for their businesses and trade.

Given the positive results of the Initiative, the Western Balkans region is now considering taking a step further in line with the CRM agenda and work on expanding the Green Lanes to a few pilot BCPs with the EU Member States (notably Greece, Bulgaria and Italy), following the establishment of an adequate legal base.

step towards addressing development goals through South-South cooperation.¹⁰⁴

Institutionalization of South-South and triangular cooperation at the regional level can also be tracked in some of the efforts of the regional organizations through the adoption of relevant strategic documents, action plans and dedicated budgets to achieving the strategic goals. For example, the South East Europe (SEE) 2030 Strategy adopts an approach of triangular cooperation by promoting collaboration between different type of its members, recipients

and donors¹⁰⁵ in the context of promoting and advancing through regional cooperation the implementation of the SDGs within the SEE region.

Thus, the donor countries are expected to finance the implementation of actions both on their own and in other countries, promoting collaboration and the sharing of experience. The Strategy is built on cross-cutting areas such as investment, mobility, competitiveness and the environment identified in the national development strategies of SEE countries.

¹⁰⁴ ECO (2021).

¹⁰⁵ Donor countries are Bulgaria Croatia, Greece, Romania, Slovenia and Türkiye.

ECO Vision 2025¹⁰⁶ is another strategic document targeted to help promote regional cooperation and activities among developing countries in the ECIS region. It is the first strategy endorsed by ECO in 2017, together with its Implementation Framework. The document outlines the strategic objectives of the economies and links them to expected outputs. Six priority areas are outlined – Trade, Transport and Connectivity, Energy, Tourism, Economic Growth and Productivity, and Social Welfare and Environment.

During interviews, regional organizations in the ECIS highlighted that South-South and triangular cooperation can be instrumental in sharing practical solutions, which ultimately benefit the people of the region. Some of them actively participated in regional and global fora on South-South and triangular cooperation including the South-South Cooperation Directors' General Forum for Sustainable Development. Regional organizations have long been playing a role in facilitating South-South and triangular cooperation in the ECIS region. Their engagement as knowledge producers and facilitators of knowledge sharing is increasing.



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¹⁰⁶ Informed by input by the ECO interviews.

4

The United Nations System's Engagement and Support





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The United Nations system's engagement and support

The BAPA+40 reaffirms the key role of the United Nations entities, including UNCTs and United Nations Regional Commissions in supporting and promoting South-South and triangular cooperation.¹⁰⁷ Over the years, United Nations entities effectively integrated South-South and triangular cooperation within their work; some had established dedicated and identifiable South-South and triangular cooperation units or focal points at their headquarters (JIU/REP/2018/2). Nevertheless, in 2019, many Governments still observed that United Nations system should further mainstream South-South and triangular cooperation in its work and support schemes.¹⁰⁸

Against this backdrop, the United Nations Office for South-South Cooperation (UNOSSC) coordinated the development of the first United Nations system-wide Strategy on South-South and Triangular Cooperation for Sustainable Development and its Action Plan, through the UN Inter-Agency Mechanism for South-South and Triangular Cooperation. These aim to maintain robust South-South and triangular cooperation in the international development agenda.¹⁰⁹ The Strategy and the Action Plan are seen as a first step of the United Nations system-wide response to the need for a more strategic, coherent, coordinated, agile, collaborative and results-oriented approach to South-South and triangular cooperation at all levels: national, regional and global. Furthermore, the aim of the Strategy is to support the national priorities of countries of the South under national ownership and

leadership and to drive forward the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Decade of Action to deliver on the SDGs.

As discussed in the previous chapters, most of the countries in Europe and CIS acknowledge South-South and triangular cooperation as an important modality of their development cooperation and are interested in building relevant institutional frameworks or improving existing ones. The Strategy frames the engagement of the United Nations as providing necessary and enabling support to better leverage the wealth of knowledge, experience, technologies, and technical as well as financial resources to meet the development needs of the global South including at the country level.

United Nations support to the national priorities at the country level



United Nations support to the national priorities at the country level is outlined within the United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Frameworks.¹¹⁰ The Internal Guidance for the preparation of the Frameworks explains how South-South and triangular cooperation should be integrated in the United Nations Common Country Analyses including as part of development trends beyond national boundaries.¹¹¹ Twelve of the United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Frameworks (UNSDCFs) 2021–2025 in the ECIS region refer to South-South and triangular cooperation.¹¹² The UNSDCF of Armenia, Serbia, Kazakhstan, Kosovo,* Kyrgyzstan and Türkiye expressly use the terminology of ‘South-South and triangular cooperation’ in a different context. For example, the Armenia UNSDCF 2021–2025 treats South-South and triangular cooperation as a cross-cutting concept, and the UNCT Country Results Report for 2021 has a dedicated sub-section where it reflects on successful examples of North-South, South-South and triangular partnerships established as part of UNSDCF implementation. Serbia UNSDCF 2021–2025 refers to triangular cooperation (regional and transborder/transboundary) as a core principle for achieving

¹⁰⁷ United Nations, 2019, para. 21.

¹⁰⁸ United Nations, 2019a, para 59(h).

¹⁰⁹ United Nations, 2019a, para 59(l).

¹¹⁰ ‘The Cooperation Framework represents the United Nations development system’s collective offer to support countries in addressing key SDG priorities and gaps. It begins and ends with an analysis of the national development landscape and SDG priorities, including through the lens of the imperative to leave no one behind. It serves as a core accountability tool between the United Nations Country Team (UNCT) and the host Government, as well as between and among UNCT members for collectively owned development results. The last is underpinned by the United Nations Common Country Analysis (UN CCA). There is explicit recognition of regional and cross-border elements within the UN CCA and the Cooperation Framework.’ United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework-Internal Guidance, 2019, paras. 3–7.

¹¹¹ United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework-Internal Guidance, 2019, paras. 7 and 38.

¹¹² According to the author’s review conducted in July 2022 and the responses of the RCOs to the survey, these are: Albania, Armenia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kosovo, North Macedonia, Serbia, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Türkiye and Uzbekistan.

the two UNSDCF Strategic Priorities, while the third Strategic Priority adequately mainstreams the principles of regional cooperation.¹¹³ The UNSDCF Kosovo* 2021–2025 mentions South-South cooperation in the context of their partnerships, while Kazakhstan confirms the commitment of the Government as a provider of South-South cooperation.

The Tajikistan United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) 2016–2022 specifies South-South and triangular cooperation at the level of outputs and United Nations-Government Joint Work Plans, and the 2020 United Nations Annual Report captures and reports on these kinds of cooperation in the context of child-friendly infrastructure investments and COVID-19 partnerships.¹¹⁴ South-South and triangular cooperation are used as instrument for bringing knowledge and expertise of other countries to address priority needs of Tajikistan. Details of cooperation are provided at the level of outputs and project initiatives. The United Nations in Tajikistan widely uses these opportunities to foster collaboration and for inter-state, regional and global cooperation.

According to the information collected, although the UNSDCF Georgia 2021–2025 does not refer to South-South cooperation, it acknowledges the importance of regional cooperation in the South Caucasus and within the EU Eastern Partnership format.¹¹⁵

The UNSDCF of Türkiye refers to South-South and triangular cooperation at an outcome level as part of international

support in implementing effective and targeted capacity building in developing countries to support national plans to implement all of the SDGs. The the Kyrgyz Republic's UNSDCF 2023–2027, for example, identifies South-South and triangular cooperation as one of the strategic priorities in terms of partnerships to achieve the SDGs. Reflecting regional and sub-regional diversity, a number of UNSDCFs in ECIS region refer to cross-border, regional integration and other regional initiatives, or acknowledge the importance of regional cooperation.¹¹⁶

Some of the evaluations of the UNDAFs also reflect South-South and triangular cooperation at an outcome level.¹¹⁷ While there were cross-boundary, regional and sub-regional perspectives in all United Nations Common Country Analyses in the ECIS region in 2020–2021, explicit references to South-South and triangular cooperation were included in only two of them.¹¹⁸ According to the survey conducted for the preparation of this study, six UNCTs reported that their COVID-19 Socio-Economic Impact Assessments (SEIAs)¹¹⁹ and/or Socio-Economic Response Plans explicitly referred to South-South and triangular cooperation.¹²⁰

At the agency level, UNFPA Türkiye's 7th Country Programme (2021–2025) refers to South-South and triangular cooperation activities under its outcome regarding population dynamics, and focuses on strengthening multi-sectoral partnerships, South-South and triangular cooperation, and knowledge sharing in the fields of health,

113 In early 2022, the United Nations Peacebuilding Fund approved the UNCT sub-regional programme, Strengthening the role of youth in promoting increased mutual understanding, constructive narrative, respect for diversity, and trust in Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, North Macedonia, Serbia and Kosovo. The joint programme is aligned with the EU enlargement strategy and accession requirements. In October 2022, the UNOSSC Division for Arab States, Europe and the CIS, in partnership with the Government of Serbia and UNDP Serbia supported a national stock-taking exercise on South-South, East-East and triangular cooperation in Serbia. The purpose of the tripartite partnership was to: conduct an overall assessment of the activities and cooperation relevant for South-South, East-East and triangular cooperation in the Republic of Serbia, and take stock of the cooperation stage in the country; and identify the main challenges and opportunities for strengthening and consolidating South-South, East-East and triangular cooperation, and developing a set of practical recommendations for national stakeholders, UNCT and other stakeholders.

114 UN Tajikistan (2020a).

115 During the previous Cooperation Framework (2016–2020), many programmes supported by United Nations agencies throughout the cycle had encompassed a SSC component by promoting knowledge sharing between Georgia and other developing countries. In 2018, UNOSSC Division for Arab States, Europe and the CIS conducted a stock-taking exercise to identify relevant South-South, East-East and triangular cooperation frameworks, conditions, patterns, successful practices and challenges of individual line ministries and public agencies, as well as United Nations agencies, funds and programmes, and development cooperation partners that are active in the country.

116 See, for example, Albania, Azerbaijan, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Georgia, North Macedonia, Serbia and Uzbekistan. Available at: Documents | UNSDG Data Portal (uninfo.org)

117 See, for example, the Evaluations of the United Nations Development Assistance Frameworks for: Belarus 2016–2020, Albania 2017–2021, Kazakhstan 2016–2020, Kosovo 2016–2020, Uzbekistan 2016–2020. Available at: Documents | UNSDG Data Portal (uninfo.org).

118 Common Country Analysis for Albania 2020 and Kyrgyz Republic 2021 explicitly refers to South-South and triangular cooperation. Available at: Documents | UNSDG Data Portal (uninfo.org)

119 For example, according to the United Nations COVID-19 Socioeconomic Response Framework for the Kyrgyz Republic, 'the United Nations assistance will also include analytical support and the promotion of the South–South cooperation exchanges to explore options for recovery and greener finance, including debt-for-nature, debt-for-climate swaps, small-scale green financing, and other tools.' Pillar V, 'Macroeconomic Response and Multilateral Collaboration'. UN Kyrgyz Republic (2021).

120 The six UNCTs were Albania, Armenia, Kyrgyzstan, Serbia, Tajikistan and Türkiye. According to the RCO Tajikistan Survey inputs, the Integrated Socioeconomic Response Framework to COVID-19 (ISEF) was built on the experience of South-South and triangular cooperation, and widely used these instruments to address its five Pillars. Cooperation with Southern countries has been widely used in health response measures, setting up laboratories and carrying out vaccines campaign. UN Tajikistan (2020b).

women's empowerment and demographic security.¹²¹ UNICEF Bulgaria's Country Programme Document (CPD) 2018–2021 highlighted the partnership between the Government of Bulgaria and UNICEF in South-South cooperation. It specifically promoted Bulgaria's good practices in de-institutionalization, an area of cooperation under the leadership of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. UNDP Albania CPD 2022–2026 refers to South-South and triangular cooperation at both the outcome and output levels. UN Women Albania's Strategic Note considers how South-South cooperation can be used as part of its output on gender-responsive budgeting (GRB). The UNICEF Country Office in Croatia includes South-South cooperation in its Country Programme Document and its Work Plan signed with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, which covers South-South cooperation activities.

The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) Türkiye and the Government of Türkiye are implementing a series of initiatives through the FAO-Türkiye Partnership Programme on Food and Agriculture (FTPP) and the FAO-Türkiye Forestry Programme (FTFP) funded by the Government of Türkiye in order to deploy Turkish experts in target beneficiary countries in the region (Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Türkiye, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan) on thematic issues such as food security, rural poverty reduction and sustainable forest management. Although initially targeting the sub-regional countries, today the geographical scope of these initiatives goes beyond, reaching out to the countries in the Balkans and in Africa.

The UNDP Country Programme for Kazakhstan (2021–2025) refers to triangular cooperation at the output level¹²² and implements, for example: a cross-border initiative funded by the EU that supports Afghan women to study and graduate from universities in Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan; a EU-funded initiative set up a multi-stakeholder knowledge-sharing regional platform supporting Central Asian countries to track and adjust key socio-economic policies by monitoring SDG progress and financing; and a regional project funded by the Government of the Republic of Korea aimed at enhancing the knowledge of government officials of innovative approaches to governance through the digitalization of public services in Central Asia and the Caucasus.

ILO Türkiye mobilized resources at the country level for South-South cooperation with Jordan, Iraq and Lebanon in 2018–2019, and with Colombia in 2020–2021. These initiatives intended to provide tripartite partners from participating countries with a platform to exchange knowledge and experiences on promoting access to decent work for migrants and refugees in countries affected by large-scale displacement.

Overall, the type of support recently provided to the countries on South-South and triangular cooperation in the ECIS region mainly relates to convening forums for dialogue, regional integration and learning efforts, partnerships with Southern partners for the implementation of the SDGs, and the integration of Southern knowledge into capacity development. Most UNCTs report some efforts in South-South and triangular cooperation, mainly in reference to their own programmatic work. However, strategic support to national efforts to institutionalize South-South and triangular cooperation and to build relevant capacity remains very limited. Thus, given the emphasis on national ownership and leadership, the ECIS governments may, as applicable, consider establishing and/or strengthening their respective South-South and triangular cooperation institutional architectures by requesting support from the UNCTs, including through the process of developing the UNSDCFs and/or relevant country programmes of United Nations entities.

United Nations support at the regional level



The United Nations System-wide Strategy is also guiding the United Nations system's engagement in South-South and triangular cooperation at the regional level. The support is focused on policy formulation, knowledge sharing and the promotion of regional cooperation, including by implementing regional agreements and policy frameworks. For example, UNDP's Regional Programme for the ECIS 2022–2025 underlines its aim to support and connect 'programme countries in capturing, codifying and sharing lessons learned, good practices and success stories, and accessing regional and global expertise and cutting-edge research, including through South-South and triangular cooperation' (para 23). WHO's Regional Programme 2020–2025 (United Action for Better Health), UNFPA's regional programme and the monitoring framework, UNECE's Technical cooperation strategy and Resource Mobilization Strategy, and the International Organization for Migration's (IOM) Institutional Strategy

¹²¹ UNFPA Türkiye has recently established a partnership with the Turkish Statistical Institute (TURKSTAT) to implement a project on advancing South-South cooperation. The Institute will collaborate with other statistical institutes of interested countries from the global South to share experience on standards and practices in effectively implementing the e-census system. Resource mobilization activities are ongoing to realize this partnership by UNFPA Türkiye.

¹²² Output 2.4 'Triangular development initiatives are in place to support the positioning of Kazakhstan, with a focus on empowerment of women'.

on Migration and Sustainable Development¹²³ are also contributing to the advancement of South-South and triangular cooperation for sustainable development.¹²⁴ UN Women is also actively involved in this modality through regional projects, including the Regional Programmes on Ending Violence against Women in the Western Balkans and Türkiye, and Transformative Financing for Gender Equality towards more Transparent, Inclusive and Accountable Governance in the Western Balkans.

For UNESCO, South-South and triangular cooperation are a key modality for implementing all of its programmes, and its specific action in this area is reflected in its [Medium-Term Strategy for 2022–2029](#) and its [Programme and Budget for 2022–2025](#). This modality is incorporated into its regional support strategies for its regional offices and included in relevant partnership frameworks.

The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) Regional Programme for South Eastern Europe has been supporting the six Western Balkan jurisdictions by providing capacity building and technical assistance in the following areas, *inter alia*: supporting law enforcement and enhancing border security; strengthening the fight against organized crime; countering illicit financial flows; preventing drug use prevention and treating drug use disorders; and strengthening research capacity, policy and monitoring, with respect to human rights and the gender perspective; cooperating with civil society; and addressing other emerging thematic areas.¹²⁵



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123 According to IOM's strategy, it 'will continue to train and support national and local governments in implementing the migration-related Goals and undertake initiatives to assist developing countries in achieving them, including through South-South and triangular cooperation'. Other regional and sub-regional strategies include the IOM Regional Strategy for South Eastern, Eastern Europe and Central Asia 2020–2024 and IOM Sub-Regional Strategy for Central Asia 2021–2025.

124 At the time of data collection, there were two FAO pipeline initiatives: the Regional South-South and triangular cooperation project under the FAO-China South-South and triangular cooperation programme on the freshwater aquaculture value chain (Albania, North Macedonia, Serbia, Armenia, Azerbaijan and Uzbekistan as beneficiaries); and the FAO Tajikistan and FAO Uzbekistan joint initiative, with the support of the FAO Regional Office for Europe and Central Asia, seeking South-South/East-East cooperation opportunities with Egypt, Republic of Korea, Israel and Indonesia through existing South-South, East-East and triangular cooperation agreements facilitated by FAO.

125 The UNODC Strategy 2021–2025 refers to South-South cooperation where the organization brings countries together to transfer knowledge, skills and information, including through South-South cooperation.

The United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction's Regional Office for Europe and Central Asia does not have a specific strategy related to South-South and triangular cooperation. However, the Office encourages and facilitates peer-learning and knowledge sharing among its constituent members to strengthen resilience building at the regional, sub-regional, national and local levels.¹²⁶

In 2021, FAO developed a new South-South and Triangular Cooperation Strategy 2022–2026 and, in 2022, the new South-South and triangular cooperation Guidelines for Action for the regions and countries. The Strategy aims at promoting the cross-cutting applicability of South-South and triangular cooperation across FAO's mandate and thematic priorities, which provides grounds for embedding South-South and triangular cooperation within and across FAO programme priority areas. The new FAO strategy puts greater emphasis on promoting flexible South-South and triangular cooperation modalities such as policy dialogues, knowledge exchanges, and technology and innovation transfers to enable and facilitate South-South and triangular cooperation in the area of agriculture and food systems.

South-South and triangular cooperation are also an integral part of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) mandate and work programme. For example, UNCTAD is implementing a Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the United Nations (UN DESA) Peace and Development Fund project, Integrated Policy Strategies and Regional Policy Coordination for Resilient, Green and Transformative Development: Supporting Selected Asian Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) Partner Countries to Achieve 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda', which also includes Kazakhstan and Türkiye as project countries. One of the dimensions of the project is promoting regional policy coordination and partnership building in developing countries including Kazakhstan and Türkiye.



Box 7

UNCTAD projects

EU4Business support to CEFTA for Non-Tariff Measures monitoring and reporting, and support to the implementation of the CEFTA Dispute Settlement Mechanism aims to:

strengthen regional integration among Central European Free Trade Agreement (CEFTA) Parties and their linkages to the European Union through increased transparency, monitoring and reporting of non-tariff measures and support to negotiate and implement a new dispute settlement mechanism.

Project start date: June 2022

Coverage: Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo,* Montenegro, Republic of Moldova, North Macedonia, and Serbia. All Central European Free Trade Agreement (CEFTA) members (Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia, Montenegro, Moldova and Albania.

* References to Kosovo shall be understood to be in the context of Security Council Resolution 1244 (1999).

¹²⁶ Following the European Forum for Disaster Risk Reduction, held in November 2021, United Nations Member States in Europe and Central Asia endorsed the regional Roadmap for Disaster Risk Reduction 2021–2030, a carefully curated package of actions resulting from a one-year, multi-stakeholder consultation process. It is the main roadmap for accelerating implementation of the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction in the ECA region, and provides a framework for identifying joint initiatives and knowledge sharing across Member States under modalities including South-South, East-East and triangular cooperation. United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNDRR) collaborated in the South-East European region with the Disaster Prevention and Preparedness Initiative (DPPI-SEE) and the Network of Associations of Local Authorities (NALAS) on the establishment of a regional roadmap for local resilience and the subnational INFORM Subnational Risk Index for South-East Europe. UNDRR collaborated with the Center for Emergency Situations and DRR (CESDRR) in Central Asia to develop the first-ever strategy for the development of cooperation between Central Asian countries in DRR for 2022–2030 and its action plan (roadmap) for implementation in 2022–2023.



UNDP RBEC via Shutterstock

The United Nations System-wide Strategy entails the development of region-specific arrangements by Regional Collaborative Platforms (RCPs).¹²⁷ With the aim to increase awareness and ownership of the Strategy and to facilitate and enable regional United Nations entities and UNCTs to leverage it as a tool to enhance South-South and triangular cooperation engagement in 2022, the UNOSSC Division for Arab States, Europe and CIS organized, in partnership with the Regional Collaborative Platform for Europe and Central Asia (RCP-ECA)¹²⁸ and the regional United Nations Development Coordination Office for ECA, a regional Rollout Webinar for United Nations Entities in Europe and Central Asia on the United Nations System-wide Strategy and its Action Plan. Some of the conclusions included dedicated training on the mainstreaming of South-South and triangular cooperation in programming initiatives, regional mechanisms and policy advocacy processes.¹²⁹

Issue-based Coalitions (IBCs)¹³⁰ are multi-agency task forces that facilitate improved cooperation between different United Nations agencies and their partners, and are one of the main vehicles of the substantive support that RCPs can offer to country teams, rallying United Nations system-wide expertise in an agile manner in response to changing regional and country needs and demand (United Nations, 2022, para 74). Seven IBCs are operating in Europe and CIS,¹³¹ and cover a wide range of issues such as the environment and climate change, data and statistics, as well as digital transformation.

For example, the IBC on environment and climate change equipped Resident Coordinators and UNCTs with a compendium of measures for green, post-pandemic recovery to support countries in ‘greening’ recovery plans promoting peer-learning within the region. In the context of the preparations for the Food Systems

127 The regional entities of the United Nations development system transitioned to regional collaborative platforms (RCPs) during the second half of 2020. UNESCAP (2021). United Nations System-wide Strategy, para 40.

128 It brings together the regional heads of the United Nations entities, UNSDG (n.d.).

129 Rollout Webinar for United Nations Entities in Europe and Central Asia on the United Nations System-wide Strategy on South-South and Triangular Cooperation for Sustainable Development and its Action Plan.

130 UNECE (n.d.).

131 IBCs in the ECIS region: Health, Gender Equality, Youth and Adolescents, Social Protection, Large Movements of People, Displacement and Resilience, Environment and Climate Change and Sustainable Food Systems.



Box 8

The International Labour Organization

The peer-to-peer review mechanism on employment policies in Central and Eastern Europe (CEE) (Non-EU Member States)* involves the Western Balkans (WB-6), Moldova and Ukraine, with the aim to support the design and implementation of more inclusive labour market policies in selected CEE countries through sub-regional cooperation to reach those most at risk of labour market exclusion.

An integrated strategic approach to facilitate the transition to formality was used for the preparation of road maps for Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan, Azerbaijan and Uzbekistan under a knowledge-sharing project.*

Notes:

* **Global and regional good practices : promoting South-South and triangular cooperation, peer learning in the world of work in time of COVID19 – South-South Meeting Point (southsouthpoint.net).**

** **Towards integrated strategy for the transition to formality: Road maps for Azerbaijan, Kyrgyz Republic, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan (ILO, 2021) – South-South Meeting Point (southsouthpoint.net)**

Summit, the IBC on sustainable food systems launched a regional community of practice on the sustainability of food systems to provide key stakeholders with an inclusive and open digital space in which to share ideas, practices and knowledge on regional policy areas related to food systems¹³² (United Nations, 2022, para. 80). Another example of identifying and responding to common challenges through regional knowledge sharing is the IBC on Social Protection,¹³³ which addressed some of the knowledge gaps on social protection using South-South cooperation. Thus, the IBC leveraged the knowledge brokering role of the United Nations to support countries in expanding social protection during the crisis.¹³⁴

Although relatively a new set-up, the work of the IBCs, namely, providing support through regional knowledge, collaboration and partnership, acts as a catalyst for international, regional and transboundary cooperation within the United Nations system. According to the United Nations System-wide Strategy, regional commissions play a key role in advancing South-South and triangular cooperation at the regional level, in partnership with other United Nations development system partners. The regional commissions, as intergovernmental entities, provide a platform for South-South cooperation, especially through intergovernmental policy work.

For example, more than half of the work of UNECE technical cooperation activities are clustered at the regional and sub-regional levels, thus delivering South-South knowledge sharing, contributing to cooperation and integration, and addressing transboundary issues in the ECIS region. UNECE's intergovernmental expert bodies carry out policy reviews and issue recommendations to specific countries and sub-regions, providing opportunities for representatives from the Global South to share the knowledge and to contribute to the work of the other global South countries. This work covers a number of areas related to sustainable development such as environmental governance, statistics, transport and trade.

132 For example, some countries from the ECIS region have experience in the agri-tech sphere, which is a source of innovation and new economic models that can be shared.

133 UNECE (n.d.).

134 For instance, in countries with ageing populations, there is space for cooperation on funding support while skilling youth to allow them to engage in the national and regional economies. The experience should be shared of countries that are leading change on disabilities and social inclusive protection to help accelerate reforms and avoid some of the pitfalls.

Another aspect of UNECE's work that is relevant to South-South cooperation is peer learning among different countries during meetings of intergovernmental bodies, which support the implementation of lessons learned through technical cooperation.¹³⁵ Through its Special Programme for the Economies of Central Asia (SPECAs), UNECE applies the South-South cooperation mechanism at the sub-regional level, tries out new approaches, shares experiences and identifies what works.¹³⁶

Through its sub-regional office for North and Central Asia, ESCAP¹³⁷ promotes the regional cooperation and addresses regional priorities of eight landlocked ECIS region countries, including on sustainable connectivity, economic transformation, social inclusion and resilience. To support and facilitate networking and active collaboration among partners in the region, ESCAP recently launched an interactive virtual platform South-South Cooperation Connector.

Implementation of the United Nations System-Wide Strategy on South-South and Triangular Cooperation increases efforts by all parts of the United Nations system to achieve more coherent and coordinated work in this area. The examples in the study confirm progress in programmes, projects and partnerships. However, more efforts are needed to translate the coherent approach by the United Nations system into transformative results on the ground.



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135 UNECE Regional Forum on sustainable development is the main multi-stakeholder platform for policy debate and peer learning in the region. It allows government representatives to present initiatives on SDG acceleration and COVID-19 recovery to the regional audience.

136 For example, the seven SPECAs countries recently developed and adopted the following: the Ashgabat initiative on reducing barriers to transport and trade using the United Nations legal norms standards and best practice recommendations; the SPECAs trade facilitation strategy; and the strategy on innovation for sustainable development.

137 The sub-regional office for North and Central Asia is based in Almaty, Kazakhstan, and covers eight ECIS region countries, namely Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan. More information is available at: UNESCAP (n.d).

* This designation is without prejudice to positions on status, and is in line with UNSC 1244 and the ICJ Opinion on Kosovo's Declaration of independence.

5

Conclusion





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South-South and triangular cooperation have deep historical roots in the ECIS region. Countries engage in various forms of cross-border, sub-regional and regional cooperation with broad thematic coverage. Thus, ECIS countries have developed their own unique South-South and triangular cooperation models, which engage various partners and comprise various operational modalities and global and regional initiatives and forums, as well as diverse funding mechanisms.

The outcome document of the BAPA+40 further encouraged the process of institutionalizing South-South and triangular cooperation at all levels – sub-national, national and regional. Since then, there has been significant progress in the region. Nationally, state bodies are being improved, often receiving broader mandates. New state bodies with mandates related to South-South and triangular cooperation are also emerging, together with the involvement of legal and institutional frameworks. The legal base for South-South and triangular cooperation comprises agreements, laws and secondary legislation.

Furthermore, the number of the national and regional development strategies and programmes incorporating South-South and triangular cooperation elements is also increasing. More countries in the ECIS region are identifying South-South and triangular cooperation not only as part of their foreign policy, but also as a way to contribute to the achievement of their own development goals and to support other developing countries' efforts. There is growing visibility of the South-South cooperation institutional framework in some countries.¹³⁸

The region has accumulated valuable knowledge and diverse experience in building South-South and triangular cooperation institutional architecture, which has been tested for decades. This has a strong potential for sharing experience, knowledge and know-how transfer with other developing countries that are interested in establishing or developing the existing institutional arrangements for South-South and triangular cooperation, as suggested in this study.¹³⁹

The ECIS region is the region with the lowest number of reported triangular cooperation projects. The countries across the ECIS have a long-standing partnership with the European Union and other OECD/DAC providers. Some new agencies within the region explicitly prioritize triangular cooperation as a core of their strategy, where they play a role of 'pivotal' partner, sharing their experience with others in cooperation with traditional providers.

The more active participation of developing countries of the region in a strengthened South-South dialogue and cooperation and in fostering triangular cooperation is seen by many as an option offering important advantages. First, it would contribute to building a more credible, engaged and effective multilateral system able to manage the new stage of globalization, thereby helping many countries of the region to ensure that the new global order takes into account and serves their interest. Second, the institution-building process in the region's countries involves a high level of path dependence. Thus, the exchange of experiences and joint efforts in the framework of a South-South dialogue aimed at developing reform agendas, and economic and social policies more successfully adapted to historically inherited institutions could usefully complement advice and support by developed countries.

One way for the countries from the region to expand South-South and triangular cooperation is through regional and sub-regional organizations. This study has presented examples of how regional organizations continue to be one of the main modalities for implementing South-South cooperation in the ECIS region and contribute to the achievement of development goals, including at the sub-regional level. With their established structures, dialogue platforms and partnership mechanisms, the regional organizations are pivotal partners for countries and United Nations entities in advancing South-South and triangular cooperation.

¹³⁸ See Chapter 2 for the examples of Azerbaijan and Türkiye.

¹³⁹ See Chapter 2.

United Nations entities have increased their efforts in scaling up the support to South-South and triangular cooperation across the ECIS region based on regional and country demands, including through regional programmes, strategies and other initiatives. With reference to the national ownership and leadership principles, countries are responsible for requesting this support. Governments can proactively seek, and benefit from, vital partners like the United Nations, which can mobilize significant expertise knowledge and facilitate partnerships globally.

Drawing from the study, the following recommendations should be considered:

- 1** Analysing the various institutions, their respective experiences as well as various other examples presented in the study were beyond the scope of this study; hence, an in-depth mapping exercise of the current status of South-South and triangular cooperation initiatives should be conducted to provide a strong foundation for enhancing this form of cooperation in this region, including through inter- and intra-regional collaboration.
- 2** Countries can increase the benefit from the development cooperation by building and/or scaling up their South-South and triangular cooperation institutional architecture and legal framework.



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- 3 A designated state body with the aim of strengthening the country's involvement in South-South and triangular cooperation can be established with less effort and budgetary constraints when countries share their knowledge and experience, and utilize United Nations' and/or other partner country's support in this process (e.g. peer exchange, technical capacity projects, stocktaking exercises).
 - 4 Special efforts should be made to develop a methodology/tools for measuring, quantifying and assessing South-South and triangular cooperation, which would reveal the true country engagement. This is another area where the regional architecture of the United Nations may support the countries by bringing expertise and knowledge where needed.
 - 5 Governments can consider increasing the use of the triangular cooperation approaches, projects and initiatives. Intensifying inter-regional exchanges and strengthening efforts to disseminate triangular cooperation examples may enable ECIS countries to benefit more from the experiences of other regions in triangular cooperation.
 - 6 A more conducive environment should be created for knowledge production and sharing. Countries may explore ways to increase the partnerships of state institutions and think tanks and academia.¹⁴⁰
 - 7 Governments can explore ways to attract private development financing and add the private sector as a strategic partner in their South-South and triangular cooperation initiatives. Connecting the knowledge production and transfer facilitated by academia and think tanks with the private sector can be pivotal.
 - 8 Building partnerships between the private sector and the financial institutions that are interested in providing funding for developing solutions could drive results to scale. The business sector also has the potential to transfer knowledge to concrete projects that support sustainable development not only in the country, but also at a regional level.
- 9 The United Nations system can further support the countries' institutionalization process by:
 - conducting analyses at different levels to better understand trends and potential for South-South and triangular cooperation, such as stock-taking exercises at the sub-regional and thematic levels;
 - increasing engagement at the national level through capacity-building programmes for relevant government officials, researchers, academia and the private sector;
 - initiating partnership programmes by taking into account the national and regional specifics for scaling up the South-South and triangular cooperation institutional capacity at the national level;
 - supporting country efforts in exploring new horizons for scaling up the development financing including through non-United Nations sources; and
 - adopting financial tools to facilitate planning, financing and implementing South-South and triangular cooperation programmes at the regional and sub-regional levels, and utilizing cross-border opportunities.

¹⁴⁰ For example, as one of the institutional actors involved in catalysing new and more effective forms of cooperation, Corvinus University of Budapest, Hungary, is well-placed to support the proposed broadening of South-South cooperation through more active involvement in relevant applied research and education of the developing countries in the region. It has experience in analysing the successes and failures of political and economic transitions of the countries of the former Soviet bloc and the impact of inherited 'institutional genes' on this process. It leads several consortiums of Central Asian and EU universities created to conduct joint research on key global challenges, including: climate change adaptation by alleviating water stress (water governance and water diplomacy); universal access to clean drinking water (SDG6); the promotion of multi-stakeholder action to guarantee affordability and accessibility of water and sanitation services through the benchmarking of the Central Asian region ('triangular cooperation'), and human capacity building by strengthening higher education and research in Central Asian countries. In addition, the University, in cooperation with its Central Asia partners, is conducting joint research with the University of Peshawar, Pakistan on the development of a Central Asia–South Asia trade and energy corridor through Afghanistan, a good example of an initiative that translates the goals and principles of South-South cooperation into concrete projects.

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Useful links

<https://www.aiib.org>

<https://unece.org/issue-based-coalitions-and-group>

<https://www.oecd-ilibrary.org>

<https://www.unsouthsouth.org>

<https://www.regionalcommissions.org/establishing-regional-collaborative-platforms>

<https://www.southsouth-galaxy.org>

South-South Cooperation Connector

<https://unece.org/issue-based-coalitions-and-groups>

<https://www.southsouthpoint.net>

National institutions

<https://www.aida.az>

<https://www.ada.edu.az/en>

<https://www.asan.gov.az>

<https://bribelgrade.org>

<https://dost.gov.az>

<https://www.TiKA.gov.tr>

<https://www.yee.org.tr>

<https://en.kosgeb.gov.tr>

<http://sszi.kz/en>

Regional organizations

<https://www.cei.int>

<https://www.carecinstitute.org>

<https://www.carecprogram.org>

<https://www.turkkon.org/en>

<https://www.rcc.int>

National legal databases

<https://adilet.zan.kz/eng>

<https://www.akorda.kz/en>

<https://e-qanun.az>

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