

Characteristics of International Development Cooperation of New Development Actors: *The Case of Croatia*

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ABSTRACT

The paper discusses the characteristics of Croatia's international development cooperation. International development cooperation, which is a very broad concept and often difficult to define, is understood in the 21st century as a variety of public and private international activities aimed at supporting development priorities, set in internationally agreed development goals. Based on a review of primary and secondary sources, a conceptualization and operationalization of key concepts, and a critical analysis of the characteristics of Croatia's international development cooperation, the article offers insight into how Croatia uses the principles of international development cooperation. With a short history as a development actor, the analysis shows that Croatia perceives traditional development cooperation in terms of official development assistance as inefficient, not offering enough possibilities for actors such as Croatia. That is why its development cooperation focuses through two-way horizontal partnerships, which is more in line with the approaches of new development actors of the Global South. According to our analysis, this can help Croatia maximize the potential of development cooperation as a means of foreign policy.

KEYWORDS: international development cooperation, official development assistance, South-South cooperation, new development actors, Croatia

POVZETEK

Članek obravnava značilnosti mednarodnega razvojnega sodelovanja Republike Hrvaške. Mednarodno razvojno sodelovanje je izjemno širok koncept, ki ga je pogosto težko opredeliti. V 21. stoletju ga razumemo kot različne javne in zasebne mednarodne aktivnosti, ki so usmerjene v podporo razvojnim prioritetam, ki so določene v mednarodno dogovorjenih razvojnih ciljih. Članek na podlagi analize primarnih in sekundarnih virov, konceptualizacije in operacionizacije ključnih konceptov ter kritične analize značilnosti hrvaškega mednarodnega razvojnega sodelovanja, ponuja vpogled v to, kako Hrvaška uporablja načela mednarodnega razvojnega sodelovanja. Na podlagi kratke zgodovine kot razvojnega akterja, analiza hrvaškega razvojnega sodelovanja kaže, da Hrvaška tradicionalno mednarodno razvojno sodelovanje v okviru uradne razvojne pomoči razume kot neučinkovito, ki ne ponuja dovolj možnosti akterjem, kot je Hrvaška, zato se njeno razvojno sodelovanje večinoma izvaja preko dvosmernih horizontalnih partnerstev, kar je bolj v skladu z aktivnostmi novih razvojnih akterjev z globalnega Juga. Na podlagi analize zaključujemo, da tovrstno razumevanje in izvajanje razvojnega sodelovanja Hrvaški lahko pomaga čim bolj izkoriščati potencial, ki ga ponuja razvojno sodelovanje kot sredstvo zunanje politike.

KLJUČNE BESEDE: mednarodno razvojno sodelovanje, uradna razvojna pomoč, sodelovanje Jug-Jug, novi razvojni akterji, Hrvaška

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INTRODUCTION

Many changes witnessed at the turn of the 21st century have had a major impact on the international community and, consequently, on the conceptualization of international development cooperation (IDC). For decades, IDC was understood purely in terms of (official) development assistance (ODA),² which emerged after the Second World War and was officially defined by the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) in 1969. However, this has been challenged by the changing balance of power, new global economic and political structures, and new actors. The conceptualization of IDC moved beyond the bipolar interpretation of the world, where a one-way relationship between countries of the Global North (aid donors) and Global South (aid recipients) determined the characteristics of development cooperation. New development actors, which were often on the receiving end of this one-way relationship, exposed the importance of reciprocal partnerships, where all partners involved can gain and learn from each other.

This paper analyses the characteristics the IDC of Croatia, which is a very interesting and peculiar development actor. As a post-socialist country that became independent in 1991, Croatia experienced the process of post-war reconstruction, peace-building, state-building, and democratic transition. This puts it in a specific place in the global development cooperation community, which is worth analyzing, especially due to the fresh experience and knowledge that it gained on its own development path. Moreover, what makes it interesting is also its dual role in the development community. On the one hand, it is a member of the European Union (EU), one of the most important global development actors providing more than half of the global ODA. And on the other hand, it is a member of neither the OECD nor the Development Assistance Committee (DAC) and often defies traditional rules of development cooperation in its strategic documents. In addition, due to its significant economic progress since declaring independence (World Bank, 2020), Croatia officially became one of the developed countries, according to economic standards, although it still claims that it faces some transformational challenges in socio-political and economic terms (MFEA and UNOSSC, 2018).

2 ODA comprises assistance from official sources of financing, which are aimed exclusively at promoting the economic development and prosperity of the countries of the South. It represents official financial flows directed by OECD countries to the countries and territories on the list of recipients of ODA. It can only be provided by countries and multilateral institutions, and constitutes any transaction whose main objective is to promote the economic development and prosperity of developing countries (Alonso, 2018).

Therefore, its position as a development actor could easily be challenged.

However, Croatia offers certain interesting comparative aspects, which make it an interesting development actor to analyze, even though its ODA figures fade in comparison with the major global development aid providers. Knowledge and experience gained from the post-war transition are unfortunately still needed in countries facing armed conflicts or still in this process. Therefore, despite its small size and capacity, Croatia can be an important development partner in this sense (Lulić Grozdanoski, 2015). Its unique position in the development community could also be viewed from the lens of its experience from the EU-accession process, which is crucial for the development of the region—particularly given that most of the potential candidate countries for EU membership are in its immediate neighborhood, and that the EU enlargement to the Western Balkans experienced some fatigue after Croatia's accession (Jazbec, 2021). Hence, Croatia may soon become a very well-known and well-positioned development partner, with knowledge and experience that developing countries seek (MFEA and UNOSSC, 2018).

Even though much attention in the literature has been directed at new development actors, such as newly industrialized countries,³ post-socialist countries,⁴ and Southern Powers⁵ (Momani and Ennis, 2013; Tok et al., 2014; Lightfoot, 2010; Oprea, 2012; Sidiropoulos et al., 2015; Arbeiter et al., 2019; Palagashvili and Williamson, 2021), there is still a considerable gap in the research of the IDC used by new development actors, which are small in both size and capacity, but nevertheless shape the IDC system. This is why this paper aims to analyze the characteristics of Croatia's IDC. Through a review of primary and secondary sources, a conceptualization and operationalization of key concepts, and a critical analysis of the characteristics of Croatia's IDC, we will try to show how Croatia uses the principles of IDC.

WHAT IS INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT COOPERATION?

International Development Cooperation in the 21st century is a very broad concept that covering a wide range of public and private international activities and interventions aimed at supporting national and

3 E.g. South Africa, Thailand, Philippines, Mexico.

4 E.g. Slovenia, Poland, Czech Republic, Slovakia.

5 E.g. Brazil, China, India.

international development priorities (Alonso and Glennie, 2015). It is a foreign policy instrument that has slowly evolved from foreign and development aid, becoming an extremely powerful instrument for countries to contribute to sustainable development and improvement of living conditions for everyone (Heiner et al., 2014; Alonso and Glennie, 2015; Alonso, 2016).

Although encompassing a whole spectrum of public and private activities aimed at supporting national and international development (Severino and Ray, 2009), its origins are rooted in the post-war spirit that strongly determined international relations in the 20th century. It is impossible to deny the fact that IDC is based on the regulation of the international system that was established after the Second World War and was determined by asymmetric power relations between the Global North and South. Development aid at the time was mainly used to create a favorable (economic and political) environment in the recipient country for (mostly economic) activities of the donor country (Bučar, 2011a). In fact, former colonial relations continued under the pretense of altruism, where despite formal independence, countries of the Global South served as a political and economic “experiment” for countries of the Global North. Although countries of the Global North tried to conceal the idea of economic imperialism behind the idea of altruism (Veltmeyer, 2005), development aid primarily served as a foreign policy instrument to enable a favorable international economic environment for donors’ own economic and political activities (Maizels and Nissanke, 1984; Benko, 1997; Alesina and Dollar, 2000; Bučar, 2011a; 2011b).

However, the political and, consequently, economic emancipation of the countries of the Global South—especially after the fall of the bipolar system at the end of the Cold War era, when the socialist system *de facto* collapsed—led to great shifts in the international community. The countries of the Global South began to develop rapidly, asserting their patterns of development cooperation and challenging the old neoliberal discourse of the Washington Consensus paradigm (Spence, 2012). However, this wave of new state and non-state actors not only influenced the shift from a unipolar to a multipolar international community, but also resulted in a move from a one-dimensional to a multidimensional understanding of development. They challenged the Eurocentric view of development, which was based on the premise that all developing countries are the same and that only a one-size-fits-all approach could bring progress. Their actions influenced the

expansion of development policies and activities needed for ensuring overall development in terms of economic, environmental, social and political factors (Mawdsley, 2012).

New (development) actors from the Global South, which had a unique experience and perspective of their own development, saw the opportunity to share their own practices with partner countries faced with similar challenges, which led to the idea of South-South Cooperation.⁶ They demanded more balanced and horizontal relations between development partners, thus directly rejecting the classical approach to development strategies embodied in ODA and the hierarchical relations between donors and recipients (Santander and Alonso, 2018). The departure from the OECD's monopoly over development cooperation not only gave new impetus that allowed new actors to point out and address the shortcomings of 20th century development cooperation, but also resulted in the (re)emergence of even more new development (state) actors and an expansion of the concept of IDC (Waltz and Ramachandran, 2011; Chaturvedy et al., 2012; Santander and Alonso, 2018).

Unlike ODA, which was, and still is, aimed exclusively at promoting the economic development and prosperity of developing countries through public funding, IDC is a much broader concept that includes public and private international activities and interventions aimed at supporting national and international development priorities, which are combined into commonly agreed goals (e.g. Millennium Development Goals, Sustainable Development Goals) (Alonso and Glennie, 2015). It includes a number of (new) actors, which were previously not recognized as development actors. In addition to the countries of the Global South, which were and still certainly are among the most vocal and influential when it comes to developmental goals, principles and activities, we can also observe an increase in the number of official providers of ODA who joined the traditional donors in adhering to DAC rules (e.g. new EU and OECD members) and providers of IDC that are not part of the DAC but nevertheless report to it regularly (e.g. Arab countries, Croatia, etc.) (Grimm et al., 2009; Klingebiel, 2014; Alonso, 2018).

6 South-South Cooperation is based on mutual benefits, where economic ties are desirable and promotion of own interests of partners in development cooperation is not prohibited (Mawdsley, 2012; Quadir, 2013). Moreover, the relationship between the partners is based on horizontal demand-based ownership (Park, 2011), where partners in development cooperation with an equal position can strengthen their strong political commitment to such cooperation and utilize their comparative advantages (MFEA and UNOSSC, 2018).

In addition to state actors and multilateral institutions, IDC activities are also carried out by private companies, foundations and non-governmental organizations. Even though their main purpose was once to only directly carry out development activities, non-state (and private) actors did not actively participate in the shaping of the IDC field (Alonso, 2018). However, companies, private foundations, religious organizations, non-governmental organizations, etc. have now become important actors in the IDC system, contributing to it with additional capital, resources, new priorities and a different organizational culture (Alonso, 2018).

Therefore, it is pointless to limit development cooperation only to ODA and its objectives, where only a limited number of actors may participate (*ibid.*). On the contrary, complex development issues require complex solutions, which is why heterogeneity of actors and processes should not be understood as a weakness, as it allows different actors to develop on their own, regardless of any prescribed recipes experienced by other actors (Benko, 2000). Countries, multilateral institutions and private (non-state) actors can, through their activities, together provide more opportunities for boosting development (Klingebiel, 2014). The old hierarchical donor-recipient relationship, where only a limited number of actors defined the rules of the game, proved as often ineffective. New actors in the development field have challenged existing structures with demands for a fairer distribution of responsibilities among countries, and highlighted the importance that development issues and capacities of individual countries are so diverse that development strategies must take into account a wide range of factors that significantly affect development (Mawdsley, 2012; Alonso, 2018).

International Development Cooperation is therefore much more than just the mere concept of ODA, which is aimed exclusively at promoting the economic development and prosperity of developing countries and represents official financial flows of OECD countries toward the countries and territories on the ODA list of recipients (Alesina and Dollar, 2000; Bučar, 2011a; Arbeiter et al., 2019). In addition to ODA, IDC activities also include total official support for sustainable development (TOSSD),⁷ triangular cooperation,⁸ Aid for Trade, partici-

7 TOSSD includes all officially supported sources of financial flows that promote sustainable development. It includes ODA activities and non-concessional and other debt instruments, equity and financial investments released from the private sector through official interventions (Alonso and Glennie, 2015; Alonso, 2016).

8 Triangular cooperation involves at least three actors and is not limited to two South-South cooperation partners. In fact, participation of a DAC member is often desirable (Alonso, 2016).

pation of private actors in infrastructure projects, South-South (development) cooperation,⁹ capacity building and policy changes that can ensure overall development (Alonso and Glennie, 2015; Alonso, 2016; 2018; Horner, 2020). Among other things, this long list is due to the fact that more and more actors are increasingly involved in development cooperation and are changing its traditional framework.

Hence, the concept of IDC is understood in this paper as a foreign policy instrument aimed at ensuring minimum social standards, reducing international inequality, and providing public goods at the international level (Alonso, 2018). Emphasis is placed on inclusive partnerships of all IDC (private and non-private) actors, which promote transfer of knowledge and horizontal cooperation at bilateral and multilateral levels. They promote mutual sharing of practices and experiences, support active cooperation for the provision of international public goods, and help correct market failures and rules that hinder or undermine the implementation of development goals (Alonso and Glennie, 2015). It is therefore a concept by which all actors (Global North and Global South) take responsibility for reducing poverty and integrating economic, social and political changes, in order to fully contribute to the implementation of development goals.

CHARACTERISTICS OF CROATIA'S INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT COOPERATION

Conceptualizing and understanding IDC is not an easy task and it needs constant reconsideration that reflects development practice(s). This is why understanding the characteristics of the IDC of a specific country is highly important, offering new insights on how different (new) actors understand and implement IDC. New development actors often have important experience from their own development path and have gained unique expertise that gives them an important comparative advantage in the global development arena (Palagashvili and Williamson, 2021). The memory of their development “struggle” is often still fresh in such countries, which is why they are more susceptible to the issues and needs of other (developing) countries.

One such example is Croatia, which walked a rocky but important road from being an ODA recipient to becoming a new development

9 South-South cooperation aims at achieving development goals, while protecting the interests of the countries of the Global South by uniting at the multilateral level and enhancing efforts for soft empowerment of the countries of the Global South. It creates alternative structures for knowledge exchange and strengthening regional relations between the countries of the Global South. It is a combination of economic and development cooperation (Zimmermann and Smith, 2011; Alonso, 2016; 2018).

partner. Drawing from its own experience of military aggression and humanitarian crisis, post-war reconstruction, democratic transition and becoming a member of the EU, Croatia gained an in-depth understanding of what recipient countries need and how development cooperation can be improved (MFEA and UNOSSC, 2018). That is why the next section of the paper focuses on Croatia's IDC and its characteristics, analyzing what Croatia wants to achieve with its IDC, which actors are helping it to achieve these goals, and how.

GOALS (AND PRIORITIES)

The goals of Croatian IDC are defined in the Act on Development Cooperation and Humanitarian Aid Abroad, which was adopted in 2008 and sets the legal basis of Croatian IDC. These goals are then further elaborated in the National Strategy for Development Cooperation of the Republic of Croatia for the period from 2017–2021 (hereinafter National Strategy for Development Cooperation), adopted by the Croatian parliament in 2017, and complemented by the strategic and geographical priorities, which support the implementation of Croatia's IDC goals.

As presented in Table 1, the general goals of Croatia's IDC are focused on eradicating poverty, promoting sustainable development, ensuring global peace and security, reducing inequality, promoting economic development and assisting in humanitarian crisis (Act on Development Cooperation and Humanitarian Aid Abroad, 2008, Article 4). These goals are then further elaborated by more specific, strategic goals, which in addition to peace and security promote transfer of knowledge that Croatia gained in its democratic transition toward EU accession and finding its place in the development arena as a new and small development actor (National Strategy for Development Cooperation, 2017, Article 7).

Table 1: Objectives and priorities of Croatian IDC

GENERAL GOALS
Alleviation of poverty and hunger
Promoting sustainable economic, social and environmental development
Social and environmental development
Ensuring global peace and security
Promoting general access to education
Improving the quality of basic health services
Promoting economic cooperation
Assistance in humanitarian crises

STRATEGIC GOALS	
1. Promoting policies for the preservation of peace, interdependence of international security and development, prevention and peaceful resolution of conflicts.	
2. Promoting and applying one's own unique experiences of war and post-war democratic transition, as well as experiences of EU accession in international development projects.	
3. Creating preconditions for closer cooperation and global recognition of new and small donors.	
4. Significantly involving national political, economic, and social stakeholders, and strengthening the support of the Croatian public for development and humanitarian policy.	
5. Encouraging the implementation of comprehensive development programs with a smaller number of consolidated, targeted and effective projects, and ensuring a gradual increase in allocations for ODA, in accordance with international commitments.	
6. Harmonizing the national legal and budgetary framework with a view to implementing development and humanitarian policies more effectively.	
SECTORAL PRIORITIES	GEOGRAPHICAL PRIORITIES ^{1a}
The dignity of every human being	Southeast Europe
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Education – Health – Protection and empowerment of women, children and youth 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Bosnia and Hercegovina
Peace and security and the development of democratic institutions	Southern and Eastern Neighborhood
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Post-war transition – Accession to the EU 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Jordan – Ukraine
Responsible economic development	Developing countries

Source: *Own elaboration based on the Act on Development Cooperation and Humanitarian Aid Abroad (2008); National Strategy for Development Cooperation (2017).*

In addition to the goals, Croatia also defined sectoral and geographical priorities, which are interlinked and “selected according to the political, economic and security interests of the Republic of Croatia and are intertwined by the specific knowledge and experience in peacebuilding and security, post-war reconstruction, recovery, state-building and comprehensive pre-EU reforms” (National Strategy for Development Cooperation, 2017, Article 5). However, what needs to be emphasized is that sectoral and geographical priorities were also selected based on the core national (foreign policy) priorities, enhancing the capabilities of partners and Croatia’s overall interest to strengthen bilateral cooperation with selected countries (National Strategy for Development Cooperation, 2017, Articles 5.1 and 5.2; MFEA and UNOSSC, 2018).

Croatia’s IDC goals and priorities set in its legal and policy framework

^{1a} Countries identified within geographical priorities, as set in the National Strategy for Development Cooperation, can be expanded by the implementation program, which is prepared by the Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs of the Republic of Croatia.

suggest that Croatia wants to encourage sustainable development, implementation of sustainable development goals (SDGs),¹⁰ and enhancement of its national political, economic, and social goals (National Strategy for Development Cooperation, 2017). However, it is also important to note that Croatia also identifies its goals in terms of the principles of South-South Cooperation (MFEA and UNOSSC, 2018), defining its own development identity through economic and development cooperation, where mutual benefits of partner countries are desirable in order to empower its international influence, economic independence, and reduce its dependence on more (economically) developed countries (Gray and Gills, 2016; Gosovic, 2016; Bergamaschi and Tickner, 2017).

ACTORS

Croatia's IDC goals, which are set to "create the conditions for closer cooperation and global recognition of new and small donors that have similar and comparable advantages, challenges and priorities," are pursued by different state and non-state actors. The Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs (MFEA)¹¹ is the main actor for Croatian IDC and is responsible for coordination of the country's development and humanitarian activities (OECD, 2021). Together with other ministries and national bodies,¹² it implements IDC based on the principle of policy coherence for development (Government of the Republic of Croatia, 2019).

Moreover, the comprehensiveness of Croatian IDC also depends on cooperation with other, non-state actors, such as the private sector, civil society, academic community, and religious communities (MFEA and UNOSSC, 2018). Croatia claims to actively cooperate with civil society organizations (e.g. Croatian Platform for International Citizen Solidarity) in order to strengthen its IDC (MFEA and UNOSSC, 2018; Government of the Republic of Croatia, 2019). However, the 2019 Development Education and Awareness Raising report for Croatia states that

10 National Strategy for Development Cooperation (2017, Article 5.1) directly identifies priority SDG areas, such as good health (SDG 3), education (SDG 4), gender equality (SDG 5), decent work (SDG 8), reduced inequalities (SDG 10), sustainable production (SDG 12), life below water (SDG 14), life on land (SDG 15), and peaceful and just societies (SDG 16).

11 The two main directorates responsible for IDC are the Directorate for Economic Affairs and Development Cooperation and the Directorate for Development Cooperation and Humanitarian Aid (OECD, 2021).

12 The ministries and other national bodies participating in Croatian IDC are the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Defense, the Croatian Meteorological and Hydrological Service, the Office for Human Rights and Rights of National Minorities, the Croatian Bank for Reconstruction and Development, the Croatian National Bank, the Ministry of Economy, Entrepreneurship and Crafts, the Ministry of Culture, the Ministry of Croatian Veterans, the Ministry of Environmental Protection and Energy, the Ministry of Science and Education, the Ministry of Finance, Ministry of the Interior, Central State Office for Croats Abroad, etc. (Government of the Republic of Croatia, 2019, p. 6).

the country does not use the full potential of the civil society sector (Bosanac, 2020). Even though the role of civil society organizations in the development community is often understood as a protector of human rights, democratization, gender equality, etc., which needs to be critical of government wrongdoings, its role in IDC is also paramount. This may be one of the reasons why the MFEA opened in 2021 a call for IDC projects in cooperation with civil society organizations that have experience in implementing such projects and can help empower vulnerable groups, promote economic development, and strengthen democracy in neighboring countries (MFEA, 2021).¹³ Only through mutual cooperation and trust between the two can Croatian IDC be enhanced.

While the role of civil society organizations is not as clear as one would expect, this is not the case with Croatian private companies. They are identified as an important non-state actor in its IDC, especially those that have interest and want to be present in the partner countries set as a geographical priority (MFEA and UNOSSC, 2018). In addition to private companies, Croatia also sees great value in the role of the academic community, which can help with raising awareness about development cooperation, as well as religious communities, which can help with its development agenda especially in the countries where Croatia has limited diplomatic presence (ibid.).

ACTIVITIES

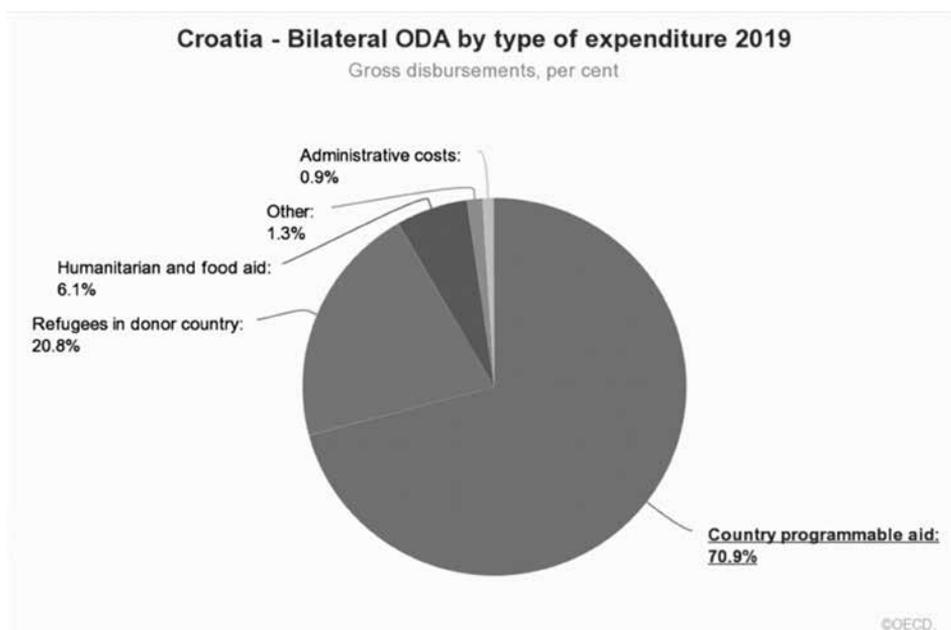
One of Croatia's main goals is to improve its political and economic position in the international community, and enhance its own and its partners' development. It tries to achieve this by involving a diverse range of political, economic, and social stakeholders in its development partnership, using a variety of traditional and non-traditional IDC activities or instruments (MFEA, 2021). Croatia acknowledges the importance of ODA as an important instrument (activity) of IDC, but it does not shy away from other non-traditional IDC activities (MFEA and UNOSSC, 2018; Government of the Republic of Croatia, 2019; OECD, 2021).

In terms of its traditional IDC activities, Croatia provided in 2019 USD 74 million, which equaled to 0.13% of its gross national income (GNI) for ODA. Preliminary data for 2020 show that Croatia provided 0.15%

¹³ Before 2021, the MFEA had published only two open calls for cooperation of civil society organizations in development projects—one in 2014 and the other in 2020 (Bosanac, 2020).

of its GNI for ODA, translating into USD 84.5 million (OECD, 2021). However, more than two thirds (72%) of its development funds in 2019 went through international organizations, 97.4% of which was Croatia's contribution to the EU budget and the European Development Fund (Government of the Republic of Croatia, 2019; OECD 2021).¹⁴ Croatia's bilateral development spending in 2019 amounted to USD 20.4 million of gross bilateral ODA (which includes earmarked contributions to multilateral organizations). As shown in *Figure 1*, 70.9% of bilateral ODA was for country programmable aid, 20.8% funds for refugees, 6.1% for humanitarian and food aid, 0.9% was spent for administrative costs, and 1.3% was unspecified bilateral ODA expenditures (OECD, 2021).

Figure 1: Bilateral ODA by type of expenditure 2019



Source: OECD, 2021. *Development Co-operation Profiles: Croatia*.

In line with its National Strategy for Development Cooperation, 73.1% (USD 14.9 million) of Croatia's gross bilateral ODA was allocated to European countries and 7.6% (USD 1.6 million) to countries of the Middle East (OECD, 2021). According to official OECD data (2021), most of the bilateral ODA was allocated to Bosnia and Herzegovina (85.9%),

¹⁴ Croatia's overall multilateral ODA accounted for 78.9% of its total ODA in 2018, whereas an estimate for 2020 is 76.3% of total ODA.

followed by Turkey (7.1%), Afghanistan (3.2%), the Syrian Arab Republic (1.3%), Albania (1.3%), Ukraine (0.6%), and Kosovo (0.6%).

However, according to the 2019 Report on the Implementation of Official Development Assistance of the Republic of Croatia Abroad, the largest development partners were Bosnia and Herzegovina, followed by Serbia, Albania, North Macedonia, and Kosovo (Government of the Republic of Croatia, 2019, p. 14). The reason is that the report includes non-traditional activities in development cooperation that are not considered ODA (*ibid.*, p. 15).¹⁵ These activities are knowledge transfer, capacity building, triangular cooperation, South-South cooperation, technical cooperation, and different project-type interventions (MFEA and UNOSSC, 2018; Government of the Republic of Croatia, 2019; OECD, 2021).

Non-traditional activities in Croatian IDC are implemented based on its partners' requests through direct diplomatic channels or multilateral fora (MFEA and UNOSSC, 2018), and encompass programs for resocialization and employment of veterans, mine-risk education, humanitarian demining, advocacy for the prohibition of landmines, activities that provide and coordinate technical assistance to countries in economic and political transition, transfer of knowledge and experience from Croatia's transition, activities in the framework of war reconstruction and reconciliation processes, etc. (*ibid.*, pp. 26–43). Specifically, it reports on its South-South cooperation activities with post-conflict societies in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Afghanistan, Ukraine, and Colombia.

In Bosnia and Herzegovina, which is Croatia's key development and economic partner, the training and expertise on the Euro-Atlantic Integration Process is shared, projects on veterans' economic and social rehabilitation are being implemented, as well as projects and activities related to demining and sustainable return of refugees (*ibid.*, pp. 46–48). In Afghanistan, on the other hand, the focus is on small-scale projects aimed at state building, improved education, health conditions, and development of small enterprises. The emphasis of both partners was on strengthening the role of women, youth, and children, which are understood to be key accelerators of change in a post-conflict society (*ibid.*, pp. 44–46). Moreover, Croatia's experience with decommissioning of mine stocks, mine-risk education, and humanitarian demin-

15 Taking non-traditional IDC activities into account, Croatia reports that its official contribution to sustainable development was primarily directed toward bilateral cooperation, which amounts to 97.7% of its IDC (Government of the Republic of Croatia, 2019).

ing is shared in Colombia as well as Ukraine, where it also focuses on psycho-social assistance for veterans and other civilians, and peaceful reintegration of temporarily occupied territories (*ibid.*, pp. 49–53).¹⁶

CONCLUSION

Croatia can be described as a unique development provider with distinct characteristics. Comparing it to its northern neighbor Slovenia, a member of the EU, OECD and DAC,¹⁷ one would assume that Croatia's path would be similar. However, this is not the case. Despite being formally recognized as a donor, Croatia is a development provider, which is not a member of the OECD and DAC, even though it reports to them regularly on a voluntary basis. The reasons for this are certainly numerous, but we must by no means forget the fact that Croatia was one of the six republics that made up former Yugoslavia, one of the founding members of the Non-Aligned Movement (Udovič, 2022),¹⁸ which aimed at reducing the economic and political dependence of the South from the North and served as one of the driving forces of South-South cooperation (Gray and Gills, 2016). This leads us to think that Croatian IDC is not defined only by global trends, but also by its historical memory, which is reflected in its present development activities.

As summarized in Table 2, Croatia understands its IDC as a foreign policy instrument for encouraging sustainable development and, most importantly, peruse its own political and economic goals. What is important is that Croatia does not only acknowledge the importance of non-traditional, new development actors, such as fast-growing economies and the private sector, but also welcomes various forms of development cooperation, which is reflected in the characteristics of its IDC. Two-way horizontal development partnership is understood as more effective than the classical donor-recipient relationship, which is why Croatia understands IDC in terms of non-traditional development activities, such as technical cooperation, transfer of knowledge, capacity building, triangular

16 More details on Croatian IDC activities in partner countries are available in its official reports (MFEA and UNOSSC, 2018; MFEA, 2022).

17 Slovenia joined the EU in 2004 and at the same time, according to World Bank standards, turned from a development assistance recipient to a donor (Arbeiter et al., 2019). It became a member of the OECD in 2010 and joined the DAC in 2013.

18 The Non-Aligned Movement was established in Belgrade in 1961, based on the idea from the Bandung Conference conclusions of 1955 (Udovič, 2022), which also paved the way for the Group of 77. Both coalitions aimed to defend and promote the collective interests of the Global South and improve common negotiating positions within the international system (Ghali and Ostojic, 2014; Dimitrijević, 2021).

cooperation, and South-South Cooperation. These activities involve state and non-state actors that can help utilize Croatia's own development experience in the international community.

Table 2: Characteristics of Croatia's IDC

GOALS	ACTORS	ACTIVITIES
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Encouraging sustainable development - Implementation of SDGs - Empowering its international (political and economic) position - Enhancing bilateral (economic and development) cooperation with selected countries 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs (and other ministries) - Private companies with interests in partner countries - Civil society organizations - Academic community - Religious communities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Bilateral and multilateral ODA - South-South cooperation - Technical cooperation - Triangular cooperation - Knowledge transfer - Capacity building

Source: *Own elaboration.*

It is not surprising that Croatia could be described as a “bridge between what is traditionally seen as North and South development cooperation” (MFEA and UNOSSC, 2018, p. 5). Based on its strategic and geographical priorities, it is clear that Croatia shaped its IDC in terms of its own political, economic and security goals. Therefore, its main development cooperation partners are countries in its immediate neighborhood and countries that can (in)directly influence Croatia's security.

In conclusion, one could use this analysis to assume that Croatia is not on its way of becoming a traditional development actor. Based on the conceptualization of IDC presented in this paper, Croatia's development characteristics are more in line with new development actors that help lead the international community toward a paradigmatic shift in the understanding of development and IDC. This positioning offers Croatia a special platform to actively engage in the international development architecture, contributing its own experience in order to maximize the potential for utilizing as many benefits as development cooperation can offer.

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