

## **“MIRROR, MIRROR, ON THE WALL...”: SLOVENIAN DEVELOPMENT ASSISTANCE IN THE WESTERN BALKAN COUNTRIES AND ITS REPUTATION IN THE REGION<sup>1</sup>**

*Abstract. The article delves into the topic of international development cooperation from the perspective of the relationship between the donor and recipient countries. The authors thoroughly analyse the official Slovenian development aid to countries of the Western Balkans. They establish that Slovenia does not tie its official development aid to the pursuit of its foreign policy goals, but provides it on a more ad hoc basis. This explains why Slovenia's development aid cannot be viewed as efficient from the perspective of its foreign policy goals in Western Balkan countries.*

*Key words: development cooperation, Slovenia, Western Balkan states, stereotypes*

### **Introduction and problematique**

Celebrating the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of its independence this year, Slovenia has been going through different stages in terms of its relationship with the former countries of Yugoslavia.<sup>2</sup> While during the 1990s Slovenia tried to cut off all ties with the ex-Yugoslav countries, in mid-2000 it changed the course of its foreign policy and slowly, piece by piece, has been returning to the region (*cf.* Bojinović Fenko and Šabič, 2014; Lovec and Bojinović Fenko, 2016). This has been encouraged by the Slovenian economic interests since the operations of Slovenian enterprises in the ex-Yugoslav countries represent over 15% of total Slovenian exports and over 70% of all Slovenian outward foreign direct investment (*cf.* Jaklič and Svetličič, 2016).

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<sup>2</sup> The understanding of ex-Yugoslav countries follows the logic of the project Cross-cultural differences and stereotypisation: an advantage or disadvantage in political and economic cooperation among ex-Yugoslavia member states. In that project, the former Yugoslav countries, as defined by the authors of the project, are: Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia, Macedonia, Montenegro and Kosovo.

However, Slovenia's return to the region has occurred in a significantly changed international and regional milieu. Civil wars, economic regression, ethnic tensions and a lack of intraregional cooperation have left dire consequences and a state of distrust in the region. Moreover, when Slovenia left the region the 'empty space' was filled by Austria and Germany. Upon its return to the region, there was almost no free space to fill since it is especially Austrian politics and economics that strongly dominate regional occurrences. Second, Slovenia's successful accession to Euro-Atlantic integrations caused some sort of envy within the region, while the framework of these Euro-Atlantic integrations (especially the visa limitations) also changed the dynamic of contacts between Slovenians and citizens of countries from the region. This has been a perilous issue because the lack of exchange of contacts especially among the younger generations has created a serious gap in cross-cultural understanding within the region.<sup>3</sup>

Soon after joining the Euro-Atlantic integration, it became obvious that Slovenia was losing its comparative advantage and that something should be done to regain a possibly advantageous position. Understanding itself as 'on the safe side', Slovenia now re-entered the region as a 'teacher', able and willing to 'teach' the countries of ex-Yugoslavia how the political and economic transition should be carried out, and how to prepare for joining the Euro-Atlantic integrations. The 'scholarly approach' was supported by different actions, one being the decision to make the ex-Yugoslav countries one of the priorities of Slovenia's development assistance. In theory, international development cooperation should neither be motivated by nor tied to a country's foreign policy or other goals, yet every-day practice shows that development assistance is rarely seen as an altruistic instrument of national foreign policy and statecraft. Frequently, it is used as a pragmatic tool for promoting and popularising the donor in the receiving country with the final objective to promote economic cooperation.

In the period 2006–2008, Slovenia adopted two relevant documents that constitute the framework of its development assistance: in June 2006, the National Assembly adopted the *Act on International Development Cooperation of the Republic of Slovenia* (IDC Act; Ur. l. RS 70/06), while in July 2008 the National Assembly adopted the *Resolution on International*

<sup>3</sup> A research study conducted by Udovič, Svetličič and Raškovič (2010) confirmed that this fact was true for Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia, Macedonia, Kosovo and Montenegro, while only partially true for Croatia. However, also contacts between Slovenian and Croatian youth were rare, sometimes due to strong prejudices between nations and sometimes merely due to the lack of language knowledge. Udovič et al. (2010) also proved that since 1991 onwards Slovenia has lost its comparative advantage in the area of language since, as pointed out by Slovenian managers, the younger generations are replacing »Serbo-Croatian« with the English language. This means that the linguistic barrier in the region has been rising and the comparative advantage of the older generations who know the language has been decreasing.

*Development Cooperation of the Republic of Slovenia until 2015* (ReIDC; Ur. l. RS 73/08) (Udovič and Bučar, 2014). While the IDC Act did not specifically determine the geographical coverage of Slovenia's development cooperation<sup>4</sup>, the ReIDC did (Udovič and Bučar, 2014). Article 10 of the ReIDC states that

*[b]ased on the stated objectives, principles and other factors, the target countries in the next mid-term period will include Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, Macedonia, Montenegro and Serbia; for programmes/projects in some of these countries, the programme method will be employed and in others, the project method.*

In the following years, Slovenia directed a large portion of its development assistance to the ex-Yugoslav countries. The proposed article investigates whether the invested development assistance has had (and if so, what sort of) an impact on Slovenia's perception within the region. Our thesis that we would like to test is that the high intensity of Slovenian development cooperation in the ex-Yugoslav countries should be positively related to the social distance towards Slovenians, which means that the more active Slovenia is in a particular former Yugoslav country, the more positive the image of Slovenians should be among that country's population.

The proposed thesis will be tested by obtaining data from primary and secondary sources that will be elaborated, analysed and coupled through use of qualitative and quantitative methodological approaches. The historical-analytical method will serve to present the main characteristics of Slovenia's development assistance in the countries of ex-Yugoslavia. Relying on analysis of the quantitative data obtained by Udovič et al. (2015), we will provide an insight into the image of Slovenians held by undergraduate students in the selected ex-Yugoslav countries.

The article builds on three interrelated parts. The introduction is followed by the theoretical framework on the setting of the geographic and thematic priorities of international development cooperation. The second part presents basic data about Slovenian development cooperation in the ex-Yugoslav countries, while the third part analyses the data on the perception of Slovenia and Slovenians in the selected ex-Yugoslav countries. The article ends with a discussion of the main findings.

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<sup>4</sup> The document only suggested that it should be aligned with the foreign policy objectives (IDC, 2006: Article 3).

## Theoretical, legal and financial framework of Slovenian development cooperation with former Yugoslav countries

The patterns and determinants of international development cooperation are important issues in development economics. Studies that analyse these issues can be categorised in three broad groups: explanatory, descriptive and prescriptive (Harrigan and Wang, 2011: 1282). While explanatory studies attempt to explain the observed allocation of aid, and descriptive studies seek to describe or evaluate the allocating of aid against normative criteria, prescriptive studies aim to prescribe the inter-recipient allocation of aid. Some empirical studies have also analysed different 'biases' (such as population, middle-income issues, policy environment, bandwagon effect etc.), but *ad finem* they all realised that the real world is complex and that the interactions between the donor and the receiving country cannot be analysed in a vacuum. They involve the interplay of bureaucratic, political, commercial, developmental and other factors (Bučar and Milosavljević, 2011) – and therefore have to be approached holistically; or as Harrigan and Wang (2011: 1284) put it, the “[a]id allocation process is complex and no one knows exactly how it works”.

### Theoretical framework

Among the three groups of studies described above, the most appropriate approach to defining Slovenian development assistance is the group of explanatory studies, sometimes also known as recipient needs'/donor interests' studies, which are framed by two major arguments. On one hand, a moral and humanitarian argument exists stating that absolute poverty is intolerable – hence developed countries have a moral imperative to provide aid and offset the unequal distribution of global resources. On the other hand, the logic of “*there is no free lunch*” prevails, meaning that the aid can be applied to promote the donor's own economic and foreign policy interests and to exercise its political power. The two approaches are quite often ‘merged’ to form so-called ‘hybrid’ models reflecting as the explanatory factors the recipients' needs and the donor's interests. Even though it is rarely openly declared, it is often seen that the donor's interests prevail. This is confirmed by Benko (1997: 266–267) when saying that “the aim of development assistance is creation of a favourable international economic environment for the actor, who gives the aid”.<sup>5</sup> His statement is elaborated

<sup>5</sup> Benko (1997: 267–268) here quotes the example of the Marshall Plan (1947) with which, according to him, the United States of America (USA) wanted to secure the highest possible dependency of Western European countries on the USA.

by Alesina and Dollar (2000: 1) who state that “an inefficient, economically closed, mismanaged non-democratic former colony, politically friendly to its former colonizer, receives more foreign aid than another country with similar level of poverty, a superior policy stance, but without a past as a colony”. Similarly, Maizels and Nissanke (1984: 891) also claim that the bilateral assistance of most countries focuses on achieving their economic, political and security interests. Finally, the International Development Association (2002: 2) clearly states that most bilateral assistance is determined by a complex system of historical, political and economic relations, so aid is less ‘true aid’, but a means and a way to achieve the foreign policy objectives of the donor country.<sup>6</sup>

### *Legal framework*

A high level of self-interest is also evident in the Slovenian decision to select the Western Balkan countries as the top-priority recipient region. The process of establishing asymmetrical relations with the region through the channel of development assistance started in 1997, but a formal step in this direction only came by establishing a single platform under the umbrella of the Stability Pact for South-Eastern Europe (1999), where Slovenia had a great impact on bilateral and multilateral development cooperation with the region (Udovič and Bučar, 2007).

Its interest to channel most Slovenian development assistance was (unofficially) confirmed by Marija Adanja<sup>7</sup> in her speech at the European Parliament in January 2007 where she stressed that (Udovič and Bučar, 2014: 83):

*Slovene development cooperation is currently focused on the countries of the Western Balkans, Eastern Europe and Caucasus. We expect this to remain so also in the future. [...] We believe to have substantial comparative advantages in this field. [...] Furthermore, our advantages with regard to the Western Balkans comprise linguistic familiarity and traditional, historic ties that enable better communication and understanding.*

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<sup>6</sup> What is of particular relevance is the question of how such potential determinants of aid allocation affect the development impact of global aid flows. Collier and Dollar (2002), for example, documented in their study that sub-optimal geographical aid allocation (resulting from channelling aid to strategically important countries from a political perspective) had reduced the potential poverty alleviation impact of aid.

<sup>7</sup> Marija Adanja was then the head of the International Development Cooperation Sector at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Slovenia.

The logic that the ex-Yugoslavia countries + Albania should be the target countries of Slovenian development cooperation was also promulgated by Mrak, Kamnar and Bučar (2007) who in 2007 provided the materials for the Strategy of International Development Cooperation of RS.<sup>8</sup> They even went a step further (compared to the ReIDC adopted in 2008) by proposing, in accordance with *EU Code of Conduct on Division of Labour in Development Policy* (2007) that “within the geographical priority of Western Balkan EU, Macedonia and Monte Negro are nominated as the countries for ‘programme cooperation’, while the cooperation with other countries in the region should be ‘project’ based” (Mrak et al., 2007: 59). In this way, Slovenia could gradually position itself as the leading EU member state donor in these two countries and eventually coordinate development cooperation on behalf of the EU. In 2008, the ReIDC was adopted, which – together with the *Declaration on the Western Balkans* (Ur. l. RS 58/2010), *Declaration on the Foreign Policy of the Republic of Slovenia* (Ur. l. RS 53/2015) and the Strategy of Foreign Policy of the Republic of Slovenia – represent the main pillar of Slovenian development cooperation with the former Yugoslav states.

### *Financial framework*

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Since the ReIDC was only adopted mid-2008, its characteristics can be discussed from 2009 onwards. That is why the discussion in this part is framed around the 2009–2014 period.

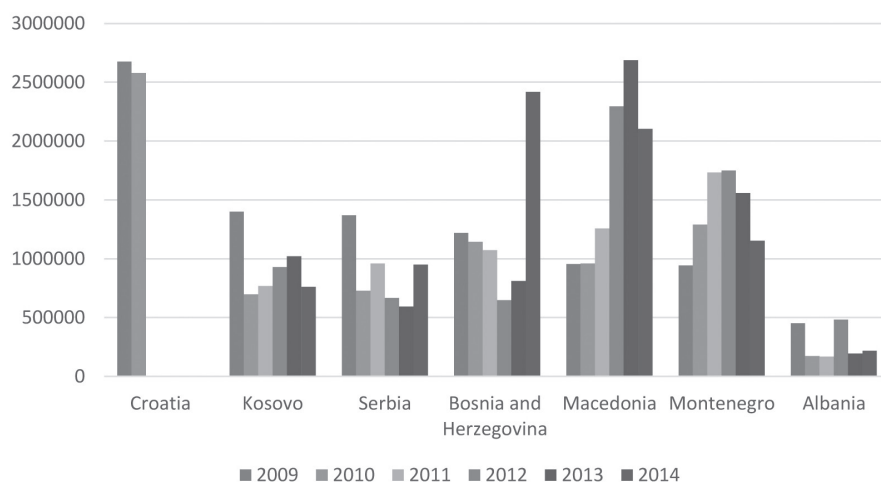
One of the first facts to be observed with Slovenia’s development cooperation is the relatively small share of bilateral development assistance compared to its multilateral cooperation. As an EU member state, Slovenia contributes to the EU budget and automatically an agreed share of these funds is dedicated to development cooperation. Further, Slovenia contributes to the European Development Fund and also pays contributions to other multilateral international institutions. On the other hand, the size of its bilateral assistance is determined by the available national resources where, in principle, Slovenia is striving to increase the funds but during the observed period was not at all successful in doing so.

In 2009, Slovenia earmarked EUR 14,362,325 or 28% of its total development aid to fund bilateral development projects. A major share (more than EUR 11.3 million or 79%) was directed to the ex-Yugoslavia + Albania countries, where Croatia received the highest amount (EUR 2.67 million while Albania the lowest (EUR 0.45 million (MZZ, 2010)). As the two “programme countries”, Macedonia and Montenegro figured less prominently than the

<sup>8</sup> The strategy was prepared as background material for the ReIDC (2008).

recipients from other countries. Not very different are the statistics for 2010 where the total amount of bilateral assistance stopped at EUR 12,848,657 of which the ex-Yugoslavia + Albania countries received EUR 9,477,676 (or 74%) (MZZ, 2011). As seen in Figure 1, the programme countries were listed as the second and fourth recipients, with Croatia remaining in the lead.<sup>9</sup>

Figure 1: SLOVENIAN DEVELOPMENT ASSISTANCE IN EX-YUGOSLAVIA + ALBANIA COUNTRIES (2009–2014)



Source: MZZ (2010–2015).

The declining trend of bilateral development aid continued in 2011 when the total amounted to EUR 10,298,739 of which EUR 7,871,767 was directly made available to the countries. The share of ex-Yugoslavia + Albania countries dropped to 68% of total bilateral assistance, also due to the fact that Croatia had 'graduated' to a higher income group and could no longer be listed as a development recipient at the OECD-DAC. Interestingly enough, in this year the top two recipients were the two programme countries: Montenegro with EUR 1,734,415 and Macedonia with EUR 1,256,167. The project countries were ranked as follows: Bosnia and Herzegovina EUR 1,071,540, Serbia EUR 958,930, Kosovo EUR 767,572 and Albania EUR 167,912 (MZZ, 2012).

<sup>9</sup> The main reason for the high position of this middle-income ex-Yugoslav country is the significant interest of Croatian students in studying in Slovenia. In accordance with the bilateral agreement on cooperation between the Slovenia and Croatia, Slovenia had waived the scholarships for them and presented this as development assistance.



The trend was reversed positively in 2012 and increased to EUR 14,883,255, yet the available net assistance hardly changed, making a total of EUR 10,811,083 or EUR 8,642,287 directly available to the recipient countries.<sup>10</sup> The share of ex-Yugoslavia + Albania countries slightly increased to 72% of total bilateral development assistance. The two programme countries stayed in the lead, only with reversed positions – Macedonia surpassed Montenegro (MZZ, 2013). According to the Report on International Development Cooperation for 2013, the share of bilateral aid that was disbursed to the ex-Yugoslavia + Albania countries had increased to 73% of all bilateral flows, even though the overall amount did not change much. What also remained the same was the ranking; Macedonia was followed by Montenegro, Kosovo, Bosna and Hercegovina, Serbia and Albania (MZZ, 2014). In 2014, the bilateral aid decreased slightly, yet the available resources for net aid had remained stable and the share of ex-Yugoslavia + Albania countries actually increased to EUR 8,623,010 or 81% of total bilateral assistance. Another shift occurred in the ranking of the countries, with Bosnia and Hercegovina taking the lead (MZZ, 2015).

The presented data suggest that the ex-Yugoslav countries had been treated as a geographical priority as specified in ReIDC-2008. The individual countries were, however, subject to different treatment from year to year. The overall extent of bilateral aid had not increased in line with what was planned in the Re-IDC so the various development actors were incapacitated in implementing their programmes. The variations in the amounts allocated to individual countries – even to the programme countries – suggest that much of the aid was allocated on a year-by-year basis and not on the basis of a long-term plan and clear cooperation strategy with an individual country. In terms of the principles of aid effectiveness (Paris Declaration) or EU guidelines (predictability, stability, programming etc.) one can question the quality of the Slovenian development cooperation, even if individual projects (according to MFA reports) were successfully implemented.

As explained above, it is expected that development assistance will have two effects. First, it helps the receiving country develop its (human and physical) infrastructure while, second, it is expected that the donor country would develop a better public image, with the citizens from the receiving country adopting a positive attitude to the donor country (and its citizens). Speaking more in economic terms, the development assistance should be understood as a sort of 'first-mover advantage', meaning that the donor country acquires some advantages from its assistance. These advantages are in most cases not economic in nature, but linked more to social and societal

<sup>10</sup> Most of the increase was attributed to a different way of calculating the administrative costs (MZZ, 2013).



factors, making the environment in the receiving country more favourable to the pursuance of the foreign policy and economic goals of the donor country. In the following section, we analyse how Slovenia and Slovenians are perceived in the ex-Yugoslav countries.

### What do you think about Slovenians?

Taking into consideration the amount of development assistance disbursed to the ex-Yugoslav countries, we speculate that Slovenia has a strong positive image in those countries. Table 1 presents eight main attributes of Slovenians as perceived in the former Yugoslav countries.

*Table 1: POSITIVE AND NEGATIVE STEREOTYPES ABOUT SLOVENIANS*

Croatia	B&H	Serbia	MNE	Macedonia	Kosovo
Friendly (+)	Ridiculous (-)	Friendly (+)	Hard-working (+)	Smart (+)	Hard-working (+)
Hard-working (+)	Kind (+)	Hard-working (+)	Friendly (+)	Responsible (+)	Sociable (+)
Smart (+)	Stingy (-)	Cultivated (+)	Thrifty (+)	Cold (-)	Creative (+)
Arrogant (-)	Arrogant (-)	Arrogant (-)	Stingy (-)	Accurate (+)	Generous (+)
Boring (-)	Smart (+)	Calm (+)	Fiery (-)	Jovial (+)	Eloquent (+)
Cold (-)	Hard-working (+)	Disciplined (+)	Business-oriented (+)	Hospitable (+)	Cold (-)
Quiet (-)	Friendly (+)	Closed (-)	Cold (-)	Nationalistic (-)	Developed (+)
Stingy (-)	Cold (-)	Smart (+)	Accurate (+)	Eloquent (+)	Cultivated (+)

\*Some stereotypes were merged together since they were related or meant almost the same.

Source: Based on Udovič et al. (2015).

As presented in Table 1, Slovenians are assessed positively in Serbia, Macedonia and Kosovo (more than five positive attributes), while negatively in Croatia (only three positive attributes). A deeper analysis shows that the frequencies of positive attributes are in most cases lower than of the negative ones. Therefore, even though Slovenia(ns) are sometimes assessed positively, the share of negative stereotypes exceeds the share of positive stereotypes (Rašković and Svetličič, 2011a, b; Rašković and Vuchkovski, 2016), which is – in relation with Slovenia's activities and development assistance in the ex-Yugoslav countries – concerning. A cross-country analysis shows there are some negative stereotypes/prejudices about Slovenia(ns) that are present in all ex-Yugoslav countries. For example, Croatians, Bosnians and

Serbs agree that Slovenians are arrogant; Croatians, Bosnians, Montenegrins, Macedonians and Kosovars agree that Slovenians are cold and, finally, Croatians, Bosnians and Montenegrins agree that Slovenians are stingy. Regarding arrogance – the notion that Slovenians behave arrogantly, this has not only been pointed out in ex-Yugoslav countries, but also by Svetličič (2016) who states that when presenting a paper in Brussels in 1996 some EU officials told him that the main problem of Slovenia – compared to other CEE countries – is arrogance. The issue of coldness is related to the Slovenian national character, which is relatively closed and introverted. What matters for our analysis is their consensus on the stingy nature of Slovenia(ns). If the Slovenia(ns) are seen as stingy, then all political and economic activities, and especially those activities as part of its development assistance, have not achieved their target, i.e. to establish a friendly environment for meeting the goals of Slovenian foreign policy.

The situation becomes even more perilous when we compare Table 1 with the results obtained by Udovič et al. (2012), where the authors used the same method as Udovič et al. (2015) to test stereotypes among ex-Yugoslav countries about Slovenia(ns). The results are presented in Table 2.

Table 2: SLOVENIANS ARE ...

Croatia	B&H			Serbia	Kosovo
	Serbs	Croats	Bosniaks		
Arrogant (-)	Stingy (-)	European (+)	Good guy (+)	Good guys (+)	Hard-working (+)
Modern (+)	European (+)	Good people (+)	Stingy (-)	Hard-working (+)	Calm (+)
Smart (+)	Inventive (+)	Stingy (-)	Hard-working (+)	Disciplined (+)	Cultivated (+)
Disciplined (+)	Cold (-)	Arrogant (-)	Smart (+)	Faggot (pederi) (-)*	Disciplined (+)
Selfish (-)	Gays (homosexual) (-)	Gays (homosexual) (-)	n.a.	Cold (-)	Stingy (-)

\* The stereotype of homosexuality (or in Serbia even 'faggot') has nothing to do with the sexual orientation itself, but more with the perception on how the 'typical' homosexual behaves, meaning that they are softer, less masculine, approachable etc. The idea that Serbs and Croats are far more masculine than Slovenians is also confirmed by Hofstede (n.d.), where the index of masculinity (even though it only partially covers the perception of masculinity in society) for Serbia is 43, for Croatia 40 and for Slovenia 19. For issues related to the translation of cross-cultural (scientific) terms, see Udovič (2016), Trupej (2015), and Fabčič (2014).

Source: Elaborated on the basis of Udovič et al. (2012).

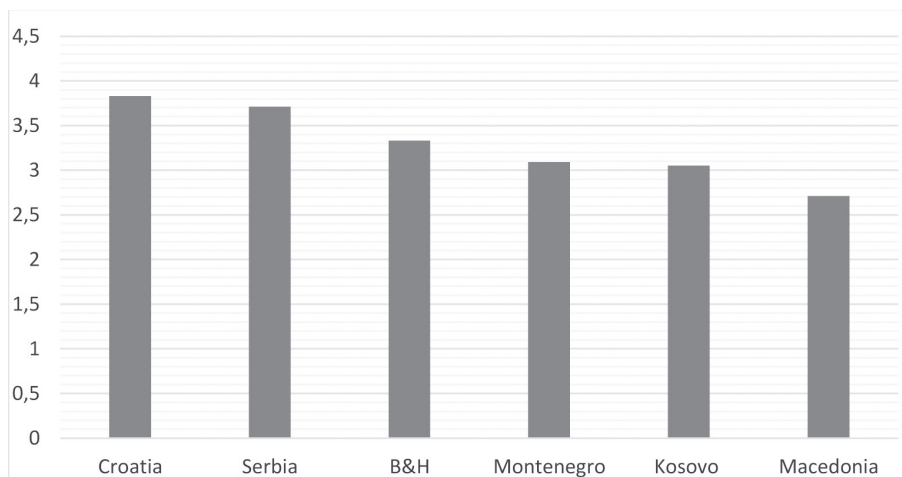
What is to be noted when comparing Tables 1 and 2 is that certain stereotypes are anchored in some ex-Yugoslavia countries. Of these, especially those hindering economic and political cooperation should be mentioned:

arrogance, stinginess and coldness. Even in Kosovo, where Slovenia(ns) are all-in-all perceived relatively most positively (because of Slovenia's role in the Kosovo revolt in 1981 and 1987 and 1989, and Slovenia's attitude in 2008), the renowned stinginess is still present. The arrogance and coldness should not be omitted since they are both negative stereotypes that strongly affect possible cooperation.

The next issue that impacts the relations between nations in ex-Yugoslav countries is ethnic distance. The main idea of measuring ethnic distance is to research attitudes to another nation or ethnic group. Ethnic distance is usually measured on a scale which starts from almost no contact (living in the same country) and gradually moves closer to intimate contact (member of my family, my spouse).<sup>11</sup>

The results obtained by Udovič et al. (2015) show that all ex-Yugoslav countries agree that they would have a (typical) Slovenian as a business partner (on average 3.3 out of 6). However, while the Croatians (average 3.83) and Serbs are more enthusiastic about the Slovenians (average 3.71),<sup>12</sup> the Macedonian scores in relation to Slovenians are the lowest in the region (average 2.77)<sup>13</sup> (see Figure 2).

Figure 2: I WOULD LIKE TO HAVE A SLOVENIAN AS ...



Source: Elaborated on the basis of Udovič et al. (2015).

<sup>11</sup> Udovič et al. (2015) formed a six-category scale of ethnic group distance, being (from the largest to the closest): (1) I am willing to live with him/her in the same country; (2) I am willing to live with him/her in the same city; (3) I am willing to have him/her as a business partner; (4) I am willing to have him/her as my neighbour; (5) I am willing to be a friend with him/her; (6) I am willing to have him/her as my family member/spouse.

<sup>12</sup> They would like to have Slovenians as their neighbours.

<sup>13</sup> They can live with Slovenians in the same city.

What is even more relevant is the cross-country average. The calculations reveal that the most 'popular' nation in ex-Yugoslavia are the Bosnians (average 3.9), followed by the Serbs (average 3.89), the Macedonians (average 3.84), the Montenegrins (average 3.7) and the Croatians (average 3.4). The score for the Slovenians is penultimate (average 3.3) and is followed by that for the Kosovars (average 3.25). These results are quite concerning given that Slovenia(ns) believe they are widely embraced in the ex-Yugoslav countries.

Finally, Udovič et al. (2015) also provided some data on how fond other ex-Yugoslav nations are of conducting business with Slovenia(ns). Realising that Slovenia is an important business actor in the region and acknowledging all business-relevant factors (common past, common cultural heritage etc.), one would expect Slovenia to rank positively in all ex-Yugoslav countries when it comes to business relations. However, as Figure 3 shows, this is not completely true.

Figure 3: *I WOULD LIKE TO CONDUCT BUSINESS WITH ...*  
(1 = Absolutely not, 4 = totally)



Source: Elaborated on the basis of Udovič et al. (2015).

Serbs are the most keen on doing business with Slovenia(ns), but on the other hand the Macedonians are the most reluctant to enter into a business relationship with Slovenia(ns). What is also interesting here is that B&H holds the penultimate position relative to the attraction to doing business with Slovenians.

## Discussion and conclusion

The expectations that international development cooperation can be a tool for promoting Slovenia in Western Balkan countries cannot be confirmed by the findings on the public attitude to Slovenians. Yet, one has to

take several issues into consideration. Despite Slovenia's claim that it has a strategy in the area of international development cooperation, the data for the past few years hardly support this. As we presented, the strategic decision on priority/programme countries was not systematically followed in the allocation of resources, nor was the increase in bilateral assistance carried out as planned. The data seem to reflect a learning period on behalf of Slovenia as a new donor on one hand and, on the other, the relatively low importance attributed to the development cooperation. These two things combined have resulted in the sub-optimal achievement of the primary objectives of international development cooperation from the viewpoint of foreign policy support.

We suggest that Slovenia has not really developed its programmes and resources allocation with the strategic objectives in mind. Yes, we have directed most of the funds to Western Balkan countries, but the manner in which this allocation was carried out was ineffective if seen from the objective of being a 'door-opener'. The existence of any comprehensive, long-term financial and contextual programming on a per country basis has so far been lacking. It seems that the conduct of our international development cooperation was basically 'recipient-driven' – if we apply an explanatory or hybrid model. Slovenia responded to the needs which emerged in different countries of the Western Balkans, but did not make itself more popular with its response (donor's interest). Such funding should be allocated with the expectation of sufficient public recognition of Slovenia's contribution in each specific case, thus gradually building up the image of a friendly supportive country. Of course, the very fact that the amounts allocated varied from year to year, that most projects were relatively small in size and that no systematic promotion was carried out on either side (neither in the recipient nor home country), reduced the possibilities of any broader impact.

International development cooperation's can only comprehensively contribute to the achievement of foreign policy objectives and building the country's image as a development partner under a different model of development cooperation than Slovenia has been practising during the past few years. It would first of all require an understanding of what role development cooperation can play in the country's foreign policy. Once the role of IDC is established within the policy, the necessary resources need to be committed, both financial and human. The next step would be a strategy that would address not only the priorities but also the tools of implementation. The stereotypes identified in our research could be a valuable guide on which perceptions we need to focus on through development cooperation to ultimately change the public climate in the recipient countries towards a more open and friendly attitude.

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