

Europe and Central Asia

Regional findings from the 2024 Listening to Leaders Survey

Leaders in government, the private sector, civil society, media, and universities in Europe and Central Asia (ECA) share their views on priorities and progress, as well as the agenda-setting influence and helpfulness in implementation of the development partners with whom they work.

544

ECA leaders responded to our 2024 Listening to Leaders (LTL) Survey

Governance

The top development goal for ECA leaders

EU

Development partner with the largest footprint across the region

World Bank

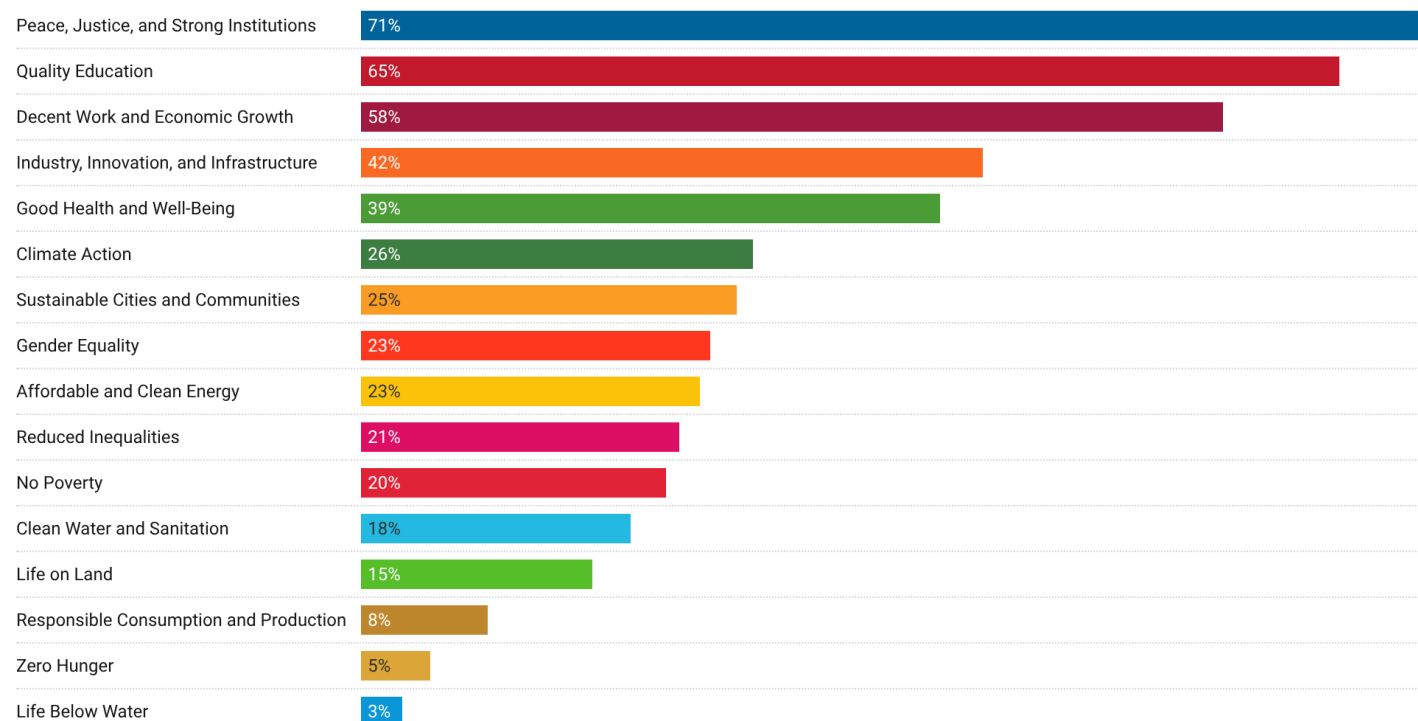
Most influential development partner across the region

UNESCO

Most helpful development partner across the region

SDG Priorities

Percentage of respondents



What leaders want

Leader priorities and the Global Goals

When asked to identify their top six development priorities of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), ECA respondents were most likely to identify Strong Institutions (71%), Quality Education (65%), and Decent Work (58%). ECA leaders tended to coalesce around fewer core priorities. They were less likely than other regions to prioritize Eliminating Poverty (20%), Eliminating Hunger (5%), Gender Equality (23%), Clean Water (18%), Reduced Inequalities (21%), Climate Action (26%), and Life Below Water (3%). Of all regions, they were most likely to identify Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions (71%) as a priority.

Partner Rankings

Respondents indicated how helpful and influential they found the partners they worked with

Influence		Helpfulness		Footprint	
Development Partner	Percent of Respondents	Development Partner	Percent of Respondents	Development Partner	Percent of Respondents
1. WB	91.9%	1. UNESCO	94.9%	1. EU	63.3%
2. IMF	91.3%	2. UNICEF	94.8%	2. USA	50.1%
3. EU	86.7%	3. IMF	90.7%	3. WB	47.5%
4. EBRD	85.9%	4. EU	90.6%	4. UNDP	45.2%
5. USA	85.8%	5. USA	89.8%	5. DEU	36.4%
6. GBR	84.7%	6. GBR	89.5%	6. EBRD	33.3%
7. IFC	83.4%	7. WHO	89%	7. IMF	27.9%
8. ILO	80.6%	8. WB	88.4%	8. UNICEF	24.8%
9. DEU	78.9%	9. IFC	88.1%	9. SWE	22.4%
10. UNDP	78.7%	10. DEU	87.8%	10. CHE	21.1%

Influence, Helpfulness and Footprint

Three survey metrics that provide insights on the perceived regional impact of partners

Footprint reflects the percentage of leaders who worked with a given partner. Influence is a measure of the partner's impact on policy decisions that leaders make. Helpfulness indicates whether or not leaders found a partner's assistance to be useful in project implementation. Notably, the average partner was considered more helpful than influential.

Sources

Custer, S., Horigoshi, A., Boer, B., and K. Marshall. (2025). *Listening to Leaders 2025: Development cooperation over a decade of disruption*. Williamsburg, VA: AidData at William & Mary.

Horigoshi, A., Custer, S., Marshall, K., and B. Burgess. (2025). *Prioritizing Agenda 2030: How do Global South leaders navigate trade-offs and assess relevance?* Analytical Brief. Williamsburg, VA: AidData at William & Mary. September 2025.

About AidData

AidData (<https://aiddata.org/>) is a research lab at William & Mary's Global Research Institute in Williamsburg, Virginia, USA. AidData helps governments and organizations make better-informed decisions on the reach, influence, and outcomes of overseas investments. We use rigorous methods, cutting-edge tools, and granular data to answer the question: who is doing what, where, for whom, and to what effect? The Listening to Leaders project surveys global leaders every 2–3 years, gathering insights on priorities,

experiences with development partners, and more across sectors like government, NGOs, civil society, and academia

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