



BELGIUM

“ N°1 priority before 2024 elections: a growth trajectory to 0.7% ”

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Main trends

“At constant prices [...], Belgian ODA has increased by 7% in one year”.¹ ODA also increased as a percentage of GNI, from 0.43 to 0.45%. This is especially good news as Belgium has decided for the first time not to count some financial flows as ODA, such as imputed student costs and in-donor refugee costs for Ukrainians. Nevertheless, under the current legislature (2019-2024), ODA has actually stagnated, even though the coalition agreement had announced a binding growth path. Flanders did count in-donor refugee costs for Ukrainians as ODA, thus more than doubling its own ODA. The federal administration also counted in-donor refugee costs for non-Ukrainian nationals. Belgian development cooperation can still be commended for its concentration in LDCs, receiving 34.8% of Belgium’s gross bilateral ODA in 2021 (DAC average is 22.9%). Yet Belgium stayed just under the 2030 Agenda objective of 0.15% GNI on ODA to LDCs (it allocated 0.14%). Similarly, Belgium can be commended for allocating 35.5% of its gross bilateral ODA to fragile contexts. However, only 1% of this went to conflict prevention in 2021, a subset of contributions to peace – decreasing from 2020.

Other trends include increasingly multilateral ODA, and a growing share in the form of humanitarian assistance. Overall, since the beginning of the legislature, Belgian development cooperation has met its core objectives. The instrumentalisation of ODA for migration objectives has been avoided thanks to a new strategy clarifying the links between development and migration. Belgium, however, has not pushed back against ODA instrumentalisation at EU level. It remains to be seen whether the position will be maintained after the 2024 elections.

Government’s relationship with civil society

In December 2022, on taking office, the new Minister for Development Cooperation emphasised the vital role of civil society for Belgian cooperation. Under the current

Reported ODA: EUR 2366 million

0.45% GNI (↑ from 0.43% in 2021)

Non-inflated ODA: EUR 2140 million

0.41% GNI (↑ from 0.38% in 2021)

Total inflated ODA: EUR 226.9 million

9.6% of total



legislature, the Minister and her administration have maintained close ties with civil society and their representatives. Negotiations are ongoing to revise the regulatory framework for non-governmental cooperation, progressing positively with the potential for substantial improvements in non-governmental cooperation programs. In April 2023, the Belgian government allocated an additional EUR 10 million fund to non-governmental actors to address inflation and the effects of multiple crises. Overall, relations with the government are positive, although civil society has occasionally been excluded from final discussions on specific issues and not adequately heard regarding the increase in ODA, despite sector mobilisation and government commitment.

The Belgian government should:

- **Adopt a binding and linear growth trajectory during the budgetary negotiations in 2023, to ensure that ODA will reach 0.7% by 2030, and that the development cooperation budget will increase in 2024 in real terms and as a percentage of GNI.**
- **Stop counting in-donor refugee costs (for Ukrainians and non-Ukrainians) and surplus anti-COVID vaccine donations as ODA.**
- **Meet and exceed the 0.15% GNI target for LDCs.**
- **Increase funding for conflict prevention and ensure development cooperation increases at the same pace as humanitarian aid. Prevention costs three to four times less than reconstruction.**

¹ <https://www.cncd.be/IMG/pdf/2023-rapport-cooperation-belge-developpement-cncd-web.pdf> pg 24.