



BELGIUM

“Belgium's development cooperation at a turning point”

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Main trends

At the time of writing, it is still unclear which political parties will form the new federal government in Belgium and who will manage development cooperation. However, the previous government can certainly be highly praised for its work during the past legislature. The Minister of Development Cooperation, Caroline Gennez, made an impression internationally, especially with her stances on Gaza. She also emphasised the importance of human rights and prioritised education and healthcare during Belgium's EU presidency.

Belgium made good choices, recognised by the OECD DAC, by focusing on the poorest and most fragile countries and sectors such as healthcare, education, and agriculture that impact poverty and inequality. Additionally, the imputed student costs and the in-donor costs of hosting Ukrainian refugees were no longer counted as ODA, from 2022 onward. The biggest drawback remains the budget. At 0.44%, Belgium is far from the targeted 0.7%, despite the commitment being repeated in the previous government's coalition agreement. As a small country, Belgium has every interest in remaining credible on the international stage, which means investing in international solidarity.

We therefore call on the future government to increase the budget for development cooperation during the upcoming legislature, while maintaining the course of a development cooperation policy focused on the countries and sectors most in need. Belgium has been praised for basing its development policy on human rights and development effectiveness principles: it must continue to do so.

Government's relationship with civil society

The relationship between Belgian authorities and CSOs is generally very strong, structured, and beneficial. Many non-governmental and official actors collaborate, or at least work together in complementary ways, in the field of international

Reported ODA: EUR 2509.8 million

0.44% GNI (↓ from 0.45% in 2022)

Non-inflated ODA: EUR 2200.1 million

0.38% GNI (↓ from 0.39% in 2022)

Total inflated ODA: EUR 309.6 million

12% of total



cooperation. Different bodies exist to ensure that CSOs are consulted on various issues, whether at the level of a partner country or in the Brussels headquarters. A positive example is the involvement of CSOs in the committee following evaluations conducted by the Special Evaluation Service of Belgian Development Cooperation. Another positive example is the regular organisation of quarterly meetings between CSO representatives and the Directorate-General for Development Cooperation.

Link to the 2024 [report on Belgian development cooperation](#).

The Belgian government should:

- **Continue to put human rights, the rule of law, and democracy at the centre of broader foreign policy.**
- **Maintain the current position of Belgian development cooperation that is clearly against the instrumentalisation of development cooperation in the field of migration or for economic and commercial interests.**
- **Invest in international solidarity by spending 0.7% of GNI on ODA and 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. According to the OECD 2022 States of Fragility report, one USD invested in prevention helps save USD 16 at a later stage.**