

Belgium



Reported ODA: EUR 2980 million
0.48 % GNI (↑ from 12.20% in 2023)

Non-inflated ODA: EUR 2483 million
0.4 % GNI (↑ from 0.02% in 2023)

Total inflated ODA: EUR 497 million
15.75 % of total

“Belgium’s strong ODA tradition now faces cuts and risks instrumentalisation”

CNCD-11.11.11 and 11.11.11

Main trends

Belgian development cooperation has long been recognised for its strong focus on **Fragile and Conflict-Affected States (FCS) and LDCS**, particularly in Africa. With a clear emphasis on **poverty reduction and inequality**, Belgium has consistently invested in sectors such as health, education and food security. Its rights-based approach prioritises democracy, human rights, and good governance—especially through support to civil society and local institutions. Belgium is also a firm advocate of multilateralism. **All these priorities and principles—including the commitment to the 0.7% target and the principle of Policy Coherence for Development (PCD)—are enshrined in Belgium’s development cooperation law.** Through diverse partnerships with NGOs, multilateral actors, academia and the private sector—and with a strong focus on grants—Belgian ODA has, over the past 20 years, made a meaningful contribution to international solidarity, addressing global challenges that markets cannot deliver and military solutions cannot resolve.

Yet today, this legacy is under pressure. In early 2025, the new government decided to cut development cooperation by 25%. If this path continues, Belgium may dedicate as little as **0.3% of its GNI to ODA by 2029**. At the same time, like many other European countries, Belgium is prioritising large-scale defence spending as essential for national security.

While humanitarian aid is spared and even elevated as a core focus, **structural development efforts risk being deprioritised**. A more transactional approach is gaining ground, where cooperation is increasingly expected to align with Belgian political or economic interests. This instrumentalisation risks undermining the principles of solidarity and effectiveness that have long defined Belgian development cooperation. It also underscores the urgent need to improve PCD, legally anchored in Belgium but largely absent from current political discourse.

Government's relationship with civil society

The role of civil society is explicitly acknowledged in the new government's coalition agreement and is seen as complementary to other development channels. The minister of development cooperation has also emphasised the importance of an open civic space. At the same time, significant budget cuts are foreseen for CSOs (25%), alongside a push for geographical and thematic concentration.

So far, the dialogue with civil society has largely focused on its own role, with limited attention to a broader reflection on the future and positioning of Belgian development cooperation in today's turbulent geopolitical context. As civil society actors, we expect the minister to continue defending development cooperation as a policy tool aimed at reducing poverty and inequality. We also hope he will publicly reaffirm the crucial role of civil society – not only as an implementing partner, but as a vital pillar of a healthy democracy all over the world. Within the current coalition, there are divergent views on this matter. This makes it all the more important that the minister provides clear leadership on these fundamental principles.

Recommendations

- Continue investing in long-term development cooperation that structurally safeguards fundamental human rights, such as access to healthcare, quality education, and food security.
- Proactively invest in conflict prevention: prevention is not only more humane, but also three to four times more cost-effective than post-conflict reconstruction.
- Support an independent and critical civil society as a cornerstone of democracy – especially now, as democratic values face increasing pressure worldwide.
- Resist the instrumentalisation of development cooperation. Promote equal and transparent partnerships based on alignment and democratic ownership, that truly respond to the needs and priorities of communities in marginalised situations.

For further insights, explore [the new CNCD 11. 11. 11. 2025 Report on Belgian Development Cooperation \(September 2025\)](#) (in French).