Annual report

2024



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Belgium
partner in development

Preface

Security, stability and prosperity, not only around the world, but also here in Belgium. That is the thrust of our international cooperation. And we don't go it alone. Sustainable, successful progress becomes possible when we join forces with strong partners: governments, multilateral organisations, development banks, NGOs and the private sector. I explicitly underscored this point in my general policy statement: mutually beneficial partnerships are the key to real impact.

This 2024 annual report details how this cooperation takes shape in the field. In Benin, the Port of Antwerp/Bruges is supporting the modernisation of the Port of Cotonou, in the context of the Team Europe Initiative. The aim is to create a more sustainable and efficient logistics hub that attracts private investors and stimulates the local economy. In Senegal and elsewhere in Africa, we are boosting healthcare by investing in local production of vaccines and medicines. This is essential if we are to tackle health crises more effectively. And in Ukraine, we are helping with reconstruction, focusing on energy and circular construction methods. The Belgian agency Enabel is one of the few European development agencies active in the country.

The new legislature brings with it budgetary challenges. But that does not mean that Belgium will pull back from its commitments. On the contrary: we will continue to take responsibility to safeguard global public goods. That means we will remain active in the most fragile countries, where we can build a bridge between humanitarian aid and sustainable development. Belgium has broad expertise in this field, and we will be drawing on it as much as possible.

Furthermore, we remain committed to stronger, more effective UN institutions, to solidarity and transparency in aid, and to partnerships that generate measurable impact. The challenges bring opportunities. Belgium is determined to seize them.

Maxime Prévot

Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs, European Affairs and Development Cooperation



Contents

Preface 7

PART 1 RESULTS REPORT 9

1.1. A SUCCESSFUL PRESIDENCY OF THE EU COUNCIL PROMOTING SUSTAINABLE AND INCLUSIVE PARTNERSHIPS 12

1.2. MULTILATERAL AND THEMATIC COOPERATION 16
- Belgium: a champion of global health 16
- Towards FfD4: Operational efficiency and effectiveness and the aid architecture 19
- Belgian climate funding: focus on the impacts in the poorest countries 24
- Improving weather and climate forecasts worldwide in collaboration with the RMI 26
- Frank and open dialogue on migration as a vector for development 27
- Belgium and the IOM are exploring the potential of remittances 28
- Sicomines and EITI in Congo: transparency helps secure an additional $4 billion for infrastructure works 30

1.3. GEOGRAPHICAL, GOVERNMENTAL AND NON-GOVERNMENTAL COOPERATION 31
- Investments in the Port of Cotonou in Benin: a mutually beneficial partnership 31
- Belgium and Ukraine, partners in reconstruction 33
- Partnership as a lever for constructive dialogue on human rights in Uganda 35
- Global citizenship education calls for greater international solidarity 36

1.4. HUMANITARIAN AID, FRAGILITY AND THE HDP NEXUS 38
- Protecting populations: a priority for Belgian humanitarian aid 38
- International humanitarian law under pressure and Belgian support for UNRWA 40
- Increased attention to fragility and the operationalisation of the HDP Nexus 40

PART 2 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR POLICY COHERENCE FOR DEVELOPMENT 43

2.1 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR SPECIFIC DOSSIERS AND THE INSTITUTIONAL FRAMEWORK 44
- Restructuring the external debt of developing countries 44
- Policy Coherence for Development (PCD) priorities 2024-2029 for the Belgian government 44
- EU-wide roll-out of the Belgian measure prohibiting the export of pesticides banned within the EU 44

2.2 RESULTS AND DEVELOPMENTS IN SPECIFIC DOSSIERS 45
- Belgium aims for an integrated policy for sustainable cocoa 45
- Green diplomacy grows in importance 46

PART 3 INTEGRITY 49

PART 4 BELGIAN DEVELOPMENT COOPERATION AND HUMANITARIAN AID IN FIGURES 53

REFERENCES AND SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER READING 56

Introduction

In 2024, conflicts, climate catastrophes and health challenges caused substantial human suffering in regions including the Middle East, the Sahel and sub-Saharan Africa. The challenges facing these regions also have major repercussions for the rest of the world, including Europe. In a highly connected world, the challenges of our partners are also our challenges. Some examples:

Conflicts have visible economic and security-related consequences, not only for our partner countries, but also for Europe and Belgium. The conflict in Ukraine has led to volatile food and gas prices and, closer to home, sabotaged energy and communications infrastructure. Since 2023, the war in Sudan has already forced 3 million people to flee their country and displaced more than 8 million citizens internally. The brutal violence in Gaza, Ukraine and Lebanon, and the deteriorating human rights situation in Afghanistan also prompted many people to flee their countries in 2024.

The most vulnerable countries suffered the most serious consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic, but the economic fabric and health of people in the most precarious situations were also severely tested in Belgium. In 2024, Belgium was able to organise a rapid response to the MPOX epidemic. Cooperation between the Institute of Tropical Medicine and our Congolese partners meant that a new variant was discovered in time, thereby bringing a global epidemic under control which, as in 2022, also affected Belgium. Our best response therefore lies in international cooperation on a global scale and effective healthcare systems around the world. This cooperation, networking and access to knowledge, information and pathogens play an essential role in public health in Belgium.

Finally, the climate is also a global issue. While global warming is hitting the most vulnerable countries hardest, even though they are the least responsible for it, the consequences in Europe are also becoming increasingly visible. The catastrophic floods in Mali in the summer of 2024 were quickly followed by floods in Spain, a painful reminder of the floods in the Vesdre Valley in 2021.

To respond to these challenges together, it is essential to make progress on the universal SDG agenda. Recent reports from the United Nations paint a bleak picture in this regard. In recent years, geopolitical tensions, the lingering effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, the proliferation of conflicts and climate disasters have severely hampered progress towards sustainable development. At the global level, only 17% of the SDGs are expected to be met by the deadline of 2030.

In order to stem this cycle of crises and global challenges, we cannot take refuge behind our respective borders. On the contrary, it is crucial, more than ever, to invest in high-quality, mutually beneficial partnerships to protect international public goods such as the climate, global health and stability. This need for funding will be high on the international political agenda at the Conference on Financing for Development in Seville this summer.

Analyses and evaluations show that international partnerships make an effective contribution to outcomes, whether reduced child mortality, improved educational attainment, or protecting human lives. This annual report presents a non-exhaustive overview of the results achieved by Belgian international cooperation through its partnerships, as well as the challenges it has faced. By mobilising the added value of each partner and each source of funding in a specific context, we amplify our impact in the field and ensure that the diversity of our partners becomes a real strength. And when these stakeholders work with more synergy and complementarity, we enhance our collective impact. This report highlights the transparency of Belgian Development Cooperation, efforts that were recognised by a good score in the Aid Transparency Index – in 2024, Belgium ranked 4th among donor countries.

The first part of this annual report illustrates Belgium's results-oriented approach, not only at the level of the different actors involved in Belgian cooperation, but also by highlighting certain policy themes. This section looks at (1) the success of the Belgian Presidency of the EU Council; (2) geographic, governmental and non-governmental cooperation; (3) thematic and multilateral cooperation; and (4) humanitarian aid, fragility and the HDP Nexus. **The second part** of the report looks at the coherence of Belgian development policies, an issue that transcends Belgian Development Cooperation. Indeed, the law of 19 March 2013 provides for efforts to ensure policy coherence for development, a process designed to ensure that the objectives and results of our government's development cooperation policies are not thwarted by the latter's policies in other areas, and that these other policies support development objectives wherever possible. **The third part** looks at integrity within Belgian international cooperation. And finally, the fourth part presents figures for Belgian ODA (Official Development Assistance) expenditure in 2024.

I hope you enjoy reading this report, and I look forward to the next opportunity to enter into dialogue on the importance of international cooperation for our common future!

Heidy ROMBOUTS
Director-General for Development Cooperation and Humanitarian Aid



Part 1 Results report

Global warming, instability, inequality, conflict and health crises can only be resolved in the context of high-quality partnerships with a wide range of stakeholders. For this reason, Belgian international cooperation and humanitarian aid form partnerships with governmental partners (Enabel, BIO Invest), non-governmental partners (NGOs, institutional and scientific actors, civil society organisations, etc.) and multilateral partners (EU, UN, development banks). An increasing number of cooperation projects are being set up with actors outside the traditional development cooperation sector, such as Belgian diplomats, the Ministry of Defence and economic actors.

This broad range of partners is a strength that enables us to achieve concrete results in the field by leveraging each partner's unique contribution and each source of funding in a specific context. The cooperation with our partners is based on quality, transparency (see Box 1), dialogue, monitoring and evaluation of management capabilities, results and the complementary expertise of the different organisations. Making actors accountable for achieving results is reflected in specific results frameworks and theories of change that they develop with partners in the developing countries concerned. A more comprehensive overview of the results achieved by the different actors is available in the annual reports and evaluations of the actors.

Box 1: Belgium, champion of transparency

In 2024, Belgium, through our FPS, achieved a score of 74.2% on the biennial Aid Transparency Index. Our development cooperation therefore holds up well in terms of transparency, with Belgium taking fourth place among donor countries. We are continuing our efforts to further improve this result.

Progress in transparency

Belgium has made further strides regarding the transparency of its development cooperation, as shown by the results of the latest edition of the Aid Transparency Index, compiled by the British NGO *Publish What You Fund*.[1] This international index assesses the transparency of the main bilateral and multilateral donors, based on a series of measurable indicators.

Belgium, and more specifically the Directorate General for Development Cooperation and Humanitarian Aid (DGD), was once again rated as 'Good', with a score of 74.2%. This is a significant improvement on the 63.3% achieved in 2022, and puts Belgium 19th out of the 50 organisations assessed, and fourth among bilateral donors, behind the UK, Sweden and Germany.

The importance of transparency

Transparency is one of the five pillars of the international action plan to improve aid effectiveness, primarily concretised in the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness.

The five guiding principles defined in this action plan relate to:

1. *ownership* by partner countries;
2. *harmonisation* among donor countries, who align and coordinate their actions;
3. *alignment* with the partner country's national strategies;
4. *managing on results* which focuses on the effects of actions in the short and longer term;
5. *transparency and mutual accountability*, to guarantee the other principles and allow public monitoring of how these public funds are allocated.

These principles were further developed at the subsequent High-Level Forums on Aid Effectiveness, and led, among other things, to the adoption of the Accra Agenda for Action (AAA). The AAA also provided the impetus for setting up the International Aid Transparency Initiative (IATI), with the aim of concretising the commitments of the AAA in the area of transparency. Since joining the IATI in 2012, Belgium has published daily updated data on funding by the DGD, as well as data updated every year on the latter's organisation.

Way forward

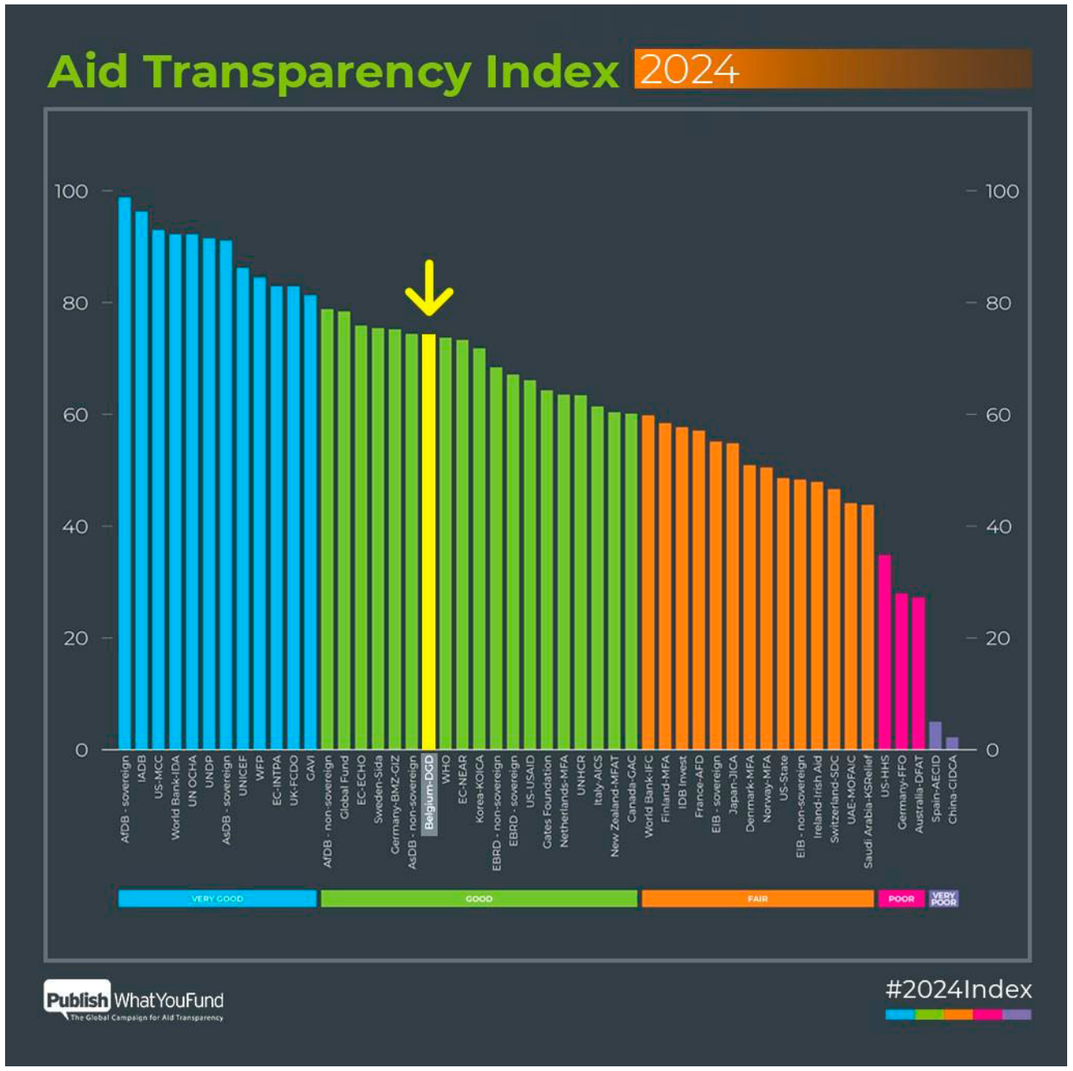
Of course, we owe our good results and continual progress in recent years to highly effective teamwork. Indeed, the professionalism of Enabel and the actors within non-governmental cooperation, and above all the dedication of the staff of the DGD, who devote time and care in equal measure to the quality of the data published, are vital.

Belgium aims to further improve its performance. Sharing detailed, operational strategies with the public must really become a reflex, for both countries and partner organisations. Sharing makes effective monitoring and accountability possible, while showing (to citizens and other stakeholders) what really goes on within our cooperation. We can integrate this approach even more effectively into our procedures and cooperation with our implementing partners, to form a single *Team Belgium*.

Belgium's role as a reliable partner confirmed

Thanks to these excellent results in the Aid Transparency Index, Belgium has upheld its reputation as a team player that combines reliability and transparency within international development cooperation. Belgium focuses on effectiveness while ensuring the participation of all stakeholders, including the citizens of our country and our partner countries.

1 https://www.publishwhatyoufund.org/the-index/2024/



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Belgium ranks 19th out of the 50 organisations assessed, and 4th among the donor countries analysed.

1.1. A SUCCESSFUL PRESIDENCY OF THE EU COUNCIL PROMOTING SUSTAINABLE AND INCLUSIVE PARTNERSHIPS

On 1 January 2024, Belgium assumed its 13th Presidency of the Council of the EU. Under the motto "*protect, strengthen, prepare*", Belgium chaired the meetings of the Council and its preparatory bodies for six months: our country set the agendas, drafted the work programme and encouraged dialogue within the Council as well as with other EU institutions, such as the European Commission and the European Parliament. In the field of development cooperation and humanitarian aid, Belgium focused on two key priorities: global health and underfunded and neglected crises. The Presidency oversaw a number of notable events and achievements, as the rest of this document illustrates. Box 2 provides a summary of key figures from the Presidency.

Box 2: The Belgian Presidency in the field of development cooperation and humanitarian aid in a few figures:

1. More than 50 formal Council working group meetings chaired by Belgium.
2. 6 conclusions negotiated in the Council, including those on the EU Global Health Strategy.
3. 5 Team Europe Initiatives (TEI) launched, including a TEI on digital health and one on Opportunity-driven Skills and Vocational Education and Training.
4. 2 Memoranda of Understanding (MoUs) signed, including one between the Africa CDC (Centres for Disease Control and Prevention) and the European CDCs.
5. Around 20 events organised, bringing together approximately 2,500 high level participants from both political and expert circles, with the European Humanitarian Forum being a prime example (see below).



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The devastating ongoing conflicts in Ukraine, Gaza and the Sahel dominated the international agenda, and consequently featured prominently in formal and informal meetings of ministers for development cooperation. The launch of the Ukraine Facility (a crucial EU mechanism to provide financial support to Ukraine between 2024 and 2027) and the reconstruction plan were on the agenda. As regards Gaza, Belgium, in its capacity as president, endeavoured to find common ground for a renewed commitment to UNRWA, reaffirming the organisation's role as the backbone of humanitarian aid in Gaza. Box 3 summarises Belgium's other humanitarian priorities and achievements.

The challenges posed by fragile and politically constrained environments, exacerbated by food insecurity as well as climate and economic upheaval, have repeatedly been the topic of discussion at various levels. The Belgian Presidency of the Council of the EU drew up 'Principles for joint EU development cooperation in politically constrained environments', which received the support of the European Commission and other EU Member States. These principles foster greater involvement on the part of Team Europe and promote impact and coherence.[2]

Belgium emphasised mutually beneficial partnerships, in particular in the field of global health.[3] High-level and expert meetings and conferences gave the EU political leverage to develop a common vision and ambition between the EU, the African Union (AU) and other African partners. The adoption of Council conclusions on the EU's global health strategy was followed by a Team Europe ministerial mission to Addis Ababa (Ethiopia). Agreements between European and African institutions and new Team Europe Initiatives on health made it possible to implement the global health strategy. In cooperation with Enabel and the *"BE-cause health"* platform, an expert conference on strengthening healthcare systems was organised, focusing on the participation and influence of civil society.

Education was at the heart of the I*mproving Educational Attainment and Learning for Girls* conference, in cooperation with UNESCO, and the *Global Gateway high-level Event on Education*, which called for better funding for education.

The Belgian Presidency of the Council Working Party on Development Cooperation (CODEV) held discussions on the various instruments of European development policy, such as the implementation of the Gender Action Plan (GAP III), the European Financial Architecture for Development (EFAD) and the mid-term evaluation of the EU's Neighbourhood, Development and International Cooperation instrument (NDICI-GE).

2 See also below – 1.4 Humanitarian aid, fragility and the HDP Nexus

3 See also below - 1.2 Multilateral and Thematic Cooperation.

The Belgian Presidency also looked to improve coherence between development and global commitments in the area of the environment and climate.

Finally, in the context of the Working Party on External Aspects of Asylum and Migration (EMWP), the Presidency stressed the importance of developing comprehensive, balanced, transparent and mutually beneficial (migration) partnerships with a number of priority countries of origin and transition. In addition to discussing the migration situation in the Great Lakes area, the Belgian Presidency also managed to put lasting reintegration after (voluntary) return, partnerships for skills mobility and the subject of missing migrants high on the agenda.

Box 3: The EU Presidency in the humanitarian field

Belgium proved to be a principled and flexible[4] donor through its presidency of the Working Party on Humanitarian Aid and Food Aid (COHAFA), keeping Gaza and support for UNRWA at the top of the agenda and highlighting five priorities:

1. **Humanitarian protection,** by adopting the Council conclusions on Protection in humanitarian settings and focusing on programmes to address and reduce protection risks. The Belgian Presidency called for more protection for humanitarian workers.

2. **Neglected and underfunded crises,** by mobilising stronger EU support and promoting means of ensuring a more equitable distribution of aid, such as flexible and predictable funding. The Presidency drew attention to the humanitarian situation in the DRC, Sudan and Afghanistan.

3. **Aid localisation**, by facilitating discussions designed to accelerate progress on localisation issues such as funding and capacity development for local actors, compliance requirements, cost-sharing mechanisms and risk distribution. This reflects an ambitious policy agenda designed to redress existing power imbalances within the sector.

4. **The humanitarian space,** given its contraction, marked by violations of international humanitarian law, reduced humanitarian access and increased insecurity for humanitarian professionals and the civilian population. Belgium drew attention to the cross-cutting dimension of humanitarian access and diplomacy, as well as to the damaging effects of misinformation and hate speech, by organising a side event on the subject in collaboration with the ICRC and UNHCR.

5. **The humanitarian funding gap,** by encouraging the implementation of the Council conclusions on addressing the humanitarian funding gap through a mechanism for monitoring progress, and a mutual encouragement between EU Member States to invest in humanitarian action.

Organising the 3rd edition of the **European Humanitarian Forum (EHF)** was also one of the highlights of the Belgian Presidency of the Council of the European Union. Bringing together over 1,400 attendees, the EHF enabled our country to highlight the problem of sexual violence in the DRC during a plenary session. The event was attended by Queen Mathilde and the Minister for Development Cooperation, as well as local actors, encouraging them to take the floor.



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4 See below - 1.4. Humanitarian aid, fragility and the HDP Nexus - for more explanation on the meaning of flexible financing.



© Africa CD, DRC



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1.2. MULTILATERAL AND THEMATIC COOPERATION

Global challenges demand a global approach. Agenda 2030 remains the guiding principle of this approach. Dialogue, partnership and cooperation are essential for finding sustainable solutions to worldwide challenges such as climate change and global health. A functioning multilateral system is therefore also in our country's interests. As a "*partner*" and "*advocate*", Belgian Development Cooperation makes a contribution in this regard through its thematic and multilateral cooperation. The present chapter illustrates this point by looking successively at our commitment to global health, financing for development, climate action, migration and development, and sustainability in the raw materials sector.

Belgium: a champion of global health

Health was the top priority of the Belgian Presidency within the Cooperation section (see above), following the adoption of the EU's Global Health Strategy and the joint EU-African Union Health Agenda 2022. Indeed, the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic demonstrated the extent to which inequalities in access to healthcare services around the world only exacerbate vulnerability. It was therefore crucial to keep the focus on global health on the political agenda by consistently maintaining a high level of commitment towards our partners, particularly in Africa, as well as towards fragile states and least developed countries.

Faced with these challenges, throughout its presidency Belgium stressed the importance of equitable access to healthcare systems and products, based on a 4AQ approach: availability, affordability, accessibility, acceptability and quality. We successfully led the campaign to adopt a common position at the European level, and invest in long-term partnerships with African Union health institutions. By supporting the African Union Development Agency (AUDA-NEPAD) and the Africa Centres for Disease Control & Prevention (Africa CDC), in particular, in developing a robust health policy in Africa, with the support of multilateral organisations such as the World Health Organization and the European Medicines Agency (EMA), the following results were achieved:

- In the joint declaration of the ministerial meeting formulated by high-level participants from the EU and Africa, the European Commission announced the launch of a support programme for the period 2024-2027. The aim is to strengthen the capacity of the Africa CDC to consolidate the continent's health safety architecture using the *One Health* approach, which focuses on the links between human, animal and environmental health.
- Team Europe initiatives (TEI) were launched on digitisation and support for African public health institutes. This brings the total number of Team Europe Initiatives in the area of health for Africa to five.
- In addition, under the Belgian Presidency, agreements were signed between the DG HERA (Health Emergency Preparedness and Response Authority) of the European Commission and the Africa CDC, as well as between the European and African medicines agencies.

This close collaboration is essential for several reasons. Firstly, it makes it possible to be rapidly informed of new epidemics and circulating variants, such as the recent MPOX and Marburg epidemics in Central Africa. Secondly, increasing production and diversifying the choice of medicines – including those from Africa – benefits everyone. Indeed, Belgium and the EU are dependent on a limited number of producers of essential medicines.

In the second half of 2024, we shifted the focus back to the three global health priorities, i.e. improving accessibility to basic health care and products, including sexual and reproductive health and rights, and strengthening the resilience of health systems. We recently responded to various emergency situations, including the MPOX epidemic, demonstrating our capacity to react rapidly in terms of clinical research and vaccine delivery.

Through the FPS Public Health, Belgium submitted a formal request to DG HERA, through which the EU made 215,000 doses of MPOX vaccine available to Africa. Our country supplied the Democratic Republic of Congo with 20,000 doses of vaccine from its own stock. In addition, Belgium allocated €2 million for a vaccination campaign and research project implemented in Kinshasa by a consortium comprising the Antwerp Institute of Tropical Medicine (ITM), the Congolese biomedical research institute INRB and other partners. Enabel, the Belgian development agency, also reallocated funds from its health programme to tackle MPOX in Congo and Burundi.

Other epidemics, such as HIV, tuberculosis and malaria, continue to require our full attention. That is why our ambition in global health is to maintain the leading role that Belgium now plays in the international community, in order to achieve universal health coverage. Working together to promote health, strengthen healthcare systems around the world, prevent new diseases and tackle inequalities and the health consequences of climate change and conflict: these will be decisive elements in safeguarding human rights and our prosperity. It is a message we will also be delivering in the context of our co-presidency of the EU-Africa Strategic Dialogue for 2025.

Box 4: Renewal of Belgian cooperation's commitment to health in Senegal



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Belgium has been actively engaged in supporting the health sector in Senegal since the 1960s, at both governmental and non-governmental levels. For example, between 2017 and 2024, the NGO *Sensorial Handicap Cooperation* provided support for 788 children and young people (including 345 girls and 443 boys) with sensory disabilities (with hearing or visual impairments). This support enabled the children to take part in community life, thanks to high-quality, inclusive, and continuous education. The NGO 'Chaîne de l'Espoir' (Chain of Hope), which has been active in Senegal for 15 years, works in the field of paediatric orthopaedics. It has operated on 157 children with congenital or acquired malformations, giving them a better quality of life.

Health is at the heart of the new governmental cooperation programme with Senegal launched in summer 2024. Together with the partner country, Belgian cooperation is working to improve healthcare, in particular for mothers and children, young people and victims of sexual violence. Belgium, as part of the Team Europe approach, is helping to improve the healthcare ecosystem and supporting our Senegalese partner in its ambition to produce its own vaccines and medicines locally.

In addition, the Belgian Embassy in Dakar chairs the group of donors that support the Senegalese health sector, including support for health products, laboratories, and orthopaedic equipment. The expertise of Belgian diplomats in Dakar guarantees effective working relations between this group of donors and the Senegalese authorities.

Towards FfD4: Operational efficiency and effectiveness and the aid architecture

In recent years, the topic of financing for development has become politicised and moved to the forefront of the international agenda due to the lack of progress in implementing Agenda 2030 (see below: Box 5) and the widening financial and political gap between high-income countries and low- and middle-income countries. As a result, numerous calls and initiatives to reform the international financing architecture have been launched: to increase the provision and mobilisation of funding for low- and middle-income countries, to ensure better representation of the Global South within international financial institutions, and to improve their efficiency. This momentum is expected to culminate at the 4th International Conference on Financing for Development (FFD4) in Seville in July 2025. This conference is a unique opportunity for a holistic, inclusive and higher-level conversation on the subject.

In 2024, Belgium pursued its commitment to this theme, given its importance for the future of "North-South" relations, the future of multilateralism, but above all the pursuit of efforts towards a more just, prosperous, inclusive and sustainable world. We capitalised on our presence within international financial institutions, the United Nations and our presidency of the Council of the European Union to address this issue. Our country has been particularly active in improving the efficiency and effectiveness of aid. Indeed, this challenge has the potential to mobilise support, strengthen partnerships and improve the global financial architecture in concrete terms.

Three events were organised during 2024 to advance this agenda:

- In February, in the context of our Presidency of the Council of the EU, a joint meeting of the Working Party on Development Cooperation and the Economic and Financial Committee on: Multilateral Development Bank (MDB) reform, operational effectiveness, especially in fragile contexts.

- In April, in Washington, on the sidelines of the Spring Meetings of the World Bank and the IMF, on: Operations Efficiency and Effectiveness: What progress so far and what priorities ahead?

- In September, in New York, a high-level event on the sidelines of the Summit of the Future and the UN General Assembly's Ministerial Week on Becoming Better in partnership: Operational efficiency and effectiveness of multilateral development banks. *What priorities for the financing for development agenda?*

These events brought together the financing for development ecosystem (UN, multilateral banks, private sector, think tanks, member states) in a format that encouraged open and constructive dialogue. These meetings highlighted the potential for improving aid efficiency and effectiveness, building trust between stakeholders to establish mutually beneficial partnerships, and reconciling the political and technical levels to move forward on concrete solutions. It also made it possible to demonstrate Belgium's commitment as a bridge-builder and honest broker on the multilateral stage.

Thanks to these efforts, we can see that a lot of attention is being devoted to the effectiveness of development cooperation in the negotiations leading up to the adoption of an outcome document at FFD4. Among these proposals are the idea of improving coordination between financial institutions and development agencies at both global and local levels, addressing the fragmentation of the international financial architecture, the need to simplify and harmonise procedures to improve access to financing for recipient countries, and a renewed focus on the impact on local populations. The general aim of



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these proposals is to accelerate and improve the implementation of projects adapted to local needs and contexts, in order to maximise their impact on the sustainable development goals. Thanks to an amendment from Belgium, this attention also found its way into a General Assembly resolution that provides strategic guidance for the operational activities of the UN development system for the next four years.

Belgium also supports the UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs, responsible for monitoring the Financing for Development process and organising FFD4, by providing funding for a junior professional officer.

In 2025, Belgium will continue its commitment to this theme, by adopting an ambitious and pragmatic new international financing framework at FFD4.



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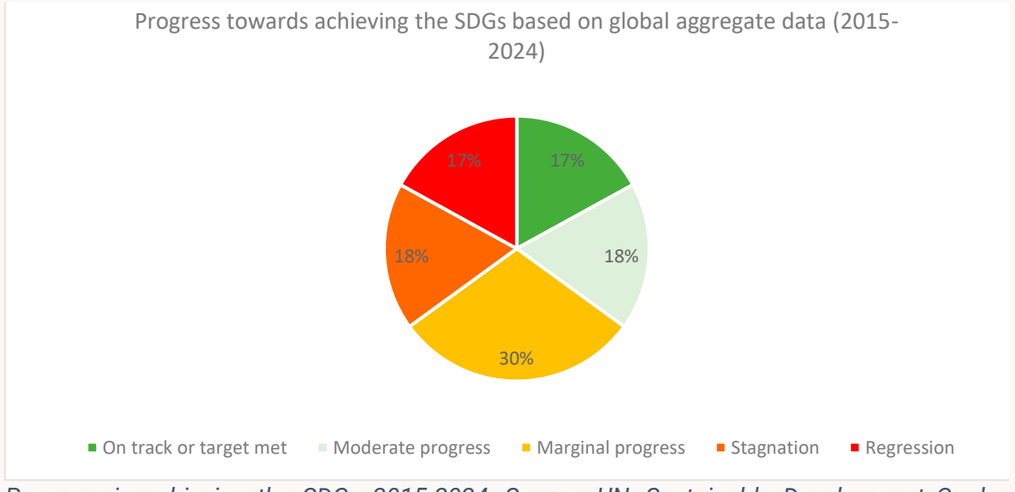
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Box 5: The state of the world and the SDGs in 2024



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The latest report on the achievement of the SDGs paints a bleak picture.[5] only 17% of the SDG targets are on track to be met by 2030. For 48% of the targets, progress is moderate or marginal. 18% of the targets have stagnated and 17% have regressed. Figure 1 illustrates this alarming situation. However, the report also highlights some notable successes, such as the reduction in infant mortality and HIV infections, and improved access to energy and water. Although very fragile, these successes underline the importance and utility of cooperation at all levels.



Progress in achieving the SDGs 2015-2024; Source: UN, Sustainable Development Goals Report 2024.

5 UN, the Sustainable Development Goals Report 2024, https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/report/2024/The-Sustainable-Development-Goals-Report-2024.pdf

The main regressions with regard to the baseline situation (2015) are observed for SDGs 2 (zero hunger), 13 (climate action), 14 (life below water), and 8 (decent work and economic growth). We focus here on two of these SDGs by way of illustration:

- With regard to food security (SDG 2), the world has not yet recovered from the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. In 2023, an estimated 733 million people faced hunger, and 2.3 billion experienced moderate to severe food insecurity. Conflicts have exerted fierce pressure on food prices in recent years.

- Decent work and economic growth (SDG 8) are complicated by geopolitical tensions, rising debt in developing countries and conflict. Global GDP per capita growth slowed in 2022 and is projected to stabilise in the coming years. There are still major obstacles to decent work, and it is estimated that around 2 billion people around the world work in informal jobs without any social protection. In the least developed countries and sub-Saharan Africa, nine out of ten people are informally employed. Finally, the report notes a decline in compliance with fundamental labour rights.

The report also highlights the record number of refugees (no less than 37.4 million) and internally displaced persons (120 million). The Stockholm International Peace Research Institute estimates that the number of victims killed in conflicts rose from 153,100 in 2022 to 170,700 in 2023. This is the highest level since 2019. The UN estimates the number of civilian casualties in 2023 at 33,400 (40% women and 30% children). These figures are hardly surprising, given the devastating conflicts in Gaza, Ukraine, Sudan and Myanmar, among others. Sudan alone has seen 8 million people internally displaced since the outbreak of violence in April 2023, and over 3 million people have fled beyond its borders, primarily to neighbouring Chad, South Sudan and Egypt.[6]

What is more, according to the World Meteorological Organization (WMO), 2024 was the hottest year since records began.[7] Global warming has contributed to a rise in the number and severity of disasters, not only in the South (e.g. the devastating floods in the Sahel region in the summer of 2024), but also closer to home (e.g. the floods in Spain in the autumn of 2024). There is a growing awareness of the intrinsic link between climate change and other phenomena such as migration and conflict. In 2022, climate-related disasters accounted for over 50% of new displacement cases (often internal or to neighbouring countries). Almost 60% of refugees and internally displaced persons also live in countries most vulnerable to the effects of climate change.[8] The latter also acts as a 'threat multiplier', amplifying the negative effects of other factors such as poverty or tensions over resources, thereby contributing to conflict and displacement.[9]

Global warming and conflict also contribute to fragility – a situation in which people are exposed to risks that the state or community is not sufficiently able to manage or absorb. The latest OECD report on fragility indicates that 2 billion people (25% of the world's population) live in very or even extremely fragile contexts. For 72% of the extremely poor, this is their day-to-day reality.[10]

6 https://dtm.iom.int/reports/dtm-sudan-mobility-update-10 (situation as of December 2024)

7 https://wmo.int/news/media-centre/wmo-confirms-2024-warmest-year-record-about-155degc-above-pre-industrial-level

8 https://www.unhcr.org/news/stories/climate-change-and-displacement-myths-and-facts

9 https://www.unhcr.org/news/stories/climate-change-and-displacement-myths-and-facts

10 OECD, States of Fragility 2025, https://www.oecd.org/en/publications/states-of-fragility-2025_81982370-en.html

Belgian climate funding: focus on impacts in the poorest countries

Climate change, biodiversity loss and pollution threaten prosperity and well-being around the world. Yet it is the poorest countries, those that have contributed the least to climate change, that suffer the most of its effects. In the context of the climate negotiations, developed countries have pledged to mobilise funds to support climate action in developing countries.

Belgium's international climate funding mainly comes from the federal government. With this funding, Belgium gives priority to making least developed countries (LDCs) more resilient. Almost half of Belgium's climate funding goes to LDCs. The majority of Belgian aid is for adaptation. In this way, Belgium helps address an imbalance in international climate financing, which traditionally relies on support for mitigation in middle-income countries. What is more, Belgian climate funding has risen sharply since 2020, and is high quality. Part of this funding is channelled through a number of bilateral cooperation programmes (see Box 6 for the example of Mozambique) or through investments by BIO Invest. But the bulk of Belgian climate funding goes towards the Green Climate Fund (GCF) and the Least Developed Countries Fund (LDCF).

Belgium ranks second among donors to the Least Developed Countries Fund (LDCF), with a total cumulative contribution of $282.87 million since its establishment in 2001, representing over 12% of total contributions to the fund. The Least Developed Countries Fund is one of the financial instruments of the United Nations Climate Convention, and supports the implementation of national climate change adaptation plans and programmes in the least developed countries (LDCs). This fund is therefore fully in line with Belgium's priorities, which are to keep the poorest countries in the spotlight. Several multilateral development banks (MDBs) and partner organisations of Belgian Development Cooperation, such as UNEP, UNDP and the FAO, act as implementing partners.

Belgium plays a key role in the Fund's Board of Directors, and advocates for regular reports on the results of the various programmes and projects financed by the Least Developed Countries Fund (LDCF). In 2024, the LDCF reported that it had funded over 423 projects and programmes since its inception. These have had a positive impact on more than 74 million people, and improved the management of 14 million hectares of land to make it more resilient to climate change. This figure represents more than four times the total surface area of Belgium. Belgium's partnership with the LDCF is therefore of considerable importance to the countries with the most pressing needs.



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Box 6: Belgium supports Mozambique in the fight against climate change

Mozambique, a partner country of Belgian governmental cooperation, is one of the ten countries most vulnerable to climate change, despite contributing almost nothing to global greenhouse gas emissions. That is why Belgium is investing €25 million (2023-2028) in Mozambique in the context of the new bilateral cooperation programme, through various programmes that help tackle the full spectrum of climate change, from access to green energy to early warning systems to avoid loss and damage in the context of natural disasters. The assistance will benefit around 550,000 people.

- The Belgian state development agency Enabel, in collaboration with the Mozambican government, is facilitating an equitable transition to green energy. To reduce the use of fossil fuels and cut greenhouse gas emissions (= mitigation), around 12,000 Mozambicans will have access to solar energy.

- Furthermore, it is essential to support the local population in adapting to the unavoidable negative consequences of climate disruption, including drought, tropical cyclones and flooding (= adaptation). Belgian investment in solar energy will help improve irrigation systems, benefiting around 3,500 Mozambicans. Finally, it will improve access to drinking water for 55,000 Mozambicans.

- Waste management and the circular economy are also the focus of significant attention. To this end, Enabel is supporting the construction of several recycling units.

One notable component of the cooperation programme concerns the "Study, Expertise and Preparation Facility for Climate Resilience and Energy Transition in Mozambique' (STEP Facility). This initiative aims to strengthen the capacity of the Mozambican authorities to mobilise additional climate financing. A relatively modest investment in the STEP Facility enables the Mozambican partner to attract additional income through innovative financial mechanisms such as carbon credits or debt-for-climate swaps.



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Improving weather and climate forecasts worldwide in collaboration with the RMI

The DGD also supports the Systematic Observations Financing Facility (SOFF) of the World Meteorological Organization (WMO) in Geneva. This facility was launched in 2022 on the initiative of António Guterres. In 2024, the DGD contributed more than €4 million to it. In total, the Belgian contribution amounts to almost €11 million.

At a time when climate change is leading to a proliferation of weather phenomena on an unprecedented scale, with increasingly serious repercussions, it is more essential than ever to have robust information systems capable of issuing warnings in time. Early warnings make it possible to implement preventive measures and limit loss and damage caused by exceptional weather conditions. As a result, the investments in early warning have a very high return.

However, not all regions of the world have reliable systems for collecting weather and climate observations. That is why SOFF is helping to fill the remaining gaps in weather station coverage around the world.

Improved access to high-quality weather station data will help to improve understanding and predictability of weather phenomena worldwide. This will particularly benefit the regions most vulnerable to climate change: small island developing states (SIDS) and the least developed countries (LDCs).

However, donor countries also benefit directly. Extending the global coverage of high-quality weather data also helps improve the quality of weather forecasts here at home. With this in mind, Belgium has a representative from the RMI on the SOFF steering committee.



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Frank and open dialogue on migration as a vector for development

At the end of January 2024, states, civil society, representatives of the private sector, cities and youth met in Geneva for the 14th summit of the "*Global Forum on Migration and Development*" (GFMD), under the French presidency, to discuss the link between migration and development. As a reminder, the GFMD was created in 2006 outside the United Nations. Belgium, the first country to hold the presidency of this global forum, has remained committed to the GFMD and continues to support it, also financially. The Forum remains highly appreciated by the various stakeholders, as its structure is conducive to flexible, frank and open dialogue framed around a positive narrative of migration as a driver of development.



© GFMD, Geneva



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Among the key themes of this 14th summit are labour migration and the impact of climate change on human mobility. Belgium contributed to two side events on these themes organised by Enabel on the sidelines of the Forum, one on the role of diasporas in the development of the country of origin, and the other on skills mobility. Our country was also on the panel of the round table on labour migration. On this occasion, the Special Envoy for Migration and Asylum highlighted the projects led and financed by Belgium, and explained the Belgian vision and approach underlying these efforts, particularly the Global Skills Partnership. This global and holistic approach aims to gradually and sustainably strengthen the socio-economic development of destination countries, in response to labour shortages and demographic deficits, and countries of origin, by reinforcing institutional systems for job placement and socio-economic development. This requires close collaboration and coordination between all stakeholders, including the private sector.

Belgium and the International Organization for Migration (IOM) are exploring the potential of remittances

In December 2022, the Minister for Development Cooperation approved an innovative pilot project aimed at providing cost-effective remittance alternatives and opportunities to invest savings in the countries of origin of migrants. Remittances refer to all monetary transfers made by migrants to their countries of origin (IOM definition). In the majority of cases, remittances are sent on an individual basis by a migrant working to support relatives in his or her country of origin. The definition could also be extended to include personal remittances and gifts in kind. The 2-year "O-REMIT" project was implemented by the Belgian office of the International Organization for Migration, and focused on three pillars: data collection on remittances, awareness-raising among the diaspora and green investments in countries of origin. While the data collection element targeted all the partner countries of Belgian Development Cooperation, the other two pillars relating to awareness-raising and investment focused on Senegal, Morocco and the Democratic Republic of Congo.

This pilot project is particularly important, as it is the first time that the remittance landscape in Belgium has been mapped in detail, making it possible to identify the countries receiving remittances from our country, to determine the amounts destined for our 14 partner countries and the channels used and why, the amount of transaction costs, etc. All this information means that our future policies can be based on facts and concrete results. Moreover, by stimulating green and sustainable investment in countries of origin and mobilising the diaspora living in Belgium, this project also presents a positive vision of migration and is in line with the vision of the "migration as a driver for sustainable development" strategy. It contributes to SDGs 8, 10 and 17, as well as objectives 1, 2, 17, 19 and 20 of the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration. The results of this project are set out in two detailed reports which give an overview of data, trends and drivers, as well as a market analysis of transaction costs.

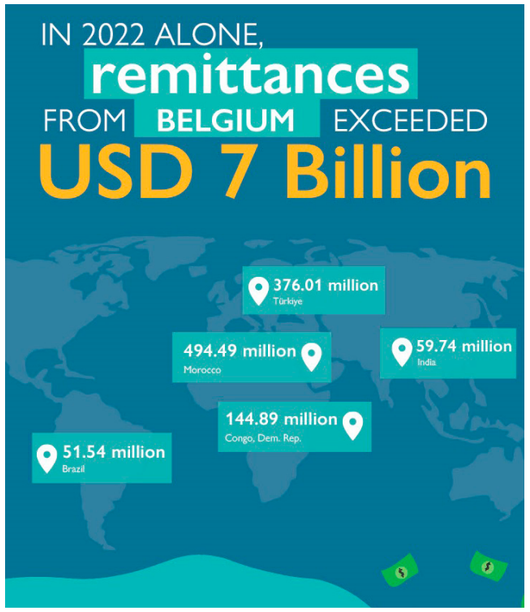
Among other things, it is stated that a total of $7.31 billion in remittances were sent from Belgium in 2022. Morocco is the country which received the largest amount, $495 million, followed by Romania and Türkiye. The average cost of transactions in our country is 4.31%, well above the target of reducing it to less than 3% set out in SDG 10.7.c. In the context of the project, a dialogue was started with different actors in the Belgian money transfer sector, including Wise, PayPal and TapTapSend. They expressed willingness to engage further in advocacy for greater transparency in international money transfers, pointing out that this could lead to more competition and lower costs.

In addition to a market analysis, an extensive survey was conducted among members of the Belgian diaspora. The survey collected information on the motives and behaviour of people sending remittances. Five workshops on digital and financial inclusion were also organised in Belgium. 3 workshops were organised in Senegal, the Democratic Republic of Congo and Morocco for the beneficiaries of remittances. The aim was to inform them about cost-effective transaction options, options for savings and ways to use remittances. In addition, investment training sessions were held for members of the diaspora, who were then put in touch with small and medium-sized green businesses in the three countries.

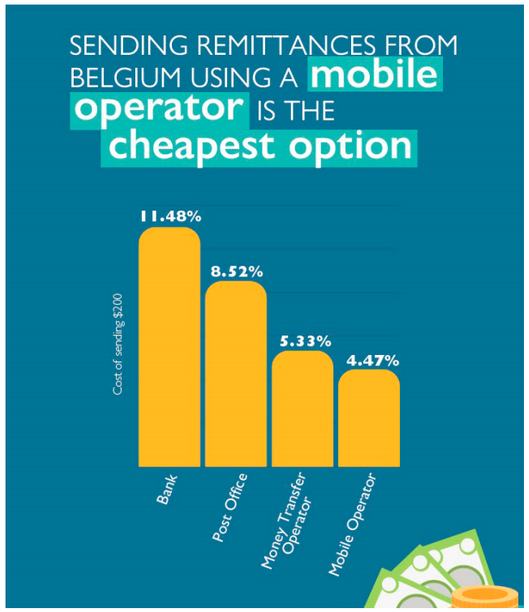
According to the World Bank, global remittances reached $685 billion in 2024, exceeding the combined total of direct investment and official development assistance (ODA). The stakes, opportunities and challenges are therefore huge. Through its activities, the O-REMIT project has laid a solid foundation for a more efficient and informed approach to remittances. It has not only improved transparency and awareness among people sending remittances, but also created opportunities for diaspora communities to contribute to the sustainable economic development of their countries of origin. The project has shown that by raising awareness and strengthening technical support for migrant and diaspora associations, their contributions to financial, economic and social development can be maximised.



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Sicomines and EITI in Congo: transparency helps secure an additional $4 billion for infrastructure works

Belgium is one of the founding members of the Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative (EITI), set up in 2003 to improve transparency and governance in countries rich in natural resources. Belgium finances the general operations of the EITI secretariat, based in Oslo, and the more specific operations of the EITI in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC).

The Democratic Republic of the Congo produces 70% of the world's cobalt and 9% of its copper. These two minerals play a crucial role in the energy transition and in electronic applications.

In 2008, the Sicomines project (an acronym of "Sino-Congolaise des Mines") raised high hopes for the country's development. The agreement, signed between the Congolese government and a group of Chinese investors, gave the latter a 68% stake in the joint venture. In exchange, the Chinese party undertook to build roads and schools financed by the mining revenues. With an investment initially valued at $3 billion, the agreement was seen as a symbol of the outstanding cooperation between the two countries.

In the years that followed, the Congolese population started to have growing doubts about the benefits of the project. Questions were raised as to whether infrastructure-related promises had been fulfilled, and whether the agreement was actually benefiting the country.

In response to these concerns, the EITI multi-stakeholder group in Congo (EITI-DRC), made up of members representing government, companies and civil society, commissioned a study to evaluate the agreement. Published in December 2021, the report came to the stark conclusion that the joint venture constituted "unprecedented damage" in the history of the DRC.

The study criticised the unbalanced capital distribution (only 32% for the Congolese government), a biased feasibility study as the basis for investment decisions, and an underestimate of the copper reserves. It turned out that essential infrastructure projects had not been carried out, while profits had been redirected to shareholders instead of being used to repay investments as originally planned.

The public debate surrounding the project and the study's conclusions prompted the Congolese authorities to carry out an audit of the Sicomines agreement. They also set up a Chinese-Congolese commission tasked with finding a better balance of interests, with input from EITI-DRC.

The report pointed out that Chinese companies had earned nearly $10 billion in profits, while only $822 million had been allocated to infrastructure work in the DRC. Following further negotiations, the Congolese and Chinese governments agreed to increase the budget for infrastructure work from $3 billion to $7 billion, an increase of $4 billion to support the development of the country and its people.

Over the past year, the EITI has demonstrated its relevance and impact by helping to make public funds more transparent and stimulating public debate, thereby helping to guarantee revenues and the equitable use of natural resources. There are still challenges, nevertheless. It is still crucial to monitor the new agreement, with the necessary involvement of the Congolese government. As the project progresses, the EITI will keep playing its role as an accountability mechanism, ensuring multi-stakeholder oversight and promoting transparency for the benefit of the Congolese people..



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1.3. GEOGRAPHICAL, GOVERNMENTAL AND NON-GOVERNMENTAL COOPERATION

The DGD is committed to building lasting cooperative relationships with partners in the Global South. These include political dialogues with the governments of Belgium's 14 partner countries, as well as strategic dialogues with Belgian non-governmental actors. If possible, we work in the Team Belgium or even Team Europe format, but always with our partners in the global South. The DGD facilitates and helps shape this cooperation, but it is the partners themselves who shape the results. This chapter illustrates some of the results and activities arising from the partnerships and dialogue in the context of governmental and non-governmental cooperation, and in the field of global citizenship education.

Investments in the Port of Cotonou in Benin: a mutually beneficial partnership

Located at the intersection of major global trade routes, Benin is one of West Africa's most important maritime hubs. Its port sector is crucial for connecting the national economy with the sub-region (including several landlocked countries in the central Sahel) and the rest of the world. Its economic importance makes it a key contributor to implementing Benin's development policies. Indeed, the Port Authority of Cotonou accounts for 30% of GDP and 45% of tax revenues. Despite many opportunities, the port also faces a number of challenges in terms of performance, supply chain efficiency and environmental impact (marine, land and air pollution). What is more, the port is a major employer. As such, working conditions and promoting decent work are key areas of focus.

Since 2018, the Port Authority of Cotonou (PAC), managed by Port of Antwerp-Bruges International at the request of the Beninese authorities, has been a central link in Belgian cooperation in Benin. The support for the port sector is focused on partnership, skills transfer, sustainability and innovation. These efforts are implemented by Enabel, the Belgian development agency, in coordination with non-governmental cooperation actors, as well as the Belgian Ministry of Defence, which plays a significant role in supporting port and maritime safety. This commitment, since reinforced by the EU, France and the Netherlands in Team Europe format, comes against the backdrop of reform of the port sector in Benin, with a view to making it more modern and efficient, and strengthening transport interconnections. Belgium and Team Europe therefore intend to raise the level of ambition, commitment and performance of actors in the PAC in terms of environmental sustainability and promoting decent work and social protection. But they are also



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looking to foster sustainability in the port ecosystem, by ensuring it has multimodal logistical connections in a healthy environment that respects biodiversity, all along the strategic corridor linking the south (Cotonou) to the north (Malanville) of Benin. These projects are part of the Global Gateway strategy, in which the Belgian and European private sector plays an essential role. Global Gateway is a new European strategy to stimulate investment in the digital, energy and transport sectors, and to strengthen healthcare, education and research systems.[11]

Improving the management of the PAC will enable it to attract private investors, while maintaining public ownership of the port. The results achieved are tangible: among other things, Belgium and Team Europe have helped improve the business climate (50% increase in turnover for the Port Authority of Cotonou), increasing the flow of export and import goods (+27.3% between 2017 and 2022), a rising trend in decent jobs (by setting up a one-stop hiring office) and improved implementation of the port's environmental policy (Ecocert certification). Against this backdrop of an improved business climate, economic relations between Benin and Belgium have been further strengthened, with an economic and trade mission by AWEX that took place in 2024. Thanks to its tax exemption policy for investment, Benin offers a favourable environment for foreign companies.

This multi-partner, multi-dimensional approach highlights the alignment between local needs and opportunities, and Belgian and European interests and values, which form the basis of a "mutually beneficial partnership".

Belgium and Ukraine, partners in reconstruction

Three years after the start of Russia's full-scale invasion on 24 February 2022, the war in Ukraine continues to rage. Since the start of the conflict, Belgium has supported Ukraine through multilateral organisations, the EU and with humanitarian aid. Since 2024, the DGD has also maintained bilateral relations with the country. While Ukraine is not a governmental partner of Belgian Development Cooperation, our government has nonetheless allocated €150 million to a reconstruction programme through the Ukraine Fund, financed by taxes on frozen Russian assets. The Belgian development agency Enabel, responsible for implementing this programme, is one of the few European development agencies active in Ukraine, thereby playing a unique role.

The programme, entitled "*BE-Relieve*", focuses on the Kyiv and Chernihiv regions, following the "*Build Back Better*" principle, and with specific attention on the cross-cutting dimensions of the environment, the fight against climate change, decent work, the quality of governance and gender. At least €20 million will be devoted to energy efficiency.

War and the ensuing instability require a flexible approach, a programme designed to adapt and adjust actions and areas of intervention, in consultation and in parallel with the developments on the ground. Russian bombing campaigns are aimed primarily at destroying Ukraine's energy infrastructure. Relentless attacks have prompted Ukraine to turn to a more decentralised, and therefore less vulnerable, energy system. In consultation with our Ukrainian partners and the relevant authorities, Enabel therefore opted to supply decentralised energy systems and emergency heating systems to get the affected population through the winter.

As a result, 400 public sites have been equipped with generators, primarily in the Kyiv and Chernihiv regions, but also in Dnipropetrovsk, Kharkiv, Sumy, Odessa and Zaporizhia. Since the beginning of February 2025, around 100 of these generators have already been delivered. The programme also includes heating systems for hospitals: four for field hospitals and 39 mobile systems for flexible deployment in urban hospital infrastructures. In addition, the BE-Relieve programme is rehabilitating part of the damaged power generation infrastructure. Together, these investments cover 2.8% of the energy production capacity destroyed by Russia. Calls for tenders have also been published for the reconstruction of two hospitals and a school in Chernihiv. Finally, three fallout shelters are under construction at three schools in the Kyiv region, essential for guaranteeing access to education in wartime.

Enabel already committed €14 million in aid for 2024. In the coming years, the bulk of the remaining budget will be divided equally between the following sectors: (1) energy and circular construction, (2) health and social protection and (3) education, skills development and employment, in addition to support for the integration of the EU *acquis*. Indeed, in 2022, the European Council granted candidate status to Ukraine.

In 2024, Belgian humanitarian aid released €15 million to support the international humanitarian response in

11 https://commission.europa.eu/strategy-and-policy/priorities-2019-2024/stronger-europe-world/global-gateway_en



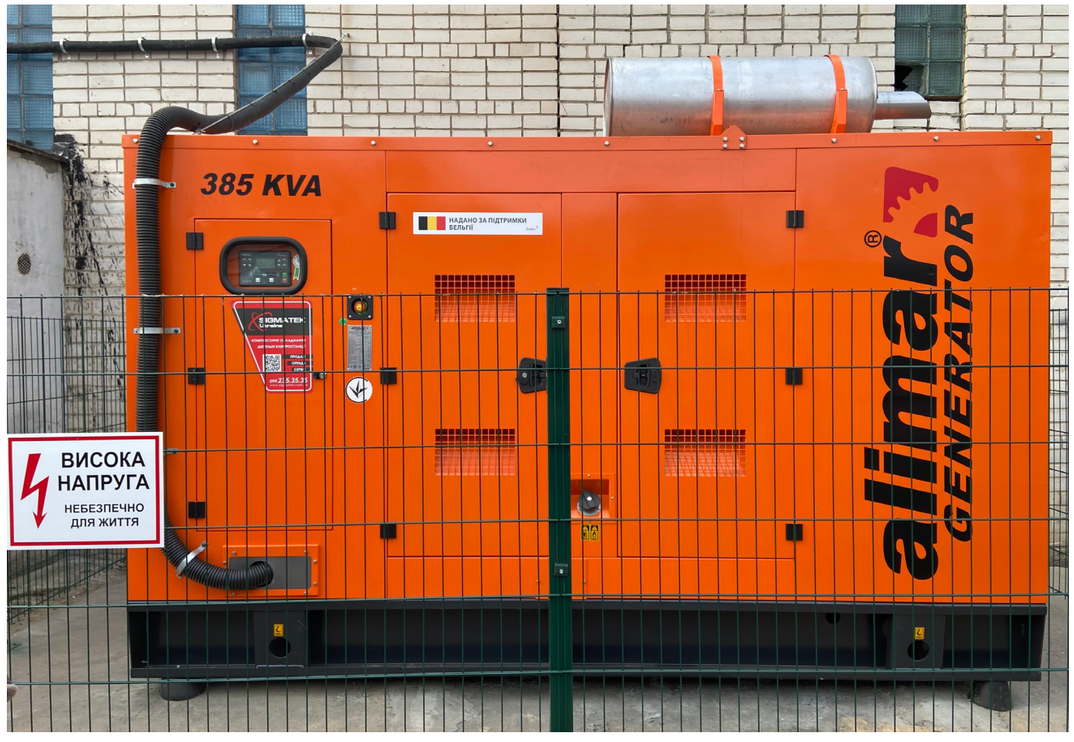
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Ukraine. Belgium contributed €7 million to the Humanitarian Fund for Ukraine of the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), capable of providing an urgent and flexible response to rapidly evolving situations and crises on the ground, and also accessible to local Ukrainian actors, many of whom are already providing assistance in the most dangerous contexts. The final €8 million was donated to the ICRC, which guarantees vital aid and services in the extremely difficult conditions generated by the conflict, as well as the strain placed on the humanitarian system and its neutrality.

Belgium's efforts to support Ukraine are not limited to development cooperation, but form an integral part of a broader military and political strategy. In fact, all levels of the Belgian government work together to ensure a secure and sustainable future for the Ukrainian population. In a country at war, flexibility and regular consultation remain crucial, but Belgian cooperation is yielding results and meeting the expectations of Ukrainian partners.



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Partnership as a lever for constructive dialogue on human rights in Uganda

In 2023, Uganda, a partner of Belgian Development Cooperation since 2005, adopted the Anti-Homosexuality Act (AHA). This Act, which is a breach of the country's international human rights commitments, aims to severely criminalises homosexuality, restricts freedom of expression and association, and criminalises in vague terms support for activities that "promote homosexuality".

At the same time, Belgium was faced with a major dilemma: should it send a strong signal to the Ugandan authorities by halting all bilateral cooperation, as some were calling for, also in Belgium, or should it, in the name of international solidarity and its underlying principles (defending human rights, combating discrimination, etc.) maintain its support for the most vulnerable, and in particular the people and groups targeted by this law, while initiating a dialogue with the partner?

Belgium made the political choice to approve a new bilateral cooperation programme with Uganda. The main aim was for Belgium to engage in a constructive dialogue with the authorities on the human rights situation in the country. The cooperation programme provided a key opportunity to achieve this. This dialogue was made possible as it was based on a partnership founded on trust and mutual respect, built over the long term.

Although substantial differences of opinion on the fundamental question of "values" underpinned this in-depth dialogue, Belgian cooperation worked to find common ground and mutual interests. In this context, the Belgian development agency Enabel, in partnership with the University of Mbarara in Uganda, conducted a study to collect baseline data on discrimination and exclusion in the sectors (health and education) and districts targeted by Belgian cooperation. The objective, factual and scientifically-validated data facilitated a collective understanding of the phenomena of discrimination and exclusion, and fuelled the discussions. Belgian actors in non-governmental cooperation also contributed valuable insights based on their knowledge on the ground. The results of this collaboration and study, welcomed by the partner, will be useful for Uganda in the context of its overarching policy of non-discrimination and inclusion. In 2024, this dialogue resulted in measures being identified to mitigate the risks of discrimination and exclusion within the cooperation programme.

Belgium's quiet diplomacy proved effective: using the cooperation levers at its disposal, it entered into evidence-based dialogue between equals, and made it possible to significantly shift some seemingly entrenched positions. Implemented in the context of the cooperation programme, mitigation measures aligned with those of the World Bank will mean that Belgium can still reach the most vulnerable on the ground, and therefore continue to have a meaningful impact.

Global citizenship education calls for greater international solidarity

The acronym 'GCE' was heard within the walls of the FPS Foreign Affairs on various occasions in 2024. Indeed, global citizenship education (GCE) has often been on the agenda of Belgian cooperation in recent months.

We can highlight the launch of the new GCE strategic note in April 2024, in the context of the Belgian Presidency of the Council of the European Union. The GCE embodied in this strategic note is more transformative than ever: it enables citizens of all ages to grasp the complexity and interdependence of the multiple crises that marked this century; it also encourages them to act – individually and collectively – to bring about a fairer, more sustainable world. Moreover, the note provides an updated definition of GCE, the various elements of language associated with it, and the objectives and priorities that guide it. As such, it is a guiding framework for the entire sector. To mark its launch, public figures from various disciplines debated the major global challenges in terms of social and environmental justice. These practitioners on the ground, active for example in providing reception for migrant children, in fair trade, or in promoting decent work on various continents, shared their experiences from this angle of global citizenship. The event raised the profile of GCE, both within the DGD and the FPS Foreign Affairs, and externally through the communication campaigns organised for the launch.

We can also highlight Belgium's co-financing of the European Citizens' Summit in March 2024, also under the Belgian Presidency. Over two days, more than 200 civil society organisations exchanged ideas and explored six deeply interrelated dimensions of international solidarity: a united response to global challenges; peace, human rights and security; in-depth transformation of our economy; respect for planetary boundaries; migration justice; and democratic participation. All this work culminated in the "Brussels Declaration: For a fair, sustainable and inclusive Europe"[12]: a reference document for GCE in political advocacy, which emphasises the leading role Europe must play in reducing global inequalities.

Finally, in the context of the GCE audiovisual programme, we can highlight the screening in December 2024 of the film "Soundtrack to a Coup d'État" by Johan Grimonprez, co-financed by the DGD, which brings us face to face with our colonial past and encourages us to take responsibility for it. Music and politics engage in a challenging dialogue in this film, based on the rhythm and sounds of jazz. This highly critical and thought-provoking documentary fuels the debate on past and contemporary forms of domination (such as the current exploitation of mining resources in the DRC), and sheds light on lesser-known aspects such as the role of women in pan-Africanism, the use of culture as a weapon of diplomacy, and the links between African independence and anti-segregation struggles.

The documentary had a successful run at both the cinema and on television, and was nominated for an Oscar in 2025. A free online pedagogical dossier[13] provides more information on the subjects of the documentary, for discussion in a school setting or beyond.

"Soundtrack to a Coup d'État" is just one example of the many educational and civic-minded audiovisual productions co-financed by the GCE programme of the DGD. Three documentaries were nominated for the Ensors 2025: "Kamay, Marching in the Dark" (also nominated for the Magritte 2025) and "Soundtrack to a Coup d'État", while in the "series" category, the production "Draw for Change" was nominated. In addition, the film "Amal" was also nominated for a 'Magritte du cinéma' award in 9 categories. A collaborative project is also planned with the Brussels Education Film Festival, at which several co-funded films will be screened.

12 https://www.caritas.eu/wp-content/uploads/2024/03/Brussels-Declaration-22-March-2024.pdf

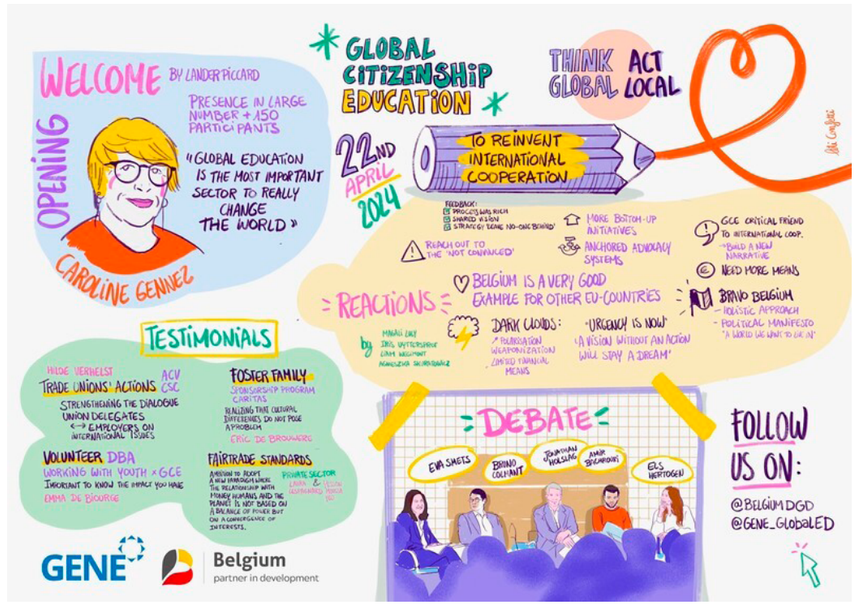
13 https://rcn-ong.be/nl/soundtrack-to-a-coup-detat-pedagogisch-dossier/



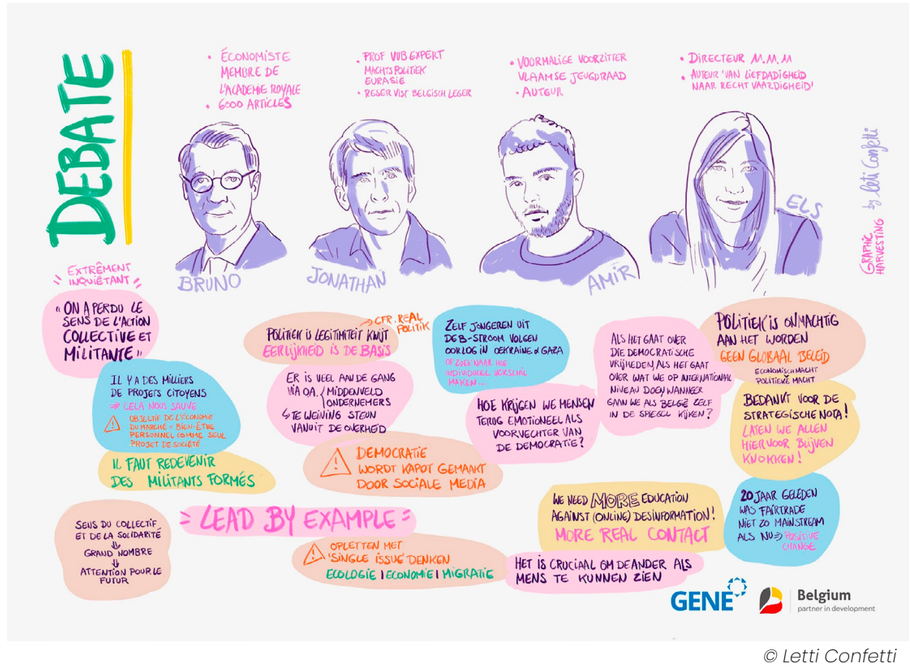
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In 2025, further efforts will be made to maximize the impact of these productions on the Belgian public, but also to disseminate them more widely within the FPS Foreign Affairs, including in our posts abroad..

1.4. HUMANITARIAN AID, FRAGILITY AND THE HDP NEXUS

The past year has once again been marked by a significant number of serious humanitarian crises caused not only by war and violence, but also by climate catastrophes. This situation underlines the importance of sustainable partnerships and flexible funding for humanitarian aid. Out of a total of almost €188 million, over 70% was awarded on a flexible basis, a historic high. In this way, Belgium ensured that its partners could respond to the various humanitarian crises rapidly, effectively and locally. The high degree of fragility and the significant number of crises once again highlighted the importance of the Humanitarian-Development-Peace Nexus (HDP).

Protecting populations: a priority for Belgian humanitarian aid

The year 2024 was marked by Belgium's involvement in the issue of protecting populations. Why is this a priority for Belgium in its humanitarian policy? Firstly, because it is a crucial issue in the lives of the affected populations (Gaza, Sudan, DRC, Yemen, etc.) and, consequently, for the credibility of the humanitarian system. If we take the time to listen to the people affected by these conflicts, their testimonies often highlight their safety and security as their top priorities.[14] Civilian populations are among the first victims of armed conflicts, which are characterised by flagrant disregard for international humanitarian law and human rights. Secondly, because this has been a clear commitment of humanitarian organisations since 2013, with protection recognised as the objective and expected outcome of humanitarian action..[15] Finally, because Belgium wants to help resolve the shortcomings identified in the implementation of the protection policy of the IASC (the Inter-Agency Standing Committee, the highest level humanitarian coordination body within the UN system), by focusing on achieving concrete protection outcomes. The evaluation of Belgium's humanitarian strategy conducted in 2022 concluded that the country's humanitarian aid had made a real difference to the lives of vulnerable populations, in particular by providing access to protection services for women and children.

Belgium used several tools in 2024 to put this priority in the spotlight. Under the Belgian Presidency of the Council of the European Union, the first Council Conclusions on protection in humanitarian contexts were adopted[16] in May 2024. The European Humanitarian Forum, held in February 2024, highlighted the fact that the current response of the humanitarian sector falls short and focuses too much on responding to the consequences of violence, rather than investing in methods to prevent and reduce the risks of violence.

Given this situation, Belgium's priority is to support humanitarian organisations in preventing, reducing, mitigating and dealing with the risks and consequences of violence in humanitarian crises. That is why Belgium supported the launch of a project[17] bringing together Norwegian Capacity operated by NRC (NORCAP), Network On Humanitarian Action (NOHA), and Humanitarian Policy Group (HPG), aimed at holistically improving the security of civilian populations, by combining research, capacity building in the field, training and the sharing of expertise on this type of prevention and mitigation methods.

Nevertheless, it is crucial that the humanitarian sector does not neglect existing initiatives within communities. Methods to prevent violence must be based on initiatives that are often already being implemented by the communities themselves. Belgium has continued to fund protection programmes run by Belgian NGOs, with a wide range of objectives, such as strengthening prevention and community protection mechanisms in Burundi, Uganda and the DRC; improving access to drinking water in Niger to reduce the risk of conflict around water sources; providing psychosocial support in southern Gaza; and providing medical, psychosocial and legal assistance to survivors of sexual violence. Box 7 presents some results, by way of illustration.

Thanks to these various initiatives, in 2024 Belgium gained more visibility as a central donor on the theme of protection. Belgium's long-standing vision is gaining ground, and the humanitarian sector recognises the added value and importance of the role our country plays at various levels. According to Nonviolent Peaceforce: "*Belgium played a key role during its presidency of the EU Council, using the platform to highlight the role of non-violent strategies in preventing violence and protecting the civilian population in armed conflicts. Belgium's commitment to this issue within the donor community is crucial in getting the humanitarian sector to see violence prevention as an urgent priority.*" In a context where international solidarity is being called into question, in particular through drastic cuts in humanitarian budgets, protection appears to be an essential priority.

14 Ground Truth Solutions. January 2024. "We do not want aid from the world. We want to stop the war" Community priorities and perceptions of aid and support in Gaza.

15 IASC Protection Policy 2016.

16 https://data.consilium.europa.eu/doc/document/ST-9736-2024-INIT/nl/pdf

17 https://odi.org/en/press/joining-forces-enhance-civilian-safety-conflict/

Box 7: Examples of results in the area of protection



© Oxfam, Burkina Faso

- In Maarib, Yemen, tribal conflicts frequently break out, leaving displaced people caught in the crossfire. The 'Community protection network', supported by Oxfam, attempted to resolve this delicate situation by involving a third party, who negotiated with the tribal leaders and finally managed to reach a ceasefire agreement.

- In Burkina Faso, risks of physical and sexual violence, as well as deadly robberies were identified on a bridge linking two villages. A courageous plea was made to the military authorities to make them aware of the problem. The first attempt was unsuccessful, as was the second. It was only on the third attempt, in the presence of the regional director of social action, that the security forces were mobilised. They subsequently deployed patrols along this stretch, in collaboration with local communities. Violence decreased immediately and economic activities resumed. This success is attributable to long-term support for the Oxfam programme.



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International humanitarian law under pressure and Belgian support for UNRWA

From a humanitarian perspective, 2024 was a challenging year, in particular for humanitarian principles and international humanitarian law (IHL). Continually under ever-growing pressure from prolonged and intensified conflicts, the civilian population, including humanitarian and medical personnel, is the victim of serious violations. Against the backdrop of the conflict in Gaza, Belgium has redoubled its diplomatic efforts to ensure safe and unhindered humanitarian access and assistance there, where the aid system is undermined by multiple obstacles. These efforts focused in particular on protecting UNRWA, the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East. Its continued presence in the Occupied Palestinian Territory is at risk due to the withdrawal of certain donors, as well as administrative and legal obstacles that threaten the Agency's ability to operate in line with its mandate. Belgium has regularly reiterated the irreplaceable, vital and indispensable role played by UNRWA in the region, particularly in delivering humanitarian aid to Gaza. Belgium also confirmed its financial support for UNRWA, with a contribution of €18.5 million to the organisation in 2024.

Despite an extremely difficult context, UNRWA achieved significant results in its humanitarian response, as illustrated below (Box 8).

Increased attention to fragility and the operationalisation of the HDP Nexus

Belgium has long been committed to cooperating with partner countries facing high or extreme fragility. By 2030, 86% of people living in extreme poverty will be living in these countries, which are struggling to achieve the SDGs. As such, Belgium attaches great importance to sustaining this commitment, even in politically complex contexts. Complementarity, coherence and collaboration between humanitarian aid, development cooperation and peacebuilding (the HDP Nexus) are essential to (1) provide a structural response to both urgent needs and the root causes of fragility, crisis and conflict, (2) make local populations and structures more resilient, and (3) reduce humanitarian needs.

In 2024, Belgian Development Cooperation continued to work towards a collective understanding and better application of the fragility approach and the HDP Nexus, both internally and with our partners. By reinforcing this coordination, Belgium can share and acquire valuable knowledge and experience in the field within OECD Development Assistance Committee (DAC) networks such as INCAF (International Network on Conflicts and Fragility), GOVNET (network on governance) and the DAC-UN Dialogue, in which Belgium collaborates with DAC members and 8 UN agencies to implement the Nexus. [18] This expertise proved particularly valuable during the Belgian Presidency of the Council of the EU, and allowed our country to draw attention to fragility and politically complex situations. Under the Belgian Presidency, consensus was formed around 10 Principles for joint EU development cooperation in politically constrained environments. These principles call for a stronger and longer-term involvement of Team Europe as a donor in politically complex environments where dialogue and partnership are under pressure. Box 9 discusses these 10 principles in more detail.

The European Commission has warmly welcomed this tangible result, which could serve as a benchmark for broader reflection, both at European level, within the OECD/DAC networks, and internally at the Belgian level.

In 2024, the Belgian strategic framework on fragility was evaluated to see to what extent it is adapted to the challenges in fragile contexts and whether it was achieving results.[19] The evaluation underscored the relevance of the Belgian framework and the importance of continuing efforts. In fragile contexts, Belgium is regarded as a reliable partner with strong and positive influence in sectors such as education, agriculture and food security, as well as healthcare, with a particular focus on human development and social transformation.



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18 UNICEF, UNHCR, UNPF, IOM, UNDP, UN-Habitat, WFP en FAO

19 See the website of the Special Evaluation Office (SEO), in particular the following page: https://diplomatie.belgium.be/en/policy/special-evaluation-office/evaluations/evaluation-belgian-fragility-approach

Box 8: Illustration of UNRWA's response in figures:

- UNRWA supplied more than 6.7 million medical consultations in the Gaza Strip between 7 October 2023 and 1 December 2024.
- More than 221,000 children received routine vaccinations between the start of 2024 and 1 December 2024. In addition, a large-scale polio vaccination campaign was conducted: UNRWA, WHO, UNICEF and partners vaccinated a total of 556,774 children under the age of 10 during the second round of vaccination at the end of 2024. 94% of the target population was reached.
- From 7 October 2023 to 9 December 2024, a total of 388,054 families (nearly 1.9 million people) received two deliveries of flour; 374,909 of these families received three deliveries.
- Between 7 October 2023 and 9 December 2024, UNRWA provided psychosocial services to 193,722 displaced persons (e.g. initial psychological care or psychosocial support).

Source: UNRWA Situation Report #151 on the Humanitarian Crisis in the Gaza Strip and the West Bank, including East Jerusalem | UNRWA

Box 9: The Principles for joint EU development cooperation in politically constrained environments underscore the importance of:

1. joint conflict and risk analysis to support decision-making processes;
2. a coordinated approach through Team Europe, both in the short and long term;
3. responding to local needs through a people-centred approach, strengthening the resilience of the most vulnerable groups (leave no one behind) and conflict prevention efforts;
4. an HDP Nexus approach to strengthen coherence and complementarity between the humanitarian, development and peace sectors, alongside an approach that takes conflict situations into account (do no harm) and investments in local peace-building, strengthening social cohesion, improving access to basic services and building trust between state and society; all while respecting humanitarian principles and international humanitarian law;
5. empowering women and young people as drivers of change;
6. a country-specific approach that takes the regional context and cross-border issues into account, as well as partnerships with civil society, regional organisations, UN agencies, international financial institutions and various local stakeholders (in support of Locally Led Development initiatives);
7. operational and budgetary flexibility to respond to rapidly-changing crises;
8. strengthening democracy through a bottom-up approach and support for transition processes;
9. investment in dialogue and communication with stakeholders, including national authorities, without legitimising unconstitutional regimes;
10. developing a convincing narrative and strategic communication to tackle misinformation and promote universal values.

Part 2 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR POLICY COHERENCE FOR DEVELOPMENT

Part I illustrated how partnerships are contributing to results in the partner countries of Belgian Development Cooperation. However, these results may be compromised by Belgian or international policies in areas other than development cooperation - consider the negative effects of Belgian or European policies on agriculture, trade, intellectual property or climate on development cooperation. As such, the Law on Development Cooperation (of 19 March 2013) underlines the importance of policy coherence for development (PCD) as (freely translated) 'a process of ensuring that the objectives and results of a government's development cooperation policies are not undermined by other government policies that have an impact on developing countries, and that these other policies support, where possible, development objectives'.

The DGD sees it as crucial that other departments and governments take into account the effects of their policies on developing countries (including the most fragile partner countries). But this concern does not fall within the DGD's direct sphere of control. Dialogue and partnerships with other federal departments and governments (regions, communities, EU) therefore remain essential to ensure policy coherence for development.

This report summarises a series of recommendations on specific policy areas and the institutional framework that has been drawn up by the Advisory Council on Policy Coherence for Development (CCPD in French), and then focuses on a few results and developments in specific dossiers..

2.1 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR SPECIFIC DOSSIERS AND THE INSTITUTIONAL FRAMEWORK

Set up in 2014, the Advisory Council on Policy Coherence for Development (CCPD-ABCO) issues opinions to the Belgian federal authorities on policy coherence for development. In 2024, the Advisory Council published three opinions: on restructuring the external debt of developing countries, on priorities for policy coherence for development for the Belgian government, and on the Europe-wide roll-out of the Belgian measure prohibiting the export of pesticides banned within the EU.

The concise summaries in this report have been taken from the opinions of the CCPD-ABCO. The opinions can be consulted in full on the website of the Advisory Council. [20]

Debt restructuring for developing countries

This opinion addresses the issue of the external debt of developing countries. At the heart of this issue is that, in the event of a developing country defaulting on its debt, there is no debt restructuring framework that is sufficiently effective and tailored to the social, environmental and climate challenges these countries face. The opinion offers recommendations for ensuring that Belgian and European policies on the management of the external debt of developing countries are consistent with policies in favour of the Sustainable Development Goals. The opinion makes four major recommendations:

- promoting the establishment of a multilateral sovereign debt restructuring mechanism.
- converting the unsustainable debts of developing countries into investments towards the Sustainable Development Goals.
- putting an end to the practices of litigating creditors ("vulture funds").
- compelling all uncooperative private creditors to participate in sovereign debt restructuring operations.

Policy Coherence for Development (PCD) priorities 2024-2029 for the Belgian government

This opinion brings the 2024-2029 priorities for PCD to the attention of the new federal government. It points out that despite the large-scale commitments made under the 'Vivaldi' government, no structural mechanism has been implemented to ensure public policy coherence at the highest level of federal power. It therefore makes four recommendations to ensure PCD going forward:

- adopting and implementing a federal action plan on PCD for the full legislature;
- extending the systemic bilateral monitoring by the DGD of certain critical policies;
- improving regulatory impact analysis (RIA) tools and mechanisms, and
- ensuring ongoing dialogue between the CCPD-ABCO and the Cabinet in charge of Development Cooperation.

EU-wide roll-out of Belgian measure prohibiting exports of pesticides that are banned within the EU

This opinion analyses an extension at European level of the prohibition on the export of banned pesticides, prompted by Belgium in response to environmental and health concerns, as well as unfair competition in the agricultural and food sectors. Belgium is seen as a key player in promoting EU-wide harmonisation of rules on the export of prohibited pesticides on the basis of legislation due to take effect in May 2025. The justifications include protecting the health of the citizens and workers, the environment and ethical considerations, but also the need to avoid double standards and negative repercussions on the EU's reputation and sustainable development.

20 https://www.ccpd-abco.be

2.2 RESULTS AND DEVELOPMENTS IN SPECIFIC DOSSIERS

Belgium aims for an integrated policy for sustainable cocoa

Belgium's sustainable cocoa strategy stands out thanks to its strong, integrated policy focused on sustainability at every level of the production process, from cocoa beans to chocolate bars. In this context, the focus is placed on poverty reduction in the small-scale cocoa farming, the root cause of deforestation and child labour.

Belgian projects run by the Trade for Development Centre (Enabel) aim to enhance the ability of producers to access the European market, in accordance with European regulations. BIO Invest, Kampani and the Business Partnership Facility finance processing capacity in producer countries. Beyond Chocolate, the Belgian multi-stakeholder initiative implemented by the Sustainable Trade Initiative (STI), brings together various stakeholders to transform the purchasing practices and supply chains of companies in Belgium. This initiative aims to foster decent incomes and put an end to deforestation, by ensuring, among other things, that companies take account of the obligations of the Cocoa & Forests Initiative, a multi-stakeholder partnership in Ghana and Côte d'Ivoire for the protection of forests.

The DGD actively influences policy on decent incomes, deforestation and due diligence within the corporate supply chain. For example, the FPS Foreign Affairs influenced EU legislation in this area, jointly organised the 5th World Cocoa Conference and took part in the discussions on the Global Gateway. To reinforce the impact of our strategy, we cooperate at European level with other Member States and with the European Commission. For example, Belgium signed up to a joint declaration on decent wages and income, joining Germany, the Netherlands and Luxembourg. Enabel is also implementing the Team Europe Initiative for sustainable cocoa in Côte d'Ivoire.

Some other outcomes and results where our strategy has made a contribution::

- 94.2% of the chocolate sold on the Belgian market is certified sustainable or complies with a corporate sustainability programme;
- 30% of households supplying cocoa to the Belgian market have their income situation monitored, and 15% have a decent income strategy in place; 45% of households are subject to the child labour monitoring and remediation system;
- 39% of the cocoa used is traceable to the plantation;
- Decent incomes have been included in recent European legislation on due diligence, obliging



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companies to change their supplying practices;

- A consensus in the Brussels Declaration to put the need for a decent income in the spotlight, as a human right;
- The decision by the Governing Body of the International Labour Organization to define the concept of decent wages and establish a methodological framework for setting decent wages;
- A mandate from the Amsterdam Declarations Partnership to work towards decent incomes.

Green diplomacy grows in importance

Climate change, biodiversity loss and pollution constitute a threat to the prosperity and well-being of every country. This triple global crisis is having a negative impact on virtually all policy areas. It is therefore logical that international environmental policy should play an increasingly significant role in international relations. Foreign investment, trade policy, security policy and international cooperation are now inextricably linked to this triple global crisis, and increasingly to climate and environmental policy.

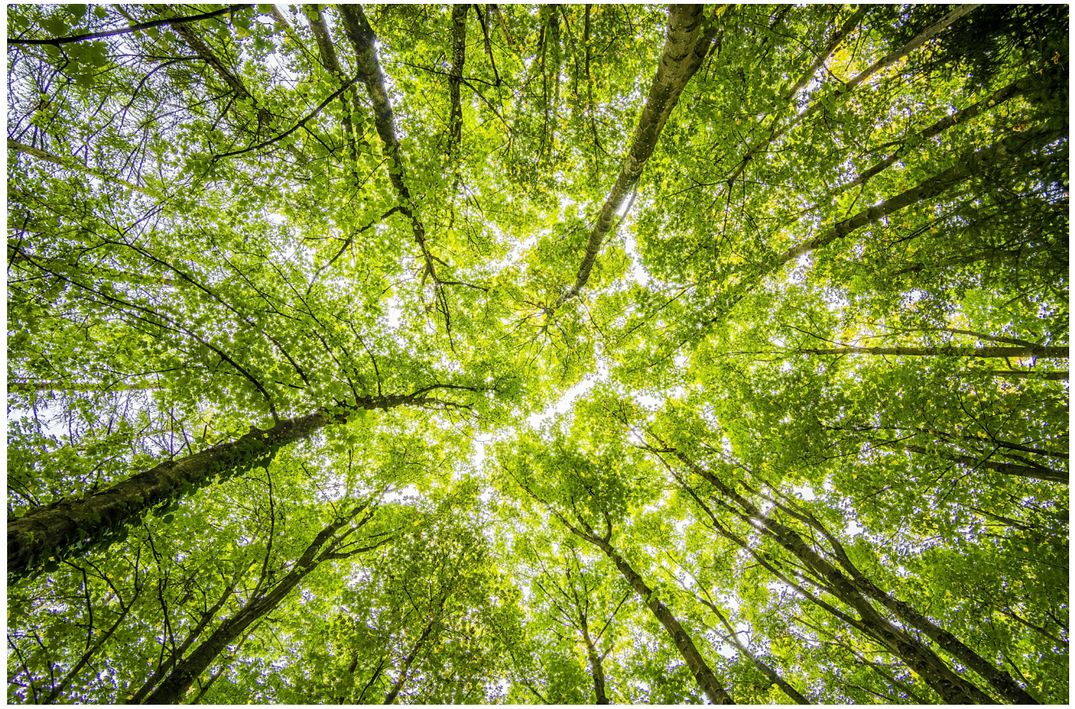
As a result, foreign policy has to evolve in line with this new reality. This is the case in particular for the EU. The EU and its Member States are convinced of the need for an ambitious environmental policy. During the last legislature in particular, a package of policy initiatives focusing on the EU's green transition was adopted, through the Green Deal. However, for this transition to be successful, it is crucial that ambitious measures are also taken at the international level, in particular to achieve the objectives of the Paris Agreement. The transition to a global economy largely free of fossil fuels is a colossal challenge, which comes with a lot of upheaval. It is therefore essential that this transition takes place in a fair, orderly and equitable manner.

Green diplomacy plays a key role in this respect. Among other things, this strategy is based on the Green Diplomacy Network (GDN) between the European External Action Service (EEAS) and Member States, which facilitates the exchange of information. Within this network, agreements are also made between Member States, as well as between the Central Administration, embassies and delegations, with a view to intensifying dialogue on climate and environmental policy in relations with our partners around the world, and helping to set out and achieve ambitious targets. Conclusions on green diplomacy were adopted during the Belgian Presidency of the Council.

The Council Conclusions serve as a guideline for European institutions and Member States to put green diplomacy into practice. As such, clear language is adopted in the Council Conclusions on the importance of Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs). These are concrete plans to put into practice the objectives that each country has set itself to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. In the run-up to the climate summit in Belém in November 2025, all countries are required to establish new NDCs. The Council is committed to supporting the development of new NDCs in partner countries, and to removing obstacles to implementing major commitments agreed between countries. What is more, the Council has reaffirmed the role of the private sector and businesses in these efforts, as well as cooperation with these stakeholders.



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Part 3 INTEGRITY

Implementing the Integrity Charter

In 2018, the various actors in Belgian Development Cooperation (civil society organisations (CSOs), institutional actors (IAs), Enabel and BIO Invest), in collaboration with the DGD and the office of the then Minister for Development Cooperation, Alexander De Croo, drew up an Integrity Charter, comprising 10 commitments relating to integrity. The aim of this charter was, on the one hand, to demonstrate to the outside world that integrity is an absolute priority for Belgian Development Cooperation and, on the other, to foster a structure and culture of integrity within the sector that prevents and detects breaches of integrity to the extent possible, and enables victims to come forward in an accessible and safe manner. The Integrity Charter became legally binding on 1 July 2023, through the Royal Decree of 28 February 2023 on integrity.

The regulatory framework also stipulates that the Minister, in their annual report to Parliament, must include a progress report and recommendations on the application of the Integrity Charter (article 35, 3° of the Law on Belgian Development Cooperation). This progress report on integrity is based on the annual integrity survey conducted among all Belgian Development Cooperation actors. The response rate for the 2024 survey was 100%, illustrating the importance the sector attaches to integrity.

The survey shows that over 90% of the points of the charter are currently implemented, with 100% for point 1 (code of ethics) and point 6 (confidential contact point) of the charter.

The survey also reveals the following in greater detail:

Points of the charter	Finding	Evolution since 2023
Point 1 – Code of ethics	100,00% of organisations have a code of ethics, which is also formally applied to all staff of the organisation..	+10,59%
Point 2 – Raising awareness	92,77% of organisations organise information or awareness-raising sessions on moral integrity, and 91.57% on financial integrity..	+11,59%; +6,86%
Point 3 – Person of trust	95,18% of organisations have an Integrity Advisor, to whom staff and volunteers can turn in confidence for advice on integrity and potential breaches.	+10,47%
Point 4 – Risk management measures	92.77% of organisations carry out risk analyses and take corresponding risk management measures.	+12,77%
Point 5 – Contracts with partners	92.31% have included specific integrity provisions in contracts with partners.	+5,13%
Point 6 – Confidential contact points	100% of organisations have a confidential contact point to which they can notify potential complaints of integrity breaches.	+3,53%
Point 7 – Audits	Last year, 86.75% of organisations carried out audits to detect breaches of financial integrity and 53.01% to detect breaches of moral integrity (it is tricky to actively carry out checks on moral integrity).	+0,87%; +15,36%

With regard to point 8 of the Charter (appropriate measures in the event of breaches of integrity), no quantitative data is available, but the qualitative question "What measures have been taken to support the victim(s)?" reveals that the organisations have put in place various measures: access to psychosocial, medical and legal support, security and protection-measures (including against acts of retaliation), the provision of clear information during and at the end of the notification process, etc.

No quantitative data is available for point 9 of the Charter, which calls for overarching communication on integrity breaches at least once a year. Nevertheless, we know that many organisations implement point 9 through their annual reports.

With regard to point 10 (actively cooperate with other actors to implement the measures of the Charter, build on existing practices and strive for continuous improvement of integrity systems), it appears that there is a broad integrity dynamic and synergy among the different actors of Belgian Development Cooperation, which are partly stimulated by the three recognised federations (NGO-federatie, ACODEV and Fiabel). Under the auspices of these federations, for example, the integrity officers of the CSOs and IAs meet regularly in an integrity working group, to discuss common challenges, share best practices and mutually strengthen their integrity systems in the process. The federations also regularly organise group training courses for the individuals with an integrity-related role within their organisation (integrity advisors, complaints managers, etc.), so that they can carry out their duties effectively.

It is clear from the progress report set out above that the sector has achieved a high level of implementation on all points of the Integrity Charter. The positive trend observed in recent years continues unabated: compared to the results for 2023, the sector has improved in virtually every respect, often by more than 10%. A further incentive to achieve this implementation rate of 100% is the recently overhauled accreditation procedure for CSOs and IAs, which includes a new audit area, namely integrity. To obtain accreditation (and subsequently funding), organisations will have to provide a document illustrating how they are implementing the various points of the Integrity Charter. The vast majority of CSOs and IAs submitted this document before 31 December 2024, the date when the accreditation procedure for the 10-year period (2027-2036) started.

Number of notifications for 2024

The survey also looked at the number of notifications of integrity breaches notified to Belgian Development Cooperation actors in 2024. All actors combined (Enabel, BIO Invest, CSOs and institutional actors) received a total of 278 notifications in 2024. As regards the type of notification (that were admissible), 38.78% related to financial integrity and 61.22% to moral integrity (including 10.61% of a sexual nature).

It is important to stress that notifications are not necessarily bad news: notifications mean that (potential) victims of integrity breaches have reported to points of contact and persons of trust, and that the latter will handle and investigate their notification correctly. In recent years, the sector has made considerable efforts to put in place accessible and dependable contact points, and this is now reflected in the figures. Furthermore, it is also important to stress that not every notification of an integrity breach necessarily leads to confirmation that an integrity breach has actually taken place: some notifications turn out to be inadmissible or, after investigation, unfounded. In practical terms, this means that 17.82% of all notifications are declared inadmissible (e.g. because the notification is not related to integrity). In 36.63% of admissible (and already closed) notifications, a breach of integrity was confirmed following an investigation. If confirmed, the organisation will always consider how to sanction the person responsible, how to further support the victim (if applicable), and how to strengthen the integrity systems to avoid such breaches in the future.

Based on the foregoing, two recommendations can be made regarding the application of the Integrity Charter:

(1) Keep raising awareness of the obligations of the Integrity Charter;

(2) Keep encouraging organisations to build on a strong culture of integrity and put in place accessible mechanisms to build trust in the notification channels and the reporting of potential integrity breaches.

Central Point of Contact

Introduced by the Royal Decree of 28 February 2023, the Central Point of Contact is a body within the DGD tasked with handling reports of sexual exploitation, sexual abuse and sexual harassment (grouped together under the general heading of 'abuse') within Belgian Development Cooperation, when there are shortcomings with the front-line contact points, in particular in cases of conflict of interest. Reports of abuse can be sent to the Central Point of Contact using the available form[21]. A circular adopted in 2023 and available in French, Dutch and English sets out the operation and missions of the Central Point of Contact.

Between July and December 2023, the Central Point of Contact received just one notification, which was subsequently judged to be inadmissible. To compensate for this relatively low number of notifications, the service responsible for managing the Central Point of Contact has stepped up its communication on the existence of this mechanism. A direct link to the Central Point of Contact portal has been added to the websites of the various Belgian posts to increase their visibility.

In 2024, the Central Point of Contact received 21 notifications. However, these notifications were all declared inadmissible, as none of them related to abuses in Belgian Cooperation. Of the 21 notifications received, 7 related to competences of the FPS Foreign Affairs (mainly consular matters), and the people who had sent the notifications were redirected to the relevant departments or posts. 3 notifications related to allegations of fraud which did not fall within the remit of Belgian Development Cooperation or the FPS Foreign Affairs. Of the 11 remaining notifications, 4 related to migration issues, 4 to conspiracy theories and 3 to other topics.

The significant number of notifications in 2024 underlines the fact that a point of contact is necessary, and shows the benefits of the communication efforts made this year. However, the low number of admissible notifications and the wide variety of notifications suggest that the communication on what exactly the Central Point of Contact is competent for needs to be refined.

Consequently, the year 2025 will be devoted to (i) clarifying communication on the exact competencies of the Central Point of Contact, and (ii) a more in-depth analysis of the reasons behind the low number of admissible notifications.

In conclusion, after a year and a half of activity, the Central Point of Contact has become a tool for implementing the integrity policy of Belgian Development Cooperation. This integrity policy is becoming more professional and is guided by the core principle of zero tolerance for inaction.

21 https://integritycomplaint.be

Part 4 BELGIAN DEVELOPMENT COOPERATION AND HUMANITARIAN AID IN FIGURES

In the 1970s, it was agreed at the international level that the rich donor countries should increase their Official Development Assistance (ODA) to at least 0.7% of their Gross National Income (GNI). Belgium also enshrined this standard in the Law of 2013 on Belgian Development Cooperation. Due to the challenging budgetary conditions caused by the financial crisis, followed by the COVID-19 measures and, more recently, the energy crisis, Belgium has not yet been able to reach this target.

The ODA figure has since fluctuated between 0.4% and 0.5% of GNI. However, an agreement reached within the EU requires Member States to reach the 0.7% target by 2030.

What does Belgian public development assistance consist of?

- financing via the development cooperation budget;
- funding from other federal authorities and the European Commission;
- part of the cost of reception for refugees;
- contributions from the Regions, Communities, provinces and municipalities;
- internationally-agreed debt cancellation.

In 2024, total Belgian development assistance represented around 0.48% of GNI, including €1,435 million from the budgets of the DGD.

Top 20 recipient countries of ODA from the DGD in 2024 (millions of euros)		
1	Congo (Dem. Rep.)	100,50
2	Ukraine	63,00
3	Rwanda	34,82
4	Palestinian Territories	29,62
5	Niger	27,69
6	Uganda	23,57
7	Burundi	22,96
8	Senegal	21,76
9	Benin	21,41
10	Burkina Faso	20,64
11	Mali	19,65
12	Syria	15,50
13	Mozambique	10,69
14	Ghana	9,48
15	Guinea (Rep.)	9,08
16	Tanzania	8,77
17	Morocco	8,10
18	Lebanon	6,21
19	Yemen	5,80
20	Peru	4,53

Overview of Belgian development assistance by channel (in millions of euros)

Directorate-General for Development (DGD)	**2022**	**2023**	**2024**
Governmental cooperation			
Belgian Development Agency (Enabel)	191,64	199,97	198,43
Consolidation of society and good governance	34,80	26,85	8,58
Regional cooperation (since 2017 through Enabel)	0,20		
Management costs of Enabel	21,86	24,40	23,05
State-to-state loans	12,38	6,69	8,01
Sub-total Governmental cooperation	**260,68**	**257,91**	**238,06**
Non-governmental cooperation			
Federations	2,86	3,05	3,26
NGO	138,17	148,50	151,28
Institutional actors	105,93	105,93	105,93
Scientific institutions	5,17	4,39	5,20
Other non-governmental actors	3,17	3,05	2,94
Sub-total Non-governmental cooperation	**255,31**	**264,92**	**268,61**
Multilateral Cooperation			
Mandatory multilateral contributions	10,51	13,17	11,98
Voluntary multilateral contributions	128,70	107,33	124,62
European Development Fund and Bank	89,29	66,57	48,43
World Bank Group	123,67	126,19	285,86
Regional development banks	53,70	54,11	73,36
Multilateral debt cancellation	35,81	33,72	32,33
Sub-total Multilateral cooperation	**441,69**	**401,08**	**576,58**
Entrepreneurship, science and technology (from 2017)			
Science, technology and innovation: Belgian actors	**1,60**	**1,49**	**1,20**
Science, technology and innovation: International actors	**4,00**	**4,00**	**4,00**
Local entrepreneurship, fair trade	**50,74**	**35,81**	**52,03**
International knowledge centres	**0,55**	**1,09**	**1,05**
Humanitarian programmes	**189,47**	**217,99**	**187,90**
Climate policy (from 2017)	**92,26**	**101,51**	**100,82**
Awareness-raising in Belgium (excluding NGOs)	**2,38**	**2,53**	**2,81**
Administration, evaluation, other	**1,91**	**1,99**	**2,08**
Total DGD	**1.300,59**	**1.290,27**	**1.435,13**

REFERENCES AND SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER READING

- Accra Agenda for Action: https://www.oecd.org/en/publications/accra-agenda-for- action_9789264098107-en.html
- Advisory Council on Policy Coherence for Development: https://www.ccpd-abco.be/?lang=en
- Africa CDC (African Centre for Disease Control and Prevention): https://africacdc.org/
- African Union Development Agency: https://www.nepad.org/
- Aid Transparency Index 2024: https://www.publishwhatyoufund.org/the-index/2024/
- Amsterdam Declarations Partnership: https://ad-partnership.org/
- Be-cause health: https://www.be-causehealth.be/en/
- Belgian Presidency of the Council of the European Union: www.belgium24.eu
- BIO: https://www.bio-invest.be/
- "Brussels Declaration. For a fair, sustainable and inclusive Europe": https://www.cncd.be/brussels-declaration-2024?lang=en
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- Special Evaluation Office: https://diplomatie.belgium.be/en/policy/special-evaluation-office
- Evaluation of the Belgian fragility approach: https://diplomatie.belgium.be/en/policy/special-evaluation-office/evaluations/evaluation-belgian-fragility-approach
- https://www.enabel.be/
- European Humanitarian Forum: https://europeanhumanitarianforum.eu/
- Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative (EITI): https://eiti.org/
- Federations of non-governmental actors:
    - Acodev: https://www.acodev.be/
    - Fiabel: https://www.fiabel.be/fr
    - NGO-federation: https://www.ngo-federatie.be/nl
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