Development: Belgium improves the quality and volume of its aid

OECD

9/06/10 - The OECD's Development Assistance Committee (DAC) commends Belgium's commitment to improve the quality and volume of its aid, particularly at a time of global economic crisis. Belgium spent USD 2.6 billion on official development assistance (ODA) in 2009, which amounted to 0.55% of its gross national income (GNI).

Belgium is likely to meet its commitment to increase this ratio to 0.7% by 2010, which would allow it to join the five donors who have already reached this goal.

Belgium's recent reforms are backed by strong support from politicians and civil society, according to a DAC review of Belgium's aid performance [1]. Aid is strategically allocated and focuses on Belgium's poorest partner countries. Efforts to modernise its co-operation over the last two years include: more strategic support to multilateral organisations, co-operation programmes that are better aligned to partner countries' priorities, new agreements to work more closely with civil society, and the use of more effective ways to deliver aid.

The DAC review highlights Belgium's work in fragile states, encouraging the government to formulate a cross-ministry approach to development co-operation in fragile states and to ensure that this is reflected in work done in developing countries. The DAC commends Belgium for the 71% growth in its humanitarian budget since 2004. Belgium's plans to reform its current rigid laws should allow it to define the focus of its humanitarian action and to link it with long-term development.

To improve the efficiency and effectiveness of Belgium's aid, the review suggests that the many development actors involved could be better linked through a common vision for development co-operation and a clear understanding of policy guidance and aid management.

Belgium's Directorate-General for Development Co-operation (DGDC) of the Foreign Ministry needs to be put in a stronger position to play its policy and co-ordinating roles. Belgium needs to make sure that it has the right expertise in the right places; delegating more decisions to the country level would help it fit better into the local context and make its administration more efficient. It should focus on bringing lessons from its field work into its policies and approaches to development co-operation.

The Development Assistance Committee, which groups major aid donors that are members of the OECD, issued its Main Findings and Recommendations on Belgium as part of a series of examinations of member aid policies and programmes. The

peer review, led by Canada and Switzerland, took place on 2 June 2010. The Belgian delegation attending the review meeting was headed by Peter Moors, Director-General, Development Co-operation, Federal Public Service for Foreign Affairs, Trade and Development Co-operation.

For further information, journalists are invited to contact Jolanda Profos, OECD Peer Review Division (email: Jolanda.profos@oecd.org [2]; tel : +33 1 45 24 90 12).

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