

It's not the end, it's just the beginning: With COVID-19, now is the time to boost aid

OECD DAC 2019 preliminary statistics CONCORD press release

Brussels, 17 April 2020 - Early figures released yesterday by the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) show an increase of 1,4% in global development aid spending in 2019 compared to 2018. This change in donor countries' official development assistance (ODA) levels can be attributed mainly to an increase in bilateral aid going to low income countries. CONCORD¹ welcomes this since aid is a crucial lifeline for the world's poorest countries and people.

However, despite a slight increase of 0,5% in EU donors' aid spending, EU Member States - yet again - collectively fell short of their international commitment to provide 0,7% of their gross national income in ODA - a proportion that is key for guaranteeing long-term, equitable and sustainable development.

"Emergencies like the COVID-19 outbreak show so clearly how important it is that the EU invests in the future of humanity. That future lies in ensuring we all follow a path of sustainable development, balancing the social, economic and environmental dimensions. EU aid must be commensurate to the challenges we face and also balance the three dimensions of sustainable development," said Tanya Cox, CONCORD Europe Director

According to the OECD figures, last year EU ODA reached only 0,47% of the collective gross national income, far below the target. Only 4 EU countries honoured their commitments on development aid spending: Luxembourg, Sweden, Denmark and the United Kingdom.² In addition, the total aid spending of the EU institutions fell by 6,1% in real terms.

CONCORD welcomes the fact that in 2019 more aid went to countries that needed it most. The net global bilateral ODA provided to Least Developed Countries (LDCs) rose by 2,6% to USD 33 billion, with the largest share going to Sub-Saharan Africa - an increase of 1,1% in real terms. Nevertheless, CONCORD regrets that EU Member States collectively have not yet reached the 2020 target of providing 0,15% of gross national income to LDCs.³ That is critical

¹ CONCORD is the European confederation of Relief and Development NGOs, made up of 28 national associations, made up of 28 national associations, 24 international networks and 3 associate members that represent over 2.600 NGOs, supported by millions of citizens across Europe. www.concordeurope.org

² As of 31 January 2020, the United Kingdom is no longer a member of the European Union.

³ According to international agendas, such as the *Addis Ababa Action Agenda* or the *Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries for the Decade 2011-2020*, the LDCs target should reach 0.15% of GNI to LDCs by 2020 and 0.2% of GNI to LDCs by 2025.

to breaking the vicious cycle of poverty and to realising all people's rights, in line with the Leave No One Behind principle of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.⁴

“Despite the encouraging figures that show a positive trend, we are off track in achieving the 2030 Agenda and the promise of a world where no one is left behind, especially for the most marginalised, excluded or discriminated-against people,” said Niina Tenhio, CONCORD expert at Finnish development NGO Fingo.

In light of the COVID-19 emergency, and the likelihood that it may put pressure on donors' aid budgets in 2020 and beyond, we join the call of the OECD Secretary General Angel Gurría and the OECD Development Assistance Committee Chair Susanna Moorehead to boost support for developing countries who are hardest hit in times of crisis. CONCORD is urging the EU institutions and Member States to step up their development aid commitments to support those who will be disproportionately hit by the coronavirus emergency: mobilising new resources and reaching the 0,7% target needs to be at the heart of the new EU seven-year budget for the 2021-2027 period. The call of the OECD Secretary General for strengthened collective and multilateral action is therefore an opportunity, a new beginning for the EU to affirm its global role as the largest ODA donor bloc.

“In times of such uncertainty, CONCORD urges EU donors to boldly step up their efforts to reach the 0.7% of gross national income target, giving people a renewed sense of hope during this global pandemic and protecting them from its social and economic consequences, which will be felt most harshly in poorer countries,” said Luca De Fraia, CONCORD expert at ActionAid Italy.

CONCORD will continue to advocate for more and better aid, which is both life-saving and puts sustainable development and the reduction of inequalities at the centre. We will, through our AidWatch Report and other advocacy actions, continue to pressure EU donors to meet their international commitments to provide genuine aid where it is needed most.

⁴ CONCORD Europe (2019), *AidWatch 2019. Leaving No One Behind. Time For Implementation*

