

"Bulgaria's participation in EU development policy is a challenge which sets out specific requirements, such as the adoption and implementation of EU primary and secondary legislation in the area of development and humanitarian aid, building up institutional capacity, and adequate participation in the work of EU bodies on development issues in their various formats."

Bulgaria's Policy on Participation in International Development Cooperation, Concept Paper, June 2007



# Bulgaria

**Has Bulgaria established a timetable to reach the target of 0.17% by 2010? NO**  
**Will Bulgaria meet the 0.17% target without inflating its aid? NGO prediction: NO**

In 2008, Bulgarian ODA decreased from €16m to €13m, leaving the share of ODA at only 0.04% of the GNI, a long way from the 0.17% 2010 target. Unless the government increases aid levels four-fold in the next two years, this objective will not be met.

In 2009, Bulgaria is expected to adopt a mid-term programme for Bulgarian ODA (2009-2011). This document will build on the legal and institutional framework for development cooperation in Bulgaria, passed in 2007. It is important that this document is used by the government to set a timetable for meeting its international aid commitments.

## • Aid quality

Gender is briefly mentioned in the new mid-term programme, but nonetheless, is still not fully addressed. The document fails to provide gender indicators or allocate specific resources for gender equality and women's empowerment. Currently, there are no other official documents dealing with gender and development and, unless new regulations are approved, it will remain a marginal development issue in Bulgaria.

Transparency is one of the weakest points in Bulgarian development assistance. Information on development policy-making is completely out of reach for citizens and information on aid flows is also very difficult to obtain. The official information disclosed automatically by the government through the internet or other channels is almost non-existent and of little relevance to citizens or Southern partners. This is an area of great concern to NGOs in Bulgaria, and one where the government must make vast strides in improving its practice.

Decisions on development issues are usually taken unilaterally by the government. Bulgarian NGOs are beginning to play a more relevant role in aid processes, but there is still a long way to go. NGOs were consulted during the preparation of the mid-term strategy; however, until the strategy is put into action, Bulgarian NGOs will have to continue to depend on funding from external donors. Other opportunities for governmental support are very limited. In addition, if the principle of democratic ownership is to underpin Bulgarian aid, it is essential that consultation processes are widened to include discussion of more specific development issues and engage with development actors in partner countries. Currently, the government does not have an official position on conditionality – a key issue for ownership. Moreover, as Bulgarian ODA is mainly provided through multilateral channels, conditions employed by the IFIs are de facto applied to Bulgarian funded ODA.

As Bulgaria provides most of its development assistance through multilateral channels, it usually disburses these funds according to pre-agreed schedules. Conversely, the country lacks a multi-annual financing framework for bilateral aid, and money is seldom disbursed on time. The new mid-term programme for Bulgarian aid should force the government to make multi-year commitments and improve predictability, but this has yet to be implemented.

## Bulgarian NGOs call on their government to:

- Finalise the aid strategy, including country strategy papers for Bulgaria priority countries, through wide public consultation and implement it as soon as possible.
- Strengthen Bulgarian Platform for International Development (BPID) contacts with relevant experts from state institutions other than MFA.
- Set aside the necessary resources and provide training to both governmental officials, and domestic CSO representatives to foster dialogue and transparency.
- Implement and conduct aid evaluations (including on gender issues) in priority countries in order to determine their true needs and reflect them in the national ODA strategy.
- Advocate for the inclusion of gender issues as a specific thematic programme and intensify the collaboration between gender-oriented CSOs and state institutions.
- Create a forum for regular meetings between MFA, MF, CSOs and other relevant stakeholders in order to discuss priority setting in ODA policy.
- Implement a public information campaign regarding the ODA obligations of Bulgaria.

## Bulgaria's total official development assistance

