

### How to take on improvements?

A decision of principle must be taken on both the direction and the size of the measures required. The establishment of a short, clear **policy agenda** will be the first step. That task should be entrusted to a high level reflection committee, in which the major actors are represented. The aforementioned committee should set up an action plan and provide the supervision of its implementation.

The **action plan** should make a distinction between the improvement of structural and cultural factors. Until now, including within the reform framework, all the attention has gone to structural factors whilst cultural factors have been neglected. However, old practices can be maintained in new structures, which is exactly one of the difficulties the reform had to deal with.

Ultimately, one more important lesson to be learnt from the past reform, is the absolute need for proper **supervision and support, follow-up and early correction** during the implementation of both reform process and action plan.

FPS Foreign Affairs, Foreign Trade and Development Cooperation  
Development Cooperation special evaluation unit  
rue des prêtres Carmes 15 - Karmelietenstraat 15  
B-1000 Brussels  
+32 (2) 501.38.34  
SES-DBE@diplobel.fed.be

[www.Diplomatie.Be](http://www.Diplomatie.Be)  
[www.dgos.be](http://www.dgos.be)

## Evaluation of the direct bilateral cooperation, 1999-2005



The evaluation of the reforms that have been introduced in the Belgian development cooperation in 1999, was laid down in the 2003 government agreement. It revealed two minor points: the tense relationship between the DGDC and the BTC, on the one hand, and the tensions between the head office and the proper field within the the DGDC itself, on the other hand.

The evaluation identified a number of matters of serious concern regarding both the organisational efficiency of the Belgian direct bilateral development cooperation and the absence of alignment with the new international perspective that turns the partner country into the major actor of its own development. The fact that the contribution of the direct bilateral development cooperation to global ODA is staying far behind, is also a matter of concern. The evaluation is designed to generate a sense of urgency in order to reverse the situation once and for all.

The evaluation period ran from 1999 to 2005. In the meantime, both the DGDC and the BTC have taken a number of initiatives that meet several recommendations of the evaluation, such as: the relationship between the DGDC and the BDC is now governed by the 3rd Management Contract, the revived Concerted Action Committee DGDC-BTC makes cooperation between the two organisations easier, the DGDC is developing an adequate human resources policy; the policy and coordinating role of DGDC is improving and a more result-oriented and less output-oriented monitoring is being put in place. Both the management responses of DGDC and BTC are attached to the report.

## What must change?

### 1. *Strengthening of the policy role of the DGDC*

This calls for a **new approach as well as for a new organisation culture**, and it requires the DGDC to develop a long-term vision on development cooperation and to take its policy-preparing and monitoring role regarding the policy conducted, very seriously. Essential condition is an **appropriate human resources** policy that results in a sector- and theme-oriented fundamental assessment as well as in an assessment of aid modalities.

As long as they are maintained as development cooperation instruments, **country strategic papers and ICPs** must contribute to improving the policy management and make sure Belgian cooperation is in line with the international perspective.

This condition is essential to be able to operate a well-defined division of tasks between the DGDC, on the one hand, and the BTC on the other hand (such as its participation in the policy dialogue).

### 2. *Development of Belgian niches within the new international perspective*

One of the point on which Belgium differs from other countries, is that its development cooperation is concentrated on the Great Lakes Region. The partner countries include several **fragile states**. This situation provides Belgium with the possibility to further focus its policy and its role on the specific needs of the aforementioned states, along with a sector-oriented concentration, either on the basis of experience (health sector) or focused on the administration level (justice, good governance, decentralisation,...).

### 3. *More partner country and result orientedness*

Until now, the Belgian system has mainly been focusing on itself, Belgian aid has a **limited predictability** and, due to the domination of project aid, 'ownership' is mainly being implemented at a local level. The evaluation pleads in favour of a result-oriented approach along with a contribution to the policy processes of the partner country.

### 4. *More delegation of powers to the field*

More partner country orientedness and better alignment with the international situation must go hand in hand with **more delegation of tasks and responsibilities** to the field. Therefore, the possibilities regarding delegation

of decision powers within the Belgian legal framework must be closely examined. There is also a need to overcome opposition forces which, both within the DGDC and the BTC, want to keep intact the weight of Brussels institutions. In the field, fundamental strengthening of the attachés as well as of the BTC field offices, is required. It is also necessary to clarify the division of tasks between the embassy and the BTC offices, namely regarding the participation in the policy dialogue.

### 5. *Improvement and streamlining of monitoring*

The Belgian monitoring system does not always meet the requirements of the Declaration of Paris. The high level must take the responsibility to have a close look at the current system and to review it. It is a matter of developing an appropriate system designed for both ex ante and ex post monitoring. That also requires a further alignment of the various quality systems used by both the DGDC and the BTC and clear instructions on quality requirements, as well.

### 6. *Better alignment of monitoring and evaluation systems*

The plusvalue of proper evaluation and monitoring is only admitted to a certain extent within the Belgian development cooperation. Priority must be given to a better feedback, mainly on the policy level, as well as to a better mutual alignment of the systems. There are now three evaluation and two monitoring systems for direct bilateral development cooperation, which do not sufficiently align their respective programmes as yet.

### 7. *Improvement of mutual cooperation*

The time has now come for both the DGDC and the BTC to show leadership in order to build mutual confidence between the two organisations, and especially in Brussels. In the field, joint field offices and a network approach could be considered.

### 8. *Review of human resources policy and of the organisation structures*

Along with a qualitative strengthening of staff of the DGDC and new forms of TA within the BTC that fit within the international context, attention must be paid to cohesion between both organisations in order to avoid functional overlappings. Furthermore, the focus must shift from the existant geographic interface in Brussels towards more fundamental expertise regarding sectors, themes and aid modalities.