

0.20% GENUINE AID/GNI

0.35% TOTAL AID/GNI

# AUSTRIA



**I repeat Austria's commitment to the New Agenda and its successful implementation at the national, regional and international levels.**

Federal President Heinz Fischer at the UN General Assembly

## MAIN CHANGES IN 2015

Austria's ODA has risen from 0.28% in 2014 to 0.35% in 2015. This growth results from aid inflated by funds allocated to refugees arriving in and passing through Austria. Refugee costs in Austria accounted for approximately one-third of total ODA in 2015, while the programmable budget of the Austrian Development Agency was only 6.2%. A timetable for reaching 0.7% ODA, which was announced by the Austrian government early in 2015, is still not (publically) available.

In 2015, the Austrian government announced an increase in the Foreign Disaster Relief Fund (Auslandskatastrophenfonds) from €5 million to €20 million. However, there is still no strategy on how to spend this money more efficiently through medium- and long-term planning. Disbursement decisions are mainly made on an ad hoc basis by the council of ministers.

Although Austrian officials announced that they would follow the recommendation of the DAC peer review not to include debt relief in their forecast scenario before this had been agreed in the Paris Club, the latest Austrian forecast shows a huge increase in ODA – due to an “anticipated” cancellation of Sudan's debt, which is not likely to happen and has not been decided on by the Paris Club.

Austria has decided to make remarkable contributions to EU trust funds such as the Madad Fund for Syria or the EU Africa Trust Fund. A large portion of these contributions is taken from existing development instruments, but repeated overlapping announcements make it difficult for the public to understand this.

## TRENDS AND PROJECTIONS FOR 2016 AND BEYOND

In 2016 the government announced a “doubling” of the budget of the Austrian Development Agency (ADA) within the next five years (an annual increase of €15.5 million). After several cuts in recent years, this can be seen as a first step in the right direction. However, it is not clearly mirrored in the multi-year budgetary plan. Increases will reportedly be used for programmes to support returning refugees, for example in Iraq, Afghanistan and North Africa. It is not known whether existing (and underfunded) priority countries/regions or strategies will also benefit from the increase.

The Austrian government claims it is implementing the SDGs through a “mainstreaming approach”. Rather than establishing

new structures, responsibilities or an overarching strategy, the SDGs are supposed to be incorporated into existing strategies. How this will be put into practice, and how potential gaps are going to be addressed, is as yet unclear. Even though the government plans to include civil society in this work, no steps have yet been taken to do so.

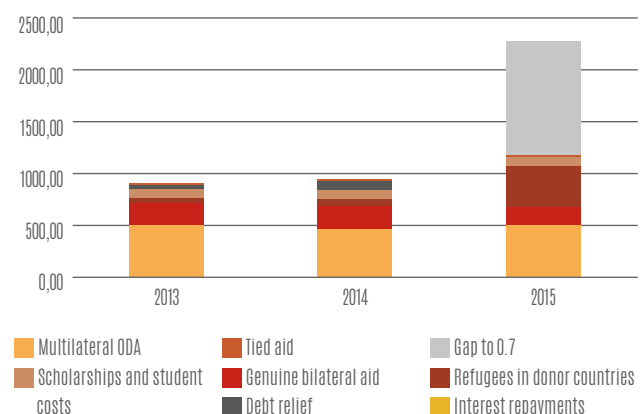
The three-year programme for Austrian development policy in 2016–2018 has come into force. Most of it is built on a participatory process involving a broad range of stakeholders, but migration and volunteers were added as new priorities after consultation.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

**The Austrian government should:**

- Fulfil the government's commitment to raise ODA to 0.7% of GNI, and should draw up and publically announce a binding timetable for reaching this goal;
- Make plans for spending new ADA money more transparent and build mainly on existing programmes and strategies;
- Focus all development programmes exclusively on the goal of fighting (multidimensional) poverty and inequalities;
- Develop a strategy for the Foreign Disaster Relief Fund in order to provide predictable financing in keeping with the commitments it made at the World Humanitarian Summit;
- Develop a general overall government strategy to implement the SDGs, with broad participation by civil society.

## AUSTRIA - GENUINE AND INFLATED AID (€ MILLION, CONSTANT 2014)



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