



Opinion Monitor for Development Policy 2022

DEVELOPMENT ENGAGEMENT IN TIMES OF GLOBAL CRISES AND CHALLENGES

Executive Summary

2022

IMPRINT

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The German Institute for Development Evaluation (DEval) is mandated by the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) to independently analyse and assess German development interventions.

Evaluation reports contribute to the transparency of development results and provide policy-makers with evidence and lessons learned based on which they can shape and improve their development policies.

In its "Opinion Monitor for Development Policy" series, DEval regularly draws up analyses on the attitude of the German population towards development policy and cooperation as well as global sustainable development.

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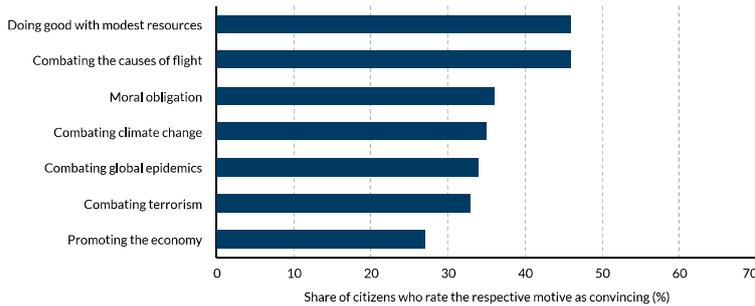
The German population's attitude towards development policy

75% advocate medium to high support for countries of the Global South

20% consider DC to be effective

People assess their own influence on the situation in the Global South as low

Convincing motives for Development Cooperation



Attitudes towards democracy and the promotion of democracy through Development Cooperation



58% advocate the promotion of democracy through DC



In cooperation with non-democratic states, the majority of people want DC to be tied to conditions

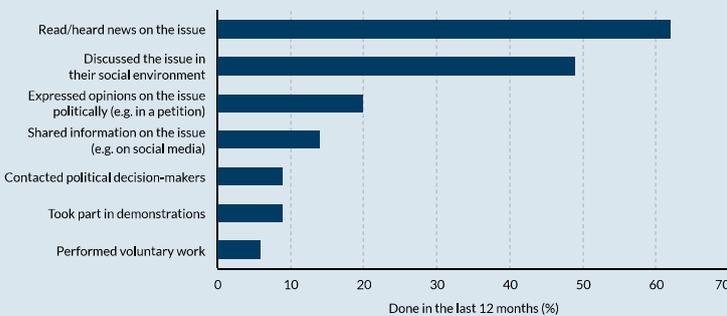


In the case of autocratisation processes in partner countries, the population advocates conditional DC, promoting democracy and adjusting the measures taking account of the situation of local people, but not ending the DC

The general public's development engagement

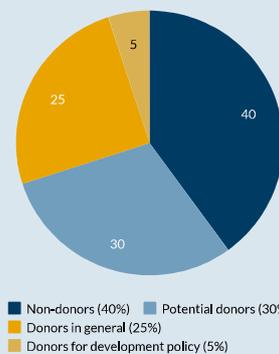
Non-monetary

The general public's non-monetary engagement



Monetary

Share of donors for development policy



Share of donors (in general and for development policy) declining since 2005

Donation labels as starting point for increasing trust in development policy NGOs

Sustainable consumption

58% of respondents pay attention to sustainability in their consumption behaviour

71% would like to consume more sustainably - especially in the case of clothing

Great approval of political measures to promote sustainable consumption

Four factors are closely related to sustainable consumption behaviour:

- awareness of sustainability
- a sense of being able to make a difference through sustainable consumption
- a sense of being able to consume sustainably
- distinct subjective norms

Engagement typology



Individuals change their engagement over time - especially intensively engaged individuals

The majority (66%) is not engaged or hardly engaged in development policy



Self-efficacy and concern about the situation in the Global South influence change in engagement.

SUMMARY

Background, motivation and questions

Development policy and development cooperation (DC) measures aim to implement the 2030 Agenda and its 17 goals, to deal with global crises such as the coronavirus pandemic or climate change and to promote sustainable global development.

The German population plays an important role here. First, governmental development policy measures are financed through taxes, which means that they need the support of the general public. Second, citizens engage themselves in development policy, thus making an essential direct contribution towards global sustainable development. It is therefore important for development policy actors to know what attitudes the general public has towards development policy and global sustainable development, what they know about this topic area and how they engage themselves. These insights make it possible to understand and classify public opinion and the engagement of citizens, and take these aspects into account when it comes to designing development policy communication and education, promoting development engagement and strategically enhancing DC. Against this backdrop, the “Opinion Monitor for Development Policy” series – to which this report belongs – addresses the following overarching questions:

- 1) What attitudes does the general public have towards development policy and sustainable development, what do they know about this topic area, how do they engage themselves, and how do these factors change over the course of time?
- 2) What characteristics do attitudes, knowledge and engagement correlate with?

The report follows up on the analysis of central attitude and engagement indicators in the “Opinion Monitor for Development Policy 2018”. It pays particular attention here to the population’s attitudes regarding democracy and promotion of democracy in the context of DC. Two focus chapters provide a detailed analysis of donation behaviour with regard to development policy organisations as well as attitudes and behaviour related to sustainable consumption. A guest contribution groups various forms of engagement to create a typology, which presents the development of individual engagement types over the course of time, and investigates the factors that influence shifts between those types.

Data sources

The data sources used, which are representative of the German population, comprise survey data from the Aid Attitude Tracker (AAT; 2012 to 2018) and its follow-on project Development Engagement Lab (DEL; starting in 2019), DEval’s own surveys conducted by the research institute ResponDi (2021) and data from the GfK Charity Panel (2005 to 2020). The focus analysis on sustainable consumption also draws on focus group discussions that were conducted with the support of an opinion research institute.

Results

What attitudes does the general public have towards development policy?

The majority of the German population continues to support DC, with 92 percent considering it important to support the countries of the Global South. 75 percent advocate providing medium to generous financial support for these countries through governmental DC. 43 percent are in favour of retaining the current expenditure for DC, while 23 percent advocate an increase. The most convincing motives for DC are as follows: “Doing good with modest resources” and “Combating the causes of flight” (46% in each case). Compared to 2019, the motive “Combating climate change” has gained in importance, with 35 percent of the population listing it as a convincing motive in January 2022. “Promoting democracy through DC” and “Working together with democratic states in DC” have met with great approval among the population (58% or more). In the case of autocratisation processes in the partner countries, the majority of the population endorses conditional cooperation, strengthening democratic structures and adjusting DC measures, but not ending the cooperation. Citizens do not believe that they can influence the situation in the Global South much

themselves – the level of “development policy self-efficacy” is accordingly low. Parts of the population continue to have reservations regarding the effectiveness of DC and (presumed) corruption in the partner countries. 22 percent consider governmental DC to be effective, while 21 percent do not. 53 percent agree that a large share of DC funding is lost as a result of corruption in the partner countries. The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), six years after being passed, are still only known to a small share of the population. Only 8 percent know the SDGs and know what they involve, while 21 percent are at least familiar with the term. Moreover, many attitude indicators show differences based on age and political orientation (that is, self-identification on the political spectrum from left to right). Younger people and those who classify themselves to the left of the political spectrum are more likely to support DC.

- There continues to be a conducive environment for development policy in Germany. However, doubts about the effectiveness of DC could jeopardise the positive basic attitude.

How does the general public engage in development policy?

a) Non-monetary development engagement

Citizens frequently read or hear news on global poverty and development (62%) and frequently discuss the issues in their environment (49%). 14 percent of those surveyed have shared information on the subject in the past 12 months, 6 percent have done voluntary work, 20 percent have expressed their opinion on the issue of global poverty and development (for example through a petition), and 9 percent have contacted political decision-makers or taken part in a demonstration (data from January 2022). The forms of engagement used have hardly changed since September 2019. Older citizens more frequently obtain information about global poverty and development and discuss it, while younger citizens are more often actively involved in voluntary work. In terms of political orientation, the data reveals that a larger share of those on the left of the political spectrum obtain information about or discuss the issue of “global poverty and development”. Engagement in an honorary capacity and the use of forms of political participation are more common at the two ends of the political spectrum. Some sections of the population even actively oppose development policy measures.

- A large share of the population conducts information-related activities. In contrast, only a small share participates in more involved and time-consuming forms of engagement.

b) Focus analysis 1: Donations to development policy organisations

The general volume of donations in Germany has been stagnating since 2015. Based on projections of data from the GfK Charity Panel – excluding large donations – it amounted to around 5.5 billion euros in 2020.¹ The share of development policy in the donations market decreased from around 14 percent to 10 percent between 2010 and 2020. Although the volume of donations has hardly changed overall, the number of donors has continually decreased – from nearly 50 percent of the population in 2005 to less than 30 percent in 2020. The same applies to donations in the area of development policy, where the share of donors has fallen from around 11 percent (2005) to 5 percent (2020). Individuals who generally donate money, and those who specifically donate to development policy organisations, tend to be fairly old compared to non-donors, have a high level of education and earn a high income. In addition to the 30 percent of the population who already donate money, there is a large untapped number of potential donors, also amounting to around 30 percent of the population. The most frequently named reasons for not donating include a lack of information and a lack of trust in charitable organisations. Donation certification labels offer a possible means of increasing the trustworthiness of charitable organisations. However, a label does not directly increase the willingness to donate.

¹ Projections of the volume of donations based on different data sources come to some quite different results. Box 9 in this report contains a discussion of these data sources.

- The number of donors in Germany is decreasing. Donation certification labels – or other easily processed information – can close the knowledge gaps that inhibit the willingness to donate.

c) Focus analysis 2: Sustainable consumption

Sustainable consumption is widespread among the population, with 58 percent of people stating that their consumption behaviour is at least partly sustainable. This sustainable consumption covers various areas, including food, clothing and finances. It also consists of various consumption phases – such as purchase considerations, disposal and consumption policy engagement – which go beyond simply purchasing and using sustainable products. 71 percent of the population state that they want to make their consumption more sustainable. There is therefore potential to increase sustainable consumption, especially in the area of clothing. Moreover, the general public is convinced that sustainable consumption can help to master challenges in development policy. A pronounced sustainability concern, perceived behavioural control, distinct subjective norms and a high perceived level of self-efficacy (regarding consumption policy) are associated with sustainable consumption behaviour. If the sense of being able to consume sustainably (perceived behavioural control) and to exert a personal or political influence (self-efficacy) is low, this potentially presents an obstacle to increasing one's own sustainable consumption. Interesting in this context is that, although the population believes that both individuals and businesses have great influence over the possibility of increasing sustainable consumption, people have little faith that they actually exert this influence. Consequently, the population supports consumption policy requirements that place obligations on companies and political actors.

- There is great potential to increase sustainable consumption in Germany. In order to exploit this potential, it is necessary to demonstrate individual possibilities for taking action and exerting influence. In the view of the population, moreover, decision-makers should establish suitable political and economic conditions for sustainable consumption.

d) Engagement types over the course of time

Grouping various forms of engagement to form a typology in the Development Engagement Lab's guest contribution reveals five types of development engagement with the following shares (data from July 2018): (1) *Totally Disengaged* (22%), (2) *Marginally Engaged* (44%), (3) *Informationally Engaged* (22%), (4) *Behaviourally Engaged* (9%) and (5) *Fully Engaged* (3%). The large majority of the population is therefore only marginally involved in development policy or not involved at all. At the aggregate level, engagement is stable over time. However, this stability conceals changes on an individual level. Those surveyed shift from one engagement type to another over the course of time. For individuals in the groups with the lowest level of engagement, the probability of shifting to a different engagement type is lower than for individuals in groups with a higher level of engagement. The latter increase or decrease their engagement over time. An analysis of the potential influencing factors reveals that an increase in the development policy self-efficacy is associated with an increase in the engagement. Concerns about the situation in the Global South lead to both an increase and a decrease in engagement. A high degree of concern namely corresponds to a high probability of increasing the level of engagement, while diminishing concern goes hand in hand with a higher probability of decreasing the level of engagement.

- It poses a major challenge to motivate those citizens who are barely engaged to engage themselves in development policy. However, development policy self-efficacy and concern about the situation in the Global South offer starting points.

Development policy implications

The results give rise to five implications for development policy practice:

- 1. Further strengthening the positive attitude towards development policy.** The support of the population for development policy provides a strong foundation for German development policy. In order to maintain this foundation, it is important to avoid concentrating communication entirely on development policy as a means of resolving specific challenges. Rather, the communication should also take account of other motives among the population – for instance, a moral obligation towards the countries of the Global South – as well as the requirements of a broader global development agenda. Doubts about the effectiveness of DC should be taken seriously.
- 2. Communicating the political context in partner countries.** Public opinion reflects the tension that results from the needs of the population in countries of the Global South and problematic (for example, autocratic) governments in these countries. In this context, citizens endorse conditional DC, which takes into account the situation of the local population, as well as measures to promote democracy. Development policy decision-makers should therefore communicate the political context in the partner country to their constituency as accurately as possible.
- 3. Increasing the self-efficacy of citizens in order to encourage development engagement among larger sections of the population.** A sense of actually being able to achieve something in development policy is an important factor influencing development engagement. In order to increase self-efficacy, we need to (1) ensure that governmental and civil-society actors expand low-threshold engagement offers, (2) make use of the social visibility of engagement and (3) demonstrate individual opportunities to contribute to collective action – for example in organisations and initiatives.
- 4. Closing gaps in the knowledge of DC and sustainable consumption.** The general public's knowledge in the area of development cooperation remains low. At the same time, there is a need for simple, reliable information. Certification labels, such as those used to certify charitable organisations and sustainable textiles, offer a possible solution in this context. To make labels useful for citizens, the corresponding information should be up to date and easily accessible, for example via apps. In this context, it is important not to neglect general information campaigns such as those to raise awareness of the SDGs.
- 5. Expanding tailored and age-appropriate engagement offers.** The engagement of the population is characterised by age-related differences. For younger people, more flexible engagement offers need to be established so that they can continue to engage when their living circumstances change (such as when they embark upon a career or start a family). In the case of older people, the potential for development engagement could be tapped more effectively by building up connections to other engagement areas – such as church engagement.

Outlook

This report is part of DEval's Opinion Monitor for Development Policy series. The next report is planned for 2024.

This is an excerpt from the publication "Opinion Monitor for Development Policy 2022. Development engagement in times of global crises and challenges".

Download the full report here: <https://www.deval.org/en/evaluations/our-evaluations/the-deval-opinion-monitor-for-development-policy/the-deval-opinion-monitor-2022-phase-iii>