

Time delays in official development assistance in 2009

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In this note the time distance methodology is used to evaluate the situation of implementation of the indicator percentage of gross national income devoted to official development assistance (ODA/GNI) in relation to the assumed line to the UN 2015 target of 0.7 percent. An exponential line to this target is assumed and the respective S-time-distance deviations are calculated for the OECD DAC countries. Several of the analysed countries are not officially committed to this target but such common benchmark allows for the relative comparisons of the official development assistance effort. S-time-distance measure was used to get an easily understandable overview of the situation whether the 22 DAC countries are on- or off- the track to this UN target.

Table 1. DAC countries by S-time-distance deviation from the exponential line to the UN ODA/GNI 2015 target for the period 2000 – 2009

	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009
DAC Countries, Total	0	1.0	1.4	1.9	2.4	0.2	2.0	4.4	4.0	4.6
Sweden	TA	TA	TA	TA	TA	TA	TA	TA	TA	TA
Norway	TA	TA	TA	TA	TA	TA	TA	TA	TA	TA
Luxembourg	TA	TA	TA	TA	TA	TA	TA	TA	TA	TA
Denmark	TA	TA	TA	TA	TA	TA	TA	TA	TA	TA
Netherlands	TA	TA	TA	TA	TA	TA	TA	TA	TA	TA
Ireland	0	-1.2	-3.5	-2.0	-1.0	-1.3	-4.6	-3.9	-4.1	-1.6
Finland	0	0.4	-0.2	0.8	0.8	-2.3	1.3	2.8	1.6	-1.2
Belgium	0	0.4	-2.0	-8.5	1.1	-3.7	-1.4	3.0	1.5	-0.6
Spain	0	-3.0	-0.2	2.4	2.9	2.4	1.2	0.3	-1.3	-0.6
United Kingdom	0	1.0	> 2	1.8	1.8	-2.4	-2.9	4.8	2.4	-0.3
France	0	0.4	-1.7	-2.1	-1.5	-3.0	-2.0	2.8	3.4	1.4
Switzerland	0	1.0	> 2	1.3	0.6	0.1	3.2	4.7	2.7	2.3
United States	0	0.3	0.0	-0.1	-0.1	-1.4	1.5	3.4	3.1	3.7
Germany	0	1.0	2.0	2.4	3.4	0.5	1.5	2.0	2.6	4.9
Austria	0	-4.3	0.4	> 3	4.0	-6.0	-3.6	-3.5	-0.4	5.4
Canada	0	> 1	0.4	> 3	2.9	0.5	3.8	4.8	4.0	6.4
New Zealand	0	1.0	> 2	> 3	> 4	3.9	4.9	5.9	5.4	6.8
Italy	0	-0.3	-1.8	0.6	2.7	-2.1	2.2	3.6	3.3	7.2
Australia	0	> 1	> 2	> 3	> 4	> 5	4.4	4.3	5.3	7.9
Portugal	0	> 1	1.4	> 3	-9.4	> 5	> 6	> 7	7.4	> 9
Greece	0	> 1	1.4	2.4	> 4	> 5	> 6	> 7	7.4	> 9
Japan	0	> 1	> 2	> 3	> 4	5.0	> 6	> 7	> 8	> 9

Source: Author's calculations based on data for ODA/GNI %: OECD (2010), current prices

S-time-distance in years: - actual ahead of path to target + behind the path to target

TA - Target already achieved

> x - Actual value is worse than the starting value, therefore S-time-distance is more than x years

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The new generic time distance methodology offers a new view of data that is exceptionally easy to understand and communicate. Statistical measure S-time-distance measures the distance (proximity) in time between the points in time when the two series compared reach a specified level of the indicator X. Expressed in time units (years, months, etc.) the interpretation for monitoring with S-time-distance measure is straightforward and intuitively understandable to everyone. For given level of actual values it deals with the deviation (lead or lag in time) between the time when such actual value was attained and the time when that level was supposed to be reached on the line to the respective 2015 MDGs target. It is like tracking the actual arrivals in comparison with the train or bus timetable (the difference being that the geographical space is here replaced with the indicator space). Thus it represents an excellent presentation and communication tool that is intuitively understood by policy makers, experts, managers, media and the general public.

The results are prepared using the free web GAPTIMER monitoring tool for calculation and graphing of S-time-distance deviations from the line to target that allows numerous stakeholders to benefit from this novel statistical measure for policy debate for many issues and at various levels (www.gaptimer.eu/s-t-d_monitoring_tool.html).

Table 1 clearly shows that for the net official development assistance 2009 was another disappointing year. Tracking the timetable for reaching the UN target with time distance showed how widely the performance in 2009 was off the track: the delay of 4.6 years for DAC total means that the actual ODA/GNI value in 2009 was at the level supposed to be achieved already in 2004 on the line to the UN target. The percentage shortfall would amount to 38 percent for the USA and 63 percent for Japan. Also the hypothetical projections for 2010 by the OECD-DAC Secretariat indicate that no radical breakthrough is in sight. Public awareness of these facts should be instrumental for public pressure on the governments for far-reaching improvements in this domain.

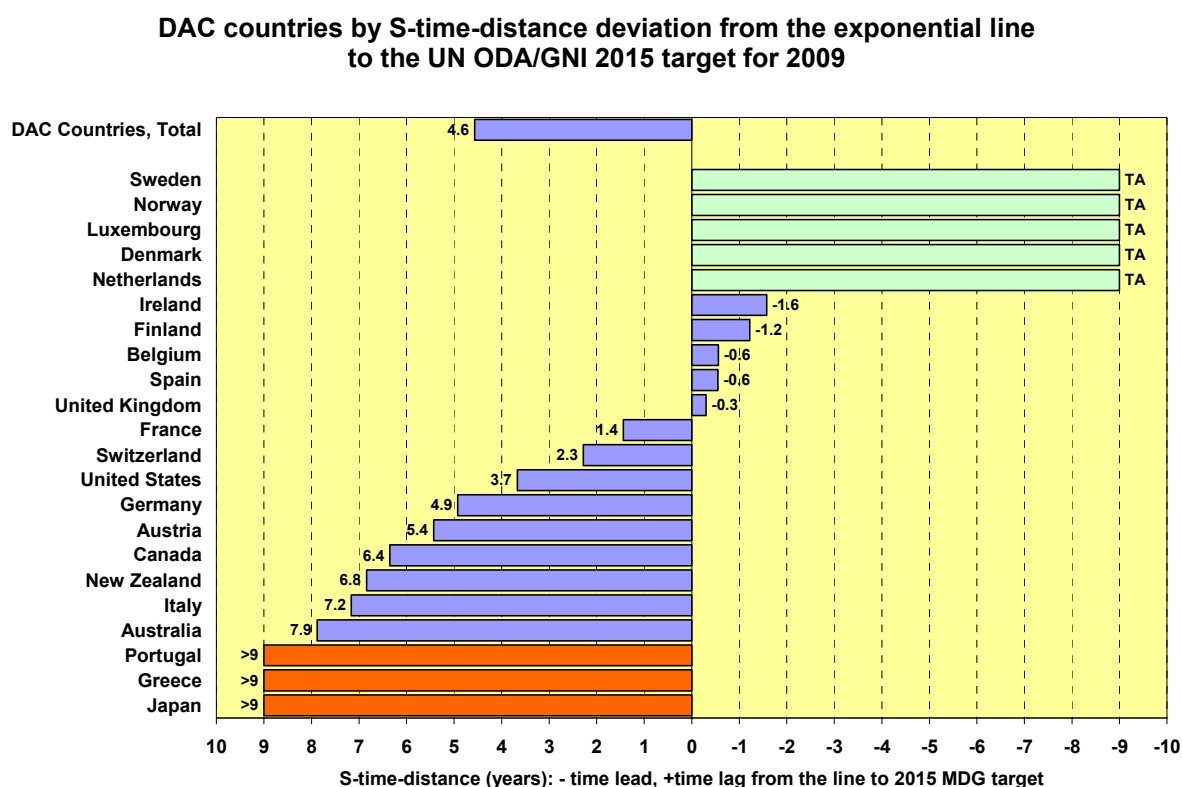


Figure 1. Time distance view of the implementation of the UN ODA/GNI 2015 target

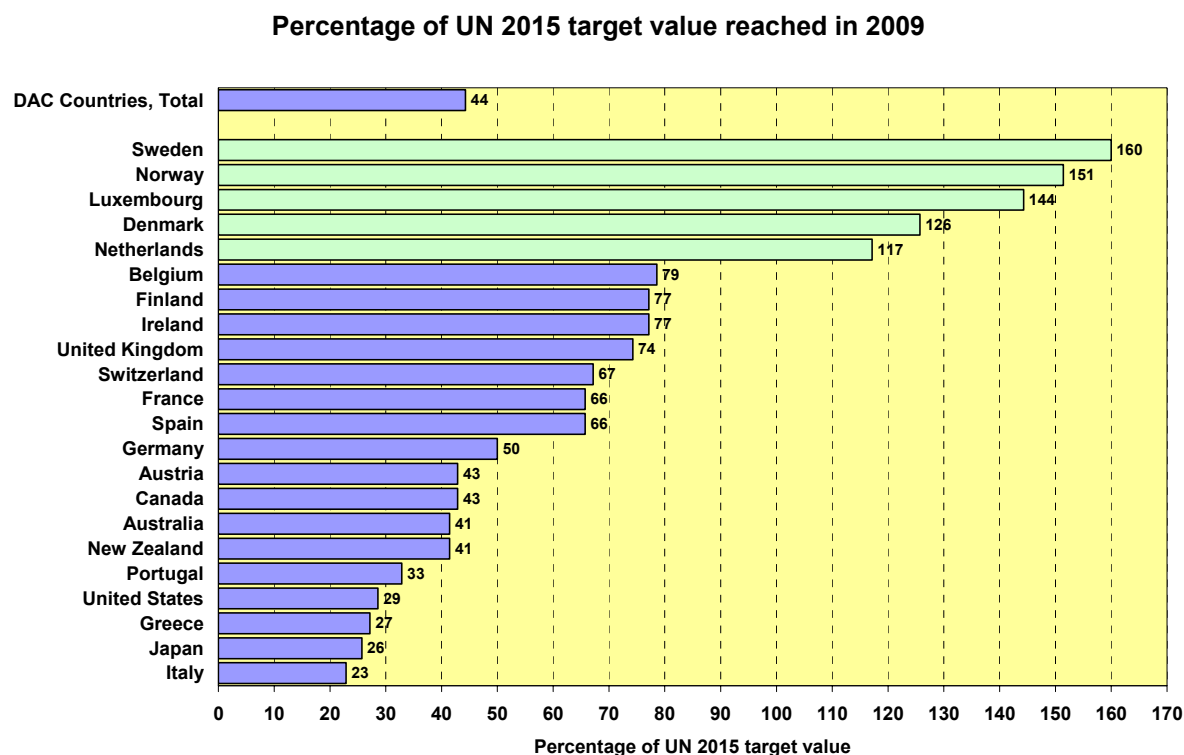


Figure 2. Time distance view of the implementation of the UN ODA/GNI 2015 target

There is a wide gap between the development assistance efforts among the observed 22 countries. Only countries encompassing about 18 percent of population of DAC countries are ahead of the line to the UN target. The ODA/GNI value in the five European countries that have already reached the 0.7 percent target is in relative terms four times higher than in the group of four countries (United States, Japan, Italy and Greece) where it does not exceed 0.2 percent of their GNI. It is sad that the latter group includes more than one half of the population of the DAC countries. Japan, Portugal and Greece were in 2009 contributing even a lower ODA/GNI percentage than in 2000 (see also Figure 1). Overall, countries with 82 percent of population in the DAC countries are behind the line to target, with time delays between 1.4 and 9 years. They need to find the political will to do much better¹. Figure 2 shows another aspect of the current situation, i.e. comparing the current ODA/GNI percentage with the 2015 UN target of 0.7 percent. The differences among DAC countries are very large indeed. It is clear that if there is a will there is a way.

References

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¹ Here we are not dealing with the complex problem of confronting expectations of aid and development successes as it is discussed in Clemens, Kenny and Moss (2007). However, it is clear that ODA is by itself in considerable delay for the majority of DAC countries and that the situation is probably worsening in the current crisis. However, there are several remarkable examples of five European countries which contributed more than 0.7 percent of GNI for the whole analysed period.

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