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The Covid-19 health emergency has created a worldwide economic shock on an unprecedented scale, triggering a global recession that far exceeds recent crises. According to the most updated [World Bank figures](#), the pandemic led to almost 100 million more people being in poverty in 2020. And that increase in poverty still lingers in 2021. Whereas current estimats suggest a global rebound in 2021, this will not be equal for all. While poverty is falling in the richest countries, in the poorest countries of the world the impact of Covid-19 on poverty is not only still present, but it is worsening. This calls for urgent action, as Covid-19 came to amplify pre-existing inequalities, including gender inequalities, and to intersect with other crises, such as the climate crisis.

The last [Eurobarometer](#) (a series of public opinion surveys conducted regularly on behalf of the European Commission and other EU Institutions) showed that [EU's work in international development](#) is a priority for a large majority of EU citizens. In 2020, 77% responded that tackling poverty in developing countries should be one of the main priorities of the EU, and fewer respondents (62 per cent) agreed that this should be one of the main priorities of their national government. These figures indicate an increase from previous years. Thus, showing solidarity is still up to date.

In 2020, the [preliminary OECD figures](#) showed that Official Development Assistance (ODA) provided by the European Union (EU) and its 27 Member States reached \$ 72.7 billion, representing 0.50 per cent of EU Gross National Income (GNI). This amount represented an increase of 7.8 per cent (in real terms) compared to 2019.

These are all rather positive signs, however, only 4 EU Member States exceeded the historic 0.7% ODA/GNI target (Sweden, Luxembourg, Denmark and Germany), and without these four countries, EU members would have not even been half way of reaching this historic 0.7 per cent target. Furthermore, it remains to be seen the total ODA allocated to Least Developed Countries (LDCs) where poverty and inequalities are most concentrated, [in 2019](#) the EU28 (including the UK) collective ODA to LDCs decreased by 4.3 per cent in nominal terms compared to 2018. And we can expect a similar trend for 2020, as the net bilateral ODA flows from the OECD Development Assistance Committee (DAC) members to LDCs dropped by 3.5 per cent compared to 2019.

And to give some perspective, we should be aware that although ODA spending went up to US\$ 161.2 billion in 2020 (with EU27 mobilising a 45 per cent of it), it constituted just a 1 per cent of the amount countries mobilised in economic stimulus measures in response to the Covid-19 crisis.

¹ Thanks to my colleague María José Romero for her comments and contributions.