

29th of April 2024

Self-Interest at the Cost of Human Development? The case of DG INTPA

Statement ahead of the May 7th FAC meeting.

EU-CORD is deeply concerned about the European Commission's leaked draft briefing book laying out its vision for international cooperation. It joins numerous other civil society organisations in calling for realigning the Commission's international cooperation efforts with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

EU-CORD, a network of 26 Christian relief and development organisations, expresses fundamental concern regarding the prevailing direction of the EU's international cooperation, as expressed in the recently leaked draft Briefing Book by the European Commission's Department for International Partnerships.

While we acknowledge that the European Commission's approach to international partnerships needs to shift, this is not it.

The Briefing Book prioritises the value of the EU's self-economic interest above all.

This leaked strategy centres on the Global Gateway initiative and heavy private-sector cooperation. It does not align with the EU's often professed values of equality and human rights or its commitments under the 2030 Agenda, the UN Convention on Rights of Persons with Disabilities, the recent Transforming Education Summit, or climate accords. Such a strategy risks side-lining genuine concerns for our planet and those most vulnerable.

The 2030 Agenda preamble encourages us to "leave no one behind," aiming for inclusive development where every individual benefits. However, the European Commission's proposed approach may have the opposite effect. It prioritises economic resilience and places it at the core of its partnerships with developing economies. This focus on economic interests first may sideline the needs of the most vulnerable populations in these partnerships.

Our faith compels us to advocate for development cooperation that genuinely serves the global common good rather than primarily creating market opportunities for European businesses and promoting EU self-interest.

In values that run counter to self-interest, we advocate for justice, mercy, and stewardship due to their inherent call for selflessness and community-orientated action. We emphasise the prioritisation of others' needs where valuing human dignity and human life calls for an approach that puts the achievements of SDGs at the centre of international partnerships



There is still time for the European Commission to reconsider its strategy.

True cooperation, built on our shared human rights and values, must prioritise mutual respect, equitable development, and the protection of human dignity above narrow economic gains. The EU must remember that true peace, prosperity, and global presence come from upholding these values, not exploiting partnerships for unilateral benefits.

The EU must also recognise that Civil Society Organisations are critical actors in the international partnerships paradigm because they respond to the most pressing cross-cutting and multi-dimensional crises worldwide.

