



Third ETTG Annual Dialogue on the EU and Global Development

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KEY MESSAGES

1. The global context continues to be defined by fragility and instability trends that particularly affect vulnerable countries and therefore further contribute to inequalities between countries in the North and those in the South. There is a stark mismatch between the magnitude of these challenges and the available funding to face them. This includes climate financing, which is moreover sometimes perceived and portrayed as competing with development financing (see, for instance, Miller, Keane, & Mason, 2023), rather than aligned with it. International development cooperation has shifted to the centre of foreign policy discussions, which provides a favourable opportunity for the EU to take its corresponding political decisions.
2. The EU faces this challenging context in the midst of enlargement efforts, whose impact on EU development cooperation policy and availability of resources ought to be considered. Central and Eastern European countries and Baltic states can contribute to old and new EU global partnerships, by adding to the diversity of perspectives within the Union, including those drawn from their own transition experiences and involvement in Team Europe Initiatives and Global Gateway projects.

KEY MESSAGES (CONTINUED)

3. To navigate this context, the EU needs to consider key spaces and processes. Global Gateway will remain at the centre stage of EU international partnerships discussions, although it should be better defined, well-targeted and contemplated alongside other tools, and with a policy-first approach. Other relevant policy initiatives include the Partnership for Global Infrastructure and Investment that is developing under the Italian G7 Presidency or the upcoming Fourth Conference on Financing for Development (4FfD) in Spain in 2025.
4. International partnerships must be redefined, as addressed by the recommendations presented in the last section of this brief. This includes explicitly addressing and discussing internal differences in the EU in order to elaborate narratives and positions in a coherent and consensualised manner among EU actors. Certain windows of opportunity can be leveraged for that, such as the 4FfD. This also requires engaging with partners in global debates for updating the terms, principles and parameters of partnerships as a means for cooperating with actors from the Global South (through a potential bringing up-to-date of the aid effectiveness agenda), exploiting the EU's own convening power in relevant spaces, and importantly bringing its own domestic constituencies on board in the process.

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INTRODUCTION

In the past years, a sequence of various polycrises have both affected and tested the relations between the EU and the Global South. Key issues including unequal response to the pandemic (e.g., on vaccine redistribution, or the unilateral decision to close borders with African countries), and the allegations of double standards raised after the ambiguous and uncoordinated reaction to the Russian invasion of Ukraine and the conflict between the Palestinian territories and Israel (Fantappiè & Tocci, 2023) have deeply affected the EU's development cooperation policy, as well as its reputation as a key global development actor.

It is with this logic in mind that since 2022 the European Think Tanks Group (ETTG) and its members have launched the **ETTG Annual Dialogue on the EU and Global Development**,¹ with the aim of convening and facilitating a frank and honest closed-door dialogue among analysts and policy makers from different EU member states and institutions on how the EU can better respond to such challenges. In 2024, the third edition of the ET TG Annual Dialogue took place in Rome on 8–9 April in partnership with the Elcano Royal Institute and the Istituto Affari Internazionali (IAI). The closed-door event gathered more than 30 participants from 12 EU member states, the European Commission and the European External Action Service (EEAS), as well as analysts and practitioners. Participants not only identified major challenges but also shared proposals for future partnerships, all of which are discussed below.

The underlying rationale of this event has been, on the one hand, to build on previous years' discussions to foster a rethinking of EU international cooperation by better defining its distinctive features, added value and potential allies in the world – and on the other, to provide inputs for the Belgian presidency of the EU. Discussions revolved around three main axes, which are further explored in this report: (1) the global context: instability and polycrisis; (2) building solid alliances with European partners, in particular in Central and Eastern Europe; and (3) adapting the EU's development cooperation tools and means to new challenges.

This Policy Brief follows the same structure and focus as the event, gathering the issues discussed during the three sessions, identifying the topics that had arisen in previous editions, others arising for the first time, the points where most participants tended to agree and those where different positions were manifested. The brief is thus structured around four main sections. Section 1 provides an overview of the still turbulent context in which the EU's development cooperation is operating. Section 2 describes the role that Central and East European countries can play in reshaping the EU's strategy towards international partnerships. Section 3 addresses the main tools available for the EU to roll out its development cooperation agenda. Finally, drawing from the discussions, Section 4 introduces the authors' proposal of a framework for establishing genuine and horizontal partnerships, by presenting some key policy recommendations for the next EU leadership.



The closed-door event gathered more than 30 participants from 12 EU member states, the European Commission and the European External Action Service (EEAS), as well as analysts. Participants discussed the challenges posed by the global context, the pivotal role of Central and Eastern Europe and how to re-shape EU partnerships with the Global South.



1. The previous editions of the ET TG Annual Dialogue were held in [Madrid](#) in 2022 and in [Berlin](#) in 2023.

1 THE EU (STILL) IN A TURBULENT CONTEXT

As in previous discussions held in Madrid in 2022 and in Berlin in 2023, the third edition of the ETTG Annual Dialogue on the EU and Global Development was a crucial occasion to reflect on the complexity of today's development **challenges and the many uncertainties** surrounding the current international context. Among them, five main issues were raised by the attendees.

First, the sustainable and equitable provision of **global public goods** – like a stable climate or health security – was again mentioned as a key challenge and a strategic objective of international cooperation. This time around, strong emphasis was also put on the **fragility and instability**² that characterise the current context at both the local and the global level. Conflicts, economic downturns and social unrest are deepening development challenges and eroding decades of progress.

Second, the consequences of persisting inflation and debt stress in Africa, Asia and Latin American countries again arose in the debates. On this occasion, these were also mentioned as one of the manifestations of the North/South divide.³ In other words, despite the increasing number of common development challenges for both northern and southern countries, the extension of global public goods (and bads), and the need to move to more horizontal

partnerships (as also pointed out in previous editions of this event and as further developed in the following sections of this brief), there are still **clear-cutting lines dividing the West and the rest** that also imply different and deeper development needs of the South needing specific attention and funding.

Third, despite what has been stated at previous international conferences and high-level dialogues on financing for development,⁴ there was a general agreement on the fact that the **private sector is still not being sufficiently engaged** in development processes. This happens in a context where the development challenges tend to pile up, with pressing financing needs for development gaps that are increasingly connected (and, hence, cannot be easily classified, selected and prioritised). As a result, the **gap between the development objectives** (and the partners' expectations) to meet and the **available funds** keeps on widening.⁵

Fourth, on **climate finance**, two major concerns were expressed. On the one hand, the launching of the **loss and damage fund** (adopted at the Conference of the Parties (COP) 28, held in Dubai in 2023) for assisting developing countries particularly vulnerable to the adverse effects of climate change is proving to be slow, at best, and risks

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2. Fragility can take many forms, as IDOS's statistical tool on fragility shows. Building on the core functions of the state, the research tool [Constellations of State Fragility](#) distinguishes between different types of fragility related to states' authority, capacity, legitimacy or functionality. Moreover, the latest report of the [Fragile States Index](#) shows that up to 114 countries are now classified in the categories of warning, elevated warning, high warning, alert, high alert or very high alert.
 3. According to a [recent publication](#) by the International Monetary Fund (IMF), public debt in emerging and developing economies could grow up to 75% of GDP in 2030, from less than 40% in the late 2000s. Moreover, these increasing debt levels would need to co-exist with much slower projections of GDP growth, that could be at average rates of below 4% in 2025, for the same group of economies (see Adrian, Gaspar, & Gourinchas, 2024).
 4. See, for instance, the [Monterrey Consensus on Financing for Development](#), adopted in 2002 or the more recent [Summary of the Second High-Level Dialogue on Financing for Development](#), held in September 2023.
 5. Specifically, at the Second High-Level Dialogue on Financing for Development convened by the United Nations General Assembly, "the Member States expressed concern over the \$4.3 trillion annual shortfall in financing for the Goals in developing countries" (UNGA, 2024, p. 2).



being substantially underfunded.⁶ On the other hand, the slow progress towards the completion of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) before the 2030 deadline in a series of key areas might well trigger a **competition between development challenges**, with the **development and climate agendas** being increasingly viewed as competitive, rather than complementary. This **competitive atmosphere, also pointed out in the two previous annual dialogues**, is having a major impact on how decisions are being adopted by key global players. For instance, **multilateral** decisions are being replaced by **bilateral or unilateral** ones. Also, among the many uncertainties surrounding the election cycle of the coming months, there is a non-negligible possibility for the United States to tighten the Inflation Reduction Act into a more protective set of measures towards the rest of the world, with potential implications for the EU's foreign policy, too.

Fifth, part of the attendees framed **China as an EU competitor** that is more flexible than EU institutions and member states and much less focused on values and norms. Some participants also shared the perception that the EU's competitors – including Russia and China – are taking advantage of the **EU's double standards** (e.g., the implementation of international norms in conflicts such as those in Ukraine and the Middle East) as well as **distrust** from the Global South, to increase their presence in partner countries. Although it could be argued that there is a rationale behind such double standards, relating to the very complex system of diverging and converging interests in very diverse European countries, the result is that there is a trust deficit, associated to a **reputational risk** (also nurtured by the perception of EU's mismanagement of crises) and, ultimately, to the EU's **loss of international influence**. This trust deficit, however, appears in various forms and is not limited to the EU. It features public-private relations and North-South links, in more general terms.

Therefore, like all political players, the EU needs to confront policy dilemmas and resolve how to better manage a series of trade-offs. Three were explicitly discussed during the meetings: (1) how to make energy transition fair, including how to balance it with other climate-related initiatives with important externalities such as the Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism (CBAM); (2) how to deal with the shift of funds from development cooperation

to risk management; and (3) how to strike a balance between industrialisation policy (or strategic autonomy) objectives and development goals – and, in line with this, how to contain the budgetary crowding-out of aid by military, security or migration policies. The response is, of course, political, but also requires some institutional and administrative adjustments such as reducing the silos logic within European governments and administrations.

Despite all of the above, the current context is not without **opportunities** for the **EU** to continue growing as a key **global player** with a strong development footprint and, hence, the possibility of building or strengthening its relations with countries in Africa, Asia or Latin America and the Caribbean.

First, some participants pointed out that in the current context of geopolitical fragmentation and increasing leadership of Southern countries, **development policy** has generally moved **from a niche to the centre of the political debates**. However, according to other attendees, this higher political profile comes **at the expense of development at the core** of international cooperation. In other words, in their view, development cooperation is being replaced by international cooperation.⁷ For instance, although there is an increasing participation of the Global South in international conversations (like the Munich Security Conference), development is falling off the agenda. Yet, it was however agreed that development policy is a powerful tool for foreign policy and international relations and has a prominent role and position in the EU's and its members' policy agendas.

Second, the EU also has many opportunities for **better positioning in the Bretton Woods (BW) institutions**. BW institutions have a lot to offer as financial actors (particularly in this moment of great needs and comparatively less resources), entailing a critical juncture for European countries to collectively discuss and decide what shape they would like to give to those institutions, and present a cohesive position. A key point here is identifying the incentives that would move Western countries to accept decreasing quotas – and corresponding relative influence – in BW institutions. If taken seriously, such a common European position would also help preserve (or even increase) the legitimacy of multilateral spaces, by diminishing their intrinsic asymmetries.

6. For more on climate finance for loss and damage, see [IDDRl's survey on existing funding streams](#) (Anisimov, 2023).

7. This approach would be in line with the [briefing book on international partnerships](#) recently leaked to Politico (see European Commission, 2024).

2 ALLIANCES IN THE EAST THE PIVOTAL ROLE OF CENTRAL AND EAST EUROPEAN MEMBER STATES

The third ETTG Annual Dialogue was a key occasion to show how within the EU, Central and East European voices on development may gain weight in the next political cycle. In the context of incoming presidencies of the EU Council on the part of Central and Eastern member states (i.e., Poland and Hungary) the dossier on the planned **enlargement of the Union to the East** (e.g., Ukraine, Western Balkans, Moldova, Georgia, Turkey) is likely to play a growing role in the EU's policy agenda and to impact on the EU's development cooperation policy as a whole. However, all participants were well aware that, despite Hungary and Poland holding the two upcoming rotating presidencies of the EU Council, these presidencies are not necessarily game changers. Therefore, it remains to be seen whether the next EU political cycle will witness the first new enlargement of the Union since 2013.

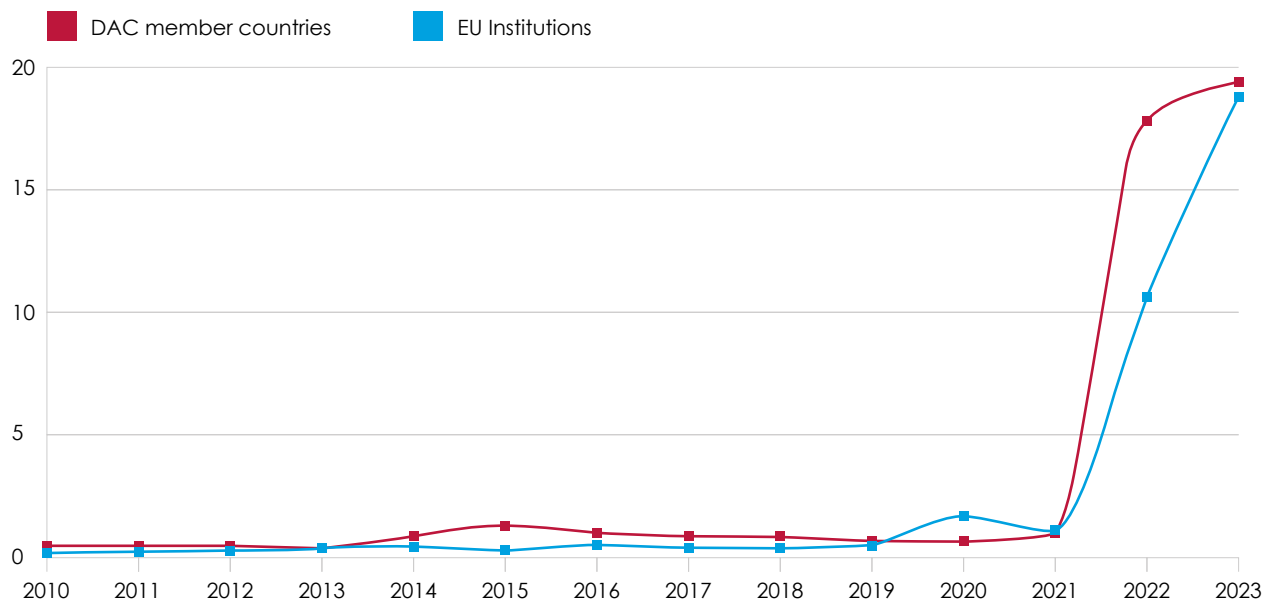
In this sense, all participants agreed that **assessing the 'costs' of enlargement for national aid budgets will be a crucial task**. The support to Ukraine has already led to a repurposing of the EU's and its members' development cooperation budgets. On the one hand, the total official development assistance (ODA) by EU Institutions rose by 10% in real terms mostly due to support to Ukraine through highly concessional macro-financial assistance loans. EU institutions spent USD 20.5 billion for Ukraine, representing 54.4% of their total ODA, mainly in the form of highly concessional lending to support macro-financial stability in Ukraine. On the other hand, ODA from the 21 Development Assistance Committee (DAC) countries that are EU members fell by 7.7% in real terms compared to 2022 (OECD, 2024a).

Therefore, **understanding the enlargement's implications on the EU's budget or the next** Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF) is pivotal to have an idea of how this may also impact the priorities and allocations of the EU's development cooperation. Will the enlargement cause a shift in the geographic focus and the EU's cooperation toolbox (i.e., in the relative weight of grants and loans)? And how may this affect other ambitious climate-related policies or initiatives with strong impact on partner countries such as the Green Deal (Raimondi, Bianchi, Sartori, & Lelli, 2023), the Common Agricultural Policy or the CBAM (see, among others, Oguntoye, Mant, Medinilla, Byiers, & Bilal, 2023; Brandi, 2021)? The cost of accession of all current candidate countries over a period of seven years could amount to EUR 256.8 billion, or EUR 37 billion a year (Stanicek, B., & Przetacznik, 2023). This would represent a huge demand for new resources to cover, particularly for the agricultural and cohesion policies, as well as reductions in payments to current member states and regions. However, studies also highlight that since the probable accession date of somewhere around 2030 goes beyond the current MFF, this leaves the necessary time to adjust policies and negotiate new rules. In any case, participants agreed that it will be important to assess the weight that the enlargement dossier or other development cooperation priorities (e.g., fragility, migration) will have in the upcoming Presidencies of the Council of Hungary and Poland, and to consider how to better engage with them.

All participants agreed that **Central and East European countries and the Baltic states can bring successful stories to foster old and new effective partnerships with the EU's global partners**. The deeper impact of the Russian invasion of Ukraine in East European countries makes



Figure 1: DAC members' official development assistance (ODA) to Ukraine 2010–2023, in billion USD (constant 2022 prices)



Source: OECD (2024b).

their perspective particularly necessary when building a common EU response to the wide range of regional and global challenges. These new voices can bring alternative viewpoints on the role of the EU as a global development actor. In this sense, several points were raised by the participants. First, they can play a stronger role in key policy processes, as they have the potential to diversify the EU's development agenda and strengthen new areas (e.g., digitalisation, education, green finance, smart agriculture) where small and medium-sized enterprises in Europe and third countries can play a very active role. Second, it was suggested that countries in Central and Eastern Europe which were formerly part of the Soviet Union and did not have an imperialist past in the Global South, can be considered well-positioned to engage with southern partners, including by sharing best practices and lessons learned of successful transition processes. Third, since these countries do not have a long historical track record on development cooperation and some have reluctant public opinion when it comes to investing in the Global South, they can also share good experiences on how to rebuild narratives at home on the importance of development. Finally, since several countries are involved in Team Europe initiatives (Keijzer, Olivié, Santillán O'Shea, Koch, & Leiva, 2023), they can share valuable experiences on how to use EU collective tools, such as the Global Gateway, to foster transformative change in partner countries.



Central and East European countries and the Baltic states help diversify the EU's development cooperation toolbox by fully harnessing the potential of Team Europe Initiatives or the Global Gateway. In addition, they do not have an imperialist past and can bring successful transition stories, as well as effective ways of rebuilding narratives at home on the importance of development.



3 BEYOND GLOBAL GATEWAY WHAT TO EXPECT FROM THE EU AT THE G7, THE G20 AND THE FOURTH CONFERENCE ON FINANCING FOR DEVELOPMENT?

Similarly to previous years, after discussing the context, challenges and opportunities for the EU as a global development actor, as well as its alliances, the Rome dialogue contemplated the instruments and spaces through which this could be done. Coinciding with the launch of Global Gateway in late 2021, the Madrid dialogue in 2022 focused strongly on this new EU strategy and how it could be understood both by EU actors and by partner countries. Discussions in Berlin in 2023 nuanced this discussion by trying to polish the narrative surrounding Global Gateway projects and addressing its main points of confusion. Although the initial focus for this third annual dialogue was on other events and spaces such as the G7, the G20 or the Fourth Conference on Financing for Development (4FfD), the persistent focus of the session on Global Gateway has shown that these issues are still far from being solved, as the discussion remained fixed on the specific results that Global Gateway aims to achieve and the way it is presented to and perceived by partners.

The diagnosis made by the discussants, which took the German and French non-paper (Chadwick, 2024) as a reference point, concluded that **Global Gateway ought not to be considered the silver bullet of EU international partnerships and development cooperation**. This strategy still sparks very diverse understandings by different actors, which poses the risk of it being presented as an all-encompassing tool and thus ultimately falling short of the expectations generated. Participants reiterated the **need for Global Gateway's elements to be part of a smarter mix of EU tools**, where each of them – including ODA – is used for the needs and realities it best suits. The same applies for the communication and participation channels for the different

types of actors involved in EU development cooperation, including civil society, multilaterals, banks, technical assistance actors, the EIB and private companies. These tools and channels should be, in turn, better targeted at certain sectors, while being effectively linked to each other.

Indeed, the Global Gateway can already capitalise on experiences of good practice, such as the dialogue that is taking place with private companies and civil society organisations (CSOs) at the local level, and its implementation going hand in hand with the Team Europe approach. In fact, in response to the persevering concerns over Global Gateway sidelining traditional development goals, participants were reminded of the **values-based nature of this strategy**, and of the fact that two out of its five pillars are directly linked to human development (education and research). In this sense, the Global Gateway can be presented as coherent with EU efforts in other spaces, such as the G7, the G20 and 4FfD, as it goes beyond financing and supports the creation of enabling environments through its de-risking efforts.

In terms of the operationalisation of Global Gateway, however, the experience so far indicates that the involvement of and ownership by partner countries from an earlier stage remains a key area for improvement. This has been – and still is – a source of discontent for partner countries, and one that the EU should not ignore. The engagement of the private sector – both European and non-European – also requires further work. Private sector mobilisation that abides by ESG standards and due diligence is vital for the success of Global Gateway, and to this end it is important to tackle disincentives and address value



chains seriously with more accurate data and assessment tools, also in line with the newly approved corporate sustainability due diligence directive (European Council, 2024). Additionally, as was already emphasised in previous years, it is **essential to maintain a policy-first** (Jung Altrogge, 2021) **and horizontal approach** beyond the narrative level and on the operational side as well, also in order to avoid reputational risks associated with its prioritisation criteria and alleged lack of transparency.

Again as in previous years, considerations regarding the purpose, nature, coherence and operationalisation of the Global Gateway often arose in conversations about its communication. Participants agreed that **clarifying and specifying the innovativeness of Global Gateway remains an unsolved challenge, that its communication efforts seem more targeted at EU actors internally** than at partners from the Global South, and that these two dimensions need to find a more coherent connection, for both developmental and geopolitical reasons. One prevailing challenge for EU development cooperation as a whole is **connecting with EU domestic constituencies**. This extends to both the citizenry and to governmental actors that do not already engage with development cooperation, in order to ensure a whole-of-government approach and avoid working in silos, especially amid the current wave of social polarisation and strong (perceived) migration concerns on the part of large sectors of EU societies. Lastly, these efforts should always keep a long-term vision in mind.

In terms of other key spaces and initiatives to consider, and coinciding with the Italian Presidency of the G7, the **Partnership for Global Infrastructure and Investment (PGII)** was referred to as an initiative related to Global Gateway. However, this PGII still needs significant capacity strengthening, and faces several of the same communication and implementation issues as Global Gateway, of both a political and a technical nature. For instance, its current lack of a Secretariat (which was once suggested to be hosted by the EU Commission) compromises its leadership's steering ability. Therefore, an effective coordination between the G7's PGII and the EU's Global Gateway could open up new dialogue channels between the two.

Another important milestone on the horizon is the upcoming 4FFD, to be held in Spain in July 2025. This **'Addis Ababa+10' conference represents a key political momentum** to broaden the approach and show a good level of ambition in terms of accelerating SDG financing (Barchiche, Dufief, Lobos Alva, Keijzer, & Marbuah, 2023). The EU could have a key role to play in contributing to creating as inclusive a space as possible, and extending this inclusivity to CSOs, academia



Global Gateway is not the silver bullet of EU international partnerships and development cooperation. As a result, it risks ultimately falling short of the expectations generated. Global Gateway's elements should rather be part of a smarter mix of EU tools, where each of them – including ODA – is used for the needs and realities it best suits.



and think tanks as well. Thematically, participants in Rome were concerned about inclusive finance, concessional finance and reform of multilateral development banks (MDBs), Special Drawing Rights, the complementary nature of the climate and the development financial agendas that are sometimes presented as competing, and not sidelining the role of ODA. As mentioned above in relation to Global Gateway, achieving a whole-of-government approach is a central challenge, as Ministries of Foreign Affairs need to agree at the country level with Ministries of Finance and Economy that have recently been contemplating protectionist measures and focusing on industrial policy. Once again, capitalising on existing efforts and previous conversations is not only beneficial but necessary.

All of the above conversations take place in a context of **rising between- and within-country inequalities and insufficient progress in MDB reform** that calls for urgent political responses. The EU should **consider the spaces and processes where it can and should seek a stronger role as a political actor with its own voice and as a development advocate**, whilst adopting a listening attitude to gauge the state of relations between northern and southern countries vis-à-vis reforms of the multilateral system. This may include reaching out more strongly to BRICS countries, to G77 countries, engaging more actively with OECD enlargement conversations, presenting a more united front at the COP or considering the EU's relations with the next US government.



4 RECOMMENDATIONS

WHAT SHOULD PARTNERSHIPS LOOK LIKE? A FRAMEWORK TO DESIGN GENUINE AND HORIZONTAL PARTNERSHIPS

The 2024 Annual Dialogue showed that the various global poly-crises are not only having major economic and social consequences, making the case for a reinforced EU development cooperation or international partnerships. Such poly-crises have also **weakened the reputation of the West, and the European Union, in multilateral fora as well as in relations with the Global South**. EU relations with African and Latin American and Caribbean partners have gained additional levels of complexity, in the midst of accusations of neo-colonial behaviours in its development or trade policies, and rising complaints about the application of double standards when it comes to the respect of international norms in cases of conflict.

The EU is trying to confront such challenges with a more assertive and cohesive external action reflected in Team Europe Initiatives (TEIs) and Global Gateway. Nevertheless, and despite the need for bold responses and quick reactions to these many climate, economic, political and social emergencies, the diversity of political objectives, interests and values within the Union as well as its institutional architecture and democratic framework also imply complex and longer policy processes and, even, the incapacity to always speak with one single voice (as recently shown in its response to the Middle East conflict).

Despite the difficult international context and its complex political and institutional setting, the next EU leadership must continue to work on a clearer definition of its external action – materialised in international partnerships in the case of its relations with African, Asian, Latin American and Caribbean countries – that includes a better understanding of what EU partners need, want and expect.

The more **specific challenges** raised during the event held in Rome during this third Annual Dialogue on the EU and Global Development can be summarised in the **need to better shape and maintain international partnerships**, given the shift from development cooperation programmes and projects, and in the current volatile and uncertain context. In this sense, participants stressed that the EU should **reverse its approach and seek to under-promise and over-deliver**, whereas sometimes the feeling has been that it is doing the opposite. To achieve this, the Union should address internal differences and come up with a clear definition of the values and interests it wants to preserve and promote. The EU's international development cooperation is still hampered by the sometimes **diverging interests and priorities between Brussels and the capitals**. Tackling this conflict of interests requires the identification of common denominators, as well as defining precise parameters both within the Union and with third countries, with a clear associated timeline. For instance, the industrial ecological transition requires a huge procurement of critical raw materials which are not available in the EU territory. According to the EU Commission, China provides 100% of the EU's supply of heavy rare earth elements, Turkey provides 99% of the EU's supply of boron, and South Africa provides 71% of the EU's needs for platinum and an even higher share of the platinum group metals iridium, rhodium and ruthenium (European Commission, n.d.a). While the EU has approved its Critical Raw Materials Act (European Commission, n.d.b), it also needs to offer exporting countries in the Global South an effective solution to move up the value chain, while progressively considering more strongly the need to invest in a circular economy and thus reduce its mining needs, in line with the efforts of others (such as China; see This Is Not Cool, 2024).

Therefore, drawing from the various factors mentioned during the event (both those indicating continuity with previous dialogues as well as new ones), we propose a series of **recommendations or guidelines** to be considered as starting points to design a framework and define the parameters to build more effective and more horizontal partnerships for all

parties involved. Importantly, all of these elements ought to be considered together with their corresponding timeframes, as these are processes whose results can often only be observed over time, and therefore all action targeted at improving these partnerships should inherently contemplate the short-, medium- and long-term visions.

RECOMMENDATION 1.

The EU needs to develop a convincing narrative, fed with clear priorities that also reflect its internal diversity, in order to redress the decline in legitimacy that is impacting its partnerships. The weaknesses of the EU narrative, including double standards, have already been pointed out in previous studies and previous editions of this Annual Dialogue. Therefore, what is needed is a clear understanding of the causes, and a strong will to address them. For instance, the lack of political consistency is often associated with the fact that EU institutions (and divisions within those institutions) tend to work in silos or that EU members have diverging interests. The **4FfD could be taken as an opportunity** for the EU to proactively present a **clear and consistent political agenda in the domain of global development finance** that would be defined by involving representatives of **Foreign Affairs, Development, Economy and Finance, hence overcoming institutional barriers**. If successful, this initiative could well serve as a pilot effort to identify common and coordinated priorities among EU actors, and it could be extended to other political agendas, where horizontal action and coordination is needed to deliver more effective results.

RECOMMENDATION 2.

Due to the difficulties in coming to a precise, cross-cutting definition of the 'values and interests' sought and defended by the EU, the next European leadership could use its role as a convening power to more clearly define these at the programming level, starting, for instance, with regional TEs or Global Gateway flagship projects and with a stronger involvement of the EU's Delegations on the ground. Debates around EU relations with the Global South often revolve around EU values and interests. This approach is problematic in at least two ways. On the one hand, despite general references to gender equality, human rights or the need for the EU to access critical raw materials, **values and interests are not defined in precise terms**. On the other hand, it is usually assumed that such values and interests – whatever they may be – are **shared across the EU** territory and the whole of the political spectrum. In addition, although human rights and values are an essential component of the EU's development cooperation policy, they should be applied in a more pragmatic approach to adapt to the different partners on the ground. Being too dogmatic on human rights and norms can have a boomerang effect and ultimately fuel criticism of the EU's double standards or paternalistic approaches.

RECOMMENDATION 3.

The EU should not use a one-size-fits-all style but adapt its approach in a consultative manner, while remaining clear about its interests. This is in line with what was said by the participants during the dialogue, who agreed that once these common denominators for partnerships have been identified, the EU should better define its offer, or craft a **better menu of offers tailored to its partners' needs**, by fully exploiting the knowledge and expertise gathered at the level of the EU delegations on the ground. Engaging with the EU delegations is essential to abandon old one-sided approaches towards partners, which are often driven by clichés and *faits accomplis*. Setting up genuine and horizontal partnerships involves much more than replicating what others do. It means co-designing projects and priorities, making interests as explicit as possible and **systematically investing more in public diplomacy**, as other competitors do (e.g., Russia, China, Gulf States), to promote the EU's vision and reputation at the local level. Additionally, participants highlighted that it is important to **better define the strategic objectives** and tools (both financial and technical) that the EU has at its disposal. Defining and implementing international partnerships can be overly blurred, when compared to development cooperation.

RECOMMENDATION 4.

International aid norms have been in a state of flux for several years now (see for instance Gulrajani & Swiss, 2020), to the point that the aid effectiveness agenda has somehow fallen off the political debate. Nevertheless, several of its principles, and particularly that of ownership, are strongly linked to the problems at the core of this international EU-South malaise. Genuine partnerships imply that the values and interests of both EU and Southern partners (including governments and administrations but also CSOs and/or youth both in the EU and in the South) are clearly driving such partnerships and that conflicting objectives are resolved at the political level. In this sense, launching a process and **international debate, similar to the one that led to the definition of the AAA**, could help the EU define more precisely the **principles and parameters of international partnerships** and hence avoid a sometimes confusing communication about its main tools and initiatives.

RECOMMENDATION 5.

In line with previous recommendations, and departing from a shared EU approach to a series of global issues (be it the agenda on global development finance or its approach to pandemic management), **the EU should also act as a convening power in multilateral and global spaces** for advancing its political objectives. The EU and its members are frontrunners on the provision of key global public goods such as global health (e.g., future pandemic preparedness, the next pandemic Treaty, the strengthening of regional medicine authorities such as the African Medicine Authority or support to local vaccine manufacturing in Least Developed Countries, etc.) or the climate policy agenda (e.g., climate finance for adaptation and mitigation, CBAM) and international trade (e.g., reform the WTO, make sure that the tariffs war between the US and China does not weaken the international trade rules). The next EU leadership should invest more in supporting its public diplomacy and coordinate with its members to speak as much as possible with one voice in key multilateral fora such as the G20, the UN General Assembly with the G77 countries, the World Trade Organization or the World Health Organization, to keep a high level of ambition when it comes to protecting multilateralism from backlashing forces.

RECOMMENDATION 6.

Finally, in order to achieve the necessary whole-of-society support for stronger development cooperation and international partnerships policies, the EU must engage with its own domestic constituencies. Conversations on the EU's international partnerships must avoid echo-chambers among traditional development actors and directly concerned authorities, and instead communicate the rationale behind dedicating efforts and resources to these policies to all parts of society, with a special emphasis on dialoguing with and incorporating the concerns and views of its own youth. In this process, participants highlighted that the EU's approach to international partnerships should be based on a **stronger involvement of CSOs, grass-root movements and youth**. Excluding non-state actors from the decision-making process would be a huge mistake in the long run, as these actors can support the EU's public diplomacy effort and most of all offer a long-lasting experience in working with local actors, delivering concrete results.



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