

Joint NGO statement ahead of the European Council of 20-21 October 2016

At the upcoming European Council on 20-21 October, European Union (EU) leaders will discuss the latest developments and progress on the EU comprehensive approach to migration. This discussion comes at a time when the EU is negotiating the 2017 budget and embarking on discussions on the Mid-Term Review of the Multi-Annual Financial Framework (MFF) and the next European Consensus on Development.

Over the last few months, there has been a notable shift whereby EU development cooperation is being directed towards addressing the root causes of migration, implying that migration is a ‘problem’ to be ‘solved’ or a ‘threat’ to be stopped. However, migration is and has always been a normal feature of human existence. The 2030 Agenda confirms that development and migration go hand-in-hand, and seeks to ensure safe, orderly and regular migration involving full respect for the human rights and human treatment of migrants, regardless of migration status. The need for development policy to take account of the potential contributions of increased mobility rather than being used to stifle it, was also recognized in the New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants, that was signed by the world’s leaders last month.

We therefore welcome a **migration-sensitive approach to development cooperation**, as put forward in the ‘Lives in Dignity’ Communication, which promotes a much-awaited long term investment of political and financial resources by the EU in protracted refugee situations, rather than maintaining a ‘short term’ humanitarian approach and funding cycles in response to situations of forced displacement, which on average last 17 years. Needs of refugees and migrants are to be integrated in national development plans, based on a thorough socio-economic analysis of the surrounding region, to determine which investments would be most beneficial for the most vulnerable populations, regardless of their legal status.

What we see though **in practice is a wholesale re-orientation of Europe’s development programming towards migration management**- a Policy Coherence for Development in reverse- and towards those regions, from which migrants or refugees originate or through which they transit. While this increase in attention and funding to fragile contexts can contribute to development objectives, a key concern is whether this funding is being channelled to the right actors for the right purposes. In particular, we have a serious concern that EU policy and funding could lead to or encourage human rights abuses through border management “at all cost.” We are also concerned that countries that do not “supply” migrants, but that are equally in need from a development perspective, will not receive adequate funding and investment due to shifting of EU development funding for migration management purposes.

Indeed, this trend is largely reflected in EU funding flows. To name but a few examples: 2 billion euro to the Emergency Trust Fund for Africa, mostly financed by the European Development Fund; 3 billion euro to the Emergency Facility for Turkey to be topped up by another 3 billion euro; 3 billion euro from the Development Cooperation Instrument to the European External Investment Fund, to address root causes of migration by encouraging European companies to invest in fragile states; 13.1% of ODA of European states in 2015 spent on refugee response in their own country, making some member states the largest beneficiary of their own aid.

We would caution that this kind of large-scale re-purposing of ODA can lead to an **unacceptable contradiction to the commitment to use development cooperation to eradicate poverty, as enshrined in the Lisbon Treaty**, and to reduce inequality. Aid is for the benefit of people in need and to promote

human rights, and should not be used to leverage migration control. EU funding should be transparent and adhere to clearly established principles, such as the Busan principles on effectiveness and the Paris principles of ownership by and alignment to partner countries' strategies. It is essential that all of this funding is disbursed based on strong criteria rooted in human rights- based approaches to development cooperation and on need rather than on political expediency.

We hold dear the EU's continued commitment to spend 0.7 % of GNI on ODA, but this amount only means something if it is used genuinely. And while we acknowledge that the needs in the regions where the funding mentioned above goes to are high, the rationale underpinning this shift and the scale at which long-term, well thought-through, development programming is side-lined is very worrying.

Finally, we are also concerned about what signals the EU discourse on migration control gives to the rest of the world regarding EU intentions and the seriousness with which the EU takes its human rights principles and development commitments.

We hope that you share these concerns expressed, and that we can count on your support for a strong, principled, human rights-based EU development cooperation as the EU negotiates and agrees its future funding allocations in light of the 2017 budget negotiations and the MFF review, as well as its forthcoming policies and programmes.

Yours sincerely,

The undersigned organisations



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