

To the European Investment Bank
Ms. Nadia Calviño, President of the EIB

Open letter: Stop the EIB funding to for-profit private healthcare providers

As members of the European Parliament, we are calling on you to stop the European Investment Bank funding for-profit private hospitals and clinics in low- and middle-income countries.

We are concerned about evidence showing that the EIB is spending millions of dollars on expensive private hospitals in poor countries that are widening healthcare inequalities, exacerbating poverty, and violating human rights.¹ For-profit hospitals funded by the EIB have been found to block or bankrupt poor patients from getting care and in cases even detain them.² At the height of the COVID-19 pandemic, some of these same hospitals denied entry to patients suffering from the virus or sold intensive care beds at eye-watering prices to the highest bidder.³

Far from advancing progress towards Universal Health Coverage as the EU has committed, this form of EIB investment is undermining it.

The EIB has consistently failed to demonstrate the positive impact of spending development funds on private healthcare. This is an alarming transparency and accountability gap. Without clear, stated, and measurable intent to advance healthcare access for those in most urgent need, and in light of its deficient impact reporting, the EIB's claims that all its healthcare investments are supporting equity of access to quality health services should be dismissed as disingenuous.

The vast majority of the EIB investments in private healthcare are made indirectly via a complex web of tax-avoiding intermediaries, mostly secretive private equity funds. These out-of-sight investments are mostly undisclosed and certainly unscrutinised. They are very difficult to track and there are significant doubts that even the EIB itself can fully account for

¹ <https://www.oxfam.org/en/research/sick-development>

² See e.g.: <https://www.monitor.co.ug/uganda/news/national/patient-sues-ihk-over-detention-1664730>

³ See e.g.: <https://nilepost.co.ug/2021/06/18/20-days-spent-in-icu-at-ihk-nakasero-victoria-case-hospitals-will-cost-you-money-worth-a-house-in-gayaza-kira/> or <https://clubofmozambique.com/news/covid-19-a-glance-at-prices-in-maputo-private-hospitals-carta-183402/>

all of them. If investments cannot even be traced, how can governments and taxpayers be sure that the EIB is doing good, and at the very least not doing harm? There is also mounting international evidence that private equity ownership of private hospitals is associated with harmful impacts on costs and quality of patient care.⁴

In light of this, we are calling on you to halt the EIB spending on for-profit private healthcare in low- and middle-income countries, conduct an urgent independent investigation into all active and historic investments, and take action to remedy any harms resulting from them. Beyond health, the EIB must ensure full transparency and disclosure of impact for all its investments, including and especially those made via financial intermediaries.

Yours sincerely,

Members of the European Parliament

David CORMAND
Saskia BRICMONT
Rosa D'AMATO
Claude GRUFFAT
Tilly METZ
Thomas WAITZ

⁴ See e.g.: <https://www.bmj.com/company/newsroom/private-equity-takeovers-of-healthcare-services-linked-to-patient-harm/>