Reflections from the Global Health Hub Germany Annual Meeting

Following HAI's participation in the Global Health Hub Germany Annual Meeting in Berlin, Tim Reed, HAI's non-executive advisor, reflects on the strengths of cross-border collaboration, the different approaches taken by the Dutch and German hubs, and the challenges facing civil society organisations in an increasingly constrained funding environment.

At the invitation of the Dutch Global Health Hub, Health Action International attended the Global Health Hub Germany Annual Meeting in Berlin (7–8 July). Not only was it a great opportunity to strengthen relationships with the coordinators of the Dutch Global Health Hub, who put on a great display and were very present, but also network with German hub members, who extended a warm welcome and demonstrated a strong commitment to international collaboration.

The meeting highlighted several notable differences between the Dutch and German hubs. The German Hub benefits not only from funding through the Ministry of Foreign Affairs but also from significant external support, including from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation (BMGF). Their communities of practice are time-bound and driven by the demands of the members. Most striking though, was the preponderance of academics, who drive the content, direction and outcomes of the German hub. By comparison, HAI observed that the Dutch Global Health Hub appears to have stronger representation from civil society organisations within the so-called Dutch "Golden Diamond" of civil society, academia, private sector and government.

Discussions with civil society representatives at the meeting echoed concerns that are equally evident in the Netherlands. Across the sector, organisations reported severe funding constraints, with shrinking financial support leading to redundancies, programme reductions and, in some cases, organisational closures. Should these trends continue, the balance of the Dutch Global Health Hub's "Golden Diamond" risks being undermined. Without a strong and sustainable civil society presence, the partnership model may increasingly resemble a weakened triangle rather than the diverse, multi-sector collaboration it aspires to represent.