

Panel Schedule: “Faith in Development Cooperation”

Panel 505, 10/07/2025, 15.15 – 17.30, Lecture Hall 30

[EuARE2025 Conference](#), 8-12 July, Vienna

15:15 – 15:25	Panel introduction Ulrich Nitschke, PIRON Global Development
15:25 – 15:45	Flipping the Script: JLI's Experiences Towards the State of the Evidence in Religions and Development. Bloem M., De Wolf F.* Joint Learning Initiative on Faith and Local Communities ~ Brussels ~ United States of America
15:45 – 16:05	Connect, Care, Contribute: An Ethnographic Exploration of Muslim Women's Philanthropy and Civic Activism in the Americas. Chitwood, K., Universität Bayreuth ~ Bayreuth ~ Germany
16:05 – 16:25	Faith-Sensitive Programming as a Way of Integrating Faith in Development Cooperation. Lange, E. & Gebbe J.* PIRON Global Development ~ Bonn ~ Germany
16:25 – 17:15	Discussion and Q&A
17:15 – 17:30	Book presentation: The Deeper Revolution. How Worldviews Shape Western International Politics. Emily Lange, PIRON Global Development ~ Bonn ~ Germany

Panel Description

Historically, development cooperation organisations and projects were founded in a context of strong belief-systems, often inspired by faith and religion. However, this sector has been changing in the last fifty years: through the increasing secularisation process in the Western world; through a secularisation thesis which brought about an increasing suspicion and undermining of faith-based knowledge and religion; non-faith-based actors meanwhile entered the development cooperation field, namely the United Nations; finally, the rise of religious-based terrorism renewed the suspicion that religion is part of the problem and therefore ought to be discouraged.

On the other hand, religious fundamentalism also served as a wakeup call for many politicians and decision makers, while the last ten years have brought several contributions challenging the secularisation thesis. Religion cannot be ignored when roughly 4 in 5 people in the world hold a belief system, particularly in territories who most benefit from development cooperation. When religion is often seen as part of the problem, it can also be part of the solution. But this calls for an urgent need for greater religious literacy from decision makers, and a need to go beyond the theoretical dismantling of the secularisation thesis into a praxis of faith in development cooperation. This panel welcomes contributions that help us discern further how to bring religion and faith back into the development cooperation discussion.