



**ANNUAL REPORT 2015**

**FOR MEMBERS**

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## FOREWORD BY THE DIRECTOR

### EU Advocacy Context - 2015

With three major UN decision-making conferences - on development financing, the sustainable development goals and climate change – and the Nairobi WTO Ministerial Conference, 2015 has been a critical year for development cooperation. As the EU is an important actor in these areas, ACT Alliance EU has worked to influence the EU to adopt positions that are pro-poor, pro-vulnerable and favourable to international development. There were notable successes in climate change – the COP21 Paris Agreement recognises ‘loss and damage’ – key for development aspects of climate change – as an independent pillar alongside ‘adaptation and mitigation’. The outcome of the sustainable development goals process – ‘Agenda 2030’ – is also positive, demonstrating the will to tackle the root causes of poverty, social injustice and environmental degradation.

However, more remains to be done. Agenda 2030 continues to rely on a growth-based development model which is at odds with the objective of remaining within planetary boundaries and many of the commitments made to human well-being. The mitigation plans made by countries around the world presented as part of the Paris Agreement are insufficient to limit global warming to an average of 2°C, much less to the 1.5°C deemed necessary. However, developing countries got very little out of the WTO conference and there is little doubt that the development agenda (Doha Development Round) has been undermined.

The Conference on Development Financing in Addis Ababa disappointed on a number of issues on which civil society has persistently advocated. For instance, although the private sector is seen as an increasingly important actor in development and as a dominant source of financing development, questions of its adherence to development principles and human rights are barely addressed. One notable success in Addis was the inclusion of references in the outcome document to the sharing of risks and rewards, accountability mechanisms, and social and environmental standards for projects involving private finance, including PPPs. These had been a focus of our advocacy efforts and the wording is a useful addition to our advocacy toolbox.

These conferences, the processes leading up to them, and their outcomes underline the importance of civil society – in both the North and the South – in monitoring, providing input, and holding governments and the private sector to their commitments. It is civil society that continues to bring to the fore the needs of the poorest people and countries, the most vulnerable and the marginalised, who are at risk of being left behind.

Against this backdrop, however, we have seen a reduction in the space in which civil society operates. This is visible in the reduced funding from traditionally supportive EU member states to development NGOs (contradicting their progressive and comprehensive policies and strategies to support civil society, protect defenders of human rights, and promote human rights, democracy and rights-based participatory development). It is even more visible in the pressure on civil society in the Global South. ACT Alliance EU has been strongly involved with this issue of ‘shrinking space’ through its leading role amongst EU NGOs in monitoring and reporting on the implementation of EU’s policy on supporting and protecting an enabling environment for civil society. Middle East and Central America (PICA) working groups, played a major role by amplifying the voice of southern CSOs towards the institutions of the EU, and in PICA’s case working closely with our core EU development policy and practice programme. This work has been well received at the institutional level, with, for example, the EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security, Federica Mogherini, and the Development Commissioner Neven Mimica speaking at an EU-CELAC (Latin American and Caribbean) civil society forum which our Central America

programme co-organised with allied networks – the first civil society event in which both commissioners took part.

2015 saw an influx into Europe of people from the Middle East and beyond in search of refuge and asylum. Europe, the EU and its member states were ill prepared for this influx. ACT Alliance EU drew up a statement calling for a collective, rights-based response to the refugee crisis, used by our members with their governments and at EU level. The statement was followed by letters, co-signed with the Conference of European Churches, the Churches' Commission for Migrants in Europe, Eurodiaconia and the EU-Cord network, sent to ministers of Justice and Home Affairs, the EU Council and heads of state.

Unfortunately, the member states have been unable – so far – to agree on a coherent approach to deal humanely with the people in crisis. The question of sharing the burden of, and closing borders to, asylum seekers is threatening the cohesion of the EU. It also entails a significant diversion of development assistance funds away from the South, which donors are now spending on asylum seekers within their own borders. In conjunction with the continuing global financial crisis, shifting geopolitical power, an increasingly complex and insecure European neighbourhood, and a shift away from the political 'middle' in Europe, this could well lead to the diminution, instrumentalisation and securitisation of aid.

In this context it is vital that ACT Alliance EU members speak with a strong, unified voice to their own governments and the EU, in unison with ACT Alliance's voices in the South, and to the UN and other international bodies, if we are to safeguard principled development cooperation that takes account of the poorest and most marginalised.

## Achievements and Impact

Such advocacy is influential; this past year has seen some notable successes for the ACT Alliance EU network.

- Prominent is the Paris climate agreement recognition of loss & damage as a new, third pillar of the post-2020 climate regime, separate from adaptation. ACT Alliance EU's work was key in drawing EU decision makers' attention to this issue's importance.
- Less prominent but critical to developments are commitments made at the WTO Ministerial Conference in Nairobi; a positive step (although arguably oversold) was the decision to eliminate export refunds and limit other forms of export competition in agricultural trade. This - long overdue - measure helps to remove an unfair advantage EU agricultural exporters had over producers in developing countries and is the outcome of 15 years of advocacy.
- ACT Alliance EU advocacy is helping ensure that critical African CSO voices on matters of seed policies and legislation are heard and allowed to inform the otherwise closed expert-level debates. This complex legislative and policy area impacts on the rights and livelihoods of about 1.5 billion small-holder farmers in developing countries.
- Prompted by work to influence the European Investment Bank (EIB) on its role in financing land grabs, the EIB has created an exclusion list of 'unsolvable land conflicts' in order to prevent investments in development on contested land.
- Our work with Concord and through ACT Alliance EU's Central America focused activity in the area of civil society space has been influential. As co-chair of a Concord group examining the development impact of EU Delegations, ACT Alliance EU has had a leading role in monitoring the implementation of the EU's commitment to preserve, support and protect an enabling environment for civil society.

- Its recommendations were well received by the EU External Action Service and are expected to lead to increased practical engagement by EU Delegations to protect and support civil society space in third countries.
- The work itself has opened opportunities for further dialogue and influence with the European Institutions. It is reflected in the speeches of Federica Mogherini, and by Neven Mimica at the 2015 EU - Community of Latin American and Caribbean States summit.
- At the level of our members and partners in Central America, we are seeing stronger interaction with EU Delegations on human rights and space for CSOs.
- Our engagement with other organisations on the Joint Africa-EU strategy has helped secure a budget provision of €22 million dedicated to strengthening civil society pan-African advocacy on democratic governance, human rights, peace and security, and gender.
- ACT Alliance EU's work aimed at a just and lasting peace in Israel and the occupied Palestinian Territories saw significant achievements:
  - the EU's adoption, after three and a half year of intense advocacy efforts, of labelling guidelines for imported products originating from Israeli settlements.
  - the inclusion for the first time, of language referring to the need for accountability as a cornerstone for regional peace and security in the July 2015 Council conclusions on the Middle-East Peace Process.

## Collaboration and Integration

In 2015, the Aprove network integrated with the global ACT Alliance. We celebrated our new identity as "ACT Alliance Advocacy to the European Union" (ACT Alliance EU for short) as well as our 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary. As a European network we agreed a strategy targeting development-related matters of relevance to the EU in line with the global ACT Alliance strategy. We are thus increasingly the *de facto* EU advocacy body of the global Alliance, funded by European members.

Management and governance structures of ACT Alliance EU are integrated with those of the global ACT Alliance: ACT Alliance's chief operating officer plays an active role on ACT Alliance EU's board, its Secretary General and Senior Policy and Advocacy Advisor take part in ACT Alliance's EU General Assembly, and ACT Alliance EU's director is an invited member of ACT Alliance's global management team.

Collaboration between our network and the global ACT Alliance was particularly close on climate change in the run up to and at COP21. We have also worked together on civil society space and in Central America. Since the establishment in late 2015 of regional representations of the global Alliance's secretariat, we see increased synergies in all common areas of our work, not just at secretariat level but within the regional ACT fora.

At a time of increasing pressure on civil society and on principled international development, this collaboration will be key in our efforts to support the world's poorest and most vulnerable people.

## GOVERNING BODIES & SECRETARIAT STAFF

### Board and General Assembly

In 2015, the tenure in the Board of Swiss Church Aid (HEKS/EPER) and DCA came to an end. DCA was willing to serve a second term and Diakonia was willing to be nominated. The General Assembly duly elected them. From May 2015 the Board was composed as follows:

Christine Allen (Christian Aid), Chair  
Marinus Verweij (ICCO), treasurer  
Birgitte Qvist-Sørensen (DCA), member  
Pauliina Parhiala (ACT Alliance), observer

Permanent observer organisations to ACT Alliance EU are: the World Council of Churches, the Lutheran World Federation, and the ACT Alliance.

### Advisory groups

Jenny Brown (Christian Aid) and Manon Wolfkamp (ICCO) were the co-chairs of the Policy and Advocacy Group (PAG) until Manon left ICCO in March 2015. For the rest of the year Jenny held the chair alone.

### Secretariat Staff

Karin Ulmer, Senior Policy Officer, Trade, Food Security and Gender took an 8 month sabbatical from March to October 2015.

The Middle East Senior Policy Officer, Agnes Bertrand Sanz, continued to work 4/5 for the whole of 2015. Esther Martinez ably supported Agnès as Junior Policy Officer throughout the year on a permanent contract with effect from April 2015.

Adrián Tuñón-Jiménez had been employed on a six month trainee contract (Contrat d'Immersion Professionnelle) from October 2014 in order to enable the ongoing PICA project work to be maintained. It was agreed to issue a further 8 month short term contract which ended in November 2015. From December 2015 Adrián was employed on a 50% contract for 3 months to finalise the work on developing our new website.

Omar Garcia Galván (previously an intern in PICA) was employed for 3 months as an Administrative Assistant to help with the organisation of the 2015 General Assembly, the Launch event and associated rebranding work.

At the end of 2015 the secretariat was composed of the following staff:

Floris Faber, Director  
Susie Wilkinson, Office Manager  
Karine Sohet, Senior Policy Officer/ EU Development Cooperation  
Karin Ulmer, Senior Policy Officer/Trade, Food Security and Gender  
Bruno Nicostrate, Policy Officer/Climate Change and Development  
Julieta Gonzales Ocampo, Senior Policy Officer/Central America  
Sophie Huguenet, EC Project Officer/Central America  
Agnes Bertrand Sanz, Senior Policy Officer/Middle East  
Esther Martinez González, Junior Policy Officer/Middle East  
Adrián Tuñón-Jiménez, Administrative Assistant, Website

## EU DEVELOPMENT POLICY & PRACTICE

**Strategic objective:** European Union development policies are based on the principles of ownership, partnership and participation, and contribute to sustainable development, gender equality, human dignity, and the alleviation and eventual eradication of poverty.

### Financing for Development and 'Agenda 2030'

This has been a landmark year for sustainable development and development cooperation, with three major UN conferences. The Addis Ababa Conference on Financing for Development was held in July. In September, the UN General Assembly adopted Agenda 2030 and the 17 Sustainable Development Goals, and the UN FCCC Conference of Parties (COP 21) convened in Paris in December.

The Addis Ababa Conference was disappointing on several issues that had been the focus of our advocacy efforts. While the private sector's role in financing development was acknowledged, questions of private sector regulation and accountability were not addressed, and the UN Tax Committee was not upgraded to allow developing countries to influence the debate on international taxation and regulation. However, civil society's influence on the Addis Ababa Agenda of Action can be seen in the outcome document. Paragraph 48 on 'Cooperation with the private sector in development' highlights private sector social responsibility as well as the need for guidelines for public-private partnerships.

Agenda 2030 holds enormous potential for sustainable development – of both 'people and planet' – affirming the UN's commitment to uphold the rights of all people and 'leave no one behind'. While it demonstrates the will to tackle the root causes of poverty, injustice and environmental degradation, its main limitation is a continued reliance on a growth-based model of development, which fails to take account of the limits of the planet and of pledges to preserve human well-being.

### ACT Alliance EU activities

To influence the UN negotiating process, civil society needs to speak with one strong voice and to influence the preparatory process at all levels – national, EU and UN. With this as our goal, ACT Alliance EU participated in the European task force of the 'Beyond 2015' campaign, as well as the CONCORD task force on Financing for Development (FFD). Combining our competencies in policy, communication and advocacy with our respective sector expertise facilitates intelligence gathering and the articulation of a common message, as well as broadening our interactions with policy makers.

ACT Alliance EU contributed to policy work, formulating recommendations based on its members' positions and harnessing the knowledge of secretariat staff on overseas development assistance, trade, development finance institutions and funding mechanisms which blend public and private finance (the so-called 'blending mechanisms'). We took part in consultations with EU institutions in preparation for the above UN meetings and other seminars where these issues were discussed. ACT Alliance EU participated in a panel discussion at the European Parliament on the occasion of the presentation of the Court of Auditors' report on EC blending facilities. We met informally with a delegation from SIDA (Sweden) and several Brussels-based organisations to discuss the accountability and transparency of blending facilities and the role of EU member states therein.

Output from our work on FFD and Agenda 2030 in 2015 included *Destination Addis Ababa*, a joint position paper with CONCORD on the implementation of the sustainable development goals (SDGs), a

detailed analysis of the EU negotiating position for the post-2015 agreement, and a 10-point recommendation paper for the EU and its member states' positioning at the UN General Assembly.

Following adoption of Agenda 2030, the 'Beyond 2015' European task force held its last seminar, winding up its activities with the end of the global campaign. New civil society structures for monitoring the SDGs were discussed within CONCORD, and a small group of members started work on two papers, one on the essential components of national and EU implementation plans for Agenda 2030, another on the contribution of civil society to the implementation of the SDGs.

A post-Addis Ababa strategy meeting on FFD was due to take place in December 2015 in Brussels but was postponed to February 2016 due to the security situation.

## EU support for and protection of the civil society space

Throughout 2015, ACT Alliance EU actively pushed for the EU to play a bigger role in fostering an enabling environment for civil society (CS), commensurate with the scale of its influence – the EU has delegations in 139 countries and has diplomatic, trade and cooperation ties with all regions of the world. Member states take a progressive stance on the issue of civil society, human rights and defenders thereof, democracy, and rights-based participatory development.<sup>1</sup>

A major Human Rights CS Forum on the theme of 'the civil society space' provided a platform to raise concern about the shrinkage of that space with the EEAS (the diplomatic service of the EU) and share our experience with other CS representatives worldwide. The forum was convened with the collaboration of the ACT Alliance Community of Practice on Rights and Development, the CONCORD working group on civil society relations with EU delegations, and the Human Rights and Development Network.

The civil society space was also on the agenda of the Development Committee and Human Rights Committee of the European Parliament, thanks to a round-table discussion organised by Bread for the World (BfdW), with MEP Heidi Hautala (Finland, Green) in December 2015, at which the global ACT Alliance made recommendations on how the EU and MEPs could counter the shrinking of that space. These fed into the Human Rights CS Forum mentioned above. The ACT Alliance EU secretariat joined forces with the ACT Community of Practice and the Central America group (PICA) to gather evidence from their members of restrictions such as on freedom of association and freedom of expression, to present their case and recommendations.

ACT Alliance EU had a leading role as co-chair of the CONCORD EUD group in monitoring the EU's commitment to provide an enabling environment for civil society. The group produced a report on mutual engagement between EU delegations and civil society organisations on the basis of a survey to assess their interactions. This report has proved useful in opening doors and raising interest in the issue within EU institutions, notably among officials guiding the EU delegations in drawing up country 'roadmaps' for engaging with civil society. These hold out a promise of a better understanding at the country level, and hence more strategic support from EU delegations for civil society in recognition of the multiple roles it plays. After detailed analysis of six roadmaps, the CONCORD EUD group produced targeted recommendations. It also developed a training toolkit for use by members to raise awareness on the role of EUDs and the way they interact with civil society at the level of policy making and aid programming.

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<sup>1</sup> In particular, the EC communication and council conclusions of 2012 on '[The roots of democracy and sustainable development: Europe's engagement with civil society in external relations](#)' and the new [EU Human rights and democracy action plan](#) adopted in 2015.

The participation of civil society is also a main theme in ACT Alliance EU's work on EU relations with partner countries (EU-CELAC, EU-Africa and EU-ACP) and EU cooperation instruments. More specifically, ACT Alliance EU supported efforts by the ACT Alliance Community of Practice in the context of Cambodia and Kyrgyzstan. Calls for diplomatic action were sent to Mrs Mogherini and senior officials in the EEAS and member states. In the case of Cambodia, this was a 'final call' for a stronger political reaction from the EU in response to a process that originated in 2011, which culminated in August 2015 with the promulgation of the controversial Law on Associations and Non-Governmental Organizations. The controversial 'Law on Foreign Agents' had a first reading in the Parliament of Kyrgyzstan in June 2015 (two additional stages remain). We are pleased to be able to report that a further legal measure that would have outlawed unregistered CSOs, was abandoned.<sup>2</sup>

## EU-Africa relations

Progress is now officially underway towards a new agreement between the EU and the ACP countries (Africa, Caribbean and Pacific). However, this could potentially have a negative impact on development funding as of 2020 when the current Cotonou Partnership Agreement (CPA) expires. Among the radical changes expected in the new agreement could be the integration of the European Development Fund, the financing arm of the CPA, into the annual budget of the EU. Under present arrangements the EDF is additional to the EU development budget. Were it to be absorbed into the latter, it might entail a significant reduction in funding. The European Commission and EEAS organised a series of expert seminars to assess the current agreement and the main questions to be addressed during the review. This gave ACT Alliance EU an opportunity to voice concerns regarding access to ACP-EU institutions and decision making. For the follow-up stage – an online consultation - ACT Alliance EU ran two seminars for CONCORD members and coordinated our response. ACT Alliance EU was subsequently invited by the ACP secretariat to take part in a panel discussion on 'Delivering on the global [sustainable development] goals' and what this meant for EU-ACP cooperation, and to engage in an ACP seminar on climate change.

ACT Alliance EU continues to make its influence felt in the dialogue between the EU institutions (DG DEVCO and EEAS) and the EU CSO Committee on a Joint Africa-EU Strategy,<sup>3</sup> and this is reflected in the budget provision of €22 million for the civil society component of the EC Pan-African programme. This funding aims to strengthen civil society's advocacy capacities and actions at the Pan-African level in four areas: democratic governance, human rights, peace and security, and gender. At the policy level, the CSO Committee is working with the EC and EEAS on a joint annual forum to be held in Addis Ababa in 2016, to ensure the meaningful participation of civil society.

## A joint EU response to the refugee crisis

In the context of the humanitarian crises that have brought a large influx of people fleeing the Middle East and elsewhere in search of refuge and asylum in Europe, ACT Alliance EU prepared a joint statement to EU governments, which was used for targeted advocacy at national level and subsequently published as a statement by ACT Alliance.

A further statement targeting the October meeting of the heads of state of EU Council members, held *inter alia* to agree upon an EU joint response to manage the vast number of arrivals, was co-signed by ACT Alliance EU, the Conference of European Churches, the Churches' Commission for Migrants in Europe, Eurodiaconia and EU-Cord.

<sup>2</sup> Worldwide NGO law monitoring is carried out by the International Centre for non-profit law ([ICLN](#))

<sup>3</sup> The Joint Africa-EU strategy, or JAES, provides a political framework and institutional architecture for relations between the EU and the African Union, with the ambition to go beyond aid and development cooperation to foster mutual interest, political dialogue, and jointly address global challenges.

## EU TRADE & FOOD SECURITY

**Strategic Objective:** EU trade, agriculture and food security policies should contribute to sustainability, poverty eradication, food security and gender equity.

### Policy background

The European Commission, under the presidency of Jean-Claude Juncker (2014-19), aims to secure EU trade and agricultural policies that boost economic growth, increase EU exports, and feed not just EU citizens but the world. Such broad objectives are used to justify all manner of policies while overlooking the need for a global shift towards equitable, agro-ecological and climate-resilient farming systems.

EU trade and agricultural policies are underpinned by a faith in technological enhancements, precision farming and mechanisation, modern plant breeding, biotechnology and genetic engineering – which in reality increase dependency on high levels of external input and energy. The fact that European agricultural subsidies are now in compliance with WTO rules under the Green Box (non-trade distorting subsidies) has not prevented the EU from pursuing its ambition to remain among the world's leading agricultural exporters.

So while the EU agricultural regime may seem stable, it is unsustainable. The reform of the CAP in 2013 has done little to prepare for a transition to a more equitable and sustainable agricultural future. Infact it leads to more soil degradation, air and water pollution, and greenhouse gas emissions, and at the cost of decent farming jobs in the Global South as well as in Europe.

The global rush for land continues to be a source of conflict. Land grabbing is synonymous with displacement, human rights violations and food insecurity. Less visible but potentially more damaging is the appropriation of seed rights. A concerted campaign to introduce seed laws in line with UPOV 1991 (the Universal Union for the Protection of New Varieties of Plants) is eroding farmers' traditional rights to seed, and favours private-sector interests by imposing formal intellectual property rights on plant varieties.

ACT Alliance EU has criticised the EU for its aggressive agri-food export and trade strategy, which is incompatible with the sustainable development goals and has a negative impact on poor peoples' livelihoods in the South. ACT Alliance EU calls for an equitable agro-ecological paradigm shift that will improve livelihoods, human dignity, and put an end to hunger. For this to happen, the root causes of hunger must be addressed, critical among them access to and control over productive resources like land, water and seed for all.

### Trade and Food Security Working Group

In 2015, APRODEV was integrated into the global ACT Alliance. While it has adopted a new strategic plan and revisited its working structures, ACT Alliance EU has had limited capacity in the sphere of food security as a result of the sabbatical leave of the relevant core staff member.

Member agencies who participate in the ACT Alliance EU Trade and Food Security Working Group continued to work on food security priorities for example, monitoring and curbing corporate influence under the New Alliance on Food Security and Nutrition, joining an NGO coalition on Concerns on Climate

Smart Agriculture, supporting partner organisations in their struggle against land grabs, and maintaining regular policy dialogue with national development finance institutes on their agricultural investments. The group also prepared for the forthcoming ratification procedure at European and EU member state level of the Economic Partnership Agreements with West, East and Southern Africa, as well as making submissions on the impact of new EU regulations on organic production and labelling of organic products on producers in the global south and their access to EU markets.

**Objective 1: Influence EU trade and agricultural policies to improve policies and outcomes for small-scale food producers and food security, and to support sustainable agriculture that is based on ecological and diverse small-scale farming systems and the right to food.**

The new EU policy “Trade for All” adopted in November 2015, reinforced the “Global Europe: Competing in the World” approach established in 2005, aiming to deliver growth and jobs by increasing EU competitiveness, opening markets abroad, and tackling behind-the-border barriers to trade. It is a step towards increasing transparency, attention to human rights and due diligence, and one which lists ‘land grabbing’ as deserving particular attention. This has come as a result of pressure from NGOs and CSOs engaging in trade issues, particularly in the wake of the EU-US Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP) negotiations, which alerted public as well as parliamentary scrutiny.

In December 2015, the WTO Ministerial Conference in Nairobi resulted in the abolition of (EU) agricultural export refunds and export competition. This is an important (if long-awaited) achievement the WTO Doha Development Round for which the global justice movement and ACT Alliance EU had been calling for a long time.

At the beginning of 2015, the Commission announced the conclusion of Economic Partnership Agreements (EPAs) with West Africa, East Africa and Southern African countries, as part of the drive to establish free trade between the EU and the Africa, Caribbean and Pacific countries. However, as of early 2016 none of the three EPAs with Africa had been presented to the European Parliament International Trade Committee for ratification, due to unresolved contentious issues which ACT Alliance EU and other CSO have persistently raised over the last decade. These include a degree of asymmetry in liberalisation commitments, flexibility in use of trade defence measures, prohibition of export duties, etc.

In 2014-15, African church leaders and parliamentarians, farmers and traders, trade unions and women’s groups all articulated broad-based concerns and criticisms of the lack of accountability and parliamentary scrutiny in Africa. EPA provisions have disrupted the already difficult regional integration process, including the introduction of common external tariffs in ECOWAS, loss of LDC status, and internal cohesion and transfer mechanism in the SACU region.

In the run-up to the African EU Valetta Summit, ACT Alliance EU insisted (via media briefings and at policy meetings) that the EU honour its commitment under the Cotonou Partnership Agreement that no ACP country would be worse off after signing an EPA than before, and that it would be flexible in interpreting the trade agreements, taking into account the ‘economic realities of its partners’ as referenced in the new EU “Trade for All” policy.

ACT Alliance EU was part of an internal evaluation of the lobbying efforts of the CAP NGO coalition on the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) reform of 2013, which was finalized in 2015. This examined to what extent NGO campaigns should be reframed to counter the influence of the EU agro-business lobby that is pushing a ‘We feed the world’ approach. The CAP neglects to monitor its external impact, and hence fails to comply with treaty commitments on policy coherence for development. Discussion on future advocacy

strategies on the CAP 2020 will take place among a broader number of CSO platforms working on sustainable food and farming in which ACT Alliance EU participates.

For our own strategic planning, ACT Alliance EU invited external experts to carry out a power-mapping exercise of the forces influencing agriculture in Africa. The EU agri-food and trade strategy is key to its agricultural trade surplus and has various impacts on smallholders' livelihoods and markets in the South. The EU and its member states exert a strong influence on global normative frameworks for food security through decision makers in Brussels or Rome. This is decisive for the future of ecological and diverse farming systems and seed diversity, which are increasingly under threat from the corporate capturing of public agricultural research and seed agendas. ACT Alliance EU is well placed to use its broad-based network to keep a close eye on these issues.

**Objective 2: Prevent, address and mitigate the EU's role in land grabbing as a result of EU investment policies and bilateral trade agreements. Hold the EU accountable for the role it plays in land grabbing.**

ACT Alliance EU members continued to support the holders of land rights in conflict situations, calling for increased accountability of EU actors and companies, greater due diligence and effective free, prior and informed consent (FPIC) from local communities which lay claim to land ownership and use. ACT agencies supported regional networks in West and East Africa, South East Asia and Central America to empower local actors in their ongoing struggles over land rights. ACT Alliance EU members regularly met with development finance institutes, parliamentarians and the media, as part of the global movement against land grabs.

In Cambodia, pressure was brought to bear by the Sugar Justice Network for compensation of local communities affected by land grabs, involuntary displacement and human rights violations. This led to a formal audit, under the auspices of the Cambodian government in 2015, which included the compilation of a list of beneficiaries. The process was supported through political dialogue with the EU delegation and the EU Trade Commissioner. However, since 2016 progress has been hampered by a lack of transparency and independence in the auditing process. The challenge remains for the EU to demonstrate that its trade preferences under the 'Everything but Arms' initiative are not associated with ongoing human rights violations.

Importantly, the 2015 EU "Trade for All" policy launched by the new EU Trade Commissioner Malmström explicitly makes reference to due diligence and EU human rights policies, although obviously it will need to be complemented by the enforcement of due diligence mechanisms.

Following revision of its social and environmental guidelines and various CSO consultations in which ACT Alliance EU participated, the European Investment Bank created an exclusion list of 'unsolvable land conflicts' that apply to direct EIB loans under the ACP Investment Fund and to equity and loans handled by financial intermediaries. Further lobbying is needed for national DFIs to follow this example, and insist upon free, prior and informed consent from all local communities whose rights to land are at risk.

**Objective 3: Seed policies in Africa are prevented from undermining seed diversity and promote farmer-saved seed markets. Seed policies recognize and support farmers' rights.**

In 2015, seed laws and policies were introduced at regional level in Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA) and at continental level (ARIPO). The APRODEV discussion paper (2014) on seeds provides evidence of the incoherence of seed provisions that undermine farmers' rights to save, use and sell farm-saved seeds. It demonstrates that the EU has failed to live up to its commitments under the International Treaty on Genetic Plant Resources for Food and Agriculture (ITGPRFA) and its own EU Food Security and Nutrition Framework. In so doing it amplifies the voice of CSOs in Africa.

ACT Alliance EU and members of the Food Security Working Group strengthened their cooperation with the seed expertise network ABPREBES and the Alliance for Food Sovereignty in Africa. Their joint advocacy efforts meant that critical CSO voices were heard by the Commission and allowed for complementary entry points and openings for African CSOs to intervene at regional meetings on seed policy. A parliamentary question brought their concerns to the attention of the Commission and later the bureau of the European Parliament Development Committee. Subsequently, DG DEVCO commissioned an independent consultancy to investigate the opportunities and risks of the harmonized seed regulations put in place by COMESA. Meetings with DG DEVCO and DG SANCO allowed further awareness-raising on the dynamic and multiple interactions of farm-saved and hybrid seed systems, and the likely negative impact of a bias towards a formalised seed system.

In December 2015, an EP hearing included a seed expert who presented the findings of a GIZ Sector Project on Sustainable Agriculture funded by the German Ministry of Development. The expert affirmed that there was a risk of UPOV 1991 undermining farmers' rights and of governments omitting to ensure that farmers were properly consulted and their rights respected.

As part of a broader CSO advocacy alliance on this issue, ACT Alliance EU signed a call for reforms to the European Seed Marketing Law in July 2105, addressed to the Commission, initiated by Arche de Noe, IFOAM-EU Group and European Coordination Via Campesina. This highlighted the commonalities of advocacy campaigns in Africa and Europe in support of innovation in peasant agriculture and organic farming, mainstreaming biodiversity, and the protection of farmers' rights.

In early 2016, ACT Alliance EU signed a letter urging an investigation of the implementation of Article 9, which guarantees farmers rights under the ITGPRFA and other relevant instruments of UPOV.

Another call – 'Why We Need a Paradigm Shift: Mitigating Climate Change and Feeding the World' - was signed with support from a growing number of global CSOs and the UN rapporteur on the right to food, who criticised as 'green-washing' the new corporate initiative on Climate Smart Agriculture for its lack of accountability or transparency, increasing farmers' dependency on external input, and maintaining the power imbalance in the global food system.

## EU CLIMATE CHANGE & DEVELOPMENT

**Strategic objective:** European Union policies with regard to climate change should be coherent with the EU's development policies and promote synergies with the objectives of poverty eradication, food security and gender equity.

### Policy Background

2015 was an important year for international climate change negotiations, bringing to an end a lengthy period marked by the weaknesses of the Kyoto Protocol and the failure of the Copenhagen Summit. Following the adoption in 2014 of the EU climate strategy for 2020-2030, the focus of ACT Alliance EU climate advocacy work was to improve EU positions and strategies within the international climate negotiations (UNFCCC) as they moved towards the final conference (COP21) in Paris, in December 2015.

The following were our strategic objectives: (i) to ensure climate resilience was fully addressed in the Paris Agreement with the [recognition](#) of the concept of Loss and Damage (L&D) as a third pillar and the adoption of a qualitative Adaptation goal; (ii) to increase the level and quality of long-term financial support for climate actions among the poorest and most vulnerable communities; (iii) to promote low carbon strategies with greater and fairer targets, commitments and mechanisms.

After a weak outcome from the climate conference in Lima at the end of 2014, which adopted unambitious 2030 climate targets for the EU, the status of climate politics was far from reassuring. Although an increasing number of stakeholders, and even those on the fringes of society, were aware of the urgent need to tackle climate change, there was a lot of uncertainty about a universal climate regime to be agreed several months later high, both within civil society and among governmental negotiators. A further negative signal occurred in early 2015 when Norway aligned its climate policies with the EU's climate and energy framework for 2020-2030, thus lowering its historical ambitions in this area. The [first round of negotiations](#) held in Geneva in February prompted further anxiety within the international community as they resulted in a draft Paris Agreement nearly ten times larger in size, lacking a workable structure as a base for proper negotiations.

In late winter and early spring, the EU and its Member States adopted a Climate Diplomacy Plan towards Paris and a mitigation plan for 2020-2030 (the so-called INDCs) reflecting a position adopted a few months earlier. Together with our member agencies and all NGOs in the CAN<sup>4</sup>-Europe network, we tried to influence both plans – in vain. Even though Latvia was presiding over the EU Council for the first time, it succeeded in keeping to the agreed European commitments and keeping at bay the desire of the Commission to weaken them. Due to the political situation among EU Member States, a renegotiation of climate targets was inconceivable and EU diplomatic efforts were deliberately kept low so as not to compete with the activities of Member States' national diplomatic services

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<sup>4</sup> Climate Action Network - The Climate Action Network (CAN) is a worldwide network of over 950 Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) in more than 110 countries, working to promote government and individual action to limit human-induced climate change to ecologically sustainable levels.

## Conferences and negotiations

2015 was also a crucial year for development policies, with a Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction (March), a Conference on Finance for Development conference (July) and the adoption of the Sustainable Development Goals (September) providing a new direction for international development support vis-à-vis the climate change paradigm. These and other processes worked in parallel to the climate negotiations. Indeed, since climate change had an increasingly important place in other areas of policy analysis and development, the need intensified for civil society to keep up the pressure on the European Commission and Member States to achieve a good outcome from the aforementioned conferences, as well as a good agreement in Paris.

Over the year, three more [negotiating sessions](#) of the UNFCCC were organised, this time in Bonn (June, September, October) where we fully participated, providing support to the overall coordination of the ACT Alliance delegation, co-organising informal dinners for official negotiators, and producing press releases, policy analysis and lobby briefing notes. ACT Alliance EU member agencies' publications were used in several advocacy actions, such as the Diakonia [report](#) on adaptation projects in Sri Lanka which highlights the need to increase climate finance to duplicate these actions, Bread for the World's [report](#) on Loss and Damage (L&D), and Christian Aid's equity policy briefing [paper](#). To boost the profile of ACT Alliance EU on climate issues during the transition towards our new website, a special blog was set up at [www.actclimate.eu](http://www.actclimate.eu)

## Policy positions

In coordination with ACT Alliance EU members, and using the public declarations of the EU Climate and Energy Commissioner, Mr Arias Canete, we succeeded in pushing L&D, a critical component of climate and development, up CAN-Europe's agenda and among EU top negotiators. Specific coalition work was also conducted with other NGOs and foundations to include [human](#) and gender rights in the EU official negotiating positions and the final climate agreement. In addition, we lobbied governments and parliamentarians of European and Latin American countries (EUROLAT and EU-CELAC) to adopt climate resolutions reflecting our positions and strengthen the diplomatic and policy cooperation of these regions in order to influence the dynamics of the international UN negotiations.

Together with Oxfam EU and CAN-Europe, we concentrated our efforts on drawing attention to the need for alternative sources of finance for climate action support. Taking advantage of the ETS (European carbon market) reform, we mobilised the European Parliament and key Member States to agree to earmark a share of revenues for the Green Climate Fund.<sup>5</sup> We were successful in that this position and other policy options were adopted in the European Parliament COP21 resolution, thus increasing our influence on the Commission and among national political parties. However, despite our efforts and the climate-friendly Luxembourg EU presidency, these policy options were not taken up by the official EU COP21 position agreed in September and November.

## COP21 and faith communities

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<sup>5</sup> The Green Climate Fund is a fund within the framework of the UNFCCC to assist developing countries in adaptation and mitigation practices to counter climate change.

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### Training and cooperation

In addition to the advocacy work, we dedicated time to training the individuals who form the global ACT Alliance delegation in Paris to ensure maximum impact. The ACT Alliance Academy was set-up, consisting of a series of online training sessions. New modes of cooperation during the negotiating sessions were used and an advocacy package was shared, allowing for lobbying actions prior to the final conference. This resulted in greater collaboration and advocacy work within the ACT Alliance delegation, as well as with our allies, namely the World Council of Churches and the Lutheran World Federation. By combining public actions and coordinated lobby activities with delegates from all regions of the world, faith leaders and their counterparts from civil society, we were able to promote key demands, many of which were reflected in the final agreement.

### Advocacy Post 2020

In the [Paris Agreement that was ultimately adopted there was crucial recognition for L&D](#) as an independent pillar, the creation of a qualitative adaptation goal, and the establishment of a dynamic mechanism to regularly ramp-up climate actions in all countries. Many elements and solutions still need to be further developed and, regrettably, the issue of financial support for climate action remains unresolved. ACT Alliance EU will therefore continue its advocacy work to ensure equity, fairness and resilience for all in the post-2020 climate era.

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<sup>6</sup> The Green Climate Fund is a fund within the framework of the UNFCCC to assist developing countries in adaptation and mitigation practices to counter climate change.

## MIDDLE EAST

**Special Programme: European Union and Member States policies concerning the Palestinian-Israeli conflict should be coherent and aligned with their commitments to respect international law.**

### Background

The year 2015 started with the unexpected ratification of the Rome Statute by Palestine, accompanied by a declaration on the basis of Article 12.3, giving the International Criminal Court jurisdiction over all crimes listed in the Rome Statute alleged to have been committed by individuals on Palestinian territory, or by Palestinian nationals, since 13 June 2014.

Elections were held in Israel on March 17, in which Likud won the highest number of votes. PM Netanyahu formed a coalition government – the most right-wing in the history of Israel. On the Palestinian side, the process of reconciliation reached a stalemate. Abbas dissolved the unity government formed a year earlier, on 17<sup>th</sup> June.

At least 521 structures, including 110 funded by international aid, have been demolished in Area C this year, leaving 636 people homeless. In Area C, EU-funded projects worth €1.5 million remain at risk of demolition. Reconstruction in Gaza is happening very slowly. As of 31 August 2015, only US\$1.2 billion of the support to Gaza announced at the Cairo Conference had been disbursed, equivalent to 35 percent of the total. Donors' impatience in the face of the continued blockade, the possibility of another attack, and the lack of progress on reconciliation and the peace process in general explain this slow disbursement rate. GDP in Gaza dropped 15 percent in 2015, unemployment reached a record high of 44 percent, and 72 percent of households had no secure food supply.

Since the Jewish New Year (September 2015), the region has experienced a new upsurge of violence: 30 Israelis have been killed and dozens wounded in shooting or stabbing incidents. 154 Palestinians have been killed by Israeli fire or in clashes between stone-throwers and Israeli troops, and hundreds more wounded. It is in this context that the ACT Alliance EU Middle-East Working Group and the secretariat pursued its advocacy work.

The EU and its member states adopted one notable decision, the result of more than three years of advocacy: on 11 November 2015, the long-awaited guidelines on the labelling of settlement products were at last published. In April, 16 member states had written to Mrs Federica Mogherini to express impatience and press for publication to proceed. Publication of the guidelines prompted an angry response from Israel.

A number of advocacy issues which had looked promising last year faded away in 2015. The EU and its member states had [agreed in December](#) 2014 to systematically lodge requests for reparation, particularly if its requests for a freeze on demolition and confiscations remained unheeded. When the plan was reviewed during the course of 2015, member states instead agreed that demands for compensation would be dependent on the outcome of a "structural dialogue" with Israel led by the European External Action Service on Area C and Gaza. However, after publication of the labelling guidelines, Israel decided to suspend the structural dialogue.

The following paragraphs give an overview of the most salient aspects of the advocacy work of ACT Alliance EU in Israel-Palestine conducted within this context.

**Objective 1: To mainstream international humanitarian law and international human rights law into EU and member states' policies on Israel and the OPT.**

The latest outbreak of violence in Gaza compounded the relevance of the need for accountability for violations of International Humanitarian Law in Palestine as a means to break the current cycle of impunity which encourages recurrent outbreaks of violence. ACT Alliance EU has actively held the EU accountable for the implementation of its commitments to promote compliance with IHL, including action against war crimes committed with impunity, through written parliamentary questions, oral interventions in the European Parliament, and by directly addressing advocacy meetings with EU officials. In addition, ACT Alliance EU organised several advocacy interventions, notably ahead of the Foreign Affairs Council of July 2015 where ACT succeeded for the first time to have included in the text of the conclusions elements of language referring to the clear need for accountability in the July 2015 Council conclusions on the Middle-East. ACT also succeeded in incorporating in the European Parliament resolution on the Middle East peace process of September 2015 language referring to accountability and more generally to international human rights and humanitarian law.

ACT Alliance EU called for the EU to support Palestine's ratification of the Rome Statute and monitor domestic investigations, as well as providing information on the implications of Palestine's accession and an update on the development of domestic investigations. We published a [Q&A on the ICC and Palestine](#), which were diffused to contacts in Brussels in April. We organised a training workshop on the implications of Palestine's ratification of the Rome Statute for civil society organisations (28 April). Together with other like-minded NGOs, ACT Alliance EU organised six advocacy visits for our partner organisation Breaking the Silence, with a main focus on the rules of engagement of the Israeli army during 'Operation Protective Edge'.

**Objective 2: To put an end to external economic involvement in settlements through which the illegal and harmful situation of the settlements is upheld.**

ACT Alliance EU facilitated the establishment of a task force on the occupation and private actors, thereby enabling an exchange of best practice and information-gathering with a larger network of organizations and individuals beyond the members of the Middle East Working Group. This included two seminars held in April and November, and the development of a policy paper on Business and Human Rights in relation to Israel-Palestine, which will be used in 2016.

For the EU-wide labelling guidelines, ACT Alliance EU put together several requests for information from the EU, providing tangible proof of a lack of political will in key parts of the European External Action Service to publish these. ACT Alliance EU alerted several member states and clarified the adoption procedure with a number of them. During the course of the year, it had two meetings with DG Trade to discuss developments on this dossier. ACT Alliance EU promoted three written questions in the European Parliament on settlement products, Mrs [Mogherini's commitment to adopt labelling](#), and labelling issues [relating to cosmetics and](#) agricultural products - in parallel with EU [non-recognition of the Crimea](#). At every meeting with EU diplomats ACT Alliance EU enquired about the progress made on drafting the guidelines.

## Looking ahead

In 2016, ACT Alliance EU will concentrate its efforts on reviving the commitment of the EU to systematically lodge demands for reparations after the destruction and seizure of EU-funded infrastructure. ACT Alliance EU had to 'hit the ground running' with advocacy work in relation to the Israeli legislation on transparency, which is anticipated to intensify pressure on Israeli human rights organisations.

## CENTRAL AMERICA

**Special Programme: European Union policies regarding Central America, in the context of the Association Agreement, should be based on the principles of ownership, partnership and participation and contribute to respect for human rights, human security, gender equality, and the alleviation and eventual eradication of poverty.**

Objective 1: Political dialogue and development cooperation policies are based on transparency and democratic principles and focus on construction of democracy, governance, human security, the fight against poverty and sustainable development.

The political dialogue between the EU and Latin America and the Caribbean made real progress this year, notably at the second summit between the EU and the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC), a high-level political event where ACT Alliance EU [messages and concerns](#) were in the spotlight.

The ACT Alliance EU Advocacy Programme on Central America (PICA), together with its allies (Cidse<sup>7</sup>, Cifca<sup>8</sup>, Grupo Sur<sup>9</sup> and Oidhaco<sup>10</sup> networks) and in close collaboration with CONCORD, co-organised the [EU-CELAC civil society forum](#), which attracted over 120 participants. Its importance was demonstrated by the participation of the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security, Federica Mogherini, as well as the Development Commissioner Neven Mimica – the first civil society event in which both took part. For ACT Alliance EU it was a great opportunity to work in close cooperation with the European External Action Service (EEAS) and Mrs Mogherini's cabinet, both ahead and after the summit. It also ensured that our message about the necessity of a stronger role for CSOs and support from the EU were included in speeches and documents.

The [outcome messages](#) of the CSO event were presented to the EU-CELAC summit by a [civil society representative](#). After the summit, ACT Alliance EU produced a [briefing paper](#) analysing the discussions between the regions, as well as advancing conclusions on where bi-regional relations are headed.

In parallel we developed and implemented a communication and visibility strategy for our messages. This included publication of an [editorial in the EU Observer](#) (a Brussels-based newspaper) while a Spanish version was published in [eldiario.es](#) thanks to the active collaboration of InspirAction (ChristianAid). We also launched an animated [video](#) (which has had over 3,000 views) through a successful Twitter campaign. Last but not least, ACT Alliance EU was interviewed by [RTVE radio](#) (Spain) and the official European Council [press office](#).

ACT Alliance EU, its members and their partners continued to promote dialogue with EU delegations (EUDs) on the space for civil society and human rights in the Central American context, where support the space for CSO work is deteriorating both in a political and financial sense. It is vital that we actively and systematically engage with EUDs to monitor whether the EU honours its commitment to support human rights and the space for CSOs – hence our activities to extend CSO outreach to the EUDs, initially among our members and partners, and also through other networks like CONCORD.

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<sup>7</sup> CIDSE: International alliance of Catholic development agencies working together for global justice

<sup>8</sup> CIFCA: Copenhagen Initiative for Central America and Mexico

<sup>9</sup> Grupo Sur: Alliance of European NGOs in development cooperation between the European Union and Latin America and the Caribbean

<sup>10</sup> ODHACO: The International Office for Human Rights Action on Colombia

PICA continued its work of facilitating and strengthening dialogue between members and partners and high-level officials from EUDs in Central America. We facilitated and participated in meetings with the Heads of the Delegation of Honduras and the Heads of Development Cooperation in three countries, focal points for CSO/HR and officials in Brussels. For the first time ever, PICA had almost 40 meetings with the abovementioned actors on topics of high priority.

ACT Alliance EU continues to lead work on CSO and EUD engagement, and its efforts have been recognised by both sides. The core programme, together with PICA, leads CONCORD's work on this issue. The [EUD report](#) launch was very well received by EU institutions (EC, EEAS, and the EP) and was even referred to by Ms. Mogherini at the EU-CELAC CSO Forum. We also conducted an analysis on the implementation of the EU CSO roadmaps,<sup>11</sup> to which PICA contributed an example from Honduras.

A briefing document on EU Strategies for Latin and Central America has proved to be a useful tool for our members, partners and CONCORD. A shorter version has been included in a training toolkit developed by CONCORD on how CSOs can improve the dialogue with EUDs, to be launched in the first quarter of 2016.

Thanks to ACT Alliance EU, discussions and exchanges about citizen security among EU officials, Central American ambassadors and civil society organisations (from Europe and Central America) remained high on the EU-Central America agenda in the second half of 2015, as demonstrated by their participation in a round-table organised by ACT Alliance EU in November.

**Objective 2: Trade and investment policies are based on transparency and democratic principles which contribute to sustainable development and the fight against poverty**

The year 2015 was marked by consolidation of the work of joint EU and Central America institutions, which was referred to in the text of the Association Agreement (AA).<sup>12</sup> PICA continued participating as a full member of the European component of a Domestic Advisory Group (DAG) for Central America, with voting rights. This group developed several recommendations to European officials on the implementation of the AA, with the aim of ensuring that EU commitments on sustainable development, and environmental, social and human rights are fulfilled (the recommendations are [available here](#)). It is worth mentioning that the involvement of the Food Security and Trade Officer in similar settings enhanced our understanding of this group and the opportunities and challenges of engagement.

The DAG gives PICA access to high-level, up-to-date information which supports our strategic advocacy actions and entry points for lobbying EU institutions. It also allows us to inform and support our members and Central America partners' advocacy work, in particular the [Regional Observatory to monitor the implementation of the AA](#) in which many members and partners participate.

The second EU-Central America bi-regional CSO event, a forum for exchange on the implementation of the Association Agreement, was held in Brussels in May 2015. The outcome document included input from PICA on upholding human rights, the right to food, and access to markets for small producers. We also called upon the EU and Central American states to support – politically as well as financially – the work of civil society representatives interested in monitoring the impacts of the AA, as well as the need for transparent mechanisms to hold both parties accountable for the implementation of our recommendations. Our participation in the DAG helped to ensure the participation of four partner organisations. PICA facilitated the forum and the EU requested its policy officer to preside over the day-long exchange between CSO and EU officials.

ACT Alliance EU launched a [report on the right to food and the situation of human rights defenders in Guatemala](#), based on an ACT Alliance EU mission in late 2014 in which HEKS and the Church of Sweden

<sup>11</sup> The EU CSO roadmaps represent a common strategic framework for the engagement of EU Delegations and Member States with civil society at country level, with a view to improving the impact, predictability and visibility of EU actions.

<sup>12</sup> The Association Agreement between the EU and Central America was ratified by the European Union in 2012 and implementation started in August 2013. This comprehensive agreement has three pillars: development cooperation, trade and political dialogue. Once fully enforced, it will be the main framework for relations between the two regions in all areas.

had actively participated. PICA pulled the report together and presented it to the EU and the international community. The recommendations will feed into PICA's contribution to the definition of programmes in Guatemala and the mid-term review of EU strategies in 2016 and 2017.

### Objective 3: Distributing and exchanging information, and building alliances to facilitate and strengthen the advocacy work on EU policies towards Central America

In 2015, PICA continued its efforts to improve communications with members and partners in Central America. ACT Alliance EU, Cifca and Grupo Sur networks published four [issues of their joint newsletter](#) for members and partners, which reaches 300 subscribers in Europe and Central America. We also launched PICA's presentation brochures in Spanish and English, and contributed to the revamping of the ACT Alliance EU website, to be completed in 2016.

Very few networks focus their work on Latin America, hence coordination and collaboration are essential to strengthen our voice. In particular, we carried out joint lobbying and coordinated our efforts with Cidse, Cifca, Grupo Sur and Oidhaco. The effectiveness of our joint efforts within the framework of the EU-CELAC summit was demonstrated by the impact of our communication and visibility strategy, as described above.

The strategic participation of PICA in thematic working groups of CONCORD and HRDN 'networks of networks' proved effective in getting our positions and case studies included in their global positions. Our positions on creating an enabling environment, and cases on dialogue between CSOs and EUDs were included in their advocacy documents which champion development and human rights issues. This helped us engage Central American partners in several forums organised by the EU in collaboration with these 'networks of networks', notably the EU-NGO Forum.

PICA continued its efforts to coordinate work with the ACT Alliance secretariat and forums in Central America. This resulted in the participation of the ACT Alliance Representative for Latin America and the Caribbean in a PICA meeting in Brussels, where there was an exchange of views on various issues. It also resulted in a visit of ACT Alliance EU's Director to Central America, where he took part in advocacy meetings with the international community, advocacy planning meetings of the Latin American ACT Forum, and the launch event of the ACT Office for the LAC region.

### Objective 4: Strong and sustainable APRODEV lobbying work on EU policies in Central America.

In 2015, PICA successfully agreed on a new advocacy strategy, which better reflects member agencies' priorities for Central America and their contributions to influence the EU and its priorities in Central America in a context of declining donor funding for the region.

PICA organised a webinar in April and a face-to-face workshop on how to lobby the European Union in Central America, in the framework of our EU-funded project run jointly with Cifca. Around 40 staff from ACT Alliance EU and members of Cifca took part, demonstrating the interest in training, the relevance of such skills, and setting the basis for further work in 2016, including development of a training toolkit on how to lobby to influence EU policies towards Central America.

Within the framework of our EU grant to strengthen advocacy efforts on behalf of Central America towards European institutions, PICA held a series of coordination meetings with CIFCA and Diakonia to ensure actions were implemented according to EU project requirements. Our first financial audit and

narrative report were well received by the EU. The mid-term review of implementation yielded some best practices, lessons learned, and recommendations to improve the final implementation period, which will end in early 2017.

In view of the challenges facing members in Latin and Central America, particularly reductions in funding, it is worth mentioning that PICA's work is recognised by the EU institutions for raising the visibility of agencies and partners. Its integration with ACT Alliance and synergy with the core team of ACT Alliance EU increase opportunities to strengthen our combined efforts.