

ACT ALLIANCE EU STRATEGY 2016 - 2018

“We know that the world can be changed for the better.

We believe the world must be transformed for the better. What looks impossible can become possible if we all seek transformation. This includes those with power, wealth and influence, as well as those most affected by injustice.

Transformation is about change in ourselves and in our relationships with one another. Right relations are needed at all levels – locally, nationally and globally. We need to actively seek these social, economic and political changes, but can only do so with the help of God.”

ACT Alliance Global Strategy 2015-2018

1. ABOUT US

ACT Alliance EU is a network of church-based development agencies that influences EU policy makers and decision-making processes in the pursuit of justice, peace and the eradication of global poverty.

It is made up of fourteen development organisations from across Europe and was for 25 years known as APRODEV. In January 2015, the network formally became part of the ACT Alliance - a coalition of 146 churches and affiliated organisations working together in over 140 countries in humanitarian aid, development cooperation and advocacy. Members of the ACT Alliance EU were already members of the global ACT Alliance and this integration strengthened our combined ability to influence global processes, adding our EU advocacy and policy expertise to ACT Alliance’s advocacy work in the global South and with the United Nations.

ACT Alliance EU collectively pursues rights-based development from a faith-based perspective, working to uphold the dignity of all human beings, irrespective of ethnicity, colour, gender, creed, nationality or political affiliation.

2. OUR DISTINCTIVENESS AND ADDED VALUE

As part of ACT Alliance, we believe that all human beings are created in the image of God. We are united in a commitment to holistic, inclusive and sustainable development for all. This means addressing the social, cultural, spiritual, environmental, political and economic dimensions that are needed for all people to live with dignity, justice and peace.

Drawing on a deep expertise of development around the world, ACT Alliance EU brings practical experience, robust policy analysis, theological and ethical perspectives on development and the active engagement of fourteen national faith-based agencies across Europe.

Our work is evidence based, providing linkages between sometimes complex EU policy processes with the concrete realities ACT Alliance members work with on the ground. Our policy and advocacy is always rooted in the reality of our global partners and stakeholders, demonstrating the consequences of decisions made in Brussels on the lives of people in different contexts in different parts of the world.

3. HOW WE WORK

We influence current and upcoming EU policy agendas and processes to maximum impact in support of the global ACT Alliance strategy, which seeks substantial improvements in the lives of people in poverty around the world. Building on our track record of influence, this strategy reflects a focused and targeted network

that seeks to align our work with events, work streams, policy frameworks and processes within the EU to have the greatest effect.

A small Secretariat has significant impact because it works effectively with its members across Europe and beyond. These members provide in-depth policy analysis and an on-the-ground understanding of the impact of policies. They also bring a commitment to engage their own nations to support the network's advocacy with the EU within their national contexts. As a network we are committed to learning from each other and to sharing expertise, insight and resources in pursuit of our strategy.

The global ACT Alliance has four main [strategic aims](#): human dignity, community resilience, environmental sustainability and a robust alliance. Over the next three years, ACT Alliance EU has identified the following four key strategic priority areas where we seek to ensure that EU policies will support and advance the global ACT Alliance's wider aims:

- Strategic priority area 1: a focus on **EU development policy and practice**
- Strategic priority area 2: a focus on EU policy around **food security**
- Strategic priority area 3: a focus on EU contribution to **climate justice**
- Strategic priority area 4: a focus on ACT Alliance EU being a **strong and robust** entity within the global ACT Alliance and contributing to the impact of ACT Alliance advocacy work.

The first three areas are connected. For instance, one cannot address questions of food security without taking into account the impacts of climate change; gender considerations and resilience in particular are inherent to all our work on development policy and practice, food security and climate justice.

We know we are stronger when working with others. We will seek to increase our impact by joining forces with other policy and advocacy initiatives, academics, think tanks and networks in Europe and beyond.

4. THE EUROPEAN POLICY CONTEXT

The EU and Development landscape is changing enormously. Many crises are affecting the EU internally and externally. Europe faces economic uncertainty, political instability and pressure at the borders; the impact of upheaval in the Middle East, Africa and, closer to home, Ukraine and Russia, the role of China, and religious radicalisation are all questions occupying Europe's leaders.

The European political discourse is about jobs and growth; indeed the dominant development model is one of "inclusive" growth, and the private sector is seen as an increasingly important actor in addressing the many problems inside and outside Europe. Another significant development is the rise in euro-sceptic parties in a number of Member States.

The European administration is compelled to do more with less, and Commission staff find themselves with fewer resources to tackle increasing workloads. We have to work harder to ensure issues such as Sustainable Development Goals (SDG), climate change negotiations, and development financing are high up the agenda.

However, the EU remains a global force and a significant development actor. Together with its member states the EU has the largest aid budget globally, a vital diplomatic network, and it continues to champion human rights and democracy. As a major trading block and a substantial actor in climate change negotiations, with a significant role in and funding for research - including in the areas of food security, climate action - and with its commitment to ensuring all its policies are coherent with its development policies, the EU wields enormous influence in development debates and processes beyond simply financing.

The EU has new political leadership and a new Commission structure that has the potential to ensure stronger policy coherence for development but may also make it more difficult to access decision makers. The European Parliament's voice is becoming more important in EU decision making and in supporting or challenging the work of the Commission.

5. WHAT THIS CONTEXT MEANS FOR US

To be able to be effective, this strategy seeks to ensure that ACT Alliance EU works in a focused way both in Brussels and towards Brussels through member state agencies working in their own countries.

To maximise our impact we have identified four thematic priorities, one of which is to organise our structures and ways of working to use our resources wisely.

ACT Alliance EU seeks to become even more influential, building on our existing track record and adding value from our position within a global alliance. We know our work is viewed as credible and reasoned by EU policy makers and Commission staff. We are well connected in the European Institutions, and seek to maintain and reinforce our contacts in the Commission, the Parliament, the Council and with Member State Permanent Representations on the priority issues.

The strategic engagement of our members at member state level is key to achieving greater impact.

The integration with the global ACT Alliance provides the potential for increased global input and evidence to support our advocacy positions and we will ensure the right processes are in place for communications, branding and profile-raising to support this. As a network with high potential but limited resources, we acknowledge that this is a shared responsibility between the Secretariat and the member agencies.

ACT Alliance EU's focus is and will continue to be international development. However thanks to the universality of the Sustainable Development Goals SDGs - i.e. the Sustainable Development Goals are to be applicable to all countries, not just the developing world - we will be alert to the opportunities for greater use of our ecumenical connections, including Eurodiaconia and CEC, to identify the advocacy synergies in areas relevant to both international development and to social justice within the EU.

6. FOUR STRATEGIC PRIORITY AREAS

The four strategic priority areas will guide ACT Alliance EU work for the coming four years. These priorities directly relate to the four strategic aims of the global ACT Alliance. Indeed it is important to ACT Alliance EU that there is strong coherence and alignment of these specific aims with the global ACT Alliance strategy. We recognise the potential leverage with the EU to secure change and advancement to ACT Alliance's global agenda. Core resources will be focused on ensuring we are as effective as possible in these strategic priority areas. Of course, contexts change and we will continue to identify the best entry points and leverage with the EU. There will be regular review and adjustment in consultation with the global ACT Alliance. In this context we will consider requests for advocacy support from the global ACT Alliance and its national and regional fora on issues which fit within our strategic framework and perhaps take on further work where additional resources make this possible.

The criteria below will be used to help to determine specific work or guide choices within the strategic priority areas and special initiatives while allowing us to be responsive to the evolving EU agenda.

- EU relevance and focus
- Relevance to global development processes
- In line with the global ACT Alliance advocacy strategy
- Member support and common voice
- Strong Southern issues and voices
- Specific contribution of faith-based perspectives to the issue.

It should be noted that throughout the strategic priority areas listed below, ACT Alliance EU will build on existing and create close working relations with the members of ACT Alliance, churches and other strategic civil society networks who share our objectives.

6a. STRATEGIC PRIORITY AREA 1: EU DEVELOPMENT POLICY AND PRACTICE

Justification

The EU, together with its member states, is a global trading bloc and the largest aid donor in the world. Making sure that EU policy and legislative decisions contribute to rather than undermine development and democratisation efforts by developing countries and their populations is therefore of utmost importance.

Re-balancing EU security and economic interests with its development policy objectives and values of democracy, solidarity and respect for human rights is a major challenge for the coming years. The issue is not only about policy coherence for development – the EU's commitment that all its policies are to be in line with its development policies and aims – but also about using scarce development financial and human resources for the right purpose and with the right impact in a political context dominated by an economic crisis agenda.

In line with the universal post 2015 sustainable development framework, all EU policies should align with the SDGs and should contribute to more equitable and sustainable models of production, trade and consumption in Europe and worldwide.

All European actors involved in development cooperation must align their strategies and practices with sustainable development objectives, including a proper assessment of their impact on human rights, including indigenous people's rights, and on the environment, land and water resources and progress towards gender equality. This is particularly true for the private sector and development finance institutions, which are called to play a growing role in EU development cooperation.

From time to time there will also be an EU contribution to humanitarian concerns on which EU development policy has implications. In such instances, ACT Alliance EU will consider influencing the EU contribution, drawing on the expertise of our members and the global ACT Alliance. Furthermore, ACT Alliance EU will be open to facilitating the delivery of the global ACT Alliance's messaging on humanitarian issues which are of EU concern.

It will be essential to preserve a space for civil society and NGOs to keep their role as development actors in their own right. This is not only to show solidarity with poor and marginalised populations but also to ensure a mechanism for making policies more effective and just, development more equitable and sustainable, and governments and business more accountable.

Strategic goals

EU development policy will reinforce, and not undermine, the ACT Alliance objectives of human dignity, sustainability and community resilience.

ACT Alliance EU will dialogue and engage with EU institutions as it seeks to hold them accountable to their own values and principles and their commitments towards developing countries. Building on evidence from members and their partners' experience, ACT Alliance EU will influence EU policy making, legislation and practice which impact on sustainable development goals' implementation, human rights and dignity, gender equality, equity and inclusiveness of the development process and resilience and empowerment at community level.

Areas of advocacy focus

Our focus will be those EU processes where we can have the greatest impact on the lives of people in poverty around the world. Priorities will vary from time to time depending on the outcomes of the 2015 international debates, key developments in partner countries/regions or major shifts in EU political and executive priorities. However, we have identified the following EU processes as important in the strategic period:

- EU's role and responsibility in the **realisation and financing of the SDGs/2030 agenda**. ACT Alliance EU **will seek to ensure** EU policies are aligned with the 2030 agenda to secure benefits for developing countries; and will make sure that EU international agreements, cooperation agreements and external action instruments contribute substantially to the realisation of the SDGs, in a way that is coherent with our objectives around climate justice.
- The regular monitoring of **EU development finance, annual budget** and the mid-term review of the EU multi-annual financial framework (MFF). ACT Alliance EU **will monitor and influence** the EU annual budget process and MFF review to seek protection for development and humanitarian aid budgets and EU finance for civil society and to address the structural lack of finance for external action of the EU.
- EU's role in promoting the **space and supporting the initiatives of civil society worldwide**. ACT Alliance EU will maintain a close working relation and dialogue with MEPs, desk officers and senior management in the European Commission and the European External Action Service (EEAS – the EU “Foreign Service”) **to improve** the role and space of civil society in all EU cooperation agreements and instruments, and in SDG follow-up and review processes.

Our advocacy work will bring in evidence from ACT national and regional fora, partners, our other strategic priority areas and ACT Alliance EU special initiatives.

6b. STRATEGIC PRIORITY AREA 2: FOOD SECURITY

Justification

Food Security is an issue that embraces the three ACT Alliance objectives of human dignity, resilience, and sustainable environment. It is at the very heart of poverty reduction and development and is directly linked to human rights, gender justice, increasing inequalities, the nature of economic development models, and environmental sustainability. In a context of climate change, increasing degradation of natural resources and projected population growth, resilience in the area of food security presents a huge challenge for the future.

Central to global food production are the livelihoods and contributions of the 3 billion smallholders, including agricultural labourers, pastoralists and many other food producers. Mechanisms and policies for global food production must consider the needs and priorities of these less powerful stakeholders alongside the role of the large-scale private sector. There remains a strong bias towards high input and energy intensive agriculture as the way to ensure global food security.

Ensuring the right to food for all requires a transformation of food systems that recognise the ecological, economic, social and gender dimensions of food production. The challenge is to support multi-functional agricultural systems in Africa, Asia and Latin America that have the potential to reverse environmental degradation, increase equity and equality, create sustainable jobs and resilient livelihoods while reducing social deprivation and economic exclusion.

Strategic goals

EU policy and practice will address the systemic causes of hunger in our current food systems.

ACT Alliance EU will engage on issues related to EU policies and their implementation to ensure that they can make a positive contribution to food security. These include sustainable agricultural production and pro-poor and inclusive market development in developing countries. To this end we will monitor several EU policy areas ranging from Food Security and Development Assistance, Trade and Investment policies, Human Rights policies, Agricultural policies, Research policies, Environment and Health policies.

Areas of advocacy focus

Our focus will be to influence EU policies, agendas and processes which have the greatest potential impact on sustainable and inclusive food production and recognition of the role of smallholder farmers. We will

work with our members, regional and global partner networks and with national and regional ACT Alliance fora to identify the strategic opportunities for ACT Alliance EU in the following areas:

- EU policies covering **Trade, Investment and Land**, to ensure that they are coherent and support sustainable food production, including fair market access and subsidy allocations.
- **EU Agricultural research and Seed policies**, to ensure that they are of benefit to poor and small-scale farmers, especially recognising the gender dimension of food production.
- **EU Development assistance** as it relates to agriculture, including support for and consideration of the roles of women farmers and smallholders in farming systems and the development of pro-poor and inclusive market systems

6c. STRATEGIC PRIORITY AREA 3: CLIMATE JUSTICE

Justification

The global climate is rapidly changing with effects that put millions of lives in danger. Environmental destruction and climate change are key contributors to poverty. Continuous pressure on our shared resources deprives the poorest and the most vulnerable – who depend on sustainable access to natural resources – of sustainable and dignified livelihoods. The Sustainable Development Goals are but one reflection of the recognition that development and environmental sustainability are intertwined. Climate change is the biggest challenge to development; essential and urgent action is needed.

The UN Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) has advocated several measures, including a significant decrease of concentration of greenhouse gas in the atmosphere, to slow down the rise in global temperature and to reduce the long-term effects of climate change. This demands a concerted international long-term global effort, involving a variety of political and economic stakeholders. The EU has to play its role, both as a bloc and the EU Member States. However, despite the urgency, progress is slow. Although most countries have collectively agreed to combat global warming, the policies put in place so far and their enforcement, including by the EU, are far from sufficient. This may lead to irreversible climate change.

Populations in the global South are paying the highest price for climate change: many developing countries are today faced with increasingly erratic weather conditions, unpredictable crop harvests, food insecurity, bio-diversity degradation and reduced access to safe water. This is why ACT Alliance, along with many other organisations, is calling for climate justice.

The international and European political dynamics can largely be distinguished between the pre-2020 and the post-2020 era. While the international Paris climate agreement is meant to start after 2020, actions and policies must be already strengthened in order to keep global warming below 2C. The Kyoto Protocol second phase ending in 2020 and additional actions are therefore a priority. Meanwhile various decisions taken in Paris must be further developed to operationalize the agreement. Therefore three layers of policy work must be addressed: EU domestic climate policies pre-2020, its policies post-2020 and its role in the international climate talks to finalise operational elements of the Paris agreement for post-2020.

Strategic goals

The EU maximises its positive contribution to tackling climate change by increasing current and post-2020 climate targets and to fulfilling its commitment to support poor and vulnerable countries. The EU plays a constructive role in the UNFCCC process and has an impact on climate change through policies that are sufficiently ambitious, promote low carbon development and contribute to poverty reduction.

Areas of advocacy focus

To ensure coherence and effectiveness of our advocacy work towards the EU, we will target EU policies domestically and at international level on the following three main policy areas:

- Revision and increase of already agreed targets for **mitigation, energy efficiency and renewable energy production**. We will advocate that the EU increase its mitigation and other targets for 2020 and 2030 and that targets are in line with the EU's fair share for 2 degree objective. EU Member States must show solidarity in sharing the efforts fairly and in helping those with carbon-intensive energy models to switch to a low carbon model.
- Strengthening the international **Loss & Damage** mechanism; elaboration of a package of solutions to accompany its implementation. At the end of 2016 the first work programme of the Warsaw International Mechanism on Loss & Damage (WIM) will be revised and further institutional development will occur to fully operationalize this mechanism. Several COP decisions taken in Paris at the end of 2015 will further be negotiated and will add specific solutions to be implemented as part of the WIM or elsewhere. We will advocate that the WIM continues as the mechanism for Loss & Damage after 2016. Furthermore, we will advocate that decisions on Loss & Damage taken in Paris are further developed and operationalized.
- Increasing the level and quality of **long term financial support** to help the **poorest and most vulnerable countries** to address climate change. This requires specific calls on increasing EU Member States financial contributions to the Green Climate Fund, to ensure it is fully operational and funded. We recognise the financial challenges across Europe and we will also lobby for the EU to put in place, and encourage others to create, new sources of finance (ETS revenue, FTT revenue, etc.), and push for a shift of fossil fuels subsidies towards renewable energy sources.

7. A STRONG AND ROBUST ALLIANCE

The fourth of our overarching strategic aims reflects the fact that we recognise we are stronger when working together to achieve greater impact. Now part of the global ACT Alliance, ACT Alliance EU supports the desire to advance the global mission of the Alliance through effective advocacy towards the EU, seeking to add value through strategic focus and effective partnerships. We will ensure that EU advocacy helps advance the mission of ACT Alliance worldwide.

Justification

The current context is a challenging economic one, yet the political stakes are high. Whilst the geographical axis of power is changing, the role of the EU remains highly influential on the world stage and we have to take the opportunities to influence it. ACT Alliance EU can draw on strong support from its members but it has limited central resources. We have to use those resources wisely in a focused and creative way in support of the overarching aims of the global ACT Alliance.

Strategy

The three policy areas outlined – EU Development policy, Food Security and Climate Justice – will be the focus of our core advocacy activity. Skilled policy and advocacy staff members will focus on these issues, supported by a working group made up of members. The working group and staff will work to a clear and achievable work plan in support of the objectives in this strategy.

As outlined in the ACT Alliance strategy, the network needs to improve its brand recognition. We have a great story to tell. For ACT Alliance EU, this too is an important priority as our previous incarnation,

APRODEV, was well known and respected amongst EU policy makers. To do this, we will be investing in communications and an improved website under the ACT banner.

Our influence is greatest when we work together as a network in delivering advocacy messages in the EU capitals as well as in Brussels. ACT Alliance EU and its working groups will identify issue by issue what is needed for members to engage more fully in their national settings, and how best to do this.

As part of our communications strategy we will raise awareness amongst the global ACT Alliance family of EU processes with particular regional or global impact. Furthermore, we will consider requests for advocacy support from the global ACT Alliance and its national and regional fora on issues where the EU plays a significant role and where we have resources and the knowledge needed for us to contribute effectively.

ACT Alliance EU will contribute to the strengthening of the global ACT Alliance's advocacy capacity through our collaboration with ACT Alliance members and fora on specific advocacy issues, through our participation in advocacy related ACT Alliance Advisory Groups and by working closely with members of the ACT Alliance Secretariat.

ACT Alliance EU has an ambitious strategy but limited resources. We will use existing resources wisely, but we also want members to understand the value of the network and to actively support such collaboration beyond membership fees. We will seek to work together to attract more resources to the network, but not in any way that detracts from members' income or funding for ACT Alliance.

Areas of focus

- Having clearer focus and structures that utilise the resources and energy of members of ACT Alliance EU in support of the three policy and advocacy areas outlined in this strategy.
- Improving ACT Alliance EU communications and brand awareness: use of ACT Alliance branding; a launch event and publicity of our work across EU policy makers.
- Reformulation of structures so they are aligned with ACT Alliance and, given the overlap of members, use members' resources as wisely as possible to maximum impact with the EU whilst retaining flexibility of response.
- Clarity about sign-off of strategies and plans, with clear and effective governance systems in place.
- Using structures and mechanisms that will facilitate learning and development across the membership of ACT Alliance EU and feeding this knowledge into the global ACT Alliance (including the European Forum).
- Making a clear supportive contribution to the global ACT Alliance in furtherance of shared objectives.
- We will retain the potential flexibility to work on special initiatives, if members wish and are able to resource them.

With this our first strategy as ACT Alliance EU, we join our voice with that of ACT Alliance worldwide to bring about such transformation, trusting in God's help.