



**actalliance eu**  
**Annual Report 2016**

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## Director's Introduction and Summary

In 2016, it became increasingly clear that the EU is in a governance crisis. Centrifugal forces within Europe put it at real risk of disintegration. In this uncertain context the EU has primarily addressed its own internal prosperity and stability, without much regard for, and often at the expense of sustainable development and economic opportunities for the world's poorest and for their human rights.

ACT Alliance EU plays a vital role in this context, keeping the EU to its commitments to go beyond narrow self-interest. This must include continuing to be a reliable donor and a global leader promoting human rights and setting fair global standards within the development arena and beyond.

Our new strategy, launched in 2016, speaks to this: *'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.'*

The strategic priority areas of Development Policy & Practice, Food Security, Climate Justice, defined in our strategy, and our special projects on Central America, the Middle East, and Refugees and Migration, pulled together to meet the challenges posed by a Europe looking increasingly to its own interests.

Our key results and impact are summarised here.

Safeguarding EU development policy (and thus also our members' access to funding) from being hijacked/derailed by the EU's narrow interests of controlled-migration and increased access to markets and business opportunities abroad →

During 2016 ACT Alliance EU has done so by

- Successfully ensuring that poverty eradication, the fight against inequality and the human rights based approach (HRBA) to development were placed at the core of the proposals that will guide the vision of the EU for development aid in the next 10-15 years, including its approach to delivering on the 2030 Agenda (in the European Consensus on Development and in the EU Global Strategy on Foreign and Security Policy – the EU's overarching approach to its external action).
- Seeking to safeguard development objectives, respect for human rights and aid accountability in the new implementation modalities for development aid and, particularly, in the blending mechanisms and guarantees for large scale private investments (such as in the European Fund for Sustainable Development, EFSD).
- Unambiguously denouncing the diversion and the use of development aid to stop flows of refugees and migrants from arriving into Europe instead of promoting poverty eradication and sustainable development – (in connection with the launch of the New Partnership Framework on Migration).
- Speaking out against plans to condition development aid to developing countries' compliance with readmission agreements and "performance" on migration control indicators.

**Bringing the voices and concerns of local organisations to the forefront of EU policies and preserving the space for civil society to engage →**

During 2016 ACT Alliance EU has done so by

- Safeguarding a long-haul institutional commitment to protect and empower civil society and its ability to speak out in defence of human rights and of people living in poverty.
- Drawing attention to and facilitating exchanges with decision makers on trends and challenges in how EU Delegations promote space and an enabling environment for civil society and establish effective partnerships with civil society organisations.
- Successfully raising the interest of senior decision makers in the EU and the ACP Secretariat to jump-start a more meaningful dialogue with the ACP civil society on the future of relations between the EU and the ACP countries. The current EU-ACP partnership agreement, the most comprehensive agreement between the EU and developing countries, ends in 2020.
- Successfully persuading Foreign Ministries to publicly express concern about the situation of civil society in Israel and Palestine. This resulted in HR/VP Mogherini and the EU Ambassador to Israel opposing the Israeli Foreign Agents/ NGO Law before the Prime Minister of Israel and specific cases of human rights defenders being repeatedly addressed in EU's political dialogue with Israel.
- Systematic engagement by ACT Alliance EU with EU Delegations about civil society space and human rights in all countries covered by the Central America project (El Salvador, Nicaragua,

Guatemala, Honduras), resulting in mechanisms and actions that improved dialogue between EU Delegations and members and partners. Advocacy efforts resulting in a European Parliament resolution on Human Rights Defenders in Honduras and related statements from the office of the High Representative for Security and Foreign Affairs and the EU Delegation.

- Strengthening of ACT fora, members and partners in Central America. Specifically: trained Central American national ACT fora in advocacy related to their priorities, and ACT / ACT Alliance EU members and partners in lobbying the EU – a total of 7 trainings of some 100 civil society representatives.

**Presenting the EU with realistic policy approaches that end hunger, ensure the dignity and consent of the population in developing countries and are climate and environment friendly →**

During 2016 ACT Alliance EU has done so by

- Seeking to prevent the loss of livelihoods and land grabs in developing countries by advocating for the integration of principles, criteria and indicators for assessing land and resource tenure into EU's investment and trade agreement with selected countries, and supporting the advocacy work of our members on related cases in Ethiopia, DRC, Mozambique, Sierra Leone and Myanmar.
- Raising awareness of the adverse impact that the EU's active promotion in developing countries of stringent intellectual property rights frameworks on seeds has over small-scale farmers' livelihoods and food security for the world's poorest.



- Continuously keeping the EU accountable to its demand on the Government of Cambodia to find redress for people affected by the land grabs that are attributable to the EU's quota and tariff policy on the sugar sector – particularly in face of the current clampdown on human rights defenders dealing with this. Of itself, getting the EU to the point of demanding this audit was a remarkable advocacy success. The scale of landgrabs in Cambodia is significant: Since 2000 over 770.000 people are estimated to have been affected.
- Seeking to prevent further pressure on land resources in the wake of carbon reduction commitments, in the Paris Agreements, for the agriculture sector, in cooperation with the Climate Change group.
- Facilitating dialogue between the EU Directorate General for Trade, trade unions, academia, the private sector and civil society in Central America, which for the first time allowed concrete concerns and responses to be raised by civil society to high level officials, and the engagement of local CSO in EU mechanisms.
- Ensuring the EU's high level diplomatic political engagement and significantly increased humanitarian assistance to protect the Palestinian population in Area C of the West Bank from being forcibly transferred. In spite of a record high number of home demolitions this year, the support of the EU has successfully prevented the demolition of entire Palestinian communities and the forcible transfer of an estimated 71% of the affected population.
- Paving the way to codifying in international law, through a UN Security Council resolution, the obligation incumbent upon all states to distinguish between Israel and its illegal settlements.

The Middle East Working Group pioneered this advocacy before the EU more than a decade ago and now the EU itself has put it at the centre of the international agenda.

**Ensuring that the Paris Agreement works for vulnerable populations in developing countries and strengthens their ability to deal with the impacts of climate change →**

During 2016 ACT Alliance EU has done so by

- Successfully lobbying the EU Climate Commissioner to acknowledge the 1.5C goal and agreeing to revise the mid-Century EU climate strategy accordingly by 2019.
- Continuing to raise the profile of climate-induced loss and damage (L&D). This contributed to keeping L&D on the international negotiating agenda and to positive decisions at the 2016 Marrakech COP, including a 5-yearly review of L&D mechanisms.
- Mobilising EU support and increased financing to developing countries to adapt to and cope with irreversible losses caused by climate change and to ensure this support is not counted at the expense of other/critical ODA budget headings.

2016 has been a challenging year for many development organisations, including ours. This makes me all the more proud of what the ACT Alliance EU secretariat staff, together with our members, have been able to accomplish. Please allow me to commend to you the detailed reports on activities which follow.

## Governing and advisory bodies & secretariat staff

### Board and General Assembly

In 2016 there were no changes to the composition of the Board. During 2016 the Board was composed as follows:

- Christine Allen Dench (Christian Aid), Chair
- Marinus Verweij (ICCO), treasurer
- Birgitte Qvist-Sørensen (DCA), member
- Bo Forsberg (Diakonia), 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 Cecilie Bjørnskov-Johansen (DCA) were the co-chairs of the Policy and Advocacy Group (PAG). At the November 2016 meeting Jenny Brown resigned because she was moving to a new job in Christian Aid. Thanks were expressed for her many years serving on PAG.

### Secretariat Staff

The Middle East Senior Policy Officer, Agnes Bertrand Sanz, took up a new role as ACT Alliance European Refugee Crisis Advocacy Officer in May 2016. Esther Martinez was promoted to Middle East Policy Officer from May 2016.

At the end of 2016 the secretariat was composed of the following staff:

- Floris Faber, Director
- Susie Wilkinson, Office Manager
- Karine Sohet, Senior Policy Officer - EU Development Policy & Practice
- Karin Ulmer, Senior Policy Officer - Food Security
- Bruno Nicostrate, Policy Officer - Climate Justice
- Esther Martinez González, Policy Officer - Middle East
- Julieta González Ocampo, Senior Policy Officer - Central America
- Sophie Huguenet, EC Project Officer - Central America
- Agnes Bertrand Sanz, ACT Alliance European Refugee Crisis Advocacy Officer

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

### Implementing Agenda 2030 at EU level: Reviewing the European Consensus on Development, cooperation agreements and instruments

#### Background

With 2016 being the first year of implementation of Agenda 2030, civil society expected the EU and its member states to prepare ambitious plans based on an honest analysis of the gaps and room for improvement in their existing policies so as to align them with the sustainable development goals (SDGs).

Only in November was the EC's communication 'Next steps for a sustainable European future - European action for sustainability' finally published, with an accompanying working document.

Disappointingly, the long-awaited overarching strategy covering domestic and external policies failed to materialise. Indeed it would seem to be "business as usual" at the EU level until 2020, based on the Juncker Commission's 10 priorities. A long-term implementation plan for the SDGs is unlikely to be ready before then.

As far as external actions are concerned, the EC and the European External Action Service (EEAS) – the EU foreign ministry – produced concrete proposals for a new global strategy on the EU Foreign and Security Policy (namely the Global Strategy) in June, and a review of the EU Consensus on Development and the EU-ACP Partnership Agreement in November.

To some extent these integrate the principles and objectives of Agenda 2030, but EU priorities such as security, migration and the private sector remain at the centre of its relations with third countries.

The new Global Strategy provides a framework for EU external action, and development policy is one instrument of its implementation, as illustrated by the following extract from the Migration Partnerships Framework (June 2016): *"Positive and negative incentives should be integrated in the EU's development policy, rewarding those countries that fulfil their international obligation to readmit their own nationals, and those that cooperate in managing the flows of irregular migrants (...) Equally, there must be consequences for those who do not cooperate on readmission and return."*

The new Global Strategy clearly promotes private-sector investment as a main tool of development: *"EU Development funds should catalyse strategic investments through public-private partnerships, driving sustainable growth, job creation, and skills and technological transfers."*

The review of the Consensus on Development – which must be endorsed by all EU institutions – offers a possibility to re-confirm the objectives, values and principles of EU development policy in line with the Lisbon Treaty, Agenda 2030, and development effectiveness principles. The risk is high, however, that the new development narrative touted by certain influential member states will impact the orientation of EU development policy and cooperation.



## ACT Alliance EU activities

To influence these processes at EU level, ACT Alliance EU joined forces with other representatives of civil society in the CONCORD working structures, the new SDG Watch coalition, and the Development Policy and Practice Group (DPPG) of ACT Alliance. This has the advantage of combining our respective policy, communication and advocacy competencies and sectoral expertise, facilitates intelligence-gathering, and allows us to speak with one voice at both EU and national levels, as well as broadening our interactions with policy makers.

With the objective of making sure that future EU development policy integrates the four pillars of sustainable development, governance included, and contributes to fighting poverty and inequalities, promoting people's rights, dignity and community resilience as well as gender equality and women's rights, ACT Alliance EU contributed to the policy work and the drafting of lobby messages and recommendations on the EU Global Strategy, the review of the Consensus on Development, the renewed EU-ACP partnership, and the proposal to establish the European Fund for Sustainable Development in the context of the Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF) mid-term review.

ACT Alliance EU also contributed to the on-line consultation on the review of the EC Instrument contributing to Stability and Peace to express its opposition to the integration of military spending.

Although there was no formal consultation on the Global Strategy, ACT Alliance EU took part in a CONCORD written contribution and in a meeting between the draft person and the 3 main NGO networks (CONCORD, HRDN and VOICE). This had an impact on the importance given to human rights and civil society space and role in the final text.

In particular the Global strategy includes a commitment to “systematically mainstream human

rights and gender issues across policy sectors and institutions” and to “champion the indivisibility and universality of human rights”.

The EU and its Member States also intend to deepen their partnerships with civil society and speak out against shrinking civil society space including violations of freedom of speech and association and to “sharpen the means to protect and empower civic actors, notably human rights defenders, sustaining a vibrant civil society worldwide”.

“Their commitment to civil society will (therefore) be long-term” and they will “reach out more to cultural organisations, religious communities, social partners and human rights defenders”.

ACT Alliance EU's input for the on-line consultation on the review of the European Consensus on Development involved summarising its views on the principles, objectives, actors and modalities of sustainable development, and on the added-value and role of the EU in achieving Agenda 2030.

This work was a source of inspiration for a paper on transformational development developed by the ACT DPPG. It was also summarised with the help of Jenny Brown (Christian Aid) as a reference document for ACT Alliance EU work on development policy and practice and for further lobby work on the new EU Consensus in 2017.

ACT Alliance EU promoted its positions at a number of debates, consultations and informal meetings organised by the EU institutions, civil society and think-tanks. The main impact of that work is that the poverty eradication objective, the need to address inequalities and a human rights based approach were integrated in the EC's proposal on the renewed Consensus on Development published in November 2016.

The last months of 2016 were used to prepare strong position papers and to establish good working relations with the European Parliament (EP) rapporteurs, the Maltese presidency and certain member

states that will be used to influence the negotiations towards an improved final Consensus by mid-2017.

ACT Alliance EU was also a key player in organising and preparing material for a seminar on the future EU-ACP partnership, and together with ACP participants presented the statement adopted at the seminar to EU and ACP institutions at a public event organised with the Slovak presidency.

This high level event raised interest on the side of the EC/EEAS, the Slovak and Maltese presidencies and the ACP secretariat who are now more interested to receive concrete recommendations from Civil Society and to support further dialogue with and amongst EU and ACP civil society.

With regard to development finance, ACT Alliance EU concentrated its work on denouncing aid conditionality and the diversion of development aid for managing the flows of refugees and migrants in Europe and in the countries of origin and transit promoted in the Migration Partnerships Framework.

At the end of 2016, ACT Alliance EU also joined forces with other Brussels based networks to prepare a position on the European Fund for Sustainable Development (EFSD), the new blending mechanism and guarantee fund for private investments.

Building on its position, the group intends to pursue its advocacy work in 2017 with specific amendments to the EFSD regulation to make sure that this new instrument brings both financial and development additionality, promotes inclusive socio-economic development that also benefits women and is managed and implemented in a transparent and accountable way in full respect, by all actors, of the UN guiding principles on business and human rights and international human rights conventions.

## **EU's role in promoting and protecting the space and supporting the initiatives of civil society worldwide**

### **Background**

Although the issue of civil society's shrinking space is acknowledged by the EU institutions, be it the European Commission, the European External Action Service (EEAS) or the European Parliament, we constantly have to make the case for the place and importance of civil society in development and democracy. There is a widespread feeling that CSOs' contribution to development is not winning the attention and support it deserves, and that governments are eyeing new partnerships, especially with the private sector.

It is apparent that the cooperation mechanisms established in recent years, such as investment facilities and trust funds, are managed less transparently, and mainly through direct contracts in partnership with Member States' cooperation agencies or development finance institutions, leaving little room for civil society involvement.

Relations and dialogue between EU Delegations and civil society is improving in a number of partner countries thanks to the development of so called country roadmaps for the engagement with civil society and to a better coordination with member states but there is still room for improvement.

While the role of civil society in domestic accountability and policy-making is under threat in many developing countries, we cannot always count upon the EU using its full political heft in relations with partner countries to defend it. In some instances, reaching a deal on the re-admission of refugees, anti-terrorism actions, and free trade and investment take precedence.



## ACT Alliance EU activities

ACT Alliance EU sustained its actions on advocacy and awareness-raising on the importance – and urgency – of preserving an enabling environment and political space for civil society in all countries.

One example was our fruitful collaboration with the ACT Alliance Community of Practice (CoP) on Rights and Development, the CONCORD working groups on Civil Society Space and on EU Delegations (EUD) and the Human Rights and Development Network (HRDN). In response to our collective pressure, a joint hearing was organised by the Development and Human Rights Committees of the Parliament in July, where CSOs presented evidence from country cases, and ACT Alliance EU represented CONCORD in another debate with members

of the European Parliament on fundamental freedoms and the problems encountered by civil society within Europe.

Convinced of the importance of the problem, the two committees have agreed to produce parliamentary reports on the issue in 2017. These reports could significantly influence the political and cooperation agenda of the Commission and the EEAS with partner countries, and put the issue higher on the agenda of the European Parliament when monitoring human rights and fundamental freedoms in Europe and worldwide.

Another key moment was the CSO Forum organised by Directorate General (DG) Development in March 2016, where, as chair of the EU Delegation group of CONCORD, ACT Alliance EU presented an assessment of existing EU country roadmaps for the

engagement with civil society and targeted recommendations for their implementation to a mixed audience of CSOs and EU officials.

An on-going dialogue with DG DEVCO was established at the CSO Forum to facilitate regular exchanges on the monitoring of the roadmaps and their impact on the enabling environment and space of civil society in developing countries.

ACT Alliance EU played a leading role in coordinating a new EU Delegation report on behalf of CONCORD. Based on a survey that collected input from CS actors in 86 countries, it incorporates five country examples, for which representatives of EUD, CS and Member States' embassies were interviewed.

The aim is to assess and improve how EUDs are supporting an enabling environment for civil society at country level and promote their participation in policy-making and development.

Highlights and recommendations from the report will be discussed with different actors from EU institutions, Member States and EU Delegations in 2017 to identify concrete steps for improvement, in particular on the need to mainstream the issue of civic space in EUDs' political dialogue with partner countries and in joint programming and coordination with MS, and to establish more effective and appropriate dialogue, communication and funding mechanisms between EUDs and CSOs.

Civil society was a mainstream theme of ACT Alliance EU work on EU relations and agreements with partner countries (EU-CELAC, EU-Africa and EU-ACP) and on EU cooperation instruments and their programming and monitoring. In 2016, the spotlight was on Trust Funds, a new modality that is characterized by a lack of transparency or accountability, and that seems to spur unhealthy competition between member states' cooperation agencies and among civil society actors.

In the framework of its work on future relations between the EU and ACP countries, ACT Alliance

EU brought together EU and ACP NGOs and the consultants undertaking the mid-term evaluation of the 11th European Development Fund (EDF) to discuss civil society participation in programming and implementation.

It was a successful way to integrate civil society participation as a key aspect of the review process that will take place in 2017.

## **EU Food Security Policy**

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

We work to ensure that EU global food policies (trade, agriculture, investment, human rights) contribute to just, diversified and agroecological food systems and enhance the realisation of the right to food.

### **Broader policy context**

The free trade rhetoric - cuts in tariffs on agricultural production and curbing of the trade policy space – that dominated the development discourse has given way to an ‘investment-led assault’ whereby global financial flows lead to land enclosure for industrial agriculture geared towards profit-making and food speculation. Global corporate players increase their influence in the circulation of food, in global value and supply chains, in agricultural production of cash crops and monocultures, which have collectively disempowered small-scale farmers and local communities, and undermined human rights.

Communities’ and women’s rights to land are violated and farmers’ rights to farm-saved seeds are undermined. Access to and control over natural resources on which women farmers, pastorals, indigenous people, seed savers, smallholders and poor people most depend are under threat. EU trade, agriculture and development finance policies smoothen large-scale private sector investments in agriculture and weaken peasants’ rights.

This has profound social and ecological costs: hunger, displacement, poisoning of soil, water and air, and a staggering loss of the agro-biodiversity needed for a shift towards climate-resilient agriculture and food justice. The abstraction of food and land from their physical forms into financial products muddles understanding of who bears responsibility

and discriminates against right holders and food producers living on the land and sustaining biodiverse ecosystems and landscapes.

### **Food Security Working Group**

The Food Security Working Group met twice in 2016 – in January (Brussels) and in June (Berlin) – and via skype conference calls thereafter, where safeguarding land rights, seed rights, and the shift to an agro-ecological food system topped the agenda. In this regard, the ACT Alliance EU Secretariat monitors developments in EU agriculture, trade and investment policies wherever relevant to global food security.

In 2016, land grabbing in Cambodia, Myanmar, Ethiopia, Mozambique and DRC was a concern, as were EU commitments to farmers’ rights as stipulated in the International Seed Treaty.

Given the breadth of the ACT Alliance EU and ACT Alliance network, our priorities take account of synergies among members of the working group and the feasibility of collaboration. In 2016, we focused on land and seeds, which both have a direct bearing on the right to food and the livelihoods of local communities. Lobbying the EU policy-making process by ACT Alliance EU’s secretariat seeks to translate these focus areas of the Food Security Working Group where possible.



These focus areas also respond to concerns from the network on gender justice and improvement of livelihoods. Women farmers as rights holders and custodians of seed diversity and traditional knowledge are often disproportionately affected by the broader policy context. A move towards more diverse, ecological farming systems would enhance the role and rights of women, and ACT members are invited to provide gender-sensitive evidence from their work on the ground to support our advocacy efforts.

## Stolen Land, Stolen Futures

### Background

Binding human rights provisions in EU trade and investment deals are vital to safeguarding land rights and preventing human rights abuses. The EU human rights policy focus on land (2016-17) has yet to translate into enforceable provisions. Public and parliamentary scrutiny increased in 2016, with ongoing EU negotiations with Canada and the US, followed by calls to dismiss or reform International Investor-to-State Dispute Settlements and ensure EU trade and investment deals protect human rights rather than putting them at risk.

The EU-Vietnam FTA, which includes a chapter on investment, was concluded without an impact assessment on human rights – a new obligation for the Commission. The omission was signalled by the International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH) to the EU Ombudsman, who returned a verdict of maladministration. Nonetheless, the Commission persisted with efforts to conclude a stand-alone investment deal with Myanmar, a country prone to land conflicts where we have yet to see evidence of a commitment to binding standards or robust human rights provisions.

In Cambodia, the shrinking space for CSOs is alarming and the government is silencing defenders of land rights. Following NGO lobbying, the government agreed to the EU's proposed sugar audit on the

reparation of land disputes of economic land concessions. Despite initial progress in 2016, DG Trade and EEAS shied away from imposing deadlines, targets or benchmarks.

Moreover, the EU launched negotiations with the Philippines and Indonesia in 2016, and an investment protection deal is being negotiated with China. A reference in an evaluation of options for temporary withdrawal from trade deals, and the priority given to land issues under the EU's Human Rights Strategy in 2017, constitute a new entry point.

### What we did and what we achieved

The EU 'Trade for All' communication (2015) refers explicitly to due diligence and EU human rights policies, but these were rarely enforced in EU deals. Submissions by ACT Alliance EU Secretariat on sustainability impact assessments on Myanmar (April), China (July) and the EU's Generalised System of Preferences (January 2017) stress the need to refer to international frameworks to prevent land grabbing (Voluntary Guidelines on Land Tenure, Free Prior and Informed Consent) and underline our support for local communities in their struggle to assert land rights.

In Cambodia, the Sugar Justice Network - whose members are also agency partners - continues to militate for compensation of local communities affected by land grabs, involuntary displacement and human rights violations, the result of perverse incentives under the EU's 'Everything But Arms' which encouraged investment in monocropping of sugar on land concessions. In 2016, no progress was made regarding the audit, proposed by the EU, to identify human rights violations in relation to economic land concessions in the sugar sector.

ACT Alliance EU took part in meetings with EU officials from DG Trade, EEAS, DG DEVCO and MEPs, and Cambodian CSOs had meetings with the EU Delegation representatives in Phnom Penh.



The Commission, however, declined to set any firm deadline for the audit, a worrying delay in view of the government's ever more restrictive action (NGO law, criminalisation of HR land rights defenders, defamation campaign against NGOs). Increasingly, activists face juridical harassment, and government attempts to silence defenders of land rights seeking reparations for land stolen.

Following ACT members involved in Myanmar, ACT Alliance EU submitted comments on the Sustainable Impact Assessments on investment protection in Myanmar and lobbied EU officials on concerns about land conflicts. A human rights impact assessment with a focus on the right to food materialised in autumn 2016, jointly led by DCA, ICCO and ACT Alliance EU secretariat. This will be the basis for ACT Forum Myanmar and ACT Alliance EU to advocate in support of land rights, land safeguards, and restoration of livelihoods.

ACT Alliance EU raised issues about land activists in meetings between the Human Rights Development Network and HR Lambrinidis on Myanmar and Ethiopia, notably the impending release of land rights defenders and questions compiled by ACT Forum Myanmar. At a first-of-its-kind EU Delegation workshop, 'Making trade work for human rights', held in January 2017, ACT Alliance EU was one of two CSOs represented.

ACT Alliance EU agencies continued to campaign on land grab cases in Ethiopia, DRC, Mozambique and Sierra Leone – the Brussels office offered support with specific EU entry points and networking among ACT Alliance members.

ACT Alliance EU joined an initiative calling on the European Investment Bank (EIB) for support for Free

Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC) to be granted to all local communities and for Voluntary Guidelines for Land Tenureship (VGGT) to be binding. A special meeting was held with EIB officials in January 2016, with follow-up during its annual stakeholder meeting in Luxembourg. ACT Alliance EU co-signed a letter to the EIB on FPIC in June 2016. In December, the EIB adopted a gender strategy, and a gender action plan is set for 2017. Input highlighting the gender dimension of land rights was given in 2016 by ACT Alliance EU and Christian Aid. Efforts are underway to influence the EIB's priority-setting given the expected increase in lending to agribusiness following the EU's new External Investment Plan, geared at delivering on the new EU's migration partnership, i.e. creating jobs through agribusiness investment. Close scrutiny of, for example, the ratio of investment per hectare, job creation and land use changes, are essential.

## Who controls seeds, controls life

### Background

The EU supported the introduction of new seed laws and policies at COMESA<sup>1</sup> and ARIPO<sup>2</sup> in 2015 and 2016. There is increasing evidence that farm-saved seed models' contribution to food security is underestimated and undermined by that support.

This conflicts with the EU's commitment to a human rights approach in sustainable agriculture, and falls short of EU commitments under the international seed treaty. The need to shift towards more diverse agro-ecological food systems is gaining ground, for example within the FAO – which created a knowledge hub in 2016 – as well as with academics.

An International Panel of Experts on Sustainable Food Systems published a first food report in 2016. The recognition that without seed diversity there can

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1 COMESA - Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa

2 ARIPO - African Regional Intellectual Property Organization

be no progress towards climate-resilient agriculture was confirmed by a 2016 study by donor platform GAFF (General Forum for the Future of Agriculture).

The international NGO seed coalition on farmers' rights to seeds made some headway at the UPOV<sup>3</sup> Symposium in Geneva in October, where it was acknowledged that these are not only ignored but contravened.

### What we did and what we achieved

The European Commission, DG SANCO, takes the lead on seed policy issues and is involved in directly or indirectly promoting UPOV 1991 seed policies in Africa. In February, ACT Alliance EU met with DG SANCO and international seed experts to underscore the importance of farm-saved seed systems in developing countries. EU officials were made aware of the interaction of formal and informal seed systems and the need for farm-bred seeds sold by smallholders on local markets in Africa.

A letter by Third World Network and APBREBES,<sup>4</sup> co-signed by ACT Alliance EU in February 2016, called for an investigation into the effect of implementation of Article 9 on farmers' rights and raised concerns about interrelated aspects of the International Seed Treaty (ITPGRFA or International Treaty of Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture) to which the EU signed up in 2004, and the UPOV 1991 (Convention on Plant Varieties Protection and Breeders' Rights), which supports breeders' rights, actively promoted by the EU in developing countries.

The right to save, use, exchange and sell farm-saved seeds is compromised by UPOV 1991, putting farmers' rights at risk and criminalising them. A coalition of international CSO seed experts' call for a symposium was granted (Geneva, October 2016) to discuss the relationship between the two frameworks.

The EU exerted its influence on the process, refusing to engage in redress, but CSO seed experts made a strong case demonstrating how farmers' rights are undermined by UPOV 1991 provisions, and are hopeful of recognition and redress in the future.



The poster features a black and white photograph of a farmer in a red jacket and hat, sitting on a large pile of harvested grain. The text on the poster is as follows:

**EU Launch & Debate**  
**RIGHT TO FOOD AND NUTRITION WATCH**  
**Keeping Seeds in Peoples' Hands**  
*Hosted by Ms Maria Heubuch (MEP)  
Ms Maria Noichl (MEP), Mr Bart Staes (MEP)*

**Wednesday, November 16**  
**13:00-14:30**  
**Room JAN 4Q2**  
**European Parliament**  
**Brussels**  
*Register by November 10 by clicking here*

At the bottom, there are logos for the following organizations:  
Hosted by: European Union, European Parliament  
Organized by: ACT Alliance, FIAN International, Brot for the World  
Supported by: APBRES, Via Campesina, Global Seed Alliance

Bringing the Symposium's findings back to Brussels was part of a seed event co-hosted by ACT Alliance EU and FIAN International in November at the European Parliament, on the 2016 global Right to Food and Nutrition Watch: 'Keeping Seeds in Peoples' Hands'. It was the first EU launch to be co-hosted by MEPs Maria Heubuch, Bart Staes and Maria Noichl. A panel of experts included FIAN, Bread for the World, APBREBES, Via Campesina and Global

3 UPOV- International Union for the Protection of New Varieties of Plants

4 APBREBES - Association for Plant Breeding for the Benefit of Society

Forum for the Future of Agriculture, alongside Commission officials from DG DEVCO.

Importantly, we were assured that DG DEVCO is committed to a human rights approach in their overall strategy of EU interventions on food security and sustainable agriculture, although this has yet to translate into the protection and promotion of farmers' rights to seeds. While the panel concluded that seed agro-diversity is the cornerstone of diverse and climate-resilient food systems, the Commission failed to address existing gaps head on. A joint press release recorded the findings and will be a basis for further advocacy. Joint advocacy work is envisaged on the Global Peasants' Rights Declaration, subject to a vote in the UN Human Rights Council in May 2017.

While genetic material has been cultivated and bred for thousands of years by peasants and indigenous peoples, and farm-saved seed systems provide up to 50,000 seeds of edible plants and biodiversity for free, industry is working with a few crops only (rice, maize and wheat) and making others pay royalties for patents. An EP report on the New Alliance on Food Security and Nutrition by MEP Maria Heubuch, adopted in April 2016, supported the call to protect the right to farm-saved seeds. ACT Alliance EU and Bread for the World voiced their support for this and the efforts of a NGO Coalition who prepared an MEP briefing in March 2016 prior to the vote in plenary.

The EU seed industry has a keen interest in accessing new seed markets in Africa, as well as increasing market share at global level. The megamergers of Monsanto and Bayer, Syngenta and ChemChina, and DuPont and Dow Chemical have created a concentration of up to 60 percent of the seed market. Multinational companies systematically buy independent breeding companies, as in Zambia, South Africa and Tanzania, which include farm-saved and farm-bred genetic materials.

There would be no genetic diversity without plant breeding and cultivating by indigenous peoples

and smallholders – they are the custodians of an ecosystem on which all life depends. While this fact is gaining recognition, the trend towards concentration forges ahead. ACT Alliance EU raised concerns on the merger of “Mon-Bayer” in early 2017 and signed a public NGO letter addressed to Commissioner Verstager.

A result of ACT Alliance EU cooperation with FIAN International is to reframe seed advocacy work as an integral part of the right to food movement, addressing access to and control by small-scale farmers to three key productive resources: land, water and farm-saved seeds.

At the end of 2016, the Technical Platform Organics invited ACT Alliance EU to join their Steering Group to provide an international perspective and input to organic and agroecological research priorities under the EU Horizon 2020 programme, in recognition of contributions made in previous years.

The Food Security Working Group prepared a policy paper on the links between food security and climate change, due in early 2017. It will orient future work by ACT Alliance EU network when it comes to resilience, climate finance and adaptation measures, and the relevance of agro-ecological food systems to a low carbon outlook. Land rights are expected to come into increasing competition with renewable energy or agribusiness investments.

In December 2016, Bread for All and WCC brought ecumenical partners together to look at the connections between food and finance, and map out ways in which churches and church-related organisations can foster fair economic relationships and ecological renewal within local communities. The workshop, held in Maputo, provided ACT Alliance EU with opportunities to reconnect with key actors in the ecumenical network who work alongside landless movements or represent feminist or theological views

of food and finance, such as perceiving nature not as a self-sacrificing mother nor a contract labourer paid for extractive agriculture, but rather a reflection of God's wisdom - 'so that they may have life and have it in abundance'.

## **Towards climate resilient agriculture**

### **Background**

The Paris Agreement (adopted in November 2016) put food security, land use and mitigation efforts indirectly at the centre of climate measures. Agriculture is now subject to national emission cuts obligations, but the pathway from fossil energy-based agriculture to a sustainable food system is far from clear. CSOs, farming organisations and academics called for the development of climate-resilient agriculture that integrates ecological considerations and empowers small-scale farmers.

They offered increasing evidence that "climate-smart agriculture" fails to solve the problems faced. This is crucial as pressure on land is likely to increase with demands for renewable energy and food security, and in response to BECCS (Bio-Energy, Carbon Capture and Storage), rising market concentration and agribusiness's domination of global markets and value chains.

The EU's new external investment plan incentivises agribusiness to benefit from public money to invest in high-tech, capital-intensive solutions to respond to global Greenhouse Gases (GHG) mitigation efforts and food security needs, compounding these global players' market dominance and closing out smallholders and small businesses.

The Paris Agreement has put land use and food security at the centre of the EU's commitments to national emission reduction commitments.

ACT Alliance EU wrote to the Commissioner on Agriculture and Rural Development, Mr Hogan, and the Commissioner on Climate, Mr Cañete, on ways

to reduce emissions in the agricultural sector and remove more carbon dioxide from the atmosphere, set to coincide with the June 2016 EU proposals for Land Use, Land Use Change and Forestry (LULUCF) and the EU's Effort-Sharing Decisions, both under the EU's Climate and Energy Framework. Environmental NGOs invited ACT Alliance EU as a development NGO to join advocacy action to strengthen its demands on global food security.

The ensuing policy paper on Food Security and Climate Change by ACT Alliance EU Food Security Working Group members, drafted in cooperation with Climate Change colleagues, looks at food systems that promote climate-resilient agriculture (finalised in February 2017) and is a basis for potential joint advocacy within the global ACT Alliance on food security and climate change.

## **Good Food Good Farming - Now**

We work to ensure that EU global food policies (trade, agriculture, investment, human rights) contribute to just, diversified and agroecological food systems and enhance the realisation of the right to food.

### **Background**

During CAP reform in 2013, ACT Alliance EU (then APRODEV) called upon the EU to acknowledge its responsibility for policy coherence for development (Art 21 (3) of TFEU). The CAP 2020 consultation now included a first reference to PCD. However, this also follows the introduction by the Commissioner for Agriculture and Rural Development, Mr Hogan, of a third pillar or 'international dimension', as part of an offensive to secure additional access to markets for the EU's agri-food sector and its trade strategy.

Unjustly, the EU continues to negotiate bilateral free trade agreements that include trade-related quotas to restrict imports of sensitive European agricultural

products, while at the same time requiring ACP governments to abandon such non-tariff trade policy tools.

Brexit represents an upheaval not only for the EU but for many ACP countries, casting uncertainty over current and future trade deals (and economic partnership agreements under negotiations).

#### **What we did and what we achieved**

ACT Alliance EU requested and carried an agenda item in the Commission's DG Agriculture Civil Society Dialogue Group on International Aspects of Agriculture, in September 2016, to address the external impact of the CAP, highlighting how European agricultural trade export orientation and company strategies are undermining structural transformation in Africa and the policy space (restrictions on rules on safeguards, quantitative import restrictions, local sourcing, positive discrimination).

Thereafter it helped set up a website to monitor EU agricultural trade relations with ACP countries ([epamonitoring.net](http://epamonitoring.net)) as a watchdog on trade flows in various agricultural sectors and trade effects of the CAP and corporate agribusiness development. By addressing policy challenges as they occur from EU-ACP trade and investment relations, it strengthens evidence-based advocacy, alerts us to any curbing of the policy space in ACP countries and any negative impacts on livelihoods that should be reversed.

ACT Alliance EU called on MEPs to withhold consent from the "outdated and incomplete" interim EPAs in West Africa, which the European Parliament voted on in October 2016, among other lobbying actions. (e.g., support to EPA studies commissioned by Bread for the World to South Centre on the flaws and risks associated with EPA deals in Western and Eastern Africa region; input to Christian Aid EPA Briefing of Church of England officials; EPA briefing of a

CONCORD seminar on EU's partnership with ACP states post - 2020 in December 2016).

The European Commission's strong-arm tactics meant that by October 2016, countries including Ghana, Ivory Coast and Kenya lost their preferential access to the EU market and were pressured to sign up to various bilateral (interim) EPAs, a result of what is perceived as the EU's 'divide and conquer' strategy.

ACT Alliance EU provided input on two important European Parliament reports setting out the parameters of the latter's work on future food security and climate change challenges. The first is by MEP Maria Heubuch from the EP Development Committee on the "New Alliance on Food Security and Nutrition" (with a vote on important provisions on farmers' rights to land and to seeds). The second is by MEP Anthea MyIntre of the EP Agricultural Committee on "Technical Solutions for Agriculture", and seeks to promote high-tech and capital-intensive solutions for agriculture.

Increasingly, the EU promotes Global Value Chains (GVC) as highly integrated production models, championed by the private sector, to deliver on job creation and the EU 2020 competitiveness agenda, as advanced by EU development policy. In response, ACT Alliance EU initiated preliminary research on the measurement of social and environmental impacts of GVC.

A working paper, made available to the Food Security Working Group, looks at new data used by "The Economics of Ecosystems and Biodiversity" (TEEB) and "Natural Capital Impact" (FAO). This may feed into advocacy on behalf of short supply chains and territorial or bio-regions deemed to have more potential to enhance the right to food, as well as empowering smallholders and women farmers at the bottom of the value chain who bear the brunt of pollution, exposure to chemicals and diminished bargaining power.

## **EU Climate Justice**

**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.

In 2016 we continued pursuing efforts to underline the development aspects of climate policies internationally and at European level, as well to draw attention to the challenges and opportunities that the Paris Agreement (PA) brings to the development sector.

In addition to regular advocacy work and meetings with decision-makers and climate negotiators, we co-produced several reports<sup>5</sup> that analysed and made recommendations on how to make the PA work for vulnerable populations.<sup>6</sup> We organised events in Brussels and in UNFCCC meetings to raise awareness of the impact of climate change in several regions of the world and offer potential solutions which would be equitable for all.

We also continued cooperating closely with the Churches, promoting interfaith initiatives and planning joint events to amplify the voice of faith-based communities. ACT Alliance EU's position was strengthened amongst the Brussels-based development NGOs on climate issues such as Adaptation and Loss & Damage. We presented on these two issues during the CAN-Europe<sup>7</sup> General Assembly. The concepts, narratives and argumentation which we are advocating and using are being adopted by other NGOs.

### **International Policy advocacy**

After the adoption of the Paris Agreement (PA) in late 2015 at COP21, the momentum was sustained throughout 2016, resulting in exceptionally rapid ratification of the agreement by 126 countries, including all major emitters. A legal way was found for the EU to ratify the agreement ahead of all its Member States (MS), thanks to a unique fast-track procedure. By the end of 2016 most MS had ratified the agreement, including countries described as 'climate-laggers' such as Poland and Hungary.

The Paris momentum, helped by swift ratification, eased many aspects of the ongoing negotiations. However, European decision makers did not use the opportunity to revise all the climate objectives agreed before COP21 to make them Paris-compatible and bring them into line with the new long-term goal of keeping global warming below 1.5°C. Despite active lobbying, in early 2016 the European Commission published an empty post-COP21 communication, that simply reiterated its past commitments and outlined legislative plans for the new year.

Both in May in Bonn and later in November in Marrakesh for the COP22, countries' negotiators

5 <http://actalliance.eu/resources-post/the-paris-climate-agreement-analysis/>

6 [https://brot-fuer-die-welt.de/fileadmin/mediapool/2\\_Downloads/Fachinformationen/Analyse/Analysis\\_65\\_Making\\_Paris\\_work.pdf](https://brot-fuer-die-welt.de/fileadmin/mediapool/2_Downloads/Fachinformationen/Analyse/Analysis_65_Making_Paris_work.pdf)

7 CAN-Europe - Climate Action Network Europe



started working on the ‘rulebook’, a set of decisions and rules to implement the PA and the different mechanisms involved. Throughout nearly two weeks of negotiations<sup>8</sup> in May in Bonn, governments grappled with the agenda and methods of working to put in place procedures that move the Paris Agreement forward ‘full throttle’. The time taken to reflect on the Paris outcome, achieve a balanced agenda, and set the pace for future negotiations was necessary and useful.

Internationally and outside of the UNFCCC, several other agreements were reached relating to greenhouse gas emissions not covered by the Paris Agreement such as those in the aviation and maritime sectors, as well as on HFCs used in heating and cooling systems. These are far from perfect, as they aim at reducing emissions in several years and on a voluntary basis, but it is a first step on which to build.

A favourable international context allowed advances to be made in all areas of the PA implementation, as well as in several parallel initiatives involving the private sector. Nevertheless, the usual contentious issues, different views and interpretations of principles resurfaced at COP22, resulting in mixed progress. On one hand there was willingness to operationalise the PA by finalising a first series of decisions by the end of this COP. On the other, several countries came to Marrakesh relatively unprepared despite the fact that the PA will rapidly enter into force – hence the outcomes from the conference were insufficiently ambitious.

Our ongoing work on climate-induced loss and damages (L&D) solutions contributed to keeping this issue high on the international negotiations agenda and creating enough pressure for decisions to be taken at COP22. Despite a lot of mistrust among

countries and negotiators on this particular theme, we contributed to the adoption of a decision to organise a review every 5 years with a good timeline for its preparation. The first review will take place in 2019. Additional measures were adopted in order to force the L&D mechanism to advance its work more rapidly.

COP22 can therefore be considered a small step in the right direction.<sup>9</sup> Several new bodies, initiatives and decisions will boost actions tackling climate change and improve climate resilience, but they too little and too slow. Meanwhile, the inauguration of Mr Trump as US President and his climate-sceptic cabinet have raised fears within the international community, notwithstanding President Obama’s earlier successes in bypassing Congress to ratify the PA and securing a moratorium on fossil fuel exploitation in America’s Arctic and Antarctic territories. Ironically, the EU and its member states continue to refuse to adapt their climate policies to the PA, although they have a political and market opportunity to fill the leadership void left by the US among rich countries.

## European Policy advocacy

During 2016, the EU and its executive arm, the Commission, released three legislative packages to implement the Energy Union strategy. The first winter energy package touched on sustainable energy and security of supply, and laid out the vision of the Commission and most Member States for the energy transition. The Commission was heavily criticised for misinforming about the level of demand for gas by 2030, arguing that gas will replace oil and coal and be a ‘transition’ towards renewables. Indeed the creation of new LNG storages and pipelines will lock the EU energy model into gas for several decades, and

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8 <http://actalliance.eu/news-post/back-to-negotiations-countries-must-not-just-bask-on-the-paris-glory/>

9 <http://actalliance.eu/news-post/marrakesh-a-small-step-to-make-paris-reality/>

open the door to the import of US shale gas. As the first energy initiative since COP21, it sends the wrong message.

Despite lobbying actions and a statement by the new Coalition for Higher Ambition,<sup>10</sup> a broad coalition of NGOs, corporations and unions pushing the EU to adjust its 2030 climate targets (mitigation, efficiency and renewables) to the long-term goals agreed in Paris, Member States could not reach agreement on this. A proposal to share the 2030 objectives among MS was outlined by the Commission in its summer package, including a proposed revision of the European carbon market and other energy-related legislation.

Before the summer recess, during the European Development Days, the Climate Vulnerable Forum, CARE, Oxfam, CAN and ACT Alliance organised a series of actions<sup>11</sup> to raise awareness of the 1.5°C temperature goal agreed in Paris and the benefits it represents. In response, the EU Climate Commissioner acknowledged this goal and agreed to revise the mid-century EU climate strategy before the end of his term in 2019.

Towards the end of the year, the Commission released a Clean Energy package, its second winter package, which included proposals to revise the Energy Efficiency Directive and other regulations aimed at boosting production of clean energy and the sustainability of manufacturing. As expected, the Commission proposed to increase the 2030 energy efficiency target by only three percentage points, but not to modify the other targets for emission reductions and renewable energy. Its highly conservative approach fails to reflect the urgency of tackling climate change which was given momentum in Paris.

Moreover, several loopholes in the package allow Member States to postpone transformations of their energy sector and infrastructure.

In short, 2016 can be seen as a missed opportunity for Europe to embrace the energy transition and create a sustainable future for all. Implementation of the PA is still a long way ahead, although more and more sectors of our society are calling for greater ambition. The opportunity exists – politically and also economically – at a time when stakeholders are calling for transformation and major countries are falling prey to populist sentiment.



10 <http://www.caneurope.org/docman/position-papers-and-research/un-climate-negotiations-2/2826-statement-from-the-coalition-for-higher-ambition/file>

11 <http://actalliance.eu/news-post/keeping-global-warming-below-1-5c-will-benefit-us-all/>

**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.

The Middle East Working Group (MEWG) works towards achieving a just peace on the basis of a shared rights-based approach to development, respect for international law, and an end to the military occupation of Palestine, as the first steps to resolving the conflict.

Since the adoption in 2012 of APRODEV's *"Advocacy Strategy on EU-Israel Relations from a Human Rights Perspective"*, we continued to pursue the five-year Working Plan, which came to an end in December.

Throughout 2016 we devoted most of our advocacy resources to responding to a string of developments pointing to the irreversible annexation by Israel of Area C of the West Bank. We also sought to address the rapidly shrinking space for civil society in Israel and Palestine so that our local partners can carry out advocacy work without fear of reprisals.

This doesn't mean that the other objectives in the Working Plan have been ignored. Between 2013 and 2015, with the EU's decision to move forward with the exclusion of settlements from EU funding and agreements,<sup>12</sup> publication of advisories against doing business in settlements by 21 Member States, and the adoption of labelling guidelines for settlement produce,<sup>13</sup> the MEWG successfully delivered on Objectives 1 and 2. We continue to build on implementation of these objectives in our representations with the EU.

### **Objective 3: To end the forced displacement of Palestinians and lobby for remedies for the affected population.**

Throughout 2016, the Government of Israel took unprecedented steps to accelerate the construction of settlements progressing towards annexation, despite condemnation by the EU, Quartet and the US.

Israel's determination to expand settlements was manifested in a more-than-twofold increase in the number of houses, humanitarian aid and means of livelihood demolished by the Israeli military (from the previous year). As a result, 1,628 people were forcibly transferred and another 7,126 adversely impacted. The most affected were 7,000 Bedouins residing in 46 communities located in the West Bank, who have been slated for relocation by the Israeli authorities to three new 'townships' so that their lands are 'freed up' for construction of settlements.

For the first time ever, the Israeli parliament advanced legislation which directly applies to Palestinians in the West Bank (though the latter have no vote in elections) with a bill authorizing confiscation of privately-owned Palestinian lands for the establishment of Jewish settlements. When it passed into law in February, it removed the final safeguard allowing Palestinian landowners in Area C to challenge dispossession in the courts. Describing the law, the EU HR/VP for Foreign and Security likened it to apartheid in saying that it

12 [http://eeas.europa.eu/delegations/israel/documents/related-links/20130719\\_guidelines\\_on\\_eligibility\\_of\\_israeli\\_entities\\_en.pdf](http://eeas.europa.eu/delegations/israel/documents/related-links/20130719_guidelines_on_eligibility_of_israeli_entities_en.pdf)

13 [https://eeas.europa.eu/delegations/israel/documents/news/20151111\\_interpretative\\_notice\\_indication\\_of\\_origin\\_of\\_goods\\_en.pdf](https://eeas.europa.eu/delegations/israel/documents/news/20151111_interpretative_notice_indication_of_origin_of_goods_en.pdf)



“Destroyed EU funded humanitarian assistance in the Maskoob village, E1 Area”, credit to B’Tselem (January 2017)

will “*entrench a one-state reality of unequal rights*”. NGOs are wary of the potentially far-reaching humanitarian consequences of its implementation.

Demolition and related practices reverse development, increase aid dependency and undermine the possibility of peaceful settlement and a future Palestinian State, not to mention the gross contravention of international humanitarian law involved.

### ACT Alliance EU’s Contribution

The MEWG sought to boost protection of Palestinians against forcible transfer by ensuring sufficient and principled delivery of humanitarian assistance by the EU and its Member States in Area C, and by building political consensus on the need to hold Israel

accountable for the destruction of EU-funded aid. More broadly, we strove for a correct and consistent legal qualification of the crime of forcible transfer, and lobbied for measures to hold Israel to account for its settlement policy (Objective 1).

ACT Alliance EU sent a letter<sup>14</sup> to Member States calling for stronger diplomatic demarches before Israel on the issue of demolitions, for action on compensation, and for high-level humanitarian advocacy. We organized four lobby tours in Brussels with local partners and ACT Alliance EU agencies,<sup>15</sup> drafted numerous parliamentary questions and interpellations, co-organized a familiarization trip by the European Parliamentary Advisor to Israel and Palestine,<sup>16</sup> supported the EAPPI’s annual advocacy mission to Brussels, and disseminated confidential updates on the situation to decision makers and the media.

14 [http://actalliance.eu/wp-content/uploads/2016/02/2016-March\\_-ACT-Alliance-EU-on-shrinking-humanitarian-operating-space-in-Area-C-.pdf](http://actalliance.eu/wp-content/uploads/2016/02/2016-March_-ACT-Alliance-EU-on-shrinking-humanitarian-operating-space-in-Area-C-.pdf)

15 10-12 February (with Member States and Commission); 4-5 April (with the European Parliament) and 25-27 April (with Council and European Parliament), 14-15 November (with European Parliament).

16 From 30 October to 3 November.

Our main demands were well received by Member States which have now decided on operational steps to react to and prevent further demolitions, including the adoption of a common narrative on EU humanitarian assistance to Area C and the consideration of lodging demands for compensation. The EU and Member States also multiplied field visits to communities at risk and expanded aid operations in Area C, as a result of which 71% of the total at-risk population was able to remain in their homes.

We also encouraged MEPs to invite the HR/VP to update them on the EU's response to demolitions and Israeli settlements. During those sessions,<sup>17</sup> she gave the strongest public confirmation to date that the EU is working towards claiming compensation for destroyed aid, and, critically, she rebuked Israeli demands that EU humanitarian projects be subject to explicit authorization from the military.

A major advance was made in December, when UNSC Resolution 2334 called on all states to “distinguish” between Israel and its illegal settlements. This means that “differentiation”, an idea that originated in the MEWG a decade ago, is now codified in international law.

### **Add-on (under objective 1) “To safeguard space for civil society in Israel and Palestine”**

The space for civil society is shrinking fast in Israel and Palestine, and with it the countervailing power of local NGOs in instances of human rights violations. The year 2016 saw an increase in parastatal and settler-led smear campaigns, which prompted the enactment of discriminatory legislation in the Knesset targeted against (anti-occupation) NGO funding.

The Israeli authorities also resorted to judicial harassment against peaceful dissent in cases brought against ‘Breaking the Silence’ and HRD Issa Amro. The Israeli authorities also levelled allegations against a number of UN and NGO staff of siphoning off funds for “terrorism” without any incriminating evidence being disclosed (UNDP and World Vision cases).

The prosecutor of the International Criminal Court has expressed concern about unnamed death threats and other forms of intimidation that Palestinian NGOs Al Haq and Al Mezan have suffered in connection with their work with her office.

This rapid deterioration can be attributed to attempts by Israeli government coalitions to consolidate an electoral base sympathetic to the occupation, find a scapegoat for the worsening security situation in Israel, hinder the work of the ICC, and respond to pressures from settler interest groups.

Restrictions imposed by the Palestinian Authority relate to the erosion of public rights, freedoms and the rule of law, and an absence of separation of powers in Palestine.

### **ACT Alliance EU's Contribution**

The cases of affected local partners were brought to the attention of EEAS/Member States decision makers to ensure their protection and the safeguarding of an environment in which civil society and democratic values are respected.

With EuromedRights, we sent a letter<sup>18</sup> of concern to Member States ahead of their meeting in January and supported a letter<sup>19</sup> by 50 MEPs urging the Israeli parliament to scrap the NGO bill. With our Catholic

<sup>17</sup> 21 May and 23 November.

<sup>18</sup> <http://actalliance.eu/wp-content/uploads/2016/01/EuroMed-Rights-ACT-EU-letter-Shrinking-space-for-civil-society-in-Israel-Palestine.pdf>

<sup>19</sup> [http://www.juliewardmep.eu/meps\\_send\\_an\\_open\\_letter\\_on\\_israeli\\_government\\_ngo\\_bill](http://www.juliewardmep.eu/meps_send_an_open_letter_on_israeli_government_ngo_bill)



sister-organisation CIDSE, we followed up with three awareness-raising tours with affected local partners<sup>20</sup> and circulated round-the-clock updates in relation to the passing of the NGO bill.

As a result, Member States foreign ministries<sup>21</sup> publicly expressed concern about the situation of civil society in Israel and Palestine and instructed EU foreign policy and its ambassador to Israel to use diplomatic channels to oppose the Israeli NGO bill, both with PM Netanyahu<sup>22</sup> and selected parliamentarians.

The HR/VP Mogherini, President<sup>23</sup> of the European Parliament and the president of the political groups also urged President Rivlin to intercede with PM Netanyahu on this matter and the HR/VP Mogherini protested against the law when it eventually passed.

## **Miscellanea - Objective 2. “To put an end to external economic involvement in settlements”**

While the bulk of pending work is focused on the follow-up and/or replication of EU policy (as outlined in the introduction) by Member States, ACT Alliance EU engaged in a number of issues in 2016.

In meetings with the Commission and the EEAS, ACT Alliance EU continued to ask for an audit of the level of implementation of differentiation requirements across the full scope of EU-Israeli relations, and of the labelling of settlement produce by Member States.

ACT Alliance EU also supported non-ACT Alliance EU members with their on-going work on differentiation.

Henceforth, this work will be strengthened in order to tap new opportunities offered by UNSC Resolution 2334.

20 23-25 May (with Commission, European Parliament, EEAS and EU Special Rapporteur on Human Rights), 2 June (European Parliament); 15 June (with Council and European Parliament).

21 [http://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2016/01/18-fac-conclusions-mepp/?utm\\_source=dsms-auto&utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_campaign=Council%20conclusions%20on%20the%20Middle%20East%20Peace%20Process](http://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2016/01/18-fac-conclusions-mepp/?utm_source=dsms-auto&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=Council%20conclusions%20on%20the%20Middle%20East%20Peace%20Process)

22 <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getAllAnswers.do?reference=E-2015-011340&language=EN>

23 <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?pubRef=-//EP//TEXT+CRE+20160622+ITEM-003+DOC+XML+V0//EN&language=EN>



**Special Programme:** European Union policies in Central America are based on the respect and realization of human rights, on democratic principles and transparency, and help to improve the lives and self-determination of people in Central America.

### Objective 1: Right to peace, security and justice

The main priorities of the Central America working group in 2016 were to influence two EU processes:

1. Definition of EU programmes in Central American countries 2014-2020
2. Revision of existing programmes as part of the mid-term review of the current EU financial framework

Delays by the EU and EU Delegations meant that ACT Alliance EU was able to prepare a set of targeted messages and recommendations on the programming of EU aid relating to justice and security in Guatemala and Honduras.

These recommendations, based on an in-depth analysis of existing EU programmes in both countries, were published as our *'Evaluation of security and justice programmes of the EU in Honduras and Guatemala 2007-2013'*<sup>24</sup> in March.

The report welcomed the political will shown by the EU to support justice and security but concluded that it will only be felt if political dialogue with higher level local officials and implementation of its programmes is strengthened. We expect to see these recommendations reflected in the new EU programme in Honduras.

The report was well received by members in these countries and civil society organizations who count

on us to provide evidence-based information to support their work, as was made clear by colleagues in Honduras when we presented the main findings.

On the official side, exchanges of views with the EEAS, DEVCO and EU Delegations left them in no doubt that while ready to engage in dialogue, civil society is determined to hold them to account for their respective actions.

In Brussels, the report mobilised a response from Honduras diplomats, who expressed concern over its impact.

Our work on the mid-term review of existing EU programmes in Central America was put on hold until the end of 2016 as a result of delays within EU institutions. Only at the very end of the year did EU Delegations start consultations and seek input from civil society, so our efforts will resume in 2017 in close coordination with members and partners in the field and with ACT Alliance EU's officer on Development Policy and Practice.

ACT Alliance EU members in Central America reported a worrying decline in development cooperation in the region which impacts their work and that of their partners. Two key agencies, Finn Church Aid and Dan Church Aid, ceased operations at the end of 2015 and 2016 respectively.

In seeking to frame policy messages on this situation, a study on the withdrawal of development cooperation is due in the first quarter of 2017. Its

<sup>24</sup> [http://actalliance.eu/wp-content/uploads/2016/04/Summary-justice\\_web.pdf](http://actalliance.eu/wp-content/uploads/2016/04/Summary-justice_web.pdf)

overriding conclusion is that the EU will maintain funding at the same level until at least 2020 (because of existing commitments). However, Member States are clearly shifting their priorities and funds to other regions, hence advocacy is vital in Europe if we want to keep Central America high on government agendas.

In this respect, our efforts to keep EU officials abreast of civil society's concerns (in Europe and Central America) were rewarded by the participation of over 40 participants in a Policy Debate organised by ACT Alliance EU in October, including high-level officials from the EEAS and the European Parliament.

The exchange of views made clear the position and challenges facing the different actors involved.

In our work with the European Parliament on issues related to Central America, ACT Alliance EU has put several issues on the agendas of the European Parliament Delegation for Central American countries such as the elections in Nicaragua, the situation of human rights defenders in Honduras and Guatemala, the implementation of trade agreements and the involvement of CSOs in these.

## Objective 2: Sustainable development

The work of EU and Central America joint institutions included in the text of the Association Agreement (AA)<sup>25</sup> continued in 2016. PICA remains part of the European component of a Domestic Advisory Group (DAG) for Central America as a full

member with voting rights.<sup>26</sup> This group made recommendations to European officials on the implementation of the AA to ensure that EU's commitments on sustainable development, environment, social and human rights were fulfilled.<sup>27</sup> Its task was facilitated by the involvement of the Food Security Officer in similar settings for other regions, who set out the opportunities and challenges at stake.

Thanks to the DAG, PICA has access to high-level, up-to-date information to underpin our strategic advocacy actions, as well as providing entry points for lobbying EU institutions on sustainable development and the contribution of civil society.

It is also used to support our members and Central America partners' advocacy work, in particular the Regional Observatory to monitor the implementation of the AA, in which many of their partners participate.

The third EU-Central America bi-regional CSO forum on implementation of the AA took place in Tegucigalpa in June. Documents issued as a result of the meeting included a call by PICA and other organisations for more work on corporate social responsibility and easier access to markets for small producers.

We also called upon the EU and Central American states to support – politically and financially – civil society monitoring of the impact of the AA, and to apply transparent mechanisms that hold both parties accountable for implementing our recommendations. Our role in the DAG helped ensure the participation of seven partner organizations<sup>28</sup> in the CSO event.

25 The Association Agreement between the EU and Central America was ratified by the European Union in 2012 and started its implementation in August 2013. This is a comprehensive agreement that includes three pillars: development cooperation, trade and political dialogue; and once it's fully enforced it will be the main framework for the relations between the two regions in all areas.

26 This means that PICA not only has access to privileged information but also that: 1) it positions ACT Alliance EU as a relevant actor working on Central America; 2) PICA can influence discussions, agendas and recommendations of this civil society group as well as propose forms of action to DG Trade concerning sustainable development.

27 <http://www.eesc.europa.eu/?i=portal.en.international-trade-monitoring-eu-central-america>

28 CONGCOOP (Guatemala), FMICA, RENICC and Centro Humboldt (Nicaragua), CEICOM (El Salvador), FROPIDEH (Honduras), CNV (Costa Rica) are part of the DAGs in their respective countries, participate in the civil society mechanism of the SICA (CC-SICA), or closely follow this process.

In parallel, PICA and its partners held a Forum on the Association Agreement, attended by over 40 representatives from civil society and social movements from Honduras and other Central American countries including Via Campesina and COPINH.

This was confirmation that organisations in the region are eager to access information on the policies of the EU regarding trade, given the link with impacts on land use, natural resources and the defence of human rights in the region.

In support of PICA's outreach we put together background notes on the Association Agreement and the potential that exists to influence its implementation, entitled 'Everything you need to know about the EU-CA Association Agreement'.<sup>29</sup>

PICA also facilitated a dialogue between DG Trade, trade unions, academic and private sector representatives, and civil society organizations in Honduras, where concrete concerns and actions were discussed for the first time in several years – a testimony to the collective interest in multi-stakeholder initiatives.

### **Objective 3: Enlargement of civil society participation in Central America**

Concerns regarding the shrinking space of civil society in Central America proved well-founded in 2016, a very difficult year for CSO and human rights defenders as persecution, harassment and even killings are on the rise.

People protesting against big infrastructure and development projects taking over their territories and natural resources were the most targeted. The assassination of Berta Cáceres in Honduras completely changed the mood of the EU institutions and Brussels-based organisations.

In this context, our in-depth knowledge of EU policy in the region and access to relevant contacts was immensely valuable to facilitating work with other regional networks and human rights organisations.

As result of our joint efforts, the European Parliament passed a Resolution on the situation of Human Rights Defenders in Honduras,<sup>30</sup> the High Representative of the Union for Security and Foreign Affairs Spokesperson issued a statement<sup>31</sup> on the case, as did the EU Delegation throughout the year.

To amplify the impact of this work, ACT Alliance EU members and partners continued to promote dialogue with EU Delegations (EUDs) on the space for civil society and human rights.

We continued to systematically engage with them to monitor the EU's commitments to support human rights and the space for civil society, in addition to extending CSO outreach work by other networks like CONCORD and HRDN.

PICA members and partners participated in meetings with the Head of the Delegation of Honduras, and with Heads of Development Cooperation and Political Affairs in three countries which are focal points for CSO/HR and officials in Brussels. In 2017, PICA held almost 40 meetings with the abovementioned actors on key issues of interest.

ACT Alliance EU continues to lead work on CSO and EUD engagement, winning recognition from both sides. Our core programme, together with PICA, leads CONCORD's work on this issue. In 2016, the focus was on a survey on this engagement (to be published first quarter of 2017), for which a questionnaire was sent to CSOs around the globe. As a result of PICA's involvement, Latin America and Caribbean was the second most responsive region.

<sup>29</sup> <http://actalliance.eu/resources-post/todo-sobre-el-acuerdo-de-asociacion-ue-centroamerica/>

<sup>30</sup> <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?type=TA&reference=P8-TA-2016-0129&language=EN&ring=P8-RC-2016-0469>

<sup>31</sup> [http://eeas.europa.eu/headquarters/headquarters-homepage/2824/statement-of-the-spokesperson-on-the-follow-up-of-the-death-of-berta-caceres-in-honduras\\_en](http://eeas.europa.eu/headquarters/headquarters-homepage/2824/statement-of-the-spokesperson-on-the-follow-up-of-the-death-of-berta-caceres-in-honduras_en)

The inclusion of Honduras as one example, provided evidence of how a CSO and EUD can work together on issues of concern.

#### **Objective 4: Institutional strengthening**

In 2016, PICA's advocacy strategy was implemented in a context of declining donor funding for the region. This was the final year of activities funded by the first-ever external funding to which ACT Alliance EU had access – thanks to Diakonia. Internal discussions focused largely on the future of its advocacy work on issues related to Central America.

While there seems to be recognition of the importance of this work in Brussels and political support from agencies and partners in the region, it does not necessarily translate into financial support from ACT Alliance EU members. Reduced funding from donors and changing priorities within agencies mean that PICA's existence post-2017 is uncertain.

Measures to ensure financial sustainability of the programme include the identification of other organisations working in Brussels on these issues and the mapping of institutional and private donors interested in supporting projects related to the region, to be finalised in 2017.

The support given to PICA's members, partners and ACT Alliance Forums in terms of their lobbying capacities made 2016 the most fruitful year ever. In May/June, PICA staged seven workshops on advocacy in four countries in Central America.

Four of these targeted agencies and national partners who wanted to know more about lobbying

the EU in Central America; three addressed ACT Alliance National Forums and focused on advocacy related to their own priorities, which vary from country to country.

Altogether, we reached out to 100 participants. After three years 'on the drawing board', together with CIFCA we launched a Training Guide on Advocacy Towards the European Union.<sup>32</sup>

Within the framework of EU funding to strengthen advocacy work towards European institutions on Central America, PICA took part in a series of coordination meetings with CIFCA and Diakonia to ensure actions are implemented accordingly.

A second financial audit and report were well received by the EU and by Diakonia (the lead organisation in this funding on behalf of ACT Alliance EU and CIFCA).

In February, the European Commission sent an external evaluator to monitor progress on the implementation of ACT Alliance EU, CIFCA and Diakonia's funding, and the subsequent report was very positive regarding the relevance, effectiveness, and impact of the actions taken.

PICA has worked hard to improve communications with members and partners in Central America. With significant contributions from PICA, ACT Alliance EU launched a new website, including an intranet tool that will be further developed in 2017.

We published two issues of a joint newsletter<sup>33</sup> with CIFA, reaching 300 subscribers in Europe and Central America.

Since there are few networks focusing on Latin America, speaking with one voice is vital. Hence

32 <http://actalliance.eu/resources-post/manual-de-capacitacion-en-incidencia-hacia-la-union-europea/>

33 <http://us8.campaign-archive2.com/home/?u=db3ad95432f73c38de886b9cf&id=70227077a2>



joint lobbying efforts have been coordinated with CIDSE, CIFCA, Grupo Sur and Oidhaco.<sup>34</sup> Strategic participation of PICA in thematic working groups of CONCORD<sup>35</sup> and HRDN<sup>36</sup> ‘networks of networks’ helped to get our positions and case studies included in their global positions.

Thanks to this ‘multiplier effect’ we can expect to have further visibility of the region in their work.

Our positions on creating an enabling environment and cases on dialogue between CSOs and EUDs were shared via these networks’ advocacy documents, regarded as leaders on development and human rights issues.

This paved the way for the presence of Central American partners in Forums organised by the EU on collaboration with these networks of networks, notably the EU-NGO Forum on Human Rights.

34 All these networks work on issues related to Latin America. CIDSE is the International alliance of Catholic development agencies. CIFCA is the Copenhagen Initiative for Central America and Mexico. Grupo Sur is the Alliance of European NGOs in development cooperation between the European Union and Latin America and the Caribbean and ODHACO is International Office for Human Rights Action on Colombia.

35 CONCORD Europe, the European NGO Confederation for Development and Relief.

36 The Human Rights and Democracy Network.



**Special Programme:** European Union policy towards Refugees and Migrants respects their Human Rights and is in accordance with International law.

### Analysis of the situation

EU Member States and Schengen Associated States collectively received 1,392,610 asylum claims in 2015,<sup>37</sup> more than double the number of applications registered the year before (662,165). Most asylum seekers landed in Greece, the majority of them fleeing conflict in Syria, Afghanistan and Iraq. In 2016<sup>38</sup>, 265,560 made the journey, of whom 3,177 went missing or died in the attempt.

Unprepared for the influx of refugees in 2015, the EU has been overwhelmed. The European Commission's European Agenda on Migration<sup>39</sup> (published on 13 May 2015) established priorities for EU migration policy and served as a basis for discussion of new measures at the Council. After months of equivocation, the essence of the European response has become increasingly clear: **to keep people out by reinforcing internal and external border controls and push the refugee problem away from Europe at any cost.**

On 18 March 2016, the EU and Turkey signed an agreement whereby the EU pledged 3 billion euros in return for Turkey's help in stemming the flow of migrants into Europe. According to the terms, migrants and refugees who tried to cross illegally from Turkey into Greece (including Syrians) would

be sent back to Turkey. For its part, the EU made a commitment to resettle 70,000 Syrian refugees arriving from Turkey. Since the agreement came into effect, the number of asylum seekers arriving in Greece has dropped substantially.<sup>40</sup>

In view of its apparent success, it has been seen as a model for similar agreements with other countries to curb the influx of refugees and migrants into the EU. The European Commission and Council are paving the way for similar bilateral agreements,<sup>41</sup> starting with the African continent. Their intention is ultimately to make the release of EU development funds conditional on recipient countries blocking migrants from reaching the EU and readmitting deportees. Migration – or rather curbing it – is thus moving into the mainstream as an instrument of EU foreign policy.

Reform is underway of the Common European Asylum System, a legislative framework aimed at unifying standards related to asylum. The Commission's proposals include a number of worrying measures that run contrary to the Charter of Fundamental Rights and to previous case law from the European Court of Justice and the European Court of Human Rights, prompting legitimate concerns among civil society organizations and others.

37 [http://appsso.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/nui/show.do?dataset=migr\\_asyappctza&lang=en](http://appsso.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/nui/show.do?dataset=migr_asyappctza&lang=en)

38 <http://data.unhcr.org/mediterranean/regional.php>

39 [http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/home-affairs/what-we-do/policies/european-agenda-migration/background-information/docs/communication\\_on\\_the\\_european\\_agenda\\_on\\_migration\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/home-affairs/what-we-do/policies/european-agenda-migration/background-information/docs/communication_on_the_european_agenda_on_migration_en.pdf)

40 <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/europe/refugees-and-migrants-arriving-in-greece-from-turkey-down-90-per-cent-says-border-agency-a7029081.html>

41 <https://ec.europa.eu/transparency/regdoc/rep/1/2016/EN/1-2016-385-EN-F1-1.PDF>



## Capacity to respond

In response to a call by Christian Aid – a member of ACT Alliance – that an ACT Alliance EU staff member in Brussels be appointed to coordinate advocacy efforts, a new European Refugee Crisis Advocacy Officer started work on 9 May 2016. The post was funded through a humanitarian appeal made by ACT Alliance,<sup>42</sup> and the officer is hosted by ACT Alliance EU. A steering committee that includes representatives of Christian Aid, Church of Sweden, Finn Church Aid, ACT Alliance (Geneva secretariat) and Philanthropy (Serbia) supervises her work.

To raise awareness of the new ACT Alliance EU advocacy project on refugees, the Advocacy Officer met various representatives of civil society and ecumenical faiths in Brussels, where ACT Alliance is now an active member of the so-called ‘Christian group’ – NGOs affiliated with Catholic and Protestant churches. The officer has joined a couple of CSO coordination groups.

The outcome of the advocacy initiative, as envisioned by the steering committee, is to ensure that:

1. The EU puts in place a coordinated humanitarian response to the refugee situation that addresses humanitarian needs in the countries hosting asylum seekers, including the provision of adequate reception facilities.
2. All Member States take a fair and proportionate share of refugees – both those already in the EU and those outside it – for relocation and resettlement.
3. Harmonized, timely, fair and non-discriminatory asylum procedures are put in place across the EU.
4. Cooperation with third countries in relation to migration is in accordance with international law and human rights.

## Related activities

### **Objective 3: Ensure that harmonized, timely, fair and non-discriminatory asylum procedures are put in place**

The main target here is the reform of the European Common Asylum System – the legal framework aimed at unifying minimum requirements related to asylum claims. The Advocacy Officer provided input to a policy paper on reform of the Dublin regulation – one of the main instruments of this legislative package – that establishes which Member State is responsible for handling a claim for asylum.

The paper was prepared by a number of faith-based organizations (the aforementioned Christian group). The Advocacy Officer also drafted a short paper for ACT members and other civil society organizations on what the reform of this highly complex legal instrument entails. On June 28, ACT Alliance convened a meeting between a number of Christian organizations and the rapporteur on the Dublin regulation at the European Parliament, Cecilia Wikström (Sweden, Liberal Group).

Input was provided by the Advocacy Officer to the European Economic and Social Committee’s advisory opinion on the new regulation (which are followed 70% of the time by the European Parliament), as well as to a draft policy and advocacy paper on the reform of other legal instruments of the European Common Asylum System, which is endorsed by ACT and other ecumenical agencies. Both this and the Dublin policy paper were sent to relevant contacts within EU institutions and the Advocacy Officer organized two follow-up meetings with EU officials.

### **Objective 4: Ensure that cooperation with third countries with regard to migration is in accordance with international law and human rights**

ACT Alliance EU regularly joined forces with other NGOs to critique new trends in EU policy, externalise protection and put forward recommendations.

42 ACT appeal EUR 151 and then ACT appeal EUR 161.



People who have fled from Syria are now living in the Oreokastro refugee camp outside Thessaloniki in Greece. Photo: Håvard Bjelland/Kirkens Nødhjelp/ACT

For example, it co-signed a statement with 108 other NGOs condemning the new EU policy to contain migration ahead of a meeting of the European Council on 28-29 June 2015.

In October, ACT Alliance and other CSOs wrote to members of the European Parliament on the EU-Afghanistan declaration and the worrying shift towards making control of migration the main objective in the EU's relationship with a number of third countries. After the statement was released, the Advocacy Officer organized a meeting with the chair of the Development Committee at the European Parliament.

The Advocacy Officer followed developments in Brussels in relation to the UN Summit on Refugees and Migrants (New York City, 19 September) and kept her ACT colleagues informed. Ahead of the event she wrote a blogspot for the ACT website, which reiterated ACT Alliance calls for more investment to be channelled into improving living conditions in fragile states and regions, for more focus on the protection

of vulnerable groups, and a commitment to creating safe passage to Europe. It was “liked” more than 8,000 times on ACT’s Facebook profile.<sup>43</sup>

### The way forward

After discussion with the steering committee and the ACT Alliance EU Policy Advisory Group, it was decided that advocacy work should focus more strongly on objectives 1 and 4 (humanitarian advocacy and international cooperation), notwithstanding the fact that work on objective 3 has borne fruit. The decision was taken after taking stock of developments in the past nine months at EU level (fostering of international cooperation to tackle migration) and within ACT Alliance (appointment of a Programme Manager on Migration & Displacement, which strengthens ACT Alliance EU’s capacity to work on these issues). It was also thought that work on external cooperation (objective 4) harnesses ACT Alliance EU’s ‘added value’ and is in line with our development advocacy mandate.

<sup>43</sup> <http://actalliance.org/act-news/blog-message-in-a-bottle/>





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