

Strategy
2019–2022

actalliance eu

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About ACT Alliance EU

Purpose

ACT Alliance EU is a network of European church-based humanitarian and development agencies whose purpose is to influence EU policy and practice regarding development and humanitarian aid policies and related issues, in order to provide sustainable benefits to and improvements in the lives of people affected by poverty and injustice around the world.

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

ACT Alliance EU within the global ACT Alliance

Members of ACT Alliance EU are members of the global ACT Alliance, the largest global coalition of Protestant and Orthodox churches and affiliated organisations working together in over 125 countries in humanitarian aid, development cooperation and advocacy. In 2015 ACT Alliance EU formally became part of the global ACT Alliance.

As part of ACT Alliance we are united in the common task of all Christians to manifest God's unconditional love for all people. We work towards a world community where all God's creation lives with dignity, justice, peace and full respect for human rights and the environment.¹

Our integration strengthens our combined ability to influence global processes, adding our EU advocacy and policy expertise to ACT Alliance's advocacy work in the global South and with the United Nations, and vice versa. This strategy is based on the strategic priorities identified in the global ACT Alliance's strategy 2019-2026.

Our distinctiveness and added value

As part of ACT Alliance, we believe that all human beings are created in the image of God. We are united in a commitment to holistic, inclusive and sustainable development for all. This means addressing the social, cultural, spiritual, environmental, political and economic dimensions that are needed for all people to live with dignity, justice and peace. We are united also in our commitment to principled humanitarian assistance, which puts at its centre the agency of affected local communities and local and national civil society.

¹ From ACT Alliance By-Laws amended May 2016.

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

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

How we work

We collectively influence current and upcoming EU policy agendas and processes in and with support of the global ACT Alliance strategy, which seeks substantial improvements in the lives of people in poverty worldwide. 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 secretariat has significant impact because it works effectively with its members across Europe and beyond.² These members contribute to in-depth policy analysis and, through their in-country programmatic experience, provide an on-the-ground understanding and evidence of the impact of policies. Given the reassertion of the role of the European Council (see later), ACT Alliance EU members commit to engage in support of the network's collective advocacy within their national contexts. Common advocacy plans and effective coordination and information flows are crucial.

Our close collaboration and joint strategic planning with the ACT Alliance secretariat allow us to influence the EU and Member State (MS) positions in global processes leading to greater impact of both the Alliance and the ACT Alliance EU network.

Our two core thematic areas are Development Policy & Practice and Humanitarian Policy & Practice. These core areas are supported by so-called Special Projects which have a specific focus and are of limited duration. They act in support of the overall strategy. Special Projects are funded separately from the core areas by members with a particular interest. The secretariat ensures synergies between our thematic areas³ are captured, including with the Special Projects.

² Network working structures facilitate this work. These include working groups and reference groups which address thematic areas or contribute specialist expertise; member organisations' senior policy and advocacy staff. The network also retains the flexibility to work on special initiatives, if members wish and are able to resource them.

³ Annex 1 tabulates possible synergies and cross-cutting issues.

The EU policy and political context

The EU remains a global force and a significant development and humanitarian actor. Together with its Member States, the EU has the largest aid budget globally,¹ a vital diplomatic network, and it continues to champion human rights and democracy. The Treaty of the European Union enshrines poverty eradication as the primary objective of its development cooperation. As a major trading block and a substantial actor in climate change negotiations and with its commitment to ensuring all its policies are coherent with its development policies, the EU wields enormous influence in development debates and processes beyond just financing. This makes the EU an important target for advocacy for ACT Alliance EU and the global ACT Alliance.

That said, the EU, including its development and humanitarian landscape is changing enormously. The EU and its external policy landscape are dominated by many crises and uncertainties internally and externally. Europe faces uncertainty linked to euroscepticism, nationalism and xenophobia which pre-occupy leaders and set the policy, including the foreign policy, agenda. In some EU MS there is an erosion of human rights and democratic checks and balances, and disrespect for European values. The erosion is in some instances replicated at EU level — e.g. in

questionable agreements with third countries regarding refugees and migrants.

Against this backdrop, the European political discourse is one of protection of the perceived interests of the EU and its citizens. Problems within the EU have knock-on effects on developing countries and ODA. External action policies are becoming instrumentalised and more linked to foreign policy, security, trade, and the anti-immigration agenda. Political discourse in and outside the EU is focused on jobs and growth. The dominant development model is one of inclusive growth — aimed in part at stemming migration — with the private sector an increasingly important actor. We have to work hard to ensure issues such as Sustainable Development Goals (SDG), climate change negotiations, and development and humanitarian financing are high up the agenda and that the role of Civil Society is recognised. Furthermore, Brexit has major implications on the global South: through trade, financial markets and investment, growth, aid and development finance, migration and remittances, and global collaboration². It also impacts on the EU humanitarian and development budgets, and potentially on joined-up approaches between the EU (including MS) donors and DFID.

1 Even with uncertainties related to Brexit. Based on the EU report on development finance 2017 EU total ODA with the UK represents 57% of total ODA or €75.7 billion of €132.4. Without the UK (€15.9 billion), total EU aid would still represent 45.1% of total OECD DAC donors ODA.

2 ODI Briefing: Brexit and Development — How will developing countries be affected? Medez-Parra, Papadavid & te Velde

We witness increased pressure on civil society within several EU MS, which is now also felt also at European level. Some speak of an existential threat to Civil Society. While this pressure has multiple sources from within and outside Europe, an outcome is a questioning of the integrity and efficacy of Civil Society (CS) organisations, the legitimacy of CS's role in advocacy, a tightened interpretation of donors' (notably ECHO) financing rules with significant sums considered ineligible and being reclaimed, an increasingly litigious environment vis-à-vis NGOs, and a European Court of Auditors' investigation, the outcome of which could potentially negatively impact on funding modalities for development and humanitarian NGOs. Networks like CONCORD and VOICE remain important for advocacy on development and humanitarian questions and increasingly for maintaining CS space within the EU. Furthermore, a tighter interpretation of financial regulations by the Commission in the light of Brexit throws into question, not just UK, but also Swiss NGOs' access to EU funding.

However, we note an increasing openness within the Institutions to faith-based humanitarian and development organisations, in recognition of their particular role, e.g. in education and the Ebola crisis. Within this strategic period, we will look into how we can leverage our position as a faith-based network in favour of our advocacy goals.

At an institutional level, we note a reassertion of the role of the European Council over that of the European Commission and the Parliament. This underscores the importance of well-coordinated advocacy between network members at MS level and the Secretariat towards the EU institutions. We must ensure that our network structures, communication flows and how we work together deliver this.

2019 will bring European Parliamentary elections and a new set of European Commissioners with an anticipated considerable shift in the political dynamic. It will also bring new strategic priorities for the EU with high-level decisions to be taken on the 'Future of Europe' and the adoption of a new Europe Strategy 2019-2024. In that context the EC prepared a reflection paper 'Towards a Sustainable Europe by 2030' which contains some good and far-reaching proposals for the implementation of Agenda 2030 in and by the EU and proposes 3 scenarios to the Council to realise that objective.

What we do

Humanitarian Policy & Practice (HPP) and Development Policy & Practice (DPP) are our core thematic areas. Aiming at long-lasting social, environmental and gender justice, which leaves no-one behind, DPP advocates for the coherence of EU development cooperation with Agenda 2030, the Paris Agreement and the European Consensus on Development. HPP focuses on key areas of ACT Alliance's strategy which are not picked up by other humanitarian advocacy actors: localisation & survivor-led responses, the role of faith actors, diversity of the humanitarian ecosystem. Commonalities between DPP and HPP

include: safeguarding Civil Society's crucial role in humanitarian aid and development (including local and faith-based actors), resilience, avoiding instrumentalisation and securitisation of EU development and humanitarian instruments, EU approaches to the humanitarian — development nexus.

HPP and DPP are supported by / intersect with Special Projects (which are currently on Migration and Displacement, Climate Justice, Food Security, and the Middle East) which all contribute to our commitment to holistic, inclusive and sustainable development.

Strategic considerations

European Parliament, Commission, Council

While we do not yet know the future composition of the European Parliament and Commission, new institutions mean a disruption in well-established contacts, especially in the EP.

It will be important to establish and maintain good working relations at lower levels within DG DEVCO and EEAS and with civil servants in the EP and develop relationships with the new Parliament and Commission.

In addition, national elections may change the politics in Member States. Radical opinions (in general but in particular about migration) may become more mainstreamed and allow less

space for evidence-based approaches to policy and programming. The situation of civil society organisations is volatile in some EU countries. This could result in the political role of CSOs being questioned by the new EP, and more generally in the Institutions and MS.

Strong representation towards the EP will be needed. ACT Alliance EU's backing by a strong constituency is a significant asset.

ACT Alliance EU will monitor and advocate in support of CS' political, watchdog and implementing role across our thematic areas.

We witness a reassertion of the role of the European Council vis-à-vis the Commission and

the EP. For our advocacy to be effective, we must influence both MS level and in Brussels.

We will ensure that the network's working structures, communication flows and how we work together are set up for well-coordinated advocacy between members at MS level and the Secretariat towards the European Institutions.

The European Commission is the guardian of the Treaties and the Charter on Fundamental Rights and has the tools to address major deviance regarding Human Rights and the rule of law at MS level. In recent years, all EU institutions made strong commitments in support of Human Rights, democracy and civil society space in external action. New, and very positive, is the fact that the Commission is beginning to effectively implement the Human Rights clauses in trade agreements.

We will maintain a human rights-based approach in our advocacy.

The EU's cooperation measures, programmes and financial support should never legitimise land and water grabs, deprive populations of their livelihoods or be conducive to human rights violations, discrimination and exclusion

We will advocate for the enforcement of the EU's and of international human rights obligations as an integral part of future deals and modalities of cooperation, in particular in the areas of migration, trade and investment.

Bringing members' experience to EU influencers and decision-makers

In future, EU Development NGOs' influence on development policy-making and programming will depend on their capacity to demonstrate their added value and expertise on several strategic priorities of EU 'geographic programmes'. This will require good connections between programming and advocacy work at ACT Alliance EU member level. Indeed, the EU will prioritise channelling ODA through geographic programmes, country by country or region by region, with thematic programmes becoming secondary and focused on the global level and global actors such as the UN.

Through the Grand Bargain and the WHS, donors, including ECHO, have committed to increased humanitarian funding to local responders. However, the European Commission is channelling funding increasingly to very large scale NGOs and the UN. ACT's strong network gives us a comparative advantage in bringing evidence on the effectiveness of local responders

Across our thematic areas, ACT Alliance EU must be effective in bringing members' on the ground programming experience to Brussels decision makers, leveraging our globally active members and ACT's unique structure of local and of faith-based members.

In addition to maintaining specific funding windows for CSOs and NGOs, it will be important to advocate for NGO and CSO funding through geographic programmes and multi-actor partnerships.

Advocacy allies

VOICE, CONCORD remain important platforms for amplifying our advocacy voice.

We note synergies and similarities of approach with several faith-based Brussels-based networks and organisations, including our ecumenical sister organisations. This is particularly (but not exclusively) the case as regards localisation and the role of Faith-Based Organisations (FBOs), but is also reflected, e.g. in our refugee and migration work.

We will continue to work with and through VOICE and CONCORD, as these networks generally support and amplify ACT Alliance EU's policies and positions.

We will continue our cooperation with other advocacy alliances and networks relevant to our advocacy. Particular examples are CEC, CCME, HRDN, Eurodad, CAN-Europe and C4C1 signatories and endorsers.

As part of ACT Alliance we are fully in line with the non-discriminatory policy of the European Union when choosing partners to implement humanitarian aid and development, and in the adherence to the humanitarian principles.

Timeframe

This strategy is informed by the global ACT Alliance strategy, whose timeframe is 2019–2026. The ACT Alliance EU strategy's 2019–2022 timeframe allows our strategy to be in sync with that of the global Alliance while allowing us to respond to a rapidly evolving context and agenda.

1 Conference of European Churches, Churches Commission for Migrants in Europe, Human Rights and Democracy Network, European, Climate Action Network-Europe, Network on Debt and Development Charter for Change

Development policy and practice

Overview

While the European Consensus on Development adopted in 2017 contains a good number of positive elements in line with Agenda 2030, we observe that more than ever before EU and Member States' development cooperation and ODA is becoming a tool of foreign policy used to promote the EU's perceived self-interest. Current debates on future EU external action instruments shows signs that the EU's foreign policy aims will steer its development assistance, with less human and social development action and more flexibility and crisis responsiveness, especially due to so-called migratory pressure. This will mean that aid can be made dependent on third countries' cooperation on 'migration management', as such only serves the EU's political goals. We also see the enhanced focus on security sector reform and anti-terrorism as further evidence of the securitisation of development policy. This impacts on the enjoyment of fundamental rights and freedoms and restricts space for civil society, in Europe as well as in the global south.

Moreover, the dominant development discourse is about unlocking and boosting private investment and exploring the huge opportunities that it can produce for partner countries and European economies.

These approaches cross-cut all current review and policy development processes and their implementation should be closely monitored to make sure that human and planet-centred sustainable development objectives are not side-lined, but stay at the core of future EU development cooperation and aid.

Specific issues

1 The EU's development cooperation instruments and ODA are guided by the objectives and principles of Agenda 2030, the Paris Agreement on Climate Change and the European Consensus on Development

Background

With the Lisbon Treaty, the European Consensus on Development and the Strategic Framework for Human Rights and Democracy, the EU has a good political and policy framework for sustainable development. Together with its Member States, the EU is still the biggest provider of ODA and a strong proponent of global public goods and multilateralism. The EU's Global Strategy contains good elements concerning development, Human Rights and civil society but current trends in favour of strengthening the EU's external action on security, migration and access to raw material and markets, risk-taking precedence over the SDGs and the Paris Agreement.

The EC proposal for the next EU Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF) 2021–2027 includes the creation of a new 100 billion external action instrument that would aim to implement the EU Global Strategy in the “Neighbourhood and the World”. Its main purpose is to simplify and increase the flexibility of EU financing, go beyond development cooperation, and shift towards new priorities such as migration and defence. This new single instrument would, however, not include Humanitarian aid and cooperation with acceding countries.

In spite of the EU's new external action priorities, an increase of the EU budget is highly uncertain

due to the reluctance of certain member states to fill the gap created by Brexit. With a more flexible use of the EU's budget and possibly less European Parliamentary scrutiny, it is uncertain how much of the future budget will serve sustainable development objectives.

Flexibility is a key word for future cooperation instruments and a major concern since 2015 with the diversion of funds from programmable ODA to migration and security-related “emerging challenges and priorities”. The ongoing modernisation of ODA rules might exacerbate this practice. Flexibility without transparent decision making and a reduced role for the European Parliament could also undermine democratic accountability and favour quick-fix visible approaches to long-term problems.

Although human rights and democracy are well represented in EU external policies, their integration into a single external action and foreign policy instrument risks weakening EU action at a time when human rights are under pressure globally. Moreover, realising gender equality needs more human and financial resources and a two-track approach of mainstreaming together with dedicated action.

By integrating the European Fund for Sustainable Development and its External Action Guarantee in the single instrument, the EC intends to subsidise

more private investments and increasingly rely on investment guarantees and blending of loans and grants as modalities of cooperation in future bilateral cooperation.

The legislative process, which involves both the Council and the EP, for the adoption of new development cooperation instruments, represents a great opportunity to ensure that our specific objectives are reflected in future EU development cooperation and that transparency and accountability towards these objectives are strengthened.

Problem statement

EU external action and finance are increasingly dominated by the EU's own interest and by objectives agreed upon with Member States in the EU Global Strategy. The new EU development cooperation modalities based on blending loans and grants and leveraging private finance, and on deals for migration and security management, risk undermining the EU's traditional support for human and social development, gender equality, democratic governance, civil society action and human rights. It is important for ACT Alliance EU to monitor and influence the setting up and subsequent implementation of EU cooperation instruments to make sure that EU's ODA is not diverted for purposes other than a people and planet-centred realisation of Agenda 2030.

Objective 1

EU development cooperation policies, instruments and ODA promote a balanced approach of the three dimensions of sustainable development that fights poverty and inequalities, supports social and environmental justice, leaves no-one behind and promotes gender equality and democratic governance.

Specific objectives

- 1.** EU public resources such as ODA and climate finance support social and environmental justice and sustainability, poverty eradication as well as actions in favour of human rights and democracy, the protection and promotion of CS space and contributing to reducing multi-dimensional inequalities, realising gender equality and leaving no-one behind.
- 2.** Transparent governance mechanisms are established in EU cooperation instruments with developing countries in order to ensure accountability towards Lisbon Treaty principles and objectives, the UN conventions on Human Rights and other EU's international commitments, including development effectiveness principles.
- 3.** Strong standards and criteria are applied to leveraging private finance to make sure that people's rights and livelihoods and the environment are effectively respected; that women's rights and empowerment, local MSMEs and decent work are effectively promoted; and the public sector and public goods are not undermined.
- 4.** A clear commitment to promoting civil society space and enabling environment and to working with and through civil society,

including faith-based organisations, is established in all external action instruments and programmes through adequate modalities for supporting CS participation and initiatives.

Important strategic considerations

Some MS' strong positioning on migration, attacks on fundamental freedoms and EU's security and economic interests reduce the EU's legitimacy as a fair partner and as an international reference on human rights or civil society. In certain

cases, defending and promoting EU (or national) interests is incompatible with dialogue and cooperation on human rights and democracy. Furthermore, the win-win cooperation promoted by the Global Strategy and the emphasis on private sector engagement and the leveraging of private finance in current EU and international debates put 'traditional' human and social development approaches into jeopardy. In this context, it is more important than ever to advocate for strong support to civil society action as an important means to defend people's rights and livelihoods and to fight for equality and justice.

2 A renewed EU-Africa partnership based on respect and solidarity that works for people and the planet

Background

The Cotonou Partnership Agreement (CPA) between the European Union and the African, Caribbean and Pacific countries (the ACP) will expire in 2020. The CPA is the broadest EU partnership in terms of size (country and content-wise) and funding. It frames the relationship between the 28 EU Member States and the 79 members of the ACP group, focusing on three areas of cooperation: the political dimension, trade and investments and development cooperation. This agreement is matched by the largest EU development funding envelope, the European Development Fund (EDF with 30.5 billion euro for the period 2014-2020).

Both the EU and the ACP group decided to negotiate a new legally binding ACP-EU agreement which would also accommodate three separate regional partnerships between the EU and the A, C and P. Therefore, regional bodies such as the African Union will play an important role in the

negotiations. A common EU-ACP foundation will include the principles, essential elements, general objectives and provisions on the political dialogue while the three regional partnerships will focus on more detailed cooperation priorities and strategies.

The renewal of the EDF will be discussed in parallel with the negotiations on the future EU-ACP agreement as part of the negotiations on the next multi-annual financial framework (MFF) for the EU. It has not yet been decided whether the EDF will be kept in its current form as an independent, all ACP, instrument or whether it will be integrated into the EU annual external action budget and split into three separate regional funding envelopes.

Negotiations on the future EU-Africa regional partnership will deepen issues already identified at the EU-AU Summit in Abidjan in 2017: economic development, growth and jobs, migration, security, radicalisation and anti-terrorism. Migration is one of the contentious issues on which the AU and the EU have diverging interests. In 2016, in Valetta,

the EU succeeded in forging a joint action plan on migration with a number of African states. At the Abidjan Summit, the focus on migration was detrimental to other important issues like the governance of natural resources, the role of civil society, youth needs and expectations or sexual and reproductive rights.

Problem statement

The 'EU-Africa Alliance for growth and jobs' announced in September 2018, and pressure

from some Member States to stem migration from Africa, dominate the EU's vision of a new model of win-win cooperation between the EU and Africa that goes beyond development aid. It will be important for ACT Alliance EU to advocate for preserving the existing positive elements of the Cotonou agreement in the new EU-ACP agreement, and for putting Agenda 2030 and the Paris Agreement at its core including by improving accountability, democratic ownership and CS participation in all aspects of EU-Africa relations.

Objective 2

The future EU-ACP agreement and EU-Africa partnership provide a human rights and principle based political and operational framework for the realisation of Agenda 2030 and the Paris Agreement on Climate Change.

Specific objectives

1. Integrating strong and binding provisions on human rights, inclusiveness, social protection, human development, environment protection, gender equality and civil society participation across all sectors of cooperation in the future EU-ACP/Africa agreement, and ensuring that accountability mechanisms are in place and that these provisions are respected at the implementation stage.
2. Promoting and subsequently monitoring the space and role for Civil Society within the EU-Africa partnership by ensuring that the mechanisms and structures allowing civil society participation are in place and are functioning at all levels: from political and policy dialogue to the programming, monitoring, evaluation and implementation of cooperation.
3. Making sure that all modalities of cooperation and investment are implemented in line with Human Rights conventions, Human Rights and Business guiding principles and other international and European standards and conventions applying to land, taxes, trade and investments, labour, environment and climate change.
4. Through the establishment and maintenance of communication tools, ensuring the information and contribution of African (and ACP) civil society organisations during and beyond the negotiation on a new EU-Africa partnership. This would include regular communication and exchanges with Africa departments in member organisations, the ACT Alliance regional office in Nairobi and other regional members and forums of ACT Alliance.

Important strategic considerations

The EU sees the future EU–ACP agreement as a way to go beyond aid and establish a model of cooperation between equals. There is a risk however that the ‘partnership of equals’ rhetoric is used to promote the EU’s self-interests in the form of win-win agreements that don’t take the real impact on people and environment into account. Besides large-scale investments, the EIP and other financial tools do allow for supporting micro, small and medium-sized enterprises and of capacity building that could have high potential if given higher priority and well implemented.

A prominent role for the AU in the negotiations will have a positive impact, as it has more legitimacy and political weight than the ACP group. Negotiations will thus take place on a more equal footing. However, based on CSO experience from the Africa–EU joint strategy (JAES) a prominent AU role could also represent a hindrance when addressing civil society space and political role. It will be important to join forces with African civil society in the fight for civil society space and role in the future agreement.

On both sides there is a risk of erosion of values, principles and enforcement of human rights obligations in the pursuit of other interests. There is a risk that principles and values are limited to only the common EU–ACP foundation and not the regional agreements, informing political dialogue, but not being reflected in practice.

Humanitarian policy and practice

Overview

While global needs for humanitarian assistance and protection are continually growing, many remain unanswered. For this reason and against the backdrop of an ongoing transformation of the international landscape, its power structures, actors and values, there is a robust ongoing debate on humanitarian policy and practice. With its important political role, and its financial clout and contributions, the EU is an important setting for humanitarian policy discussions.

Central to ACT Alliance EU is the need for the humanitarian and development sectors to align more effectively around collective outcomes and complementary action while maintaining a principled humanitarian approach, moving towards multi-year planning and funding frameworks, and supporting local and national responders' crisis response. ACT Alliance EU members actively participated at the World Humanitarian Summit (WHS) and the subsequent process on humanitarian reforms. We were encouraged by a seemingly growing consensus between member states, the UN, the Red Cross family and INGOs on these key issues. However, current political trends endanger this consensus.

In recognition, the 2018 ACT Alliance EU General Assembly decided to make humanitarian advocacy a new core thematic area for the network. The GA also decided that our humanitarian advocacy will (at least initially) focus on key areas

of the global ACT Alliance strategy which are not strongly picked up by other humanitarian advocacy actors, namely:

- ▶ Localisation, including Survivor-and-Community-Led-Crisis-Response
- ▶ The role of faith actors
- ▶ Diversity of the humanitarian eco-system

Parallel and linked to this focus, the network can have a role in putting and keeping select emerging and ongoing humanitarian crises on the Brussels agenda, particularly on issues related to the humanitarian principles and imperative and the plight of crisis-affected people to whom the EU must access to effective humanitarian assistance and protection. Where the network decides that such advocacy is appropriate the work will be done with the support of the global ACT Alliance secretariat, and in accordance with the ACT Alliance Humanitarian Policy. It will require strong input and engagement of ACT Alliance EU members, and close coordination of information and messaging with ACT Alliance secretariat and members and partners on the ground.

Humanitarian crises affect women, men, boys and girls differently. Some may be denied their rights because of their gender, not have their opinions taken into account because of societal structures or cultures, be exposed to sexual violence and abuse, or be at risk of being recruited into armed groups. ACT Alliance EU commits to promoting and integrating gender perspectives, including intersectionality, in its humanitarian advocacy, ensuring that our work takes into account the roles of women and men, and their access to, and influence in decision-making regarding humanitarian assistance and protection. This will be reflected throughout our humanitarian advocacy.

IHL, protection and access issues are key to the network. Here our views are well-reflected in the work of NGO VOICE, and so do not form part of this strategy. On these topics ACT Alliance EU members do however engage individually and collectively with NGO VOICE and other Brussels interlocutors. To ensure coherence, members will need to coordinate their work with VOICE and its working groups as well as with other networks, whether on topics supported by this strategy or not. Doing so will help leverage the strength of our network and of alliances developed with other NGO actors. At a minimum, members working directly with NGO VOICE must keep other ACT Alliance EU members and the Humanitarian Policy Officer informed.

ACT Alliance EU's humanitarian advocacy will be launched in 2019. At the outset work will be needed to develop our humanitarian working structure and ways of working, identifying and establishing interlocutors and allies within civil society and the EU Institution and NGO; and deepening our political and policy understanding.

Specific issues

1 Strengthening support from key European stakeholders to ensure affected communities and civil society are central in delivering humanitarian assistance and protection

Background and problem statement

The need for developing a more effective aid system that places affected communities, local and national civil society and agencies at the centre of humanitarian assistance and protection, has been repeatedly reaffirmed by the humanitarian system and its stakeholders. Several earlier policy documents of the humanitarian sector acknowledged these actors' importance. But the World Humanitarian Summit (WHS), the Grand Bargain (GB) and other recent documents like the Global Compact on Refugees explicitly stress the need for acknowledging the significant role of local and national actors in humanitarian responses and the gains in effectiveness they bring, of communities as first-responders, and the added value of people-centred approaches.

Key commitments under the Grand Bargain's localisation work stream include to:

- ▶ Understand better and work to remove or reduce barriers that prevent organisations and donors from partnering with local and national responders
- ▶ Increase and support multi-year investment in the institutional capacities of local and national responders.
- ▶ Achieve by 2020 a global, aggregated target of at least 25 per cent of humanitarian

funding to local and national responders as directly as possible.

- ▶ Make greater use of funding tools which increase and improve assistance delivered by local and national responders, such as pooled funds.

ACT Alliance and its members are prominent voices for changing the humanitarian system towards a better global balance of actors. ACT Alliance now channels its own Rapid Response Funding exclusively to national and local actors. ACT Alliance members are together developing, testing and learning from a response approach which enables both international and local humanitarian actors to support survivor and community-led crisis responses (SCLR) in rapid onset and in ongoing crises. Evidence confirms the relevance and added value of a people-centred approach in driving humanitarian responses. Evidence also documents the substantial potential of community-led crisis response for the humanitarian–development–peace nexus (promoted at the WHS and in the GB).

However, two years beyond the WHS, we witness only a few concrete policy changes which translate commitments into practice. Positively, some EU Member States have attached conditions supporting localisation when awarding humanitarian grants. Others provide guidance on

their expectations of grantees. ECHO and DFID are funding flagship grants to implement WHS localisation commitments. Nevertheless, local and national humanitarian actors and communities still receive very little direct financing, and the international coordination systems remain dominated by large international organisations from the global north. Thus, there are clear political, structural and procedural challenges to the localisation agenda.

At EU level, resistance to a stronger role for national and local actors is inter alia anchored in ECHO's funding modalities (the EU Humanitarian Aid Regulation does not allow direct funding to national and local non-government actors but

must go to Europe-based¹ FPA partners) and in administrative structures of the EU and its MS. Furthermore, while there are some differences in perception between these donors' HQ and field staff, resistance to localisation is linked to a prevailing perception by donors, NGOs and others, of a lack of effectiveness of local and national actors and a weakness in adherence to principled response.² Furthermore, the localisation agenda is viewed through the lens of "effectiveness" rather than being guided by an approach that builds local agency, ownership and capacity. The latter approach is inherent to ACT Alliance's conception of partnership and includes the aspect of empowerment, which is also part of the GB.³

Objective 1

Strengthen acceptance by and support from key European stakeholders of affected communities, local and national civil society and agencies to be at the centre of delivering humanitarian assistance and protection needs.

Specific objectives

1. Relevant EU level stakeholders (ECHO, MEPs, EU MS including COHAFA Working Group delegates) have a practical understanding of the dignifying, effective and principled contribution of communities and local and national civil society organisations to humanitarian assistance and protection. This understanding is reflected in their policy decisions and diplomatic engagements.
2. ECHO and MS develop methods (and adapt relevant regulations) to increase opportunities, ownership and responsibility of communities and local/national organisations to provide humanitarian assistance and protection. This objective will focus on financial flows, capacity development and the SCLR approach, and it will take into account the needs of women and men. Examples could be:
 - ▶ ECHO and key MS increase investment in pooled funds that are directly accessible

1 Norwegian NGOs are eligible for ECHO Framework Partnership Agreements.

2 We believe there is little evidence to support this perception, and that the picture is context-dependent.

3 We note that this localisation discussion is only one aspect of an increased critique on the effectiveness and efficiency of the established, northern, humanitarian ecosystem, that has emerged in the recent years in academic and policy comments.

to national and local organisations and communities — women and men — and improve modalities of existing ones to make access easier to such actors.

- ▶ ECHO and key Member States issue guidance on “localisation in practice” to FPA/bilateral partners and to ECHO HQ/field staff.
- ▶ In their awarding of humanitarian grants, ECHO and EU Member States attach conditions regarding support for localisation and provide guidance on what they expect from grantees in this respect.

Important strategic considerations

While donors have committed to increased funding to local responders, important reports⁴ show a stalling of results in this field. ACT Alliance EU humanitarian advocacy can play an important role through strategic dialogue with ECHO and the EU Institutions, engaging ECHO/EU on the development of the SCLR approaches, and to a

commitment to fund the approach. This advocacy would also support the Grand Bargain’s underperforming participation and nexus workstreams.

In addition, the relevant institutions of the European Union and MS participate appropriately through diplomacy and resource provision in emerging, ongoing and protracted humanitarian crises to prevent and reduce humanitarian suffering, preserve the dignity of affected populations and ensure principled humanitarian assistance and protection.

ACT’s strong network of local members gives us a comparative advantage: Our combination of well-known international NGOs working in close and trusted partnership with local and national actors with a strong reach into remote communities can be an attractive proposition to donors looking to deliver on the Grand Bargain and WHS localisation agenda.

Within this topic, we recognise the complexities involved in modifying the existing EU Humanitarian Aid Regulations.

2 Strengthening the role of faith-based organisations

Background and problem statement

In many areas experiencing crises and conflict, faith is central and a big part of people’s lives. Worldwide, more than eight in ten people identify with a religious group. The possibility to live and realise one’s own spirituality is a central aspect of human dignity.

In many parts of the world, social authority and organisation are strongly shaped by faith and religion. Hence communities often rely on faith and faith institutions as part of their coping mechanisms, enhancing communication, sharing and compassion, offering courage, comfort and hope. When states become weak, people increasingly identify with and rely upon traditional

⁴ e.g. ALNAP State of the Humanitarian Sector 2019.

community structures and religious identities for meaning and security.⁵

While providing important elements of humanitarian assistance and protection themselves, FBOs often play a role crucial to other humanitarian actors, in negotiating access, providing insights into local customs and structures, improving effectiveness and dignity, in helping ensure both women and men access assistance and protection and in trauma counselling.

Faith-based organisations are among the most prominent NGOs active in development, peace work and humanitarian aid.⁶ In fact, faith-based organisations provide a unique structure and possibility to advance the discussions around the humanitarian–development–peace nexus. We see a growing interest within the humanitarian and

development community to better understand and work with FBOs, with, e.g. the World Bank and several EU MS developing programmes and expertise. That said, FBOs and local faith actors are still not fully recognised as stakeholders with a unique potential in humanitarian relief. A so-called Charter for Faith-Based Organisations, discussed at the WHS, did not gain traction, nor did the interreligious dialogue and cooperation between the different faith groups on their particular added-value. In the “Agenda for Humanity” and other documents and resolutions, the major part of the international humanitarian system, including ECHO and some MS understand the role of faith in crisis and conflict to be predominantly in reconciliation and peace efforts. While FBOs and churches do have such a role here, this disregards the other important contributions and potential of FBOs.

Objective 2

Relevant faith perspectives, dimensions and capacities are acknowledged and included in humanitarian response programmes/projects when financed by ECHO and are reflected in the humanitarian policy dialogue at the level of the European Union.

Specific objectives

- ▶ Relevant stakeholders (EU institutions, MEPs, key MS and humanitarian NGOs) have a practical understanding of the various contributions faith and FBOs (can) make in humanitarian assistance and response. This is reflected in their relevant programme and policy decisions.

- ▶ Programming/policy guidance on faith literacy and the role of faith in humanitarian assistance and protection are integrated into ECHO and key MS documents.

Important strategic considerations

ACT’s network of not only local but faith-based members gives us a comparative advantage in mobilising resources in humanitarian response and

⁵ These can come with gendered consequences concerning access to and control over resources, information and decision-making — which must be taken into account in our work.

⁶ There is no fixed EU definition of an FBO, and in practice there are many different forms of FBO active in providing aid.

provides crucial links to local faith communities in humanitarian contexts. Faith leaders and actors in the ACT network also play important transformational roles in shaping attitudes and behaviour.

As part of ACT Alliance we are fully in line with the non-discriminatory policy of the European Union, including when choosing partners to implement humanitarian aid and development, and in the adherence to the humanitarian principles.

An important window of opportunity is provided by FBOs' potential role in the planning and delivery of assistance to refugees and host communities and in shaping public opinion, galvanising action, generating resources, and providing expertise for these interventions. The Global Compacts on Refugees and Migrants (GCR/M) could play an important role in building

the political will to address the needs of refugees and migrants and in improving current response mechanisms which can no longer support those needs.

The discussion around the so-called triple nexus presents an additional window of opportunity: the connection between and complementarity of humanitarian, development and peace work. ACT Alliance members, especially those from crisis-affected countries, have important insights and practical experience on how to link these three dimensions in an appropriate, conflict-sensitive and community-centred manner. (The ACT perspective represents an important, and specific added value to the nexus discussion. For negotiating the financial and funding issues around the topic, NGO VOICE is best placed to lead on the European level).

3 Maintaining a diverse humanitarian ecosystem

Background and problem statement

ECHO manages significant funds for humanitarian interventions but is under pressure to control its administrative and overhead costs. In the interest of efficiency, ECHO is showing a trend towards concentrating the lion's share of its funding in the form of large contracts to a small number INGOs and the UN.⁷ This trend could run counter to the localisation agenda to which ECHO signed up in the Grand Bargain; it does not harmonise with ACT Alliance's vision of a decentralised multi-stakeholder humanitarian system which can take advantage of the different talents, attributes and greater contextualized understanding available in each individual setting; and it runs counter to

a more locally-driven, less one-size-fits-all, more demand-less supply-led humanitarian model.

At risk could be the needs of rights holders, including the voices that risk being unheard such as women, girls and members of minority and ethnic groups.

The trend towards concentration and large contracts could, in the longer term, put at risk ACT Alliance EU members' access to ECHO funding (as recipients of relatively small grants), and thus their partners' access to ECHO funds.

The trend will be hard to stop, but we believe we must remain engaged in safeguarding funding

⁷ The November 2018 ECHO partners conference announced plans to implement strategic partnerships and programme approaches — i.e. concentration — with a few big NGOs.

for local actors and smaller INGOs. NGO VOICE includes a number of larger INGOs, not all of whom prioritise the Grand Bargain commitment related to localisation. It is important for ACT Alliance to be a uniting voice showing the need for a diverse humanitarian ecosystem.

A diverse humanitarian ecosystem allows for diversity regarding expertise, perspective and

experiences of INGOs, partners and rights holders, thereby contributing to a multi-faceted humanitarian response. ACT Alliance EU wishes to see an ECHO which is committed to diversity, with a continued understanding of the benefits of working with and taking advantage of the unique capabilities of a wide range of different actors.

Objective 3

ECHO adheres to its commitment to a diverse humanitarian ecosystem, continuing to fund and maintain a lively and open dialogue with a variety of different FPA partners, and preserving diversity in possible new institutional partnership regulations.

Specific objectives

1. ECHO, MEPs and key Member States show a practical understanding of the benefits of a diverse humanitarian ecosystem. They apply these benefits in their funding decisions and strategic dialogue.
2. ECHO and key Member States shape funding schemes that allow for diversity in terms of operations, content, size and geographical positioning.
3. The trend to concentrate funding and institutional dialogue on a few larger UN and INGO actors is halted.

One area on which all VOICE members can unite is the desirability of reversing ECHO's trend to decrease funding to NGOs in favour of the UN system.

A recent Court of Auditors report raised some concerns about the degree of insight ECHO has into the correct use of funding channelled from one INGO family member to another or channelled to local partners. We will advocate to European decision-makers to try to avoid ECHO taking strong anti-diversity actions in response.

Distinct from the ACT Alliance EU advocacy agenda: ACT Alliance EU/the global ACT Alliance should consider profiling themselves towards ECHO as a family or consortium in order to be eligible for future 'concentrated' funding.

Important strategic considerations

We can use our strong representation in VOICE to persuade VOICE to support these advocacy efforts, especially in alignment with similarly inclined actors like Caritas and EU-Cord. Not all VOICE members will agree with our position; we can do our best to articulate our side of the argument.

SPECIAL PROJECT

Climate justice

Overview

The European Union is a significant player in the fight against climate change. With the departure of the United States as an engaged actor, the EU can have a major role in providing leadership at the global level and in bridging the gap between developed and developing countries in order to raise ambition in terms of mitigation, adaptation and provision of resources to enable climate action. ACT Alliance EU aims to influence the EU towards bolder and more ambitious policies in support of poor and vulnerable communities which are hit hardest by climate change. It does so from a rights-based and gender equality perspective.

Climate finance is needed to enable climate action in developing countries, including mitigation, adaptation and loss and damage. Support for mitigation in developing countries is an investment from which all the earth's inhabitants benefit since all nations must transition towards low carbon development. Support for adaptation and loss and damage is the responsibility of polluters, and a moral obligation, as vulnerable and poverty-affected people, who frequently are the least responsible for climate change, already suffer from its effects. People living in poverty who lack the resources and capacities for adaptation or to cope with loss and damage may face displacement, famine and conflicts. Currently, the developed world, including the EU, is failing to deliver on commitments to mobilise climate finance. And financial support tends to be focused on mitigation projects in emerging economies, leaving poor and vulnerable countries behind.

Placing 1.5°C pathways in a context of justice, gender equity, human rights and the SDGs requires us to consider many linkages. Land-use changes, elimination of

poverty, decent work, and food security are elements of sustainable development which can benefit from decarbonisation, but which could also come under threat from unwisely chosen mitigation strategies. There are numerous desirable shared benefits between climate action and sustainable development, but these benefits are neither automatic nor assured. Recognising this, ACT Alliance EU climate justice advocacy will proactively engage with other elements of the ACT Alliance EU strategy.¹

While acknowledging that the EU is still a major greenhouse gas emitter and must significantly increase its mitigation ambition and action in order to comply with the 1.5°C target, ACT Alliance EU climate strategy focuses on two specific issues: (1) Adaptation and Loss & Damage, and (2) Climate Finance. Both issues relate directly to ACT Alliance members' programme activities members in developing countries, thus increasing synergy and cooperation with the global ACT Alliance while simultaneously supporting our evidence base. Furthermore, these are issues where ACT Alliance EU can truly add value: while many EU-based NGOs² work on mitigation, few have expertise in adaptation, loss and damage, and climate finance with a focus on EU policies and processes affecting developing countries.

Specific issues

1 Increased support for Adaptation and Loss & Damage

Background

The frequency and intensity of climate- and weather-related disasters have increased, and with it people's vulnerability to extreme weather events. Since the 1980s extreme-weather events have tripled. The majority of such events has occurred in tropical and coastal regions, particularly in South and South-East Asia, North and Central America, the Caribbean and Africa. Climate change now poses the greatest threat to the fulfilment of the SDGs, alongside violent conflict.

There are three facets to supporting people living in poverty: Resilience, Relief and Rehabilitation (3R). This triptych, which requires an increase in coordination between long term development, climate adaptation, climate loss & damage, disaster risk reduction, and humanitarian action, is so far not being sufficiently supported by the international community, by national governments and more importantly by the countries responsible for climate change.

1 See Annex 1, which tabulates possible synergies and cross-cutting issues across the strategy's thematic areas.

2 Including CAN Europe, of which many ACT Alliance EU members are part.

Problem statement

At COP19 (November 2013) in Warsaw, Poland, the COP established the Warsaw International Mechanism (WIM) for Loss and Damage associated with Climate Change Impacts (Loss and Damage Mechanism), to address loss and damage associated with the impacts of climate change, including both extreme and slow onset events, in developing countries which are particularly vulnerable to the adverse effects of climate change.

Since the creation of the WIM and the adoption of its Executive Committee's (ExCom) work plan in 2015, too little has been achieved concerning the WIM's third function: "Enhancing action and support, including finance, technology and capacity-building". The EU has so far not engaged significantly in this area, neither in the WIM nor in other UN fora related to Loss and Damage. The EU should further the adoption and creation of new ways of supporting, financially and by other means, people facing climate-induced loss and damage. It must support an exhaustive 3R approach to climate-related disasters.

Objective 1

The EU changes its approach to loss and damage, adaptation, DRR and humanitarian work for a streamlined 3R methodology, promotes it actively in UN fora and allocates new and additional funds to provide support to people facing climate-induced loss and damage.

Important strategic considerations

ACT Alliance EU will target EU related bodies which have a role to play in EU engagement, and commitments, related to 3R, including loss and damage. Positions and strategies will be developed in cooperation with the ACT Alliance resilience team, HPPG, and the ACT migration CoP, to ensure that activities are coordinated globally.

The EU targets will include the European Commission, Parliament, and Council, and the EU's

WIM ExCom member. Activities will include lobby meetings and policy input to the WIM, where the EU plays a significant role as one of the twenty ExCom members. In addition, the WIM hosts the working group "Task Force on Displacement" which interlinks with the Platform on Disaster Displacement and also feeds into the Global Compact on Migration which recognises climate change as a cause of migration. This is important because climate finance is needed to address both economic and non-economic climate displacement related loss and damage.

2 Increased financial support for climate resilience

Background

The EU, with the other developed countries, has committed to mobilising USD 100 billion annually by 2020 to support poor and vulnerable countries in their efforts to deal with climate change. According to the Paris Agreement, this support should be balanced between mitigation and adaptation.

EU climate finance to developing countries is both delivered by EU member states directly as well as by various EU institutions. Roughly three-quarters of EU climate finance comes from the member states' national budgets and finance institutions. The rest is channelled via the various programmes of the EU budget, the external European Development Fund and the European Investment Bank.

Problem statement

The EU (including its member states) is the largest provider of climate finance. However, EU compliance with existing principles and rules for climate finance can be questioned. This includes the principle of “new and additional” financial support, the balance between support for adaptation and mitigation, and a commitment to address the needs of developing countries. Indeed, the promise of support to most vulnerable countries is being replaced by market-oriented initiatives in middle-income countries. At the same time, the lack of “new and additional” finances and the redirection of existing development funds to climate-related issues may undermine existing development programming, with funds potentially being diverted from, inter alia, instruments related to democracy, education, healthcare and poverty eradication, and redirected in support of climate objectives.

Objective 2

The EU and its member states increase the quantity and quality of financial support to poor and vulnerable countries; and climate finance reported by EU institutions and EU member states is in line with the principles and targets agreed within the UNFCCC.

Important strategic considerations

Our advocacy work will focus on processes and policies relating to the EU commitments and engagement relating to climate finance. Advocacy targets will, therefore, include ECOFIN processes, and the European Commission and member states.

Positions and strategies will be developed, and monitored, in cooperation with the ACT Alliance finance team, and where relevant other ACT Alliance

and ACT Alliance EU working groups. Cooperation with CEC, Eurodad and CAN-Europe is important for enabling national advocacy, and for increasing the pressure on Brussels based institutions.

The debate about climate finance has an overlap with the general debate about development aid, and coordination with other ACT Alliance EU advocacy themes, as well as other NGOs (e.g. Concord), will also be important.

SPECIAL PROJECT

Migration and displacement

Overview

The topics of migration and asylum have been high on the European Union's and its Member States' agenda since 2015, affecting both the internal reforms of the Common European Asylum System and the EU's external action focus and spending in third countries. Since the La Valletta Summit, migration has become a central topic of EU foreign policy, and as such a political priority that the EU's external action budget is tasked to tackle. The best example for such interventions is the EU Emergency Trust Funds for Africa, working on the so-called root causes of migration with one of the aims being the prevention of movement.

The migration-development nexus is a prominent subject of discussion related to EU development assistance, due to the highly political and somewhat contentious approach of Member States to migration toward the EU. The 2021-2027 Multiannual Financial Framework's (MFF) proposed external action instrument and the EU's relationship with African countries (EU-ACP negotiations) are largely affected by the EU's understanding of this nexus; Member States' fear of migration can dominate financing for development and the EU's cooperation with source and transit countries in the Middle East and on the African continent.

The relationship between humanitarian assistance for conflict-induced displacement and the EU's perceived self-interest to keep asylum seekers in so-called safe third countries has also been a topic of heated debate. This is in large part due to the EU-Turkey Statement and proposals to replicate it in other neighbourhood countries, for example as part of the external dimensions of the Common European Asylum

System (CEAS), and the implementation of new strategies for large displacement situations which re-examine the approach of humanitarian aid.

Since the failure of the Dublin system in 2015, the CEAS and related files have been under constant reform, but the main problem of responsibility sharing and solidarity among the Member States is still unresolved. All files of the CEAS are treated as one reform package. This is resulting in deadlock, while numerous files are open and not enough attention is paid to the proper implementation of the currently valid binding framework. In the situation of no solution for internal solidarity, outsourcing has occurred multiple times in the form of ideas for external processing centres, disembarkation in third countries, strengthened returns and weakened safeguards for asylum seekers, coupled with much bigger roles in implementation for the EU Border and Coast Guard Agency (new Frontex) and the European Asylum Support Office (EASO).

In December 2018 the Global Compact for safe, orderly and regular migration (GCM) and the Global Compact on Refugees (GCR) were adopted, and their implementation is on the EU's agenda. Whereas the GCR seems to cause fewer tensions for the EU, the GCM has been a huge problem during the negotiations and since, among others because numerous EU member states have withdrawn. It is important for the EU to align its asylum and migration acquis with the two compacts and to be actively involved in their implementation and support partner countries affected by large displaced populations. Moreover, international humanitarian and development actors will play a major role, among others using EU funding, in the planning and implementation of the Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework (CRRF) in host countries with large displaced populations. There are also expectations for EU external action to support the GCM objectives despite controversy inside the EU.

Specific issues

1 Aid and migration — EU aid should not be driven by migration and security policy objectives

Background

Since 2015 migration and asylum have been prominent on the EU's agenda and more funding has become available for programming. Migration is seen as a thematic foreign policy area, and one

on which EU external action should be spending. The La Valletta Summit and their EU Emergency Trust Funds are a result. There are numerous good programmes funded through this modality. However, the narrative and a big portion of the programmes have the objective of 'better

migration management', 'keeping people out' or making more efficient return agreements with countries of origin or transit. These objectives cannot and should not determine EU–third country relations, development cooperation or EU external action. Migration is important and will remain so in an interconnected yet largely unequal world, but ACT Alliance EU must promote and protect development assistance based on the Aid Effectiveness Principles and the Sustainable Development Goals, and, as regards refugee and migration: objectives to facilitate safe, orderly and regular migration and functioning asylum systems.

Problem statement

Due to the highly politicised debate around migration and the use of EU external action funding to 'stem irregular migration', in 2019 advocacy work will focus on already existing EU external action funding used for migration management and its review before the next budget. Furthermore, advocacy around migration in the next MFF and the next framework position between the EU and the ACP countries is an important priority.

Objective 1

The focus of EU aid must focus on poverty eradication and sustainable development where migration has a role to play but cannot be the main policy area motivating spending.

Specific objectives

1. In the next MFF the EU's approach to migration and asylum will be rights- and evidence-based so that development programming and allocations for the humanitarian–development nexus will serve the long-term benefit of third countries and persons who benefit from the EU's external action, linked to human rights conventions and member organizations' relevant work on the ground.
2. The approach to migration and asylum in EU–ACP shall be rights-based, so ACP countries' asylum and protection systems develop, and all parties of the agreement benefit from the development benefits of migration instead of focusing on returns and reintegration.
3. Mid-term reviews and NGOs' evaluation of ongoing programmes are considered in

decision making regarding the next MFF so that sustainable development is a priority, not EU foreign and security policy interests.

4. Change in the objectives and targets of EU programmes, so that they do not aim at lowering numbers of arrival but has the aim of contributing to sustainable development in third countries.
5. In EU external action related to migration and asylum, attention is paid to strengthening asylum systems in third countries to ensure protection for persons in need.

Important strategic considerations

EU Member States have increasingly been debating migration and asylum since 2015, and the unfortunate focus on lowering numbers, keeping people out of Europe and making it difficult for

them to arrive has been the aim accompanying the largely negative discussion. There is concern that radical opinions about migration will be ever more mainstreamed with less space left for human rights, fact and evidence-based approaches to policy and programming. The situation of civil society organisations working on migration is

volatile in some EU countries. ACT Alliance EU must be more effective in bringing members' on the ground programming experiences and learning as convincing evidence for decision-makers in Brussels, leveraging our unique structure and globally active members.

2 Implementation of the two global compacts

Background

In December 2018 the two global compacts for migration and on refugees (GCM/GCR) were endorsed and adopted, with their implementation plans and respective projects to be the task of 2019. The EU and its member states must be prominent actors in the implementation, not only as donors and facilitators but also as host countries for persons in need of international protection, a block that sets an example for sustainable integration of third-country nationals, a champion of human rights for all persons under its jurisdiction and a supporter of safe and regular migration and the right to seek and enjoy asylum.

Problem statement

The political debate around migration and the fragmentation of Member States' approaches to migration and asylum do not distinguish properly between external action and internal political struggle. It is difficult to have an EU-level coordinated approach vis-à-vis the two compacts, especially the GCM, and to keep them as reference points for development or humanitarian projects financed by EU external action and reinforced in EU-third country cooperation which has a migration window.

Objective 2

The European Union has a respectable and positive role for the EU in the implementation of the GCM, GCR and CRRF that among others supports ACT Alliance EU members' and others' roles in the implementation of programmes based on the compacts. By bringing positive examples of projects linked to the compacts into EU-level advocacy, ACT Alliance EU will contribute to reiterating with evidence the need for implementation and the positive objectives and approaches of these documents.

Specific objectives

1. EU as a principled actor takes an appropriate (according to population, GDP and available

facilities) number of UNHCR identified vulnerable refugees each year for resettlement

2. EU opens safe and regular channels for migration.
3. EU participates in the implementation of the compacts actively and reforms its legislation in accordance with their content.
4. EU remains a donor of international humanitarian and development assistance focusing on the rights of persons and sustainability of the projects related to the compacts and the CRRE.
5. EU external action promotes the objectives and spirit of both compacts and their successful implementation.

Important strategic considerations

The two compacts are often mentioned together, but their effect on the EU is very different. The

GCR mobilises donors to help countries affected by large population displacement, introducing integrated service provision via the CRRE, and, hopefully, raising the number of resettlement places. The GCM, on the other hand, would affect Member States' policies on migration and migrants in their countries. This has met with significant resistance. With Member States withdrawing from the migration compact, it will be tough for the EU to act as a unit. A 'coalition of the willing' type approach carries the risk of lower involvement and ownership by members states, and should not mean EU external action doesn't focus on both compacts as internationally widely acknowledged and accepted documents related to asylum and migration. Advocacy work should focus on the positive effect and benefit of global cooperation on migration instead of reinforcing the voices of far-right politicians and parties.

3 Reform of the Common European Asylum System and related files

Background

Numerous files of the Common European Asylum System and other files related to the issues have been under reform for some time, and recent debate has been around whether to adopt them as package-deal, all at the same time, or to separate them. The European Parliament has its negotiating positions ready on most files, but the Council has been unable to find compromises on the Dublin Regulation and on the ramifications, it would have on other files of the CEAS. There are also new files open for reform but not adopted yet. Because of the reinforced external dimension of the CEAS, EBCGA (European Coast and Border

Guard Agency, the former Frontex) and EASO (European Asylum Support Office), third country relations will be affected by the EU's agenda on returns and reintegration and their aim to keep people out. Without regular pathways for migrants and asylum seekers, recipients of EU aid will suffer conditionality and consequences of 'Fortress Europe'. Decision makers must be aware of the financial, political, economic and diplomatic risks of putting returns so high on the agenda when remittances contribute to development more than ODA does. Work on these issues aims at supporting the objectives of specific issues one and two, exclusively focusing on the external dimensions of the files.

Problem statement

The reform of the CEAS and related files will continue in 2019, and as the Dublin Regulation (internal allocation and responsibility sharing) has been problematic, alternative plans are proposed. There is no CEAS without a proper sharing of responsibility and solidarity among EU

Member States, and there cannot be any lowering of safeguards and standards due to the lack of political will to solve that. External dimensions of the CEAS reform will become more prominent due to the agency role of the border guard ECBGA and the EASO becoming an agency, the focus on returns and the plans for external processing.

Objective 3

There should be EU asylum and migration acquis which respects the values and principles upon which the EU is founded, while upholding the rights of its subjects, and of all persons, including persons in need of international protection. Difficult political circumstances cannot mean the outsourcing of the solutions to unsafe third countries.

Specific objectives

1. Avoid external processing in the CEAS and argue for keeping and strengthening safeguards.
2. EU develops articles on the right to effective remedy including the right to appeal.
3. EU introduces safeguards around returns and responsibility sustainable reintegration.
4. Raise awareness among EU institutions, Member States on the lack of human rights safeguards for EU agencies.
5. Advocate for the development of a proper plan of allocation of responsibility of EU agencies.

representations and comitology. For reforms to be in line with international law and current EU standards, advocacy on both national and EU level must be coordinated and strong, leveraging ACT Alliance EU's structure and the work and influence of its members.

Important strategic considerations

The remaining time for this legislature is very short, and the same files will most likely end up in front of the next European Parliament and European Commission, with different party

SPECIAL PROJECT

Food security

Overview

Meeting growing food demands while minimising ecological losses presents one of the major challenges society faces and is critical to many of the Sustainable Development Goals.

We face intersected crises of climate change; of malnutrition; of biodiversity loss; and of growing violations of land rights of local communities and Indigenous Peoples. Behind these global crises is over-consumption of the world's resources by those able to do so. ACT Alliance EU supports the call that climate action must be congruent with efforts and investment to ensure food security and nutrition improvement, respect of human and land rights, and restoration of natural ecosystems. These objectives must not represent choices or trade-offs, but challenges that must be approached in an integrated manner.

Specific issues

1 Global food & nutrition security (and trade)

Background and problem statement

2015 saw the recognition of the rights of Indigenous Peoples and local communities in both the Paris Agreement and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. But 2017 was the deadliest year for land rights defenders and environmental activists, where we see an increase since 2015 in documented killings.

According to FAO, during 2017 the total number of food insecure people (suffering from hunger) increased again, similar as during the two previous years.

EU food system, consumption and production patterns are unsustainable and a problem to the world. Hunger is an injustice that continues despite the expansion of EU food production and the rapid growth in the value of EU agro-food exports since 2010. The EU's virtual land (and water) grab continues unhampered. The Rights of indigenous people and local communities are violated. Ecosystems are depleted (agrobiodiversity loss, soil depletion, gene diversity loss). Large scale monocultures continue to receive subsidies and inhibit instead of promoting moves towards

agrobiodiversity. Import surges and unfair competition harm small-scale farmers' livelihoods in developing countries. Global value chains are orientated towards profitable markets rather than the realisation of the right to food, while they continue to externalise social and environmental costs. Intensive livestock agriculture increases GHG emission causing global warming. The role of land and agriculture is key to climate resilience and to diversifying smallholders coping strategies. The June 2018 CAP legislative proposal appears to lock-in policy measures that perpetuate the existing system of overexploitation, 'overproduction', and overuse of land and livestock by way of increasing export orientation.

Many agricultural and natural ecosystems are close to collapse due to overexploitation, fragmentation and pollution. The scale of the biodiversity crisis is such that it may provoke the collapse of many ecosystems before the full impacts of climate change even start to take effect. Feedback loops between biodiversity and climate change flow both ways: the more ecosystems are degraded, the more carbon is released into the atmosphere and the harder it will be to mitigate climate change.

Objective 1

Secure land rights and land titles (human right to food).

Specific objectives

1. Secure Land Rights as part of the Human Right to Food; focus on indigenous people and local communities in developing countries, including communal land rights and custody.
2. Promote long term investment that secures land titles for smallholders and empowers them.

Objective 2

Transition towards climate resilient and agroecological food systems.

Specific objectives

1. EU policies and finances move towards transition of global and, i.e. EU food systems (Common Agricultural Policy) towards diverse agroecological approaches that respect the right to food, land rights, seed rights and the right to healthy nutritious food, and promote agrobiodiversity.
2. Thereby contributing to disaster preparedness, disaster prevention, and climate resilience by empowering smallholders and diversifying their coping and survival strategies.

agenda. Local coping strategies are always context-specific, and hence gender-sensitive for any community.

Our policy analysis is based on the understanding that EU trade and investment policy are one of the most important and strongest arms of the EU to push for its own policy interests.

The Special Project will continue to work in cooperation and as part of broader CSO coalitions. The Special Project will seek (as feasible) to engage with other ACT Alliance EU agencies to amplify its voice on land and seed rights, climate resilience, and contribution to SDGS and humanitarian assistance.

Important strategic considerations

The CLARA framing of three intersected crises of food, land and biodiversity and coalition building will guide strategic considerations,¹ which puts the protection of land rights, restoring ecosystems and food systems at its centre. Land, seeds, ecosystems, and natural resources are prone to climate impacts and resilience for local communities is to stay on the land and improve their livelihoods and identify (dignity) is per se at the heart of any localisation

¹ Climate justice advocates, land rights campaigners, agroecologists, development organisations, faith-based groups, conservation groups, and representatives of people's movements and indigenous people; many of these groups work on enhancing women rights and empowerment, see <https://www.climatelandambitionrightsalliance.org>

SPECIAL PROJECT

Middle East

Overview

The Oslo process has failed so far to deliver tangible progress in conflict resolution between Israel and Palestine. While a relaunch of a credible peace process is not within a foreseeable horizon, occupation of the West Bank (including East Jerusalem) and the blockade of Gaza continues while the situation on the ground is fast degrading: the humanitarian situation in Gaza continues to deteriorate, Israel's illegal settlement policy is accelerating, divides between Hamas and Fatah deepen, and the Palestinian Authority's human rights track-record deteriorates — all of which entrenches poverty, obstructs economic development and destroys the prospects for peace.

Based on our analysis of the issues above, we believe that poverty in the occupied Palestinian territories (OPT) is man-made. Therefore, as an alliance of development agencies, we are pursuing a policy — local, regional and global — that aims to reduce poverty, to improve daily lives of the Palestinians in the West Bank, East Jerusalem and Gaza, and to support efforts towards a just, lasting and peaceful resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

Specific issues

1 Demolitions and forcible transfers of the Palestinian population in the West Bank (including East Jerusalem), and threats of annexation of settlement areas to Israel

Background

Demolitions, evictions and forcible transfers in Area C of the West Bank and East Jerusalem correspond with a planning regime violating international humanitarian law — which makes,

at the same time, obtaining building permits very difficult for the Palestinian population in these areas. This, together with the expansion of the Israeli settlements in OPT undermine its territorial contiguity and in effect the possibility of a two-state solution.

Objective 1

Encouraging and backing the EU and MS in its support of adherence to the international humanitarian and human rights law, especially with regard to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, in order to prevent practices such as forcible transfers, displacement, structure demolitions and annexation.

Important strategic considerations

2019 Knesset elections (and their results) could further accelerate forcible transfers, demolitions, and expansion and construction of the illegal Israeli settlements in the OPT. The current US

Administration's 'Middle East plan' might go against the long-standing EU policy towards Israel and Palestine, and could present a new set of challenges in terms of adherence to international humanitarian law.

2 Shrinking space for local and international civil society in both Palestine and Israel

Background

Freedom of expression has been increasingly challenged in both Israel and Palestine and recently passed legislation in both Israel and Palestine further restrict space for civil society under both

authorities. Disinformation campaigns further attempt to undermine local and international NGOs working in I/OPT. Obstructions persist of timely delivery of humanitarian aid to the most affected locations and of effective implementation

of development projects by both local and international civil society.

Objective 2

Encouraging and backing the EU and MS to seek solutions and safeguard space for civil society, aid provision, legal assistance, and safe passage for and timely delivery of humanitarian aid, as well as to provide diplomatic protection for human rights defenders.

Important strategic considerations

2019 European elections will likely result in some loss of former (individual) allies but also

offer an opportunity to create new allies and raise their interest in other issues of this strategy. Disinformation campaigns are likely to continue and risk confusing public opinion.

3 Violations of international humanitarian and human rights law

Background

Authorities in Israel and Palestine fail to apply adequate measures to promote respect for

international humanitarian law and accountability for its violations. This further deepens the existing divide between the parties to the conflict and brings them further away from achieving peace.

Objective 3

Encouraging and backing the EU and MS in its efforts to promote respect to IHL/HRL as a cornerstone for peace and stability in the region, in line with existing FAC-resolutions and EU policy.

Important strategic considerations

Efforts to promote respect for international humanitarian law and accountability is under increasing pressure, including through disinformation campaigns. The strategic period may see specific steps to pursue international accountability for IHL and IHRL violations in the OPT.

ANNEX

Possible synergies across th

Development policy & practice

- ▶ **Migration & displacement, Food security, Agriculture & climate justice:** Monitoring the EU cooperation priorities and modalities and their implementation at country level, in particular in the areas of Migration & displacement, Food security, agriculture and Climate justice.
- ▶ **Migration & displacement:** Advocating for development cooperation expenditure in the area of migration that promote a long-term strategic vision founded on EU's international and internal legal obligations, principles of human safety and dignity, human rights and the maximisation of the development potential of migration.
- ▶ **Migration & displacement, Food security:** Making sure that the enforcement of EU's and African States human rights obligations is an integral part of the future deals and modalities of cooperation in particular in the areas of migration, trade and investment. These deals should take account of the interests and realities of each partner country and their population and shouldn't frustrate political decisions and structural efforts undertaken by African states and their regional bodies. EU's cooperation measures, programmes and financial support should never legitimise land and water grabs, deprive populations of their livelihoods or be conducive to human rights violations, discrimination and exclusion.

- ▶ Protecting and promoting CS space and an enabling environment for CS in EU external action and agreements with third countries.

Humanitarian policy & practice

- ▶ **Climate change:** Especially as regards DRR and resilience, and as a driver of humanitarian crises.
- ▶ **Food security:** Including in humanitarian-development nexus programming.
- ▶ **Migration & displacement:** On refugee response, but potentially also in humanitarian crisis advocacy
- ▶ **Development policy & practice:** Especially on the HD(P) nexus, MFF, and potentially regarding the role of Faith and Faith Based Actors in Development and Humanitarian Aid, and shrinking space for Civil Society

Climate justice

- ▶ **Food security:** All IPCC SR1,5 scenarios include negative emissions. We expect the debate around these solutions to increase in coming years. In order to properly assess and address the potential risks and opportunities embedded in such approaches, coordination with the Food Security could be needed.
- ▶ **Food security:** Agriculture plays a critical role in any analysis of drivers and impacts of climate change. The sector makes substantial

Thematic areas

contributions to climate change. Better land management and agricultural practices could avoid significant amounts of ongoing emissions. At the same time, agriculture will bear much harm from the climate impacts which the sector itself faces. Food producers will need to change their practices over the coming decades to adapt to climate impacts as far as possible.

- Migration & displacement:** Patterns of human mobility are highly likely to shift as the climate continues to change. National and global policy must act to give people choice – the choice to stay or go, and the support to do so. The Global Compacts on Migration and Refugees, to be finalised in 2018, offer scope for climate risk-informed action. However, the compact might never be implemented due to a number of countries' governments refusing to sign it, and it doesn't respond fully to the reality of climate-related displacement. Further policy solutions need to be elaborated to provide adaptive solution to people facing no other choice than to move away to a new liveable place.

Food security

- Development policy & practice:** Shrinking space for civil society. Human Rights and community activists are imprisoned, killed, or displaced for protecting claims to land.
- Development policy & practice:** Land rights and their relationship to livelihoods, dignity, decent life and human rights.
- Migration & displacement:** Loss of land rights are closely connected to loss of rights, displacement, migration and refugee situations.
- Climate justice:** There is a significant link between renewable energy investment and land rights. See also 'Climate Justice' above

Migration and displacement

- Development policy & practice:** Development assistance seen and used by the EU as a tool to curb migration has become a central issue of concern for the migration and displacement programme. Advocacy efforts focus the safeguarding genuine poverty eradication focused development cooperation instead of unsustainable programmes to stem migration. This means advocacy is needed related to migration in the external action heading of the next MFF and migration in the EU-ACP agreement.
- Climate justice:** Climate induced displacement is on the agenda of the international community and a recurring topic of debate in the EU level, especially related to external action.
- Humanitarian policy and practice:** Refugee protection and forced displacement are humanitarian issues, with the Global Compact on Refugees and the call for stronger international cooperation. The EU must step up as a principled donor and a region of destination for persons in need of international

protection. Moreover, in its external action, the EU must support the implementation of the Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework for protracted displacement situations in host countries while also reacting to emerging crises or ongoing with a strong protection approach, for example in Syria.

Middle East

- ▶ **Development policy & practice:** Due to protracted nature of the conflict, humanitarian and development actors in OPT are facing an increasing need to seek out ways to combine emergency aid with medium and long-term solutions
- ▶ **Development policy & practice:** Protecting and promoting civil society space and safeguarding human rights defenders.
- ▶ **Humanitarian policy and practice:** Impediments to an effective delivery of humanitarian aid persist.
- ▶ **Humanitarian policy and practice:** Forcible transfers exacerbate humanitarian needs of the Palestinian population, especially in Area C.
- ▶ **Climate justice:** One of the consequences of the occupation is a lack of unrestricted access to water and a meaningful land management for the Palestinians in the West Bank (including East Jerusalem) and Gaza. Such conditions not only exacerbate an already deteriorating humanitarian situation, but also obstruct climate change adaptation in the region located in one of the most water-scarce areas in the world.

Matrix of possible syne

	Humanitarian policy & practice	Climate
Development policy & practice	HDP nexus MFF Localisation Role of faith and FBOs Resilience CSO space Securitisation of aid	EU ODA agreeme Monitor on clima environ program blending
	Humanitarian policy & practice	DRR Resilienc Loss & D Climate humanit
		Climate

Synergies across thematic areas

Climate justice	Food security	Migration & displacement	Middle East
<p>Consistent with Paris Agreement</p> <p>Climate change and adaptation in EU geographic areas, in particular land rights and guarantees</p>	<p>Monitoring impact of EU cooperation priorities and modalities, in particular blending and guarantees, on small scale farmers' land rights, Human rights and livelihoods,...</p> <p>Protecting HRs, land rights defenders and promoting CSO space</p>	<p>Risk of aid conditionality Alignment of development cooperation expenditure with EU international and internal legal obligations, principles and human rights</p> <p>Maximization of the development potential of migration</p> <p>Migration in EU-ACP and EU- Africa agreements</p>	<p>CSO space</p> <p>HR defenders</p> <p>HDP nexus</p>
<p>Climate change as a driver of humanitarian crises</p>	<p>Food security — including in humanitarian-development nexus programming</p>	<p>Forced displacement</p> <p>Search and rescue</p> <p>Refugee response</p> <p>Humanitarian crisis advocacy</p>	<p>Forced displacement</p> <p>CSO space</p> <p>HDP nexus</p> <p>Securitisation of aid</p>
<p>Climate justice</p>	<p>Renewable energy investments vs land rights</p> <p>Negative emissions solutions</p> <p>Agriculture as a driver of / solution for climate change</p> <p>Harmful effects of climate change on agriculture</p>	<p>Climate induced displacement</p>	<p>Climate as an exacerbating factor in humanitarian crises</p> <p>Obstacles to climate adaptation</p>
	<p>Food security</p>	<p>Climate induced displacement</p> <p>Land rights and displacement</p>	
		<p>Migration & displacement</p>	<p>Refugees and human rights</p>