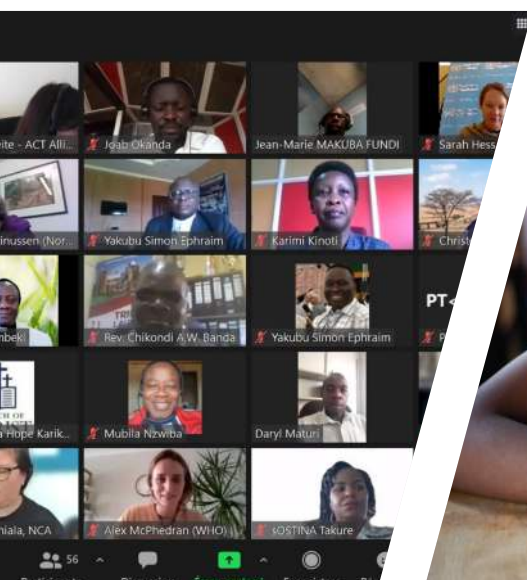


# actalliance eu



# Annual Report 2021

# Abbreviations

<b>ACP</b>	Africa, Caribbean and Pacific
<b>AU</b>	African Union
<b>CONCORD</b>	European NGO Confederation for Relief and Development
<b>CS</b>	civil society
<b>DAC</b>	Development Assistance Committee
<b>DG</b>	Directorate-General
<b>DG INTPA</b>	Directorate-General for International Partnerships
<b>EEAS</b>	European External Action Service
<b>EC</b>	European Commission
<b>EP</b>	European Parliament
<b>GSP</b>	Generalised System of Preferences
<b>HRDN</b>	Human Rights and Democracy Network
<b>MIPs</b>	Multi-annual indicative programmes
<b>NDICI</b>	Neighbourhood, Development and International Cooperation Instrument
<b>OACPS</b>	Organisation of African, Caribbean and Pacific States
<b>RBA</b>	Rights-based approach
<b>SCLR</b>	Survivor and Community-Led Response
<b>SDGs</b>	Sustainable Development Goals
<b>TVET</b>	Technical and Vocational Education and Training
<b>VOICE</b>	Voluntary Organisations in Cooperation in Emergencies

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**Editor** Janet Whitelaw-Jones

**Design** Toby Wardman

## Front cover image credits

*Left: African vaccines equity workshop with faith leaders and health civil society*

*Centre: Girl in classroom (Kenya) — Sean Hawkey [sean@hawkey.co.uk](mailto:sean@hawkey.co.uk)*

*Right: ACT Africa hosts vaccine seminar*

# Annual Report 2021

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# Introduction

2021 has been another year of Covid-related disruption. I am proud of the results achieved and the resilience our team has shown as we continue to advocate for a world where people live in dignity.

## Consolidation

Against the backdrop of continued disruption, the year has been one of consolidation; for the team and for our work. Change does not happen quickly in advocacy, so when we witness the results of our efforts building on the work of previous years, there is reason to celebrate.

In 2021 we helped bring progress on many fronts: we successfully put social protection and equitable and quality education and health systems at the top of the EU's cooperation agenda with Africa; we helped increase the share of the development budget which will be used for education; our efforts to shift the language used on migration as a force for development are reflected in the EP Development Committee opinion on Legal Migration Policy and Law; we continued to strengthen the role of civil society in the EU-OACPS and Africa-EU partnerships; and you can read about the survivor and community led response (sclr) that we introduced to ECHO policy.

In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, vaccine equity formed an important focus of our work. Efforts were three pronged. There was concerted advocacy in Brussels towards the relevant DGs, ACT EU members focused on their respective capitals and the global ACT Alliance worked with faith leaders. Together we addressed the social justice and faith elements of vaccine access and contributed to the demands to unblock global production. This was one area where we worked across sectors to bring network pressure to address injustices in health access.

We launched our policy paper with key messages on post COVID19 development, uniquely drawing together and showcasing the expertise of the ACT EU membership. The paper highlights key learnings and recommendations for future EU and Member State development cooperation and formed the backbone of our messaging on Africa-EU and the Global Europe instrument's priorities.

Our Special Project on the Middle East continued to engage with EU institutions and European governments. The Middle East Working Group focused on the destruction of humanitarian aid in the region to signal that such practices are not in line with International Humanitarian Law. This engagement resulted in the discussion of concrete steps and actions available to the EU and Member States, which can help protect vulnerable Palestinian communities at risk of forcible transfer.

## Synergy and coherence

We worked hard to consolidate our strengths as a secretariat team. Although we lost several Special Projects at the end of 2020, we have integrated key aspects of Migration, Climate Justice and Food Security into our work. As a team we increased synergies and coherence focusing on three important transversal issues that you can read about on page 24. We experimented with rapid response advocacy which enabled coordination between members to deliver crucial messages from crisis situations.

## Collaboration

Stronger working relationships were evident this year. We welcomed working more closely with the ACT Nairobi office and the All Africa Conference of Churches. We look forward to further deepening these connections given the expected strong focus on Africa by the EU. We continue to be grateful for the strong relationship with the global ACT Alliance.

I am consistently impressed by the dedication of our team and our members in pursuing our shared vision. Thank you for your enthusiasm, integrity and hard work in furthering the impact we aim for: that European external relations, humanitarian aid and development cooperation policies and practice are rights-based, equitable and people & community centred and contribute to human security and dignity for all.

Thank you for your support.

Floriz Faber  
ACT Alliance EU Representative

# in 2021

**act**alliance eu

...had  
**244**   
direct advocacy  
communications  
with policymakers

---

  
contributed to  
**15** POLICY  
MAKING  
PROCESSES

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 CO-HOSTED  
SPOKE AT  
CONTRIBUTED TO  
**138** events

met  
policymakers  
**105** times  
&  CIVIL SOCIETY  
NETWORKS   
**230** times

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published  
& co-published  
 **32**  
**78** media  
products  
(TWEETS BLOGS  
PRESS RELEASES  
WEBSITE UPDATES)  
policy papers  statements  
joint letters  
& briefings

# Highlights from our 2021

## January

Took part in a meeting with the Head of Unit of the pan-Africa Unit of DG INTPA to discuss the December political agreement.

Launched the second Climate Finance report with an op-ed in Euractiv.

## March

Organised workshop with ACT EU members on the Triple Nexus.

Submitted joint CSO letter on addressing structural and post-COVID inequalities in education.

## May

Called for action to halt the evictions of Palestinian Families in East Jerusalem.

Co-organised regional consultations on Covid-19 vaccine access and health equity.

## February

Co-organised an ECHO conference on localisation.

Submitted a joint CSO letter to the Commission concerning the legislation on mandatory human rights and environmental due diligence.

## April

Launched the ACT Vaccines Working Group.

Co-organised the first webinar on Migration in the Africa-EU Context, with Caritas Europa and Africa.

## June

Speech delivered at OACPS Joint Assembly on role.

Joint CSO policy recommendations on migration spearheaded at the

Participated in a roundtable with survivors of violence, led response to the crisis, contributing to the advocacy message.

## July

Launched the Guide for Insiders on the post-Cotonou EU-OACPS partnership agreement.

## October

Published a joint open letter with Caritas Europa on migration as a force for development in the Africa-EU partnership.

Launched the Post-COVID 19 paper on development cooperation priorities.

## December

Submitted letter supporting a people-centred Africa-EU Partnership ahead of the AU-EU Summit.

Launched analysis into challenges facing small and medium-sized organisations.

## September

Launched a membership survey on localisation with ACT Global.

## November

Released a joint statement by CIDSE and ACT Alliance EU, calling for the protection of Palestinian human rights defenders and CSOs.

Second webinar on Migration in the Africa-EU context co-organised with Caritas Europa and Africa.



# Core programme

# **Development policy and practice**



Classroom in Kenya. Credit: Sean Hawkey [sean@hawkey.co.uk](mailto:sean@hawkey.co.uk)

**2021 was a year of success and consolidation for Development Policy and Practice (DPP). The results we achieved on major decision and negotiation processes will have an impact on EU support to human development and the role of civil society in the coming years.**



## Key highlights

- ▶ We brought back human development to the centre of the Africa-EU partnership through sustained advocacy towards DG INTPA and the EEAS.
- ▶ We convinced the three main EU institutions to put in place effective structures for the meaningful participation of civil society in the EU-OACPS and Africa-EU partnerships. This is the culmination of efforts since September 2018.
- ▶ We fostered informed and constructive dialogue between civil society, EU and African officials on migration and published an open letter on migration as a positive development force which counters the current EU narrative.
- ▶ Our calls for an increase in support for inclusive and quality education and for a monitoring and early warning system on civic space are reflected in the implementation plans of the new Global Europe instrument.
- ▶ As well as demonstrating the expertise of our members, our policy paper on post-COVID-19 development policy and practice forms a strong basis for influencing the EU's priorities of cooperation.

### A new era in Africa-EU relations

2021 was a transition year towards a new era in Africa-EU relations and cooperation. DG Development became DG International Partnerships (DG INTPA); a new legally binding agreement was initialled (still to be ratified) between the EU and the Organisation of the African, Caribbean and Pacific States (OACPS); a new EU multi-annual cooperation programme and investment package for sub-Saharan Africa was adopted; and the EU and AU launched the political process paving the way for the AU-EU Summit planned in February 2022.

Together with close allies in European civil society we engaged with all EU institutions to make sure that the future Africa-EU partnership is people-centred, delivers on human rights and gender equality and secures a space and a role for civil society. We continued to support those in the ACT Alliance network and European and African civil society organisations with information on major trends and upcoming challenges and opportunities in Africa-EU relations.



## Strengthening civil society space and role in the EU-OACPS and Africa-EU partnerships

By the end of 2021 we succeeded in our efforts to convince the three main EU institutions to put in place and support effective institutional and operational structures for the meaningful participation of civil society in EU-OACPS and Africa-EU political dialogue and cooperation.

The civil society provisions of the new EU-OACPS agreement offer an excellent basis to build on. This success is the result of our constant advocacy since the start of the negotiations in September 2018.

*The parties commit to “protecting and ensuring freedom of expression, opinion and assembly and to preserving and broadening an enabling space for an active, organised, transparent civil society, thereby strengthening domestic transparency and accountability. They will also promote a multi-stakeholder approach, enabling the active involvement of a wide variety of actors in partnership dialogue and cooperation processes, including women and youth as key stakeholders”*

— **Negotiated Agreement text initialled by the EU and OACPS chief negotiators on 15 April 2021**

We were invited to speak, on behalf of CONCORD, at the 40th EU-OACPS Joint Parliamentary Assembly (JPA). We presented our

**views and recommendations** for more inclusive EU-OACPS institutions and for an effective and impactful dialogue with both EU and ACP civil society. As a follow-up the EP published an online survey to collect CS suggestions to improve the engagement of the Joint Parliamentary Assemblies.

We presented a similar call to the EU Council's ACP Working Party where the 27 Member States regularly meet to take decisions on EU-OACPS cooperation. Our points were well taken by many Member States who asked DG INTPA to produce concrete proposals.

The topic was discussed at length with ACP civil society and DG International Partnerships (DG INTPA) at the launch event of CONCORD **Insider's Guide to the post-Cotonou Agreement**. We contributed to the Insider's Guide which builds on our **collective analysis** of the new EU-OACPS Agreement and aims at informing EU and ACP civil society of the new agreement, its priorities and how CS can and should participate in its implementation. This is a useful tool for ACT Alliance EU members and partners in their engagement with EU delegations in ACP countries.

Two concrete positive outcomes of these collective advocacy efforts were the broad CS consultations organised ahead of the October AU-EU ministerial meeting and the setting-up of a joint CS-European Commission steering committee to organise an Africa-EU CS Forum ahead of the AU-EU Summit in February 2022. Although late and far from perfect, these two initiatives reflect the increasing awareness on the EU side that more needs to be done. They open doors for further collaboration with the institutions on setting up more effective and meaningful structures and mechanisms for participation.

## Influencing EU priorities for the AU-EU summit of 2022

Building on the recommendations of our **2020 paper on a people-centred Africa-EU partnership** and our **2021 paper on EU's cooperation priorities in a post-COVID era**, we successfully put social protection and equitable and quality education and health systems at the top of the EU's cooperation agenda with Africa.

Our speech at the EU-OACPS Joint Parliamentary Assembly raised interest in the EEAS pan-African unit and has helped establish a working relationship with the staff responsible for the preparation of the AU-EU Summit. We took part in several working meetings with them on issues related to investing in people, social protection, education, health and inclusive economic development. We were able to influence the discussion paper on future AU-EU cooperation priorities which was tabled by the EU at the October AU-EU ministerial meeting. We also opened the door for other CONCORD members such as CIDSE and its African partners who made concrete contributions on agriculture and food matters.

Although the EEAS pan-African unit focused on investing in people, social protection was not high on their agenda. We highlighted this issue through a **briefing paper** with concrete recommendations expanding on the social protection chapter of our **post-COVID paper**. Together with other NGOs we published and shared a **joint letter** with EU officials calling for quality inclusive education at all levels including TVET. In the letter we called for strengthening public education systems, addressing structural inequalities and creating ties across policy sectors.

At the end of 2021, the EEAS pan-African unit began drafting the joint AU-EU declaration to be adopted at the Summit. Preliminary information on the draft indicated that new initiatives on social protection and health and on education were part of the EU's proposals for future Africa-EU cooperation.

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## Maintaining the dialogue and advocacy on migration

Together with Caritas Europa and Caritas Africa, ACT Alliance EU took the lead on the contentious issue of migration and mobility in the Africa-EU context. Our aim was to foster informed and constructive discussions on the potential of the new Africa-EU partnership to maximise the positive impact of migration on sustainable development and to counter the current EU narrative, which is focused on returns, security and stemming the arrival of migrants.

Despite the agreement on migration reached in the new EU-OACPS agreement, the impact of the external dimensions of the EU's migration policy still raises concerns in many African countries. By organising two webinars with more than 80 participants each, we fostered a dialogue between African and European civil society and EU and AU policymakers. Participants highlighted both the complexity of the issue and the opportunities migration offers for development. They also raised the importance of engaging CSOs more systematically in debates around migration and mobility in the Africa-EU context. A general recommendation from both webinars was that the EU must give more attention to African aspirations and priorities and make concrete proposals to support intra-African migration and safe and legal pathways

for regular migration to Europe. These two elements of the debate are key for economic and social transformation and can substantially contribute to sustainable development on both continents.

Building on these exchanges, together with Caritas Europa, we published and shared a [joint open letter](#) with EU and MS senior officials ahead of the October AU-EU ministerial meeting. We urged EU leaders to prioritise migration as a force for development by promoting a rights-based, human-centric, long-term approach to migration, focusing on harnessing its positive aspects and reflecting the priorities of African countries. Thanks to close links with several MEPs and their advisors we were successful in integrating these messages in the European Parliament (EP) [Development Committee opinion](#) on Legal Migration Policy and Law.

Other advocacy actions on migration and development in 2021 related to the risks associated with the use of ODA for migration policy purposes. We contributed to the CONCORD paper, [Setting the Highest Standards](#), with concrete recommendations on how the Global Europe Instrument's 10% spending target for migration can deliver on migrants' rights and sustainable and inclusive development. We also contributed to similar recommendations in the [Joint CSO policy recommendations on migration spending](#) addressed to the OECD DAC.

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## The new EU Global Europe instrument

The regulation of the NDICI, the new EU development cooperation and external action instrument entered into force in June 2021 with the official name 'Global Europe Instrument'.



DG International Partnerships, DG NEAR and EU Delegations around the world dedicated all of 2021 to the drafting and adoption of geographic (country and regional) and thematic multi-annual indicative programmes (MIPs) for the implementation of the Global Europe Instrument. As a member of both CONCORD and the Human Rights and Democracy Network, ACT Alliance EU contributed to the monitoring of this broad programming process and shared regular information with our members through the Development Policy and Practice and the Funding groups.

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## **A substantial increase of the education budget**

It is on education that we were the most successful. Our recommendations aligned with Commissioner Urpilainen's objective of increasing EC support for education and youth and to spend at least 10% of the Global Europe instrument on education. We co-signed two joint NGO letters, one in March 2021, detailing how the new 10% spending target could be used to pave the way for more resilient and inclusive public education and TVET systems and to address the COVID-19 education challenges. In November, after our second letter focused on Africa, DG INTPA invited us to an education focused meeting where they confirmed a prospective 2 billion euro increase in education expenditure in the coming 7 years. Its emphasis will be on strengthening education and TVET systems at country level. A qualitative step is also expected with new initiatives in Africa-EU cooperation such as a "Regional Teachers' Initiative" to increase the quality of teacher training and professional development.

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## **Defending CS space and its role in implementation**

Our advocacy work aims to ensure that the Global Europe Instrument will promote and enable the participation and action of civil society.

In our [post COVID-19 paper](#) and in our suggestions for the Multi-annual indicative programmes (MIP) of the CS thematic programme, we recommended that the EU and its Delegations in partner countries put in place a monitoring and early warning and action mechanism on civic space. At the end of December, we were delighted to read in the MIP for the CS thematic programme that a new global initiative, the "Monitoring and Engagement System" for an enabling environment will be developed. It will encompass monitoring of all aspects pertaining to civic space and an enabling environment for civil society; early warnings in times of imminent change; global flexible short-term support to enable civil society actors to quickly engage in situations of deterioration and/or positive developments pertaining to this environment; and long-term support for CSO capacity.

We took part in consultation meetings on the future MIP for the Human Rights and Democracy programme organized by DG INTPA Gender Equality, Human Rights and Democratic Governance unit. Based on consultations with the ACT Alliance EU funding group, we made concrete recommendations on the programme's priorities and on the idea of introducing Financial Framework Partnership Agreements as a new way to finance CS action.

## ACT Alliance EU recommendations on post-COVID-19 development policy and practice

In November 2021, we delivered a **new policy paper** with key recommendations for EU development cooperation in a post-COVID era. As well as showcasing the expertise and work of ACT Alliance EU members and faith-based organisations, the paper highlights key learnings and recommendations for future EU and MS development cooperation policies and practice. The work done by our members in preparation of the paper served as a basis for our advocacy messages on Africa-EU and Global Europe instrument's priorities of cooperation.

The paper combined recommendations on civic space, social protection and health, education and youth, gender, climate adaptation and sustainable food and agriculture issues. As such it is a valuable reference for our network and

its members on important policy issues. It also links our development advocacy work with our work on localisation and the triple nexus in the context of humanitarian aid.

The priorities of development cooperation need to shift towards more people-centred programmes and community-led approaches. Engaging women and youth and giving them a leading role will be critical to achieve the needed social, economic, and environmental objectives of Agenda 2030 and ensure no-one is left behind. We highlight effective modalities for working with and in support of local actors and how development finance, policy coherence for development and a strategic use of ODA can contribute to these objectives.

In the short to medium term, we will continue collecting evidence and operational recommendations on the issues discussed in the paper and on the role of faith actors at local, national and international levels.

Marching to end gender-based violence — Katabazi/CCT





# Core programme

## Humanitarian policy and practice



The midwife of Nawdamorra Sub Health Center in Laghman province, Afghanistan, conducted an awareness session on COVID-19 to sensitise the women in the community. — CWSA

**2021 was a year of important contribution to the localisation agenda and bringing faith and social justice perspectives to address inequities in access to Covid-19 vaccines and treatment.**



## Key highlights

- ▶ At EU level, timely advocacy led to the adoption of the core financial modality of the survivor and community-led response approach in ECHO cash policy.
- ▶ We leveraged network learnings from pilots and methodologies for locally led response and just partnerships, successfully putting the topics higher on ECHO's agenda. This led to recommendations for the core elements of ECHO's pledged localisation guidance including funding and integration of civil society, capacity sharing and greater support to women and youth-led organisations.
- ▶ We addressed the social justice and faith elements of Covid-19 vaccine equity and contributed to the mounting pressure to unblock global production and the release of intellectual property.

### Locally led response and just partnerships

In 2021 we introduced the survivor and community led response (sclr) in ECHO policy. At the same time, we addressed the slow progress by ECHO and its NGO partners toward just partnerships with and leadership of local actors. This included key elements of accountability and capacity sharing.

To support this, we co-organised a conference for 150 members of ECHO's headquarter and field personnel. The aim was to review ECHO's existing support to the leadership of civil society based in countries of humanitarian response as well as explore the future direction of EU localisation policy.

ACT Alliance EU members and partners presented a forceful case for the prioritisation

of increased EU investment in three key areas: enhanced organisational and coordination structures, mutual capacity sharing for strengthened accountability, and scaling up modalities for community-led response. Notably, YMCA Palestine demonstrated some strong results using the sclr methodology. Their work involves developing women's leadership, inspiring ownership of communities in crisis-affected populations, and developing strong links between the self-help groups with relevant education, private sector and government stakeholders.

Involvement in the conference also paved the way for deeper technical discussions with ECHO on the group cash transfer modalities central to the sclr approach. Through timely intervention and collaboration with [Local2Global Protection](#) and [Key Aid Consulting](#), the discussions led to the integration of group cash transfers for

community groups into the ECHO cash policy review. We will build on these advances to achieve increased donor support both to ensure predictable resources for existing groups and to scale up the approach. The [ODI-HPN publication](#) and promotion of a study into the approach represented a significant milestone and paves the way for further engagement with the EU and Member States in 2022.

Unfortunately, progress stagnated in the second half of the year. ECHO's drive to re-design the ECHO Partner's Conference as an annual Partner's Day, and to host the first EU Humanitarian Forum pledged in the [Communication on Humanitarian Aid](#), provided opportunities but also significant challenges. ECHO faced the complex task of developing the Forum, co-hosted with the French presidency. ECHO's NGO partners were ready to contribute preparatory webinars, regional consultations and the conference agenda but sporadic engagement by ECHO with implementing NGOs and their in-country partners left many unable to access those spaces. In future renditions of

the Humanitarian Forum, we will call upon ECHO to build on these foundations with greater transparency, inclusivity and representation, particularly of local civil society. ACT Alliance EU — in collaboration with likeminded networks — ensured a strong focus on local leadership in the VOICE joint position paper presented under the climate resilience preparatory session for the 2022 Forum. The resulting messaging placed strong emphasis on locally led adaptation and the crucial involvement of affected populations in loss and damage and addressed the financial instruments necessary to enable flexible funding. Leveraging the expertise of ACT Alliance EU members in locally led and responsive anticipatory action and climate adaptation are growing priorities as we enter 2022.

Mai Jarrar listening at meeting with protection group members in West Bank



## **Localisation for ACT Alliance EU: a shared commitment to justice and dignity**

In 2021, we consolidated the common localisation position of ACT Alliance EU. This articulated our shared values underpinning a shift in power to actors at local level, core elements of localisation, definitions and scope. At the same time, we instigated a process with the global ACT Alliance membership, through a membership survey, to help inform deeper peer-to-peer exchange and the direction of formal ACT Alliance localisation guidance. While initial findings demonstrate a widespread depth of experience in partnerships with local actors and support to locally-led response, the survey highlighted the gap between localisation discourse in international fora and the degree of uptake among national and sub-national civil society. So that in-country members and partners lead the development of operational and policy guidance, 2022 will see ACT Alliance EU and the global Alliance further collaborate to leverage the tools and experience of members and deepen regional consultation and peer-to-peer exchange.

It's clear that our common commitment to partnerships is rooted in human dignity, respect and ownership of local and national civil society. As we continue to discuss racism in the ACT Alliance EU and global networks, our collective work to recognise and address the unfair and often exclusive power structures of the current humanitarian system is of crucial value.

## **Vaccine advocacy: connecting global experiences of crisis-affected populations' access to vaccines and international advocacy**

The production of Covid-19 vaccines in early 2021 rapidly exacerbated global structural inequalities related to health access. The European Commission and many Member States' entrenched a position to block moves to open patent rights to production centres globally and incentivise technology and know-how transfer. In response, ACT Alliance EU, together with the global ACT Alliance, mobilised and formed collaborations with civil society, leading advocacy to address the stark injustices in access to vaccines. An important part of our work was supporting religious leaders and faith-based organisations to address the intertwined issues of access and vaccine hesitancy.

Regional consultations among the global ACT membership informed a full briefing and corresponding letter to national governments. In turn, the briefing led to the engagement of ACT Alliance EU with health agencies and faith-based actors addressing the blockage of the TRIPs waiver necessary to unblock patent rights and the process of technology and know-how transfer for Global South production sites.

At EU level, health networks and EU stakeholders favourable to the TRIPs waiver called on ACT Alliance EU and its members to raise the profile of the faith and social justice perspective. In response we developed two strands of action. First, we engaged several European faith-based organisations to address the European Commission Directorates General of Trade and International Partnerships through a joint letter, and the December Council Summit through a policy statement. Excellent



mobilisation of our respective memberships resulted in a **published op-ed**. All sought to demand just EU action on the TRIPs waiver. We continue to call for the EU to redress the disparities between pledges made in the context of the Africa-EU Summit preparations for equitable partnership and EU support for skills and R&D upgrading and the stark difference in Covid-19 vaccine rates between the two regions.

Secondly, members leveraged the advocacy materials developed by the secretariat to address national governments and extend EU collaboration with health civil society leaders to mobilise national civil society networks as well as the organisations' supporters. In the Netherlands, for example, the newly developed collaboration with health-centred civil society led to a joint Kerk in Actie and ACT Alliance EU intervention with global health civil society to address a CDA party meeting addressing Covid-19 vaccines.

We leveraged the joint declaration resulting from an ACT Alliance workshop for religious leaders, African faith and health civil society leaders

and the WTO to address senior leaders of the EU and African Union. To do so, we submitted the declaration as an ACT Alliance EU and ACT Alliance Africa letter to the respective Unions as follow up to a key ministerial meeting in preparation of the Africa-EU Summit.

The strong and well-coordinated mobilisation of civil society has resulted in further political action by religious leaders, scientists, trade unions, Nobel peace prize laureates and economists. Most importantly, the position of Member States and countries worldwide has been shifting. Yet urgency and a significant shift in positioning by powerful Member States and the European Commission remain elusive. In 2022, ACT Alliance EU will continue to collaborate with the global ACT Alliance to address the injustices in health access responsible for multiplying the suffering of crisis affected populations.

Yakkum, Act Alliance Global member



# Special project **Middle East**



DSPR

**2021 was a challenging and frustrating year for the Middle East Working Group (MEWG). As the situation on the ground continued to deteriorate our imperative was to continue to engage policy makers through available advocacy channels.**

## Key highlights

- ▶ We called on the EU institutions and the European governments to protect international justice mechanisms and accountability for international law violations.
- ▶ We successfully contributed to securing a principled position by the EU and Member States' officials regarding the designation by Israel of the six Palestinian rights groups as terrorist organisations.
- ▶ We engaged policy makers in discussions regarding the situation of vulnerable communities in Area C facing home destructions and forcible transfer, resulting in concrete preparatory steps around possible responses to demolitions by the European Commission and Member States.
- ▶ We supported efforts in Ireland to secure **governmental acknowledgment of West Bank's *de facto* annexation**.

## Developments in the Middle East

As Israel's *de facto* annexation proceeded without obstruction, protests against **evictions of Palestinian families in East Jerusalem** were met with a violent Israeli response. The eruption of deadly hostilities between Israel and the authorities in Gaza in May was followed by Israel's destructive bombing campaign of the Strip under blockade. In October, the Israeli government took a decision to designate six Palestinian civil society and rights groups as terrorist organisations – including two MEWG partners. This was the latest in a series of longstanding efforts to delegitimise Palestinian rights organisations working to end occupation and defend human rights. It was a major blow to Palestinian civil society at large, already facing mounting pressure with regard to access

to donor funding in light of the continuing campaign to discredit them.

Some important political developments took place in Palestine and Israel in 2021. In Israel, a new government was appointed and in Palestine, despite initial hopes, the Palestinian elections were cancelled. This has further highlighted the democratic backsliding of the Palestinian Authority.

Against the backdrop of the deteriorating situation in Israel and Palestine and ongoing rights violations under occupation, we noted that structural inequality and unequal rights were increasingly discussed in the context of apartheid in 2021. This was covered by prominent rights groups such as B'Tselem and Human Rights Watch.



## European response to the Gaza bombing

We actively **monitored** reactions of key European leaders and policy makers to the escalation of violence in East Jerusalem and Gaza. In the hope for an end to the devastating cycles of violence, we advocated for a strong European condemnation of international law violations and the importance of accountability, and urged policy makers to ensure that the situation in East Jerusalem is addressed by the EU with a view to protect Palestinian families at risk of evictions.

Unfortunately, despite these calls from ACT Alliance EU and other rights organisations, European reactions were rather weak and lacked serious demands for accountability. Yet, there are some noteworthy exceptions. In Belgium, the momentum helped advance **concrete steps**, deepening the differentiation towards Israeli settlements. In Ireland, we supported the work of our MEWG member to secure governmental acknowledgment of West Bank annexation which resulted in a motion adopted by the parliament recognising Israel's unlawful de facto annexation.

In the context of our work towards accountability, a positive development was the publication of a letter regarding the International Criminal Court (ICC) in major media across Europe. **The letter**, signed by over 50 former European officials, calls on the EU leaders to support the ICC and its independence, globally and in the case of Israel and Palestine. This is particularly important in the light of the increasing attacks the court has been facing in relation to its decision to investigate violations in the occupied Palestinian territory.

## Support to Palestinian civil society and rights organisations

ACT Alliance EU's MEWG persistently engaged with policy makers across Europe to inform them of the European position on the **designations**. We exchanged relevant updates and information across the MEWG and brought them to the attention of policy makers with a view to help coordinate the response of European governments. In meetings and briefings of European officials together with the affected Palestinian organisations and Israeli rights groups **we called for a firm stance by the EU** to reject the designations and any unfounded allegations against Palestinian rights organisations. This was important globally, because such measures serve as an inspiration to other governments seeking to silence rights groups and civil society. We coordinated several initiatives to this end including leading international non-governmental organisations. One example of this was coordinating a letter to the EU's leaders with leading rights organisations calling on the EU to reject the designations, to protect Palestinian civil society.

## Preventing forcible transfer of Palestinian communities in Area C

MEWG advocacy on the issue of demolitions of donor-funded aid in Area C of the West Bank was a high priority in 2021. The demolition rates reached unprecedented numbers in 2021 - the highest second only to 2016 since record keeping began.



In this regard ACT Alliance EU was able to successfully build on its previous work. This allowed us to engage relevant decision makers across European institutions as well as in Member states on concrete steps to secure compensation for destroyed humanitarian aid in order to signal that such practices are not in line with International Humanitarian Law. This engagement resulted in the discussion of concrete steps and actions available to the EU and Member States in addressing demolitions, which can help protect vulnerable Palestinian communities at risk of forcible transfer.

In another positive outcome, demolitions were discussed in the Irish and Danish parliaments. We helped secure a pan-European letter signed by 370 parliamentarians from 21 countries. The letter was sent to European foreign ministers and the HR/VP Borrell, calling on Europe to take immediate concrete steps to prevent the displacement and forcible transfer of Palestinians in the West Bank including East Jerusalem, and to actualize differentiation in all dealings with Israel.

# Transversal issues



Famix distribution by EECMY LWF sitrep 'The mothers of Ayder'  
— LWF Ethiopia / EECMY

**In 2021, the secretariat team explored ways to build synergies and coherence between our different strategic objectives. Our aims were to strengthen our advocacy agenda, avoid overlaps and make the best use of the capacities and knowledge of a smaller, more agile and responsive team.**

With that in mind, we focused on three transversal issues:

- ▶ Civic space and an enabling environment for civil society, including the issue of localisation and the role of faith-based organisations.
- ▶ The triple nexus between Humanitarian aid, Development and Peace.
- ▶ Piloting a new approach for rapid response advocacy of the ACT EU network and secretariat on specific crisis and country situations.

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## **Civil society space & enabling environment**

We built on previous work to influence EU donors' policy and regulating framework on the enabling environment and funding for CS. Together with the ACT Alliance community of practice on Rights and Development we contributed to the work by the OECD DAC CSO Reference group to influence the OECD-DAC Recommendation on Enabling Civil Society in Development Cooperation and Humanitarian Aid. Several members co-signed and sent the letter to their government, pushing DAC members to endorse the OECD [Recommendation](#). The EU and many of its Member States endorsed this document and we will use it as a reference in our future work.

We contributed to CONCORD and VOICE efforts on new CS funding modalities and measures and

on the model contract which the EC is gradually introducing in its development cooperation and humanitarian aid rules and procedures. Christian Aid is taking part, on ACT Alliance EU's behalf, in the CONCORD working group on EU regulations for CS and contributes to information exchanges through the ACT EU funding group.

We engaged with the EU institutions on the shrinking space for civil society in Palestine in particular the increasing attempts to delegitimise the work of Palestinian rights organisations and to prevent them accessing donor funding. We highlighted the global impact of some of the attacks Palestinian civil society is witnessing and stressed the need for continuous European support to human rights organisations in Palestine.

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## Triple nexus

We provided a space for internal learning, sharing of practices and advocacy opportunities on the operationalisation of the triple nexus and the role of faith actors. Methodologies for locally-led response have been at the heart of our humanitarian advocacy in recent years. Including the perspectives of local faith-based and secular actors into triple nexus policy and programming discussions has been key for ACT Alliance EU. However, triple nexus policy and advocacy has often lacked emphasis from development actors at civil society and multi-lateral levels.

Building on the 2020 work on the triple nexus and with the aim of strengthening synergies within the secretariat, we organised an internal workshop among the members of the development and the humanitarian policy and practice working groups.

We clarified our joint understanding and framing of the three pillars of the triple nexus — humanitarian, development and peace — and shared practices of member organisations and local partners. We reflected on shared advocacy priorities and means of leveraging the experience of our local partners, including the role of faith actors.

The Post-Covid Recovery paper provided the opportunity to explore methodological approaches for the implementation of the triple nexus at local level, including funding modalities. Our message emphasised that investment in localisation methodologies is also an investment in crisis response and longer-term development.

In collaboration with a VOICE task force, the HPP working group and personnel of the ACT Climate Justice reference group made significant

contributions to the VOICE joint statement on key elements of climate resilience for ECHO policy and programming.

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## Piloting rapid response advocacy

Humanitarian crises are becoming more complex and with that, ‘do no harm’ advocacy for our organisations is of primary importance. As a representative network, in 2021 we began convening and coordinating members’ advocacy to Member States and key EU stakeholders. The result is crucial messaging from crisis situations. These include the measures necessary to protect local partners in highly dangerous contexts, the key issues related to gender and the increasing complexity of sanctions and counter terrorism measures for both humanitarian and development operations.

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## Leveraging our work across sectors

Other areas where we leveraged team collaboration and multiple strands of advocacy were vaccine equity, and initiatives on corporate due diligence and accountability.

Our statement on vaccine equity and hesitancy was sent to our interlocutors in DG INTPA and the EEAS for the preparation of the Africa-EU summit. This was particularly effective as the Africa-EU Summit preparations dominated the development agenda in late 2021. We collectively addressed the key development and external action interlocutors both at EU and AU level with a Joint Declaration on discrepancies in access to Covid-19 vaccine doses





ACT Africa hosts vaccine seminar

and the knowledge and technology necessary for production and manufacture locally. The statement articulated donor action necessary to address vaccine inequities alongside recognition of challenges within the African region related to hesitancy and supply issues.

We advocated jointly on initiatives in legislation on corporate due diligence and accountability. In this context, we coordinated a joint letter to the Commission signed by 79 civil society organisations regarding EU legislation on human rights and environmental due diligence. We urged the Commission to reference international humanitarian law and included a demand for an enhanced corporate due diligence for conflict-affected areas in its legislative proposal.

# 2021 finances

Membership contributions are our main source of income. We are most grateful to all our members for their continued financial support which is both generous and sustained.

The 2021 accounts were audited by DGST and partners, Réviseurs d'entreprises of Brussels, Belgium.

	2021 €	2020 €
<b>Income</b>		
Member contributions	599 268	780 258
Other income	32 118	15 300
<b>Total income</b>	<u>631 386</u>	<u>795 558</u>
<b>Expenses</b>		
Human resources	548 258	595 622
Office costs	75 986	75 010
Communications	6 021	8 693
Travel & meetings costs	5 693	19 113
Advocacy activities	10 843	13 508
Administrative & other costs	34 229	28 104
<b>Total expenses</b>	<u>681 030</u>	<u>740 050</u>
<b>Net surplus/(loss) for the year</b>	<b>(49 644)</b>	<b>55 508</b>
Reserves at 1 January	475 021	419 513
Reserves at 31 December	<u>425 377</u>	<u>475 021</u>

# Board, secretariat and advisory groups

## Board and general assembly

### *Board membership from May 2021*

**Bread for All** — represented by Bernard DuPasquier, Chair

**Finn Church Aid** — represented by Katri Suomi, Deputy Chair

**Bread for the World** — represented by Martin Krieg, Treasurer

**Diaconia ECCB-CRD** — represented by K Ambrožová, member

**ACT Alliance** — represented by Thorsten Göbel, observer

### *Departures from the Board*

The following mandates ended in May 2021:

**Bread for the World** — represented by Cornelia Füllkrug-Weitzel

**Diakonie Austria** — represented by Michael Bubik

### *Observers*

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

The General Assembly met online in May 2021.

## Advisory groups

Policy and Advocacy Group (PAG) met online in March 2021 and October 2021

Dennis Kjeldsen (DCA) resigned as chair in March 2021 and was replaced by Fionna Smyth and Oli Pearce (Christian Aid) in October 2021.

## Secretariat and staff

At the end of 2021, the secretariat was composed of the following staff:

**Floris Faber**, ACT Alliance EU Representative

**Susie Wilkinson**, Office Manager

**Karine Sohet**, Senior Policy Officer - EU Development Policy & Practice

**Rebecca Venuto**, Junior Policy Officer – EU Development Policy & Practice

**Ruth Watson**, Policy Officer – EU Humanitarian Policy & Practice

**Alexandra Gerasimčíková**, Adviser - Middle East





**ACT Alliance EU office**  
Boulevard Charlemagne 28  
1000 Brussels  
[admin@actalliance.eu](mailto:admin@actalliance.eu)  
tel. +32 2 234 56 60

**actalliance eu**