

A busy month for CONCORD, with many institutional meetings: participation in the European Union-ACP joint assembly, a conference with the German presidency, and a meeting with Louis Michel at the first Civil Society Forum.

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CONCORD is the European confederation of relief and development NGOs. Its 22 national associations and 19 international networks represent over 1,600 NGOs which are supported by millions of citizens across Europe. CONCORD leads reflection and political actions and regularly engages in dialogue with the European institutions and other civil society organisations. CONCORD is part of the Global Call to Action against Poverty.

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### A WORD FROM PETER BALLANTYNE FROM EUFORIC

Ten years ago in 1997, a group of organisations got together to establish Euforic as a platform to share information on international cooperation activities involving Europe. We decided to use a new tool called the 'world wide web' that was just getting going. The founding members of the cooperative were the ACP Secretariat, APRODEV, EUROSTEP, CIDSE, CLONG (now CONCORD), and ECDPM.

Our starting point was the need to create information and share facilities and spaces where 'we' would feel comfortable and where our efforts could be made visible and be shared. In the beginning, we spent much effort building up our first web sites.<sup>1</sup> We were joined by other like-minded groups such as CIDOB, CTA, EADI, ICCO, IDS, IPS Europe, ODI, OEFSE, and others.

Nowadays, of course, we all have our own web sites and portals and we increasingly use a growing number of Internet-based tools to communicate and share what we do and forge collaborations. Keeping up with the crowd is, however, still a challenge; as is keeping abreast of technical opportunities that can help us do our jobs more effectively.

At Euforic, therefore, we concentrate on a couple of main activities.

First, with our members and other partners we bring together and re-disseminate information on international cooperation. We offer a kind of news and research alerting and library service on different issues, themes, and countries. This mixes up different sources and perspectives and has a European 'flavour'. We provide content in several languages and are one of a very few initiatives to have completely bilingual French and English services. We don't collect all information together, but we signpost where it will probably be.

In doing this, we use a mix of approaches and tools, including new things like blogs, wikis, newsfeeds, social bookmarks, and dgroups, as well as collective calendars and search tools. These allow us to much more efficiently, and at very low cost, track, present, and share information on different themes and countries. It also allows readers of this Flash, for instance, to sign up to information alerts or publish our news on their own web sites, and, by using similar tools, to automatically and seamlessly get their own information into Euforic and other similar services. Follow the 'rss feeds' link on our web site to see the issues we cover and how to sign up for free.

Second, we work with our members and others to enhance their information, knowledge sharing and communication capacities. Precisely by working together we can share lessons and approaches we learned and collectively build much more intelligent ways to share information and communicate about development. This mainly involves running awareness and training events, in March with CONCORD for example, and working intensively with some organisations on their own approaches and tools. We will focus on some of these issues in more depth at the Euforic Annual Meeting in Brussels on 5 and 6 June.

There is much talk in Europe of issues like coordination, coherence, effectiveness, and partnership; we believe these processes are only possible when the organisations and people involved are well informed and can effectively communicate their views.

We are excited that CONCORD will rejoin Euforic and we look forward to working with the Secretariat and other CONCORD members to build a cooperative Europe-wide communication platform on development issues. We are also keen to find partners and collaborators to improve our collective work.

*Peter Ballantyne*

For further information, [www.euforic.org](http://www.euforic.org) - [info@euforic.org](mailto:info@euforic.org)

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<sup>1</sup> You can still see early ones at: [web.archive.org/web/\\*/http://www.oneworld.org/aprodev](http://web.archive.org/web/*/http://www.oneworld.org/aprodev); [web.archive.org/web/\\*/http://www.oneworld.org/liaison](http://web.archive.org/web/*/http://www.oneworld.org/liaison); [web.archive.org/web/\\*/http://www.oneworld.org/eurostep](http://web.archive.org/web/*/http://www.oneworld.org/eurostep); [web.archive.org/web/\\*/http://www.oneworld.org/ecdpm](http://web.archive.org/web/*/http://www.oneworld.org/ecdpm); [web.archive.org/web/\\*/http://www.oneworld.org/euforic](http://web.archive.org/web/*/http://www.oneworld.org/euforic); [web.archive.org/web/\\*/http://www.oneworld.org/cidse](http://web.archive.org/web/*/http://www.oneworld.org/cidse); [web.archive.org/web/\\*/http://www.oneworld.org/acpsec](http://web.archive.org/web/*/http://www.oneworld.org/acpsec).







For CONCORD, this is a timely and crucial initiative which will help to ensure that the strong commitments made by the European Commission and the Member States to put gender equality at the heart of development policies will be put into practice. CONCORD also made a number of contributions during the drafting process of this document.

Gender equality is a crucial but often neglected area of development policy. To ensure that this strategy is effectively implemented it will be important to watch over the European Commission's progress in this area. CONCORD has already written to the European Parliament Development Committee asking it to take into account this new strategy for gender equality when monitoring and evaluating the work of the Commission in this area, especially in screening the CSPs for gender analysis. CONCORD also stresses the need to ensure policy coherence for development in this process.

CONCORD welcomes this strategy and will be following its implementation closely to ensure that the joint commitment of CONCORD and the EU in achieving gender equality becomes a reality.

To consult the EC Communication on Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment in Development Cooperation: [http://ec.europa.eu/development/body/theme/human\\_social/pol\\_gender2\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/development/body/theme/human_social/pol_gender2_en.htm)

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### NGOs feel excluded from the "Non-State Actors" and other thematic programmes

As you know, the European Commission has totally changed the way in which it will fund development aid from 2007 onwards. The new Development Co-operation Instrument (DCI), and the related geographic and thematic programmes, should mean more simplified and rationalised aid – amounting to a total of 16.8 billion Euro in 2007-2013.

Within the DCI, NGOs do in principle have access to all geographic and thematic programmes. The specific thematic programme on "Non-State actors and local authorities in development" (NSA/LA), however, will co-finance initiatives proposed and/or carried out by civil society organisations and local authorities and so is an actor-oriented programme that supports the right of initiative of NGOs. As for the other programmes, the European Commission (EC) has come up with an NSA-LA strategy paper 2007-2010 to make the general policies more concrete. This document is now going to be discussed in the DCI committee of the Council and probably also by the European Parliament (under its right of scrutiny).

CONCORD has analysed the NSA/LA and other of the EC's strategies and is seriously worried. There are many good intentions and promises, in the DCI regulation texts and in the strategy papers, to respond to initiatives from NGOs and to involve civil society in the EU's development policies and their implementation. But CONCORD concern is that these will be lost through the implementation of the thematic programmes, or through geographic programming, the main instrument. CONCORD fears that the practice will be very different from the rhetoric, because already the reality at EC level shows that:

- ◆ There is little commitment to opening up geographic programmes to CSOs.
- ◆ There is a perceptible and strong tendency to use thematic programmes for influencing global agendas at the expense of responding directly to innovative and valuable CSO initiatives.
- ◆ There are no clear guidelines from the European Commission Headquarters to the EC Delegations on best practice as regards the Call for Proposals procedure or the definition of eligibility criteria. This could lead to irregular and unpredictable calls for proposals and arbitrary selection procedures.
- ◆ Proposed procedures for the implementation of the Thematic Strategy Papers do not include consultation with civil society.
- ◆ There is increased attention given to focus countries, where it is unclear how the countries have been chosen.
- ◆ There is hardly any contact or discussion between the geographic and thematic desks at the European Commission, resulting in a lack of clarity regarding the complementarity between the thematic and geographic programmes.

CONCORD has sent urgent letters to Member States and the secretariat of the Development Committee in the European Parliament to alert them and to ask for their support and careful scrutiny.

CONCORD has also contributed to the own-initiative report by MEP Pierre Schapira (France, PSE, also President of [Euro-cities](#)) on the "Role of local authorities in development" which was adopted on 15 March by the European Parliament. This report reflects on the moves in the sector of decentralised cooperation and pleads for a broader role

for local authorities in the definition, implementation and evaluation of EU development policies and in the process of managing aid from EU funds. It argues that local authorities are entitled to manage EU aid for three reasons: they have electoral legitimacy; they are much closer to citizens, have experience of local needs and help increase participation by the population; and, finally, local authorities have gained experience in a wide variety of development-related areas. Consequently, the report suggests focusing on decentralisation in the geographic programmes to be revised in 2008/2009, and calls on the Commission to increase funding for "NSAs".

The report also tackle the relations between local authorities and civil society: on the one hand, it stresses the "*need to promote dialogue between local authorities and Non State Actors*" for the purpose of acting in a complementary and coherent manner in the implementation of local development projects funded by the European Union. On the other , the text considers that "*it is important to make a clear distinction between the specific role of local authorities and that of NSAs, in terms of their sphere of competence, legitimacy, and experience (...)*". NGOs are indeed often criticised for lacking the needed "legitimacy" because they are not formally representative of a constituency. However, the several million citizens working in or supporting about 3,000 European NGOs can be considered a source of legitimacy. Development NGOs are also recognised as contributing valuable skills and expertise.

In a way, MEPs do recognise the representative role played by CONCORD, as the report calls on the Commission to "*establish a partnership with a platform of European associations representing local authorities active in the field of cooperation and modelled on CONCORD*" in order to facilitate dialogue and cooperation with the EU institutions.

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### A vision of development awareness in Europe for the 21st century

On 26 February the first European Multi-stakeholder Development Education (DE) Steering Group meeting took place to develop a common vision of what Development awareness in Europe should be for the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

There is strong evidence to suggest that a general public that is more informed (and critical) about global development issues is vital in order to sustain the political will of European governments to meet their Millennium Development Goal (MDG) commitments. In short, countries that are higher spenders on development awareness have, in general, higher ODA/GNI ratios. Despite this, there is, to date, no overarching European policy framework on development education and public awareness to support and complement the work at EU Member-State level.

For the first time, representatives from a broad array of civil society, governmental and inter-governmental organisations have now started to concretely spell out what could be a European development education policy framework, why, and through what process. Representatives from the current German Presidency, the future Portuguese Presidency, and the Belgian, Polish and Irish Ministries of Foreign Affairs/Development; the European Commission; the OECD Development Centre; UNDP Slovakia; the North-South Centre of the Council of Europe; Global Education Network Europe (GENE); the European Youth Forum; DEEEP (Development Education Exchange in Europe Project); and CONCORD's Development Education Forum (DEF) are holding discussions within a Steering Group.

This group has agreed that the Strategic Framework should be partly a "Vision", containing challenging, forward-looking political thinking on DE/AR in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, and should at the same time be partly a practitioner's guide, complete with practical tools and guidelines. The focus will be on the EU, although it will deal with global issues and general principles and objectives and so will not be Euro-centric. The Vision will also stress the strong coherence between national and EU policies, and between all the activities of the stakeholders involved. Its broad aim will be to ensure greater understanding of development issues among the European public. Its precise objectives and structure are being worked on. The =Vision will be a tool to support the work of all the stakeholders. Emphasis will be put on quality, highlighting best practice, and it will be self-critical and forward-looking, offering a long-term vision for DE/AR beyond 2015 and the Millennium Development Goals. This could be a specific follow-up to the 2005 European Consensus for Development, and a contribution to Wallström's Plan D for Democracy, Dialogue and Debate.

The Steering Group will continue to develop firm proposals on the Vision to present to the wider plenary group of DE/AR experts, hopefully in the autumn. As its aim is to support existing coordination structures and parallel processes, relevant external events by the different stakeholders will be fed into the work of the Vision. One of these events will be the DEEEP Summer School on "Achieving the MDGs: the role of Development Education" which will be held in Slovakia from 26 June to 2 July. DEEEP will be sure to keep you updated of the developments of this multi-stakeholder process – now that it has well and truly kicked off!

For further information: Adam Davies ([a.davies@deEEP.org](mailto:a.davies@deEEP.org)), DEEEP Advocacy Officer.



- ◆ Globalisation causing interdependence on all major fronts of human endeavour;
- ◆ Credible leadership to bring about effective democratic global governance.”

To be legitimate, this leadership needs to rely on long-standing values that can inspire people within and outside Europe. These include respect for human rights, democracy and the rule of law, social justice, equality between women and men, non-discrimination, solidarity and protection of the environment.

For further information or to see the e-card, click [here](#) to read the Civil Society Contact Group statement.

## DG Development shows steps taken to enhance Policy Coherence for Development

*"Even though the concept of policy coherence for development (PCD) was enshrined in the Treaties a long time ago, the issue has never made it all the way up to Commissioner level. Until now",* reflected Bernard Petit, Deputy Director-General, at DG Development's meeting on this topic, on 1 March. Since October 2006, a rolling Work Programme on Policy Coherence for Development has been approved by the Member States of the European Union.

Policy coherence is all about optimising policy decisions, about the balancing of different interests. Policy coherence for development means that the possible impact on developing countries of EU policy decisions is seriously taken into account. Naturally, the EU still faces trade-offs between legitimate interests that are not necessarily compatible. *"Things have changed, however, since the adoption of the MDG package",* stressed Bernard Petit, *"development is not always losing out any more".*

Apart from the inevitable conflicts of interests, he identifies two other main challenges for the future, in terms of PCD. First, the divergent positions of member states on policy issues such as agriculture and fisheries. The ACP themselves, however, are not exactly a homogenous group of countries either. *"We are ambitious but realistic,"* Petit underlined. In order to take progress on PCD further, discussion and consultation with civil society and NGOs remain important.

The meeting on 1 March was organised by DG Development to demonstrate, first and foremost, how the EU implements mechanisms and tools that lead to improved coherence between development policy and other policy areas. *"The new unit A/1, forward-looking policy agenda and PCD, has become the focal point for PCD within the Commission,"* explained Françoise Moreau, Head of Unit. She pointed out that, indeed, as was suggested by the EU Coherence Programme, the role of the Secretariat-General of the Commission – responsible for the overall coordination between the different DGs – has been increased, now that the Inter-service Consultation Group has become an official Commission working group. Last but not least, the Impact Assessment System, which evaluates the consequences of new policy proposals, now contains a section devoted to PCD.

The first Biennial Report on PCD is currently being prepared by the Commission on the basis of a questionnaire sent out to all the Member States. *"It will be a kind of naming and shaming exercise, demonstrating what the European Commission and the Member States have done to keep their commitments to policy coherence for development,"* commented Petit. The PCD Report is due in October of this year.

It is clear that strong commitment within DG Development has led to the improved functioning of the different mechanisms within the Commission structures, designed to enhance PCD. However, DG Development by itself cannot guarantee that development-friendly alternatives to policy proposals will be seriously contemplated in all policy areas. Efforts should now be aimed at communicating the importance of PCD to other DGs as well.

For further information: Else Boonstra, EU Coherence Programme, [www.eucoherence.org](http://www.eucoherence.org)

## THE EUROPE FILES

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This column reports on the new appointments made in the last month, both in development NGOs and in the EU institutions.

### European NGOs

- ★ Oxfam: Alexander Woolcombe, [alexander.woolcombe@oxfaminternational.org](mailto:alexander.woolcombe@oxfaminternational.org), is the new press officer of the Brussels office.
- ★ Belgium: the new general address for SOS Faim Belgique is: [info.be@sosfaim.org](mailto:info.be@sosfaim.org).
- ★ Hanna Lauha is the new EU Project Advisor at the Finnish NGDO Platform to the EU: [hanna.lauha@kehys.fi](mailto:hanna.lauha@kehys.fi)

- ★ Mrs Aoife Black is the new EU Policy and Advocacy officer of Trócaire (Ireland): [ablack@trocaire.ie](mailto:ablack@trocaire.ie)
- ★ Richard Bennett is taking a six-month sabbatical from BOND, from Easter until early October. His direct replacement as Acting General Secretary is Charlotte Imbert, currently Learning & Training Manager.

#### EU institutions

- ★ European Parliament: MEP Mircea Cosea of Romania, previously a member of the Alliance for Liberals and Democrats for Europe (ALDE) group, has joined the far-right group, Identity, Tradition and Sovereignty (ITS). [POST, Joop](#) (Netherlands-EPP-DE) and [PUSCAS, Vasile](#) (Romania, PES) are replacing [EURLINGS, Camiel](#) and [CORLĂTEAN, Titus](#) respectively.
- ★ European Commission: Louis Michel, the European commissioner for development policy and humanitarian aid, will be taking unpaid leave from the Commission from 12 May to 10 June. His post will be filled temporarily by Olli Rehn, the Finnish commissioner for enlargement.

### CONFERENCES ORGANISED BY CONCORD AND ITS MEMBERS

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#### 2007

- ★ 12 March: Pan-European conference for the German Presidency on European Partnership Agreements and Africa – Bonn. Contact: [easin@concordeurope.org](mailto:easin@concordeurope.org)
- ★ 14 March: Web 2.0 training, in partnership with Euforic-Brussels, CONCORD office: [aphilippart@concordeurope.org](mailto:aphilippart@concordeurope.org)
- ★ 25-26 March: TRIALOG central training – Estonia or Romania. Info: [www.trialog.or.at](http://www.trialog.or.at)
- ★ 26-27 April: Seminar on capacity-buildings in the national platforms – co-organised by CONCORD, Coprogram, Coordination Sud and Acodev – Brussels. Info: [avogt@concordeurope.org](mailto:avogt@concordeurope.org)
- ★ 25 June - 2 July: DEEEP Summer School on "Achieving the Millennium Development Goals: the role of development education" – Slovakia. Info: [www.deeep.org](http://www.deeep.org) – Zuzana Deáková, [secretariat@mvro.sk](mailto:secretariat@mvro.sk) or Angelo Caserta, DEEEP Co-ordinator, [a.caserta@deeep.org](mailto:a.caserta@deeep.org).

#### 2008

- ★ Summer: CONCORD/DEEEP Summer School on "Getting poverty on the political agenda, the role of Development Education" – the Netherlands (tbc)

### FORTHCOMING WORK MEETINGS

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- ★ 13 April: CONCORD Board meeting – Brussels
- ★ 26 April: Advisory group – Brussels
- ★ 23-25 May: Development Education Forum – Luxembourg
- ★ 7-8 June:  CONCORD General Assembly – Brussels
- ★ 12-13 June: FDR meeting – Brussels
- ★ 26 June - 2 July: Development Education Summer School – Slovakia
- ★ 28 June: CONCORD Board meeting – Bratislava
- ★ 6 September (tied to Aid Watch seminar) – Brussels (tbc)
- ★ 25 September: CONCORD Board meeting – Brussels
- ★ 23-24 October: FDR meeting – Brussels
- ★ 24-25 October: Development Education Forum – Brussels
- ★ 26 November: Advisory group – Brussels
- ★ 27-28 November: CONCORD second General Assembly – Brussels (tbc)

For further details on any of these CONCORD-related activities please do not hesitate to contact the CONCORD Secretariat or check the extranet.

### OTHER NEWSLETTERS

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- ◆ Have a look at the [newsletters of CONCORD members](#).

- ◆ [Trialog](#): latest news of this project aiming to raise awareness of development issues in the enlarged EU and to strengthen dialogue and partnerships between development NGOs in accession countries, EU countries and developing countries.
- ◆ [Deeep](#) (Development Education Exchange in Europe Project): this second issue of *Development Education Times* will provide you with information on upcoming events, resources and publications related to development education as well as a range of articles dealing with funding opportunities for Development NGOs.
- ◆ [CSCG](#) (Civil Society Contact Group): the CSCG brings together eight large European NGO platforms in the following fields: culture (EFAH), development (CONCORD), environment (Green 10), human rights (HRDN), lifelong learning (EUCIS), public health (EPHA), social (Social Platform) and women (EWL) to develop the dialogue between civil society organisations and the European institutions as an essential part of strengthening participatory democracy.
- ◆ Euforic News: [click here to subscribe](#) and discover the latest news about development.
- ◆ [German NGO Presidency](#) : Newsletter No 4 of the EU Presidency Project of VENRO (12th April 2007)