

**“EUROPEAN NON-STATE
ACTORS AND LOCAL
AUTHORITIES THEMATIC
PROGRAMME”**

December 2007

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This update note can be downloaded on www.concordeurope.org.

We will also provide translation in French, Spanish and German.



UPDATE NOTE FOR INDIVIDUAL NGOS AND CSOs ON THE "EUROPEAN NON-STATE ACTORS AND LOCAL AUTHORITIES THEMATIC PROGRAMME"

December 2007

Introduction

The "Non-State Actors and Local Authorities in development" (NSA-LA) is the new European Union's thematic program to support small scale initiatives proposed and carried out by civil society organisations and local authorities from Europe and partner countries in the area of development. This support is mainly focused on civil society organisations and is granted on the basis of their own proposals.

The NSA-LA annual budget for 2007 is € 207 million and this will rise gradually to approximately € 224 million by 2010. The NSA-LA Thematic Strategy Paper (TSP) 2007 -10 guides the overall allocation of resources and details of its three objectives. The **Annual Action Plan (AAP)** details the specific actions that will be funded under each objective and the countries in which support will be concentrated.

Every 7 years the European Union reviews its multi-annual spending plan and negotiates the resources to be allocated to different policy areas. This process is called the "Financial Perspectives". In the framework of the Financial Perspectives 2007-2013, the **European Commission (EC)** has rationalised and simplified the instruments of its external assistance¹. As a result, the "NGO co-financing" - former B7-6000 - and "de-centralised cooperation" budget lines are now succeeded by the "Non-State Actors and Local Authorities in development" (NSA-LA) thematic programme under the Development Coordination Instrument (DCI).

In December 2007, the first calls for proposals under this new system will come out and will be published on the EC website <http://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/>. In order to inform European NGOs and their local partners, CONCORD² has made this update note based on the NSA-LA Strategy Paper 2007-2010³, the Annual Action Plan 2007 and some contacts with the European Commission.

CONCORD has worked during four years to bring constructive inputs in the programming of EC external aid support for civil society, but the final programme reflects only few of the expectations and proposals that we shared with the EC (see annex 2 about CONCORD contribution in the process of reformulating the NSA-LA thematic programme). It seems that the commitment of the EC to stakeholder consultation, in Europe and locally, remains weak, resulting in profound frustration among involved NGOs in Europe and their local partners.

CONCORD is not satisfied with the strategy and annual action plan. We especially question the EC's compromise in relation to the priority country list and the effect that the full decentralisation of calls for proposals will have on the

¹ "Europe as a global partner" works with five instruments: Development Co-operation Instrument, European Neighbourhood and Partnership Instrument – ENPI, Instrument of Pre-accession – IPA, Stability Instrument, and Human Rights and Democracy Instrument. The DCI has geographic programmes and five thematic programmes: Non-state actors and Local Authorities, Food security, Investing in People (human and social development), Environment, and Migration and Asylum. Some specific update notes are available from CONCORD.

² CONCORD is the con-federation representing European NGOs for relief and development at European level. Its 22 national associations and 20 international networks represent over 1600 European NGOs that are supported by millions of European citizens.

³ http://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/where/worldwide/civil-society/index_en.htm

workloads of the delegations, particularly when there is not enough capacity in the delegation⁴ at present. In addition to this, the decentralisation of calls for proposals will lead to the risk that local calls for proposals will not fit with the central objective of the NSA-LA. This central objective, that CONCORD advocated for and that we have safeguarded, is the "right of initiative" of civil society.

That is why CONCORD has not endorsed the NSA-LA strategy or the Annual Action Plan, but we realise that NGOs need to deal with it for the current year. CONCORD will aim to ensure that more of its views and feedback are addressed in the next AAP for this the NSA-LA thematic programme.

1 Objectives of the programme

The new thematic programme "Non State Actors and Local Authorities in Development" should be seen as the successor to former budget lines "NGO Co-financing" and "Decentralised Co-operation" and aims at supporting small scale initiatives proposed or carried out by civil society organisations and local authorities from Europe and partner countries in the area of development. This thematic programme recognises the very important role that civil society and local authorities should be able to play as development actors in each country.

The three principal objectives of the NSA-LA programme for 2007-2013 are:

- **Objective 1:** Actions in partner countries to "promote an inclusive and empowered society in partner countries to facilitate non-state actor (NSA) and local authority participation in poverty reduction and sustainable development strategies"
- **Objective 2:** Actions in Europe to "promote awareness raising and development education in the EU and acceding countries for development issues"
- **Objective 3:** Networking in Europe to "facilitate coordination and communication of NSA and local authority networks in the EU and acceding countries"

For objective 1, the annual action plan 2007 sets out two types of interventions. This could change in the future, but at least in the call for proposals 2007 they are:

- (i) In-country interventions taking place in a single partner country. These actions have to take place in one of the 68 priority countries⁵ and are managed by local EC Delegations.
- (ii) (a) Global, multi-country interventions and; (b) actions in Least Developed Countries or Low Income Countries not included on the country priority list. These actions (a) and (b) are managed by EC headquarters in Brussels. "Multi-country" means at least two countries.

For objective 1 (i) priorities will be decided by the local delegations and integrated in the local calls for proposals. They will be published at country level and on the website of the local EC Delegations. A full list of Delegations can be found at http://ec.europa.eu/external_relations/delegations/intro/web.htm

For objective 1 (ii) priority will be given to global, multi-country actions with a multi-actor approach comprising activities aimed at:

- (a) improving the capacity to engage in local, national and international decision making processes;
- (b) improving international linkages and networking between non-state actors and local authorities from the European Community and from the partner countries;
- (c) providing innovative service delivery and service delivery in difficult / out of reach environments;
- (d) strengthening strategic partnerships, networks and cooperation between non-state actors and local authorities from the partner countries;
- (e) facilitating interaction between state and non-state actors in different contexts and support an increased role for local authorities in decentralisation processes.

⁴ Experience of support to non-state actors under the 9th EDF shows that European Commission delegations were unable to put in place the systems to organise calls for proposals. Out of the 2.7% it was planned to allocate from all national budgets, only 0.6% was actually allocated.

⁵ See annex 1.

For objective 2 priority will be given to actions covering the following themes:

- (a) Public support for the MDG agenda, with a particular focus on sub-Saharan Africa;
- (b) Coherence for development, with a particular focus on areas of public interest where common goals with development are important such as migration, trade (including Fair Trade), security, human rights, social dimension of globalisation and decent work, environment, and HIV/AIDS
- (c) Media and development.

NOTE

Support by the EC in the NSA-LA needs to be “subsidiary and complementary to geographic programs”, which is sometimes misunderstood as meaning that all projects with civil society should now be funded through the NSA-LA thematic programme. This is not true because, within the DCI instrument, NGOs do in principle have access to all geographic and thematic programs. This specific thematic program for Non-State Actors and Local Authorities, however, is an actor-oriented program that supports the right of initiative of civil society.

This point must be highlighted by NGOs and CSOs at country level when they join discussions or consultations with the EC Delegation.

CONCORD will monitor the implementation of this 1st year local call for proposals and asks all NGOs and partners to inform us about problems and limitations that you would face in the coming months! You can contact us through networks or national platforms that are member of CONCORD or you can contact directly Alwin Loeckx, aloeckx@concordeurope.org.

Based on all this information and feedback from you, CONCORD will (without naming any specific NGO or CSO) contact the competent EC Headquarter services to contribute to solving the main problems of calls and consultations and to input into the next 2008 Annual Action Plan.

2 Applicants: wider access and open for local civil society

The NSA-LA is open for applications from so-called Non-State Actors (NSA) and local authorities from Europe and partner countries. NSA would include development NGOs and other civil society organisations (CSO) such as academic institutions, political foundations, trade unions... 85% of the funding shall be allocated to NGOs and other NSA and 15% is reserved for local authorities in Europe and the South.

The former budgetline for NGO co-financing was open for applications by European NGOs only, with local partners, but now local organisations can apply directly under objective 1. CONCORD has supported the proposal of direct local access to “strengthen the participation of civil society in partner countries and to support its role in building people’s participation in their own development”⁶.

⁶ See annex 3 or download “CONCORD Vision Towards a True Partnership between the EC and Civil Society Organisations: The role of the future CSO thematic programme” (November 2005) from www.concordeurope.org or directly at http://www.concordeurope.org/Files/media/internetdocumentsENG/4_Publications/3_CONCORDs_positions_and_studies/Positions%2020032006/060201-CSO-vision.pdf

3 Country priority list and further deconcentration

The NSA-LA will “co-finance initiatives proposed or carried out by civil society organizations and local authorities” and so is an **actor-oriented program that supports the right of initiative**. Nevertheless, you are not completely free to propose whatever project, because the NSA-LA gives certain priorities for all 3 objectives. These priorities remain in general quite open, but for objective 1 (i) the European Commission made a controversial country priority list with 68 countries (see annex 1). In these 68 countries, the local EC Delegation will write the local calls for proposals and they will manage the contract locally. **The right of initiative of NGOs and civil society risks being pre-empted by allowing the local delegations to narrow down the eligibility and thematic priorities of each call for proposals. That is why we invite NGOs to contact the EC delegations to limit such risk.**

Also, it is not clear how the country priority list was developed. In principle priority should be given to interventions in countries where:

- (a) the country situation is not conducive to ensuring civil society and local authority involvement in the development process, including difficult partnerships, unstable situations, conflict, poor governance, etc.;
- (b) specific needs of parts of the population are not addressed in the partner country development strategy (the strategic frame of cooperation between the EC and the national government) and population groups are out of reach of mainstream services and resources, and excluded from the policy-making process.

In reality however, the choice of countries seems to have been a mix of political priorities and the different capacity and interest of local EC Delegations to work through the NSA-LA.

CONCORD lobbied for equal treatment of all LDC and LIC countries, as it was in the former NGO co-financing budget line, and was therefore against a country priority list. As a result, the EC amended its Annual Action Plan for NSA-LA and will also issue a central call for proposals for other countries, namely all LDCs and LICs not included in the list of 68 priority countries. However, there is 80% less budget foreseen for these countries.

CONCORD DECONCENTRATION MONITORING

Since 2005 CONCORD has been monitoring the deconcentration of EC contract management via an analysis of concrete examples of experiences provided by its members and individual NGOs. The objective is to identify weaknesses where they exist and to foster good management practices in a committed and sustainable way.

By identifying issues that regularly cause problems between civil society organisations (CSOs) and EC Delegations, general solutions are proposed that should improve both practice and relations between the EC Delegations and CSOs. The monitoring exercise is not designed to “name and shame” individual delegations or to create additional tensions, nor to take up CSOs’ individual management problems, or to attempt to identify individuals involved either at EC Delegation, Brussels or CSO level.

The second deconcentration report makes the following recommendations to the European Commission: structured dialogue between the European Commission and CSOs to be instigated; further investment in a manual for all users of the Standard Contract; clear lines of authority for the arbitration of disagreements and final decision-making over the interpretation of rules; and regular and on-going training on the Standard Contract and its management at delegation level.

CONCORD also made, together with the EC, a reader with interpretations of the 2003 version of the EuropeAid Grant Standard Contract for external actions (see a bit further).

In 2008, CONCORD will monitor more closely the whole process of local calls for proposals and consultation with local civil society. We will compare eligibility and thematic priorities with the objectives that are set out in the NSA-LA strategy and annual action plan and then engage into discussing with EC Headquarters to find concrete solutions and improvement for the following calls.

4 Calls for proposals & budget 2007

The general calls from Brussels (objectives 1 (ii), 2 and 3) should come out by the end of 2007. The timing for the concept notes will take into account the holidays, which means that the EC will add 2 weeks extra on top of the 45 days, as they did last year.

The local calls by the EC Delegations (objective 1 (i)) have no set timetable yet. It will be up to each Delegation to decide when to issue the call, so **the calls can go out at different times. The only certainty is that calls will be issued no later than February 2008**, as contracts need to be signed before the end of 2008. All these calls for proposals will be published on Delegation websites (http://ec.europa.eu/external_relations/delegations/intro/web.htm) and also on the EuropeAid website <http://ec.europa.eu/europeaid>.

Indicative budget for calls for proposals 2007:

	Non-State Actors	Local Authorities
Objective 1 (i): priority countries ⁷	€ 99.265.000	€ 10.685.000
Objective 1 (ii): global / multi-country	€ 27.209.000	€ 7.838.500
Objective 1 (ii): individual countries that are not on the priority list	€ 23.178.900	€ 6.676.500
Objective 2: development education	€ 24.800.000	€ 4.200.000

There will be no limit to the number of proposals that can be submitted by organisations for the multi-country or in-country call for proposal. For country-based calls under objective 1 (i), managed by the EC Delegations, there are indicative pots of funding already allocated (see annex 1), therefore NGOs can decide if it is worthwhile to make more than one application per country.

You will not be judged on the number of submissions that you make for a country level or multi-country level intervention even if submissions cover the same countries in the both sets of applications. Assessment will be done according to the points awarded and the level of funding available in each funding envelope.

The maximum possible rate of EC co-financing for objective 1 (i) and 1 (ii) is 75% of the action total eligible costs for European Non State Actors and Local Authorities and 90% of the action total eligible costs for partner countries Non State Actors and Local Authorities.

Grants awarded under objective 1 (i) must fall between a minimum of € 20.000 and a maximum of € 1.000.000 (for 5 years together). Each Delegation may determine the minimum and maximum amounts of grants, provided these amounts stay within the abovementioned limits.

Grants awarded under objective 1 (ii) must fall between € 500.000 (for 5 years together) and € 4.000.000 for global/multi-country interventions and between € 20.000 and € 1.000.000 for interventions in Least Developed or Low Income Countries that are not on the priority country list.

For development education (objective 2) the maximum possible rate of EC co-financing is 75% of the action total eligible costs. Grants awarded must fall between € 100,000 (for 3 years together) and € 1,000,000. Exceptionally, and exclusively for actions proposed by organisations from the 12 New Member States, the rate of EC co-financing can correspond to 90% of the action total eligible costs and the grant awarded can be as low as € 25,000.

The co-financing by the NGO would apparently no longer be split between e.g. 15% private and 10% European sources, so it could come from anywhere in the world. This needs to be confirmed.

⁷ Exact allocations in annex 1

5 PADOR online application

The European Commission is setting up a system in which you can register and apply online for calls for proposals: Potential Applicant Data On-line Registration (PADOR)⁸. This should simplify administration for NGOs, because you no longer have to re-introduce the same documents about experience, legal status, etc. for each application!

In principle, registration in PADOR will not be compulsory for the NSA-LA call 2007 yet. After the launch of PADOR by end of 2007, registration in PADOR will be compulsory only for a few calls for proposals as test-phase. The obligation, or not, to register in PADOR will be specified in each call for proposals.

CONCORD has contributed to this new registration system with the aim of simplifying management burden. We will be monitoring the system with the EC to assess if this new mechanism is really responding to NGO/CSO expectations! If you face some structural difficulties with this new system, please inform us as well. You can contact us through networks or national platforms that are member of CONCORD or you can contact directly Alwin Loeckx, aloeckx@concordeurope.org.

6 Application stages

Calls for proposals will in a first round ask for a concept note for projects, instead of full project proposals. These concept notes will be graded and the best are retained.

Applicants who pass this first stage will then be notified of the deadline for submitting a full application form.

7 Standard grant contract

A modified standard grant contract will be issued for funding under the NSA-LA. CONCORD will work with the European Commission on a reader with clarification and interpretation, as it has done in the past for the standard grant contract 2003 and 2005.

CONCORD READER ON FINANCIAL REGULATION

At the beginning 2007, CONCORD presented an English reader with interpretations of the 2003 version of the EuropeAid Grant Standard Contract for external actions. The Standard Contract sets out the rules that apply to grants from the Commission within the framework of external actions. The reader is a tool that is helping CONCORD members and other NGOs to better address contractual issues with the EC delegations.

The reader for version 2003 was compiled in 2004 - 2006 by CONCORD, through regular meetings with Europe Aid unit F3 - Financial and contractual matters. The reader gives a clear explanation on all articles in the Standard Contract and also indicates differences with the 2000 version. The European Commission endorsed the work that has been done on this reader.

CONCORD is working on an update of the reader for the Standard Grant Contracts versions 2006 and 2007, but in the meantime we have published a French and Spanish translation of the 2003 reader⁹.

⁸ <http://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/onlineservices/pador>

⁹ Download English, French and Spanish reader from www.concordeurope.org

8 Gender

CONCORD has a strong commitment to gender equality and has identified the strengthening of gender & development awareness and work within as a cross-cutting issue and key to achieving development objectives. That is why we encourage all NGO/CSO to integrate gender in their projects.

The European Union has also strongly committed itself to promoting gender equality and women's rights in all its actions, including in its policies relating to the promotion of rights and the eradication of poverty. These commitments are clearly reaffirmed in the European Consensus for Development and the new EU strategy launched this year 'Gender Equality and Women Empowerment in Development Cooperation'.

Gender equality is not a conditionality, it is enshrined in a number of political and international agreements (Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), MDGs, Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action) and is a development objective in its own right.

Although gender equality is one of the priority themes of the EC "Investing in People" thematic programme, it should also be mainstreamed throughout all the other thematic programmes, such as the NSA-LA.

9 Call for engagement and feedback

CONCORD hopes that this update note helps you to better understand the political and practical orientations of the Non-State Actors and Local Authorities thematic programme. **We encourage NGOs and other civil society organisations to engage into discussions and consultation in a coherent and coordinated way with all the EC Delegations.**

CONCORD needs your contributions, input and feedback in order to improve the following calls for proposals. As confederation we represent 1600 European NGOs for relief and development at European level through our 22 national European associations and 20 international networks. CONCORD leads reflection and political actions and regularly engages in dialogue with the European institutions and other civil society organisations.

Our Funding for Development and Relief (FDR) working group works proactively on EU funding policies and priorities to promote access to funding for civil society, on the allocation of funds to these priorities (including analysis of statistics) and on the EU funding process and organisation. The FDR will lobby on all problems relating to EC funding (objectives, procedures, delays, transparency, efficiency, communication and information policy) on the basis of the positions developed through the policy work.

Thanks for your support and feedback on this update note!

Annex 1 - Country priority list for objective 1 (i)

Below is the list of countries and indicative allocations where it will be possible to apply for NSA-LA funding under objective 1 (i) of the 2007 Annual Action Plan (AAP), so through the local call for proposals. These countries and the allocations can be changed in the coming years. For LIC and LDC countries that are not in this list, you can apply through objective 1 (ii).

BL 21.03.01: Non State Actors in Development

BL 21.03.02: Local Authorities in Development

African, Caribbean and Pacific countries

	BL 21.03.01	BL 21.03.02	TOTAL
Angola	2.500.000 €		2.500.000 €
Cameroun	2.000.000 €		2.000.000 €
Chad	900.000 €	100.000 €	1.000.000 €
Congo Brazzaville	1.000.000 €		1.000.000 €
Cuba	250.000 €		250.000 €
DRC	1.250.000 €		1.250.000 €
Equatorial Guinea	200.000 €		200.000 €
Eritrea	250.000 €		250.000 €
Guinea Bissau	2.500.000 €		2.500.000 €
Guinea Conakry	500.000 €		500.000 €
Guyana	700.000 €	300.000 €	1.000.000 €
Ivory Coast	2.000.000 €		2.000.000 €
Kenya	3.375.000 €		3.375.000 €
Madagascar	1.500.000 €		1.500.000 €
Malawi		400.000 €	400.000 €
Mozambique	2.500.000 €	500.000 €	3.000.000 €
PNG	1.000.000 €		1.000.000 €
RCA	2.150.000 €	350.000 €	2.500.000 €
Rwanda	1.800.000 €	200.000 €	2.000.000 €
Samoa	250.000 €		250.000 €
Sierra Leone	2.550.000 €	450.000 €	3.000.000 €
Somalia	2.500.000 €		2.500.000 €
Sudan	3.000.000 €		3.000.000 €
Swaziland (*)	750.000 €		750.000 €
Uganda	2.000.000 €		2.000.000 €
Vanuatu	250.000 €		250.000 €
Zambia	2.000.000 €	750.000 €	2.750.000 €
Zimbabwe	1.700.000 €	300.000 €	2.000.000 €
TOTAL	41.375.000 €	3.350.000 €	44.725.000 €

Central and South America countries

	BL 21.03.01	BL 21.03.02	TOTAL
Argentina	375.000 €	250.000 €	625.000 €
Bolivia	2.500.000 €	500.000 €	3.000.000 €
Brazil	3.250.000 €	750.000 €	4.000.000 €
Chile	800.000 €	200.000 €	1.000.000 €
Colombia	2.050.000 €	450.000 €	2.500.000 €
Ecuador	2.000.000 €		2.000.000 €
El Salvador	1.700.000 €	300.000 €	2.000.000 €
Guatemala	2.000.000 €		2.000.000 €
Honduras	680.000 €	120.000 €	800.000 €
Nicaragua	2.050.000 €	450.000 €	2.500.000 €

Paraguay	510.000 €	90.000 €	600.000 €
Peru	1.750.000 €	250.000 €	2.000.000 €
Uruguay	350.000 €		350.000 €
Venezuela	1.900.000 €	100.000 €	2.000.000 €
TOTAL	21.915.000 €	3.460.000 €	25.375.000 €

Asia countries

	BL 21.03.01	BL 21.03.02	TOTAL
Bangladesh	3.000.000€		3.000.000€
Burma / Myanmar	2.000.000€		2.000.000€
Cambodia	2.500.000€		2.500.000€
China (*)	2.000.000€		2.000.000€
India	4.000.000€		4.000.000€
Indonesia	850.000€	150.000€	1.000.000€
Iran (*)	1.000.000€		1.000.000€
Kazakhstan	300.000€	300.000€	600.000€
Kyrgyzstan	600.000€		600.000€
Laos	2.050.000€	450.000€	2.500.000€
Mongolia (*)	1.000.000€		1.000.000€
Nepal	2.000.000€		2.000.000€
North Korea (*)	500.000€		500.000€
Pakistan	1.700.000€	300.000€	2.000.000€
Philippines	2.100.000€	400.000€	2.500.000€
Sri Lanka	1.000.000€		1.000.000€
Tajikistan	750.000€		750.000€
Uzbekistan (*)	375.000€	375.000€	750.000€
Vietnam	850.000€	150.000€	1.000.000€
TOTAL	28.575.000€	2.125.000€	30.700.000€

Eastern Europe, Mediterranean and Middle East

	BL 21.03.01	BL 21.03.02	TOTAL
Armenia	750.000€	750.000€	1.500.000€
Azerbaijan (*)	1.000.000€		1.000.000€
Belarus	750.000€	250.000€	1.000.000€
Georgia	1.700.000€	300.000€	2.000.000€
Syria	150.000€		150.000€
West Bank and Gaza Strip	2.000.000€		2.000.000€
Yemen	1.050.000€	450.000€	1.500.000€
TOTAL	7.400.000€	1.750.000€	9.150.000€

(*) For these countries the respective in-country programme may be managed by EC headquarters.

Annex 2 - CONCORD contribution in the process of reformulating the NSA-LA thematic programme: strategic and political background

"Myth and Reality"

In October 2003, and within the framework of discussions surrounding the financial perspectives 2007-2013, the European Commission (represented by its directors of DG DEV and EuropeAid), officially presented to Member-States, European Parliament and CSO representatives at Palermo the following challenges concerning the future of the NGO co-financing budget line:

1. **The question of eligible actors** to the NSA-LA thematic programme (focused in the past only on European actors)
2. **The question of merging the lines** "NGO co-financing" and "decentralised cooperation", both of which were focused on the role of actors.
3. **The question on the complementarity between geographic and thematic programmes**
4. **The question on the burden on management and administrative procedures of the budget lines**
5. **The hypothesis to reduce the "action radius" of the budget line** by establishing geographic, thematic (or sectoral) and/or actor focused priorities.
6. **The question on the impact of actions of CSOs** to feed into the future discussions and to ascertain the added value of this type of "programme" related to actors.

The European Commission asked all "parties" to the "quadrilogue" meeting in Palermo to engage in a process of dialogue in order to respond to these questions. After the Palermo meeting in 2003, the European Commission (namely EuropeAid Office) committed time and energy in **facilitating a inclusive and participative process of reflection and debate with all actors/institutions** to ensure that the proposals are clear, appropriate and "owned" by all parties. This approach was welcomed by the Member-States, CSOs (including CONCORD) and the European Parliament.

CONCORD responded pro-actively to these 6 questions, through a wide process of consultation of its constituency which included all its members, especially at national level. The results of this European wide consultation was presented in a "vision" document¹⁰ which was widely distributed in 2005. It contained following answers:

1. The question on eligibility of actors

From the beginning, CONCORD supported the proposal that the NSA-LA Thematic Programme should be opened to CSOs of the "South".

2. The question on merging the "NGO co-financing line" with "decentralised cooperation"

While recognising the important role of Local Authorities in development and the existing partnerships between Civil Society and Local Authorities, CONCORD proposed a separate thematic programme for Local Authorities in order to have an appropriate tool for each cluster of actors which responds to their reality and function. It is clear that Local Authorities, as part of the State institutions, have their own unique responsibilities and functions in relation to the Central State and the population/civil society.

3. The question on complementarity between geographic and thematic programmes

¹⁰ Download "CONCORD Vision Towards a True Partnership between the EC and Civil Society Organisations: The role of the future CSO thematic programme" (November 2005) from www.concordeurope.org or directly at http://www.concordeurope.org/Files/media/internetdocumentsENG/4_Publications/3_CONCORDs_positions_and_studies/Positions%2020032006/060201-CSO-vision.pdf

The European development NGOs, and CONCORD since its creation, have always called for a **better planning and complementarity between geographic and thematic programmes**, especially in relation to support to Civil Society (see official positions in relation to negotiations on the Cotonou Agreement, for example). In this context, CONCORD proposed to start at local level (facilitated by the EC Delegations) a process of open and planned consultations with (local and European) Civil Society. The CONCORD proposal was related to the design of the Country Strategy Papers (CSPs) which were being drafted at that stage. **The objective was to elaborate EU strategies concerning Civil Society in each of the partner countries.** These strategies "actor/country" would be finalised by the drafting of a note by the EC Delegation outlining which programme and/or instrument (geographic, thematic, etc...) would best respond to the overall strategy to achieve the specific country objectives (tool mix). This process has never been seriously and systematically addressed by the EC.

4. The question of the administrative burden and management of the budget line

CONCORD has had active discussions with EuropeAid services on: the system eligibility of CSOs (creation of PADOR), changes to financial procedures to respond to the reality in the field and especially to capacity of small and medium sized CSOs (Publication of the report "striking a balance" which was sent to the European Parliament's Commissions on Budget and Budget Control and to the Director of DG Budget; publication of a "reader" for CSOs and EC Delegations on the interpretation of the financial rules and regulation), the creation of "restricted" Calls for Proposal (Calls in two stages), annual reports by CONCORD on the reality of devolution (deconcentration) of the management of contracts, etc..

5. The hypothesis to reduce the actions radius for the budget line

From the very beginning, CONCORD rejected any "geographic", "thematic" or "actor" related focus of the budget line, proposing instead a focus on "supporting the strengthening of CSO partnerships: north-north, south-south, south-north and global. This proposal was, it seems, never seriously taken up by the European Commission, nor was it considered in their own internal reflections.

6. The question on impact of CSO actions

CONCORD participated actively in the preparation of a international seminar on impact and institutional culture of learning, together with the European Commission and the French government in 2005. This seminar proposed a series of concrete recommendations for all actors (European and "southern" CSO, Member-States, European Parliament and European Commission). Nothing has been done on the part of the EC to ensure follow-up to these recommendations.

All the CONCORD proposals are part of a global and coherent strategy with the following objectives:

- Strengthen the role and capacities of Civil Society, especially in developing countries
- Recognise the added value of a funding tool focused on "actors" (as against the traditional sectoral approaches) and partnership
- Put at the heart of the programme mechanisms which allow a real expression of need from the bottom up (right of initiative) as well as innovative approaches proposed by Civil Society
- Create a culture of dialogue and learning which strengthens strategic partnerships between the EC and Civil Society at Headquarter and country level.

Strengthening the strategic role of EC Delegations as "interlocuteurs" versus government as well as vis à vis Civil Society, while optimising the coherent use of different development cooperation instruments at their disposal (geographic, thematic etc.) was at the hearty of CONCORD contribution since 2003.

What do we find in the final NSA-LA Annual Action Plan 2007?

1. Thematic Programme is **open to actors from the South (at least in principle)**
2. **Single programme** covering both CSO actors and Local Authorities
3. **No strategic approach** towards CS actors in partner countries, but rather a theoretic approach full of confusion in regard to subsidiarity.

4. A decision to decentralise the Call for Proposals without any deeper thought (especially in relation to point 3). No major alignment of the financial rules which in practice leads to extreme difficulties in access to funding for Civil Society actors of partner countries (this is in contradiction with point 1).
5. No real approach to strengthening partnership, but instead a move to “geographise” this Thematic Programme, despite concerns and well argued dissenting opinions raised by all actors involved (MS, CSO and EP)
6. A clear lack of political will to capitalise on the joint process of learning.

As a final point, and in the framework of division of responsibilities between the Directorates General of the European Commission, DG Development, responsible for the programming of the thematic programmes, did not set up an open and inclusive process of consultation with relevant actors and did not respect the EC's own minimum standards for consultation.

The current result of the process after 4 years:

- An incoherent programme
- A major risk to lose the central objective of the programme, i.e. a non-respect of the “right of initiative” of CSOs.
- Profound frustration among actors involved in the process since the beginning at European and at (partner) country levels.