The meeting of the European Council in Copenhagen on 12 and 13 December 2002 marked an historic milestone in the ambitious process of the enlargement of the European Union. After the successful conclusion of accession negotiations, the Union is now ready to bring on board ten States as new members from 1 May 2004: Cyprus, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Poland, the Slovak Republic and Slovenia. These States will consequently play a very important role in shaping the future development of the European project. The next formal steps are stipulated in the Presidency Conclusions of the Copenhagen Council:

- The draft of the Accession Treaty should be completed and prepared to be signed in Athens on 16 April 2003.
- Commissioners from the new Member States will join the current Commission from 1 May 2004.
- The 2004 newly elected European Parliament will approve a new Commission that should take office on 1 November 2004.
- The new Member States will participate fully in the next Intergovernmental Conference.

The process and the ambitious time frame pose a variety of challenges to the European Union in all its areas of policy and implementation. The necessary institutional changes and reforms are discussed in the ongoing Convention process and decisions will be taken at the Intergovernmental Conference in 2004.

Civil society groups, especially NGOs in the current and new Member States will have to engage effectively with the Convention in order to ensure that the EU continues to play an important role in international development policy and development cooperation. The European Union is the largest contributor to Official Development Assistance (ODA), but its unique structure with a Commissioner, a General Directorate, and a Parliamentary Committee on Development and Cooperation is getting weaker. Accordingly, we, civil society representatives must lobby diligently to keep development issues on the agenda of new European constitutional, organisational and financial bodies.

TRIALOG was one of the first attempts to create links and partnerships with organisations in accession countries. Now, the first National Platforms of the accession countries are members of the new European NGDO confederation CONCORD. A special working group has been established within CONCORD to work on enlargement issues.

TRIALOG provides a framework to strengthen, intensify, coordinate and institutionalise civil society participation from accession countries in EU development policy and development cooperation issues. We are particularly proud of the working partnership that was established with the Canadian ODACE programme and other groups in 2002. In order to participate effectively in the formulation of coherent policies and aid programmes as well as assuring the access of civil society groups to resources for development, the focused and coordinated action of all participants is needed.

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TRIALOG’s first phase will end in September 2003. The main objectives are exchange and cooperation between NGOs in the EU Member States and the accession countries as well as raising public awareness concerning North-South issues. Consistent with these aims, the project has implemented a range of activities.

These are the starting points for all activities. The website and online database allow for a direct search for partners in the EU, accession countries and beyond.

TRIALOG staff and steering group members discussing TRIALOG issues.
Partners of TRIALOG's Seminar on Labour Issues

EU Enlargement and NGDOs April 2003

been set up by Portuguese speaking immigrants and legal issues. The Portuguese National Personnel Development Cooperation, focusing on accession country participants in a workshop on AGEH, one of the consortium partners, included awareness of enlargement among British NGDOs. Poland. The main objective of this visit was to organize a 2 week study visit for 5 NGOs from accession countries. BOND has study visits have been facilitated. BOND has NGDO Platforms as possible, various bilateral campaigns and advocacy.

Decentralized activities: bilateral seminars and study visits

As TRIALOG aims to involve as many National NGDO Platforms as possible, various bilateral study visits have been facilitated. BOND has organized a 2 week study visit for 5 NGOs from the Czech and Slovak Republics, Malta, and Poland. The main objective of this visit was to learn how a platform can work and to raise awareness of enlargement among British NGDOs. AGEH, one of the consortium partners, included accession country participants in a workshop on Personnel Development Cooperation, focusing on recruitment, preparation, supervision, evaluation and legal issues. The Portuguese National Platform has received a Slovak NGDO that has been set up by Portuguese speaking immigrants with the aim to initiate joint projects with Angola and Mozambique. During the Global Education Congress in Maastricht, 10 participants from accession countries met with members of the Dutch Platform and the Dutch MFA in order to exchange information and to establish first contacts.

In addition to this, TRIALOG supported the participation of 5 accession country representatives at the Development Education Forum, which met in Helsinki in November (for more information see page 5). The Asem4people meeting in Copenhagen, a parallel NGO meeting to the EU Council meeting welcomed the participation of 7 representatives of accession countries (organised by the Danish Platform). And finally, the preparatory meeting for the European Social Forum in Vienna welcomed 14 participants from accession countries.

Publications

In February 2002, TRIALOG published a study titled Development Policy in Candidate Countries by Lena Krichewsky. She authored this document during her three-months internship. High demand for the study, coupled with the progress being made over the past year has made a second printing necessary. The second edition includes new, updated material that relates to developments in this field since the first publication. For more information see page 8.

In September 2002, the second edition of TRIALOG's Policy Paper Development Cooperation in the Context of EU Enlargement was published and sent out to more than 600 addresses.

The Brussels Office

TRIALOG's Brussels office, targeting its efforts towards the European Institutions, did the follow-up work regarding the Policy Paper in order to increase or start the dialogue with the respective institutions. The visibility of TRIALOG was greatly enhanced during the year 2002, which can be verified by the increasing number of events, to which the Brussels policy officer was invited as a speaker. One of these events was the first seminar organised by the European Commission for government officials from accession countries in order to present the work of the Commission in all areas related to development policy and cooperation. In the course of the year 2002, also the contacts with missions of accession countries in Brussels, the European Parliament, the UN and many Brussels-based think-tanks, organisations and NGOs could be increased.

Outlook for TRIALOG phase II

The chief aim of all our activities has always been to encourage and promote exchange and cooperation. This has been achieved to a high degree. The three existing National Platforms of the accession countries have become full members of CONCORD. One of their representatives has even been elected to the Board.

In this third year of implementation, an external evaluation has been undertaken. The report states that the project has proved to be very relevant, effective, and efficient, as it addresses an urgent need for information and networking. Its conclusions and recommendations served as a starting point for the design of TRIALOG II (October 2003 - September 2006) that has been submitted to the European Commission this March.

In comparison with the current project, TRIALOG II will focus on the following five specific objectives:

- Facilitating the inclusion of NGDOs and their coordination bodies from accession countries into CONCORD and linking them with other relevant EU-NGDO networks
- Strengthening capacities of NGDOs and their coordination bodies from accession countries in order to participate in policy debates about development policies of the EU institutions and national governments and in order to be able to use the political and financial External Aid opportunities available at EU and national level
- Building institutional capacity of NGDOs in accession countries through the strengthening of National Platforms or other NGDO coordination bodies
- Providing opportunities for increased networking, information exchange, mutual learning, partnership and for joint projects between NGDOs from EU, accession countries and LDCs
- Increasing awareness of development issues, development concepts, paradigms and methodologies in order to ensure participation in international development discourses and activities.

In line with the achievements and experiences gained during the current project and being mindful of the needs of beneficiaries, TRIALOG II aims to strengthen the role of civil society in EU poverty eradication policies and to increase the capacity of the enlarged European Union to live up to its commitments to the Millennium Development Goals.

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Participants of TRIALOG's Seminar on Labour Issues
On January 30, 2003, CONCORD, the successor of the Liaison Committee of Development NGOs (CLONG) was founded. After two years of struggle, reorganisation, lots of brain work of a devoted group called the Founding Committee and even more consultation amongst old and new members, the difficult past could finally be left behind.

So, what is CONCORD?
CONCORD is the federation of NGOs for relief and development in Europe. Its members consist of 18 National Platforms\(^1\) and 10 Networks\(^2\), representing more than 1200 European NGDOs. Seven other networks have already applied for membership\(^3\).

With the establishment of CONCORD, NGDOs from Europe plan to renew their relationship with the EU institutions concerning development cooperation. They committed themselves to ensuring development policy and cooperation a place high on the political agenda of the European Institutions\(^4\).

From a TRIALOG perspective, we especially welcome the decision to instantly integrate the three existing National Platforms of the accession countries (Czech Republic, Malta, Slovak Republic) as full members of CONCORD, showing that the NGO movement is ahead of the official enlargement process.

TRIALOG is particularly proud of the fact, that Jan Plesinger (Chairman of the Czech National Platform) and Claudia Bonk (TRIALOG’s policy officer in Brussels) were elected to the newly established Management Board of CONCORD during the first General Assembly. The other members of the Management Board are Frans Polman (President, Dutch NP), Giampiero Aildaheff (Treasurer, Solidar), Bart Bode (Secretary, Cidse), Justin Kilcullen (Vicepresident, Irish NP), Carol Rask (Vicepresident, Aprodev), Elke Rusteberg (German NP), Niels Tofta (Danish NP), Jean-Louis Vielajus (French NP).

CONCORD’s main objectives are\(^5\):
- promoting the interests of our sector drawing on our strength as a movement, ensuring that the NGO movement is seen as legitimate, and receives the support of the European Institutions
- anticipating developments in North-South relations, ensuring that the NGOs not only respond to events, but help to shape the future agenda of European Development Cooperation
- coordinating cooperation among NGDOs in order to influence the political debate and policy formulation on development and humanitarian issues; improving the legitimacy and promoting firmly the political interests of European NGDOs as a whole as strategic partners to the European Union and Institutions
- ensuring stable and quality access to EU funding
- promoting the quality of NGDOs’ work, in particular regarding the relation with civil society in the South
- contributing to capacity building at NGDO level

The unique benefit of CONCORD is its capability to present a joint position of the NGO community in combining expertise, quality, representation, information sharing, capacity and knowledge.

CONCORD’s fundamental principles\(^6\):
- Full participation of all members is essential for the proposals of the confederation to be representative and effective
- To relate NGDO experience in the Southern countries to the work of the structure
- The Working Groups are to be the driving force of the structure
- As the driving force of the structure, the working groups will do the principle content work, come up with policy documents and plans for action etc. The working groups correspond to important policy areas and are of two types\(^1\):

The Core working groups
Core working groups are permanent, deal with the on-going interests of the NGOs and are included in the core budget of CONCORD. The groups are:
- The EU-NGO Funding Group
- The Development Education Forum
- The Presidencies Group

Thematic working groups
Thematic working groups are convened on an ad hoc basis to respond to various policy issues. If such a group wishes to have its position endorsed by CONCORD, or to speak on behalf of CONCORD, the Board’s consent is needed.

The existing working groups are:
- Cotonou (Convenor: Eurostep)
- Trade (Convenor: CIDSE)
- Funding for Global Development (Convenor: Eurodad)
- Enlargement (Convenor: TRIALOG)
- Food Security (Convenor: EuronAid)

CONCORD’s priorities for 2003
For the year 2003, a small number of issues have been identified as CONCORD’s main priorities. These are EU-NGO Funding, the Future of Development Cooperation and the European Convention, and Enlargement.

At the inauguration ceremony, the European Commission represented by Commissioner for Development and Humanitarian Aid, Poul Nielson congratulated CONCORD and emphasised the Commission’s willingness for ongoing partnership and dialogue. Eddy Boutmans, the Belgian Secretary of State for Development Cooperation, also praised the newly founded confederation and expressed his best wishes for ongoing joint efforts of NGOs and governments and enhanced dialogue.

CONCORD will join forces with all interest groups fighting for the eradication of poverty and wants to be seen as a serious partner for all stakeholders in Europe and the global South.

Claudia Bonk
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Another working group is felt to be necessary, tackling the issue of humanitarian aid. It might be established after the accession of Voice, who is seen as a suitable convenor for such a group.

A working group on enlargement
The Enlargement working group is a special case, because with TRIALOG, the convenor has the status of a project. In order to live up to the responsibilities of such a working group, TRIALOG has transformed its steering group into the working group. The focus of the group will be the needs of the NGDOs from accession countries. Therefore the aims of the group will be policy work, the exchange of experiences and best practices, enhancement of visibility on European level, and full integration and participation of NGDOs from accession countries in the other working groups.

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\(^1\) National Platforms: Austria, Belgium, Czech Republic, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Ireland, Italy, Luxembourg, Malta, Netherlands, Portugal, Slovakia, Spain, Sweden, United Kingdom.
\(^2\) Networks: Action Aid, Aprodev, Caritas, Cidse, Euronaid, Eurostep, Eurodad, FPF, Solider, Terre des Hommes.
\(^3\) Epo, EU-cord, Forum, Save the Children, Voice, Wide and World Vision.
\(^4\) Taken from CONCORD Flash no. 1, 30 January 2003.
\(^5\) ibid.
\(^6\) ibid.
\(^7\) ibid.
The ODACE Programme - Canadian activities in accession countries

West European development workers are sometimes surprised by the strong North American presence in Central and Eastern Europe. Their Polish or Hungarian counterparts, however, recognise that countries like Canada have a long history in the region: over one million Canadians trace their roots to the ex-Communist countries, and there has been strong Canadian support for democratic initiatives in the region, especially since the return to parliamentary democracy in 1989-91.

While many Canadians are uneasy about the rightward shift in Central European foreign policy (and an apparently uncritical support for US unilateralism), Canadian development workers are keen to learn from Central European experience in strengthening democracy in the Balkans and ex-USSR, and to share Canadian perspectives on development issues in the global South.

Our readers may be particularly interested in the ODACE programme of the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA). This five year programme seeks to consolidate the Official Development Assistance (ODA) delivery mechanisms of the Central European countries, and to strengthen local NGDOs and other groups that will help implement these activities and inform the Central European populations about global issues.

Between now and 2006 Canada will spend about 2 million Euro on financial support and advice to the ODA units within the foreign ministries of the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Poland, and Hungary. This institutional capacity building phase will be complemented with up to 7 million Euro of Canadian matching funds for ODA projects managed by Central European NGOs, universities or companies.

The Montreal-based NGO Alternatives has also been engaged to manage a capacity building programme for the NGDO sector in Central Europe. Activities so far include financial support and advice for national NGDO Platforms and study visits for NGDO staff to Canada or (preferred) to global South countries which are ODA priorities for Canada and the Central European countries. In December 2002 Pavel Pinkava of the Czech volunteer-placement agency INEX-SDA visited Morocco to see how local NGOs receive and supervise Canadian and other northern interns. In March, a mixed Polish-Czech-Hungarian-Slovak-Canadian team visited Afghanistan to evaluate humanitarian assistance there, and develop joint proposals for a more focused intervention. Up to 1 million Euro will be spent on these and other NGO capacity building activities.

The Canadian side is particularly interested in encouraging Central European NGDOs to move beyond humanitarian and physical reconstruction projects towards more development-oriented activities such as training, civil society development and poverty alleviation.

Rather than duplicate our training activities, TRIALOG and the Canadian programme will co-sponsor a series of events in the accession country capitals. Canadian funds will allow a greater Central European input into TRIALOG training events, and some Canadian NGDO specialists are expected to contribute training on themes such as civil society development and the role of NGOs in peace support and reconciliation.

The Canadian programme will also support training activities by Central European NGDOs that wish to share information and skills they have acquired in TRIALOG workshops.

The two projects have also begun to share research and contacts, and to publicise each other's services. Our partners in the accession countries will soon begin to feel the benefit of this cooperation!

The Canadian programme offers 2-4 week internships or study visits for staff of Central European NGDOs in their country's ODA priority territories, or in Canada.

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STOP PRESS
Now available: TRIALOG’s up-dated study: Development policy in the Accession Countries. See page 8 for more details.