

CONCORD Cotonou Working Group briefing paper

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Concord is the European Confederation of Relief and Development NGOs, made up of national associations, international networks and associate members. In total, Concord represents over 1800 NGOs and is supported by millions of citizens across Europe. The work of the Confederation is carried out by the members, split in specific working groups depending on their experience. These groups feed the political debate and contribute towards improving the formulation of European policies affecting development cooperation and humanitarian aid.

One of these working structures is the Concord Cotonou Working Group (CCWG). This working group has a focus on all issues related to the Cotonou Agreement. Because of the link between the Cotonou agreement and multiple other development issues the CCWG cooperates closely with other relevant Concord working structures.

The Concord Cotonou Working Group: framework and objectives

The Concord Cotonou Working Group works within the framework of the Cotonou Agreement, which determines EU relations with 78 countries from Africa, the Caribbean and the Pacific (ACP) since 2000.

The overall objective of the Concord Cotonou Working Group is to push for the translation of the Cotonou Agreement into actions that advance poverty eradication in the ACP countries and contribute to the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals and successor post-2015 sustainable development agenda. The CCWG's current work is strongly linked to the three pillars of the Cotonou Agreement.

1. With regard to **development cooperation**, the CCWG is working on a fair, participative and owned programming of the European Development Fund (EDF) amongst others via consultations with the different European institutions. In the coming years focus will shift to monitoring implementation and respective evaluation, through the mid-term review of the current EDF. When working on these issues, close cooperation with civil society and Parliaments in ACP countries is absolutely necessary
2. In addition the CCWG also works on a number of **political questions**, such as revisions and the future of the Cotonou agreement post 2020 and the participation of civil society in the ACP-EU Joint Parliamentary Assembly (JPA). Linked to this political dimension is the importance the CCWG attaches to the cooperation between members of parliament and civil society. The CCWG is committed to ensure the effective participation of CSOs from the North and South, stimulate dialogue and exchange between Parliamentarians and civil society.
3. The CCWG focuses less on the **economic and trade cooperation** between the ACP countries and the EU. Although some activities include references to the economic partnership agreements (EPAs), this is not the main aim of the Working Group activities. With regard to these issues collaboration with other, more specialized, Concord task forces, such as the Funding for Development and Relief Working Group and the Trade Reference Group is sought.

An important aspect of the work of the CCWG is its systematic engagement with southern partners to track the implementation of the Cotonou Agreement and the European Development Fund, to discuss

common strategies and assess the challenges of EU-ACP relations.

Importance of the ACP-EU Joint Parliamentary Assembly

Within the EU-ACP relations a number of key institutions can be identified. These include amongst others the European Parliament, the European Commission, the European External Action Service, EU delegations in ACP countries, the ACP secretariat and the ACP Group of Ambassadors.

One of the most important institutions created by the Cotonou Agreement is the ACP-EU Joint Parliamentary Assembly. It brings together the elected representatives of the European Community and the ACP states. Given the importance of the cooperation between parliamentarians and civil society, the JPA is a key area of CCWG work. The JPA offers a unique opportunity to inform and exchange ideas with parliamentarians and to encourage policy makers to keep and reinforce human rights and poverty focus as core objective and partnership, ownership and participation as core principles of the Cotonou Agreement.

For the CCWG this happens via organised events, which always focus on an issue linked to the JPA agenda, and the information stand where parliamentarians can find information on several relevant topics in the format of briefing papers and publications. Members of the Concord Cotonou Working Group can be found at the stand for extra information and further exchange. In addition the CCWG also attends the ACP-EU JPA Committee meetings to stay up to date and to encourage further dialogue with parliamentarians both from the EU and ACP side.

For further information, please visit <http://www.concordeurope.org/> - Tel +32 2 743 87 65