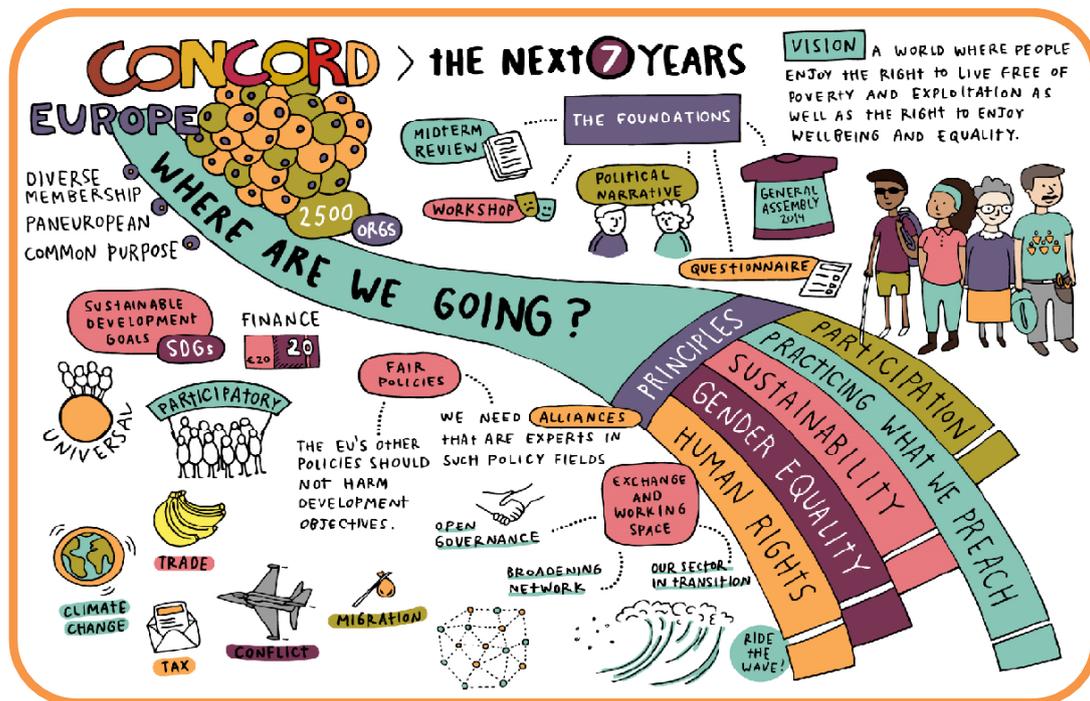


CONCORD STRATEGY

2016-2022

APRIL 2015



I. VISION AND MISSION – OUR VALUES AND AMBITIONS

VISION

CONCORD envisions a world where people enjoy their right to live free of poverty and exploitation as well as their right to enjoy wellbeing and equality. This must be achieved by a citizen-led transformative agenda based on social justice and gender equality and respecting diversity and the limits of our planetary capacity.

MISSION – OUR ROLE

CONCORD members work together to ensure that:

- European policy promotes sustainable economic, social and human development, addressing the causes of poverty, and based on human rights, gender equality, justice and democracy;
- The rights and responsibilities of citizens and organised civil society to influence those representing them in governments and EU institutions, are promoted and respected.

II. WHERE WE WOULD LIKE TO REACH – what are our realistic ambitions for change, to which CONCORD can make a substantive contribution; what meaningful difference can CONCORD make?

CONCORD's strategy will be based upon two pillars of work supported by key principles of how we work.

1. European policy promotes sustainable economic, social and human development, addressing the causes of poverty and inequality, and is based on human rights, gender equality, justice and democracy

Making sustainable development a reality for all

CONCORD will focus its work on furthering the concepts that have underpinned our advocacy on the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). These include the conviction that;

- people and planet come first,
- the root causes of poverty and inequality are interconnected,
- human rights and gender equality must be at the centre of sustainable development efforts,
- people must be involved in decisions that affect them (and future generations),
- we need to move beyond GDP to other measures of wellbeing and,
- The Sustainable Development Goals are universal.

Having advocated for transformational UN Sustainable Development Goals, CONCORD will build upon its previous work (AidWatch, Development effectiveness, Financing for Development, Beyond 2015 and other work streams) to ensure that the concerns and realities of the most marginalised are addressed whatever the framework agreed, translated into the necessary policies with the necessary financing.

Our work on Official Development Assistance (ODA) and other financing for development (including on effectiveness and accountability) will continue to evolve to focus principally on ensuring the SDGs remain high on the political agenda and are a success by effectively monitoring and holding the EU to account for its financing commitments.

Beyond that, CONCORD's added value will be to continue to work with allies to ensure that the EU, in its development and other policies, implements the Goals. To do so, we will work with all relevant stakeholders putting forward new ideas and proposals to ensure the SDGs deliver their full potential. CONCORD's focus will remain to hold the EU accountable to its obligations towards contributing to the success of the SDGs through its external action. Drawing on the experience of Beyond 2015, we will contribute to global civil society efforts to ensure successful SDGs globally, including through our civil society allies in Europe.

Key to the success of the SDGs will be the shift to more participatory and accountable governance, allowing people to participate in decisions that affect their lives. CONCORD will support, through influencing EU policy and as part of global alliances, civil society and citizens to actively engage in the implementation and monitoring of the goals and hold their leaders to account.

Building on our work monitoring and encouraging the EU to fulfil its commitments in partner countries (CSO Roadmaps, Human Rights Based Approach toolkit etc.) and within the context of the EU's relational frameworks with other regions like the follow up of the Cotonou Agreement, we will seek to ensure civil society has a voice and real involvement. CONCORD's added value will be to advocate for EU support to civil society to engage the public in tracking progress to meet goals while effectively holding governments to account for commitments made. The SDGs framework will be promoted and monitored through a sort of 'SDGWatch' – in coalition with civil society globally. This will include CONCORD being connected to Civil Society efforts in Europe to ensure the implementation of sustainable development in Europe, especially through promoting sustainable development within EU policies.

CONCORD will remain a watchdog holding the EU to account for its commitments not only on financing for development and other relevant commitments like climate change finance but also on promoting human rights, gender equality and women's empowerment.

Ambitious goals will not only be promoted through the EU's development and international cooperation

policy but by ensuring that other EU policies are coherent with the promotion of sustainable development, equality and human rights.

We will broaden our work from promoting the concept of Policy Coherence for Development (PCD) to tackling some of the EU's domestic and foreign policies that are most incoherent and counter-productive; policies that have negative impacts on the lives and future of poor and vulnerable communities outside Europe. We need to push our leaders to move from process to progress and from declaration to practice to make a real difference to millions of lives. As well as building appropriate legal frameworks and institutional mechanisms, CONCORD will push European policy-makers to make responsible and fair policies to address global challenges and change harmful policies.

To be effective this will require strategically identifying which policies to target along with investing in new relationships with institutional interlocutors outside the development sector. In identifying other priority incoherent or unfair policies, we will build upon the current and previous work of CONCORD (e.g. food security, trade, migration, natural resources, climate, financial flows). Climate change is one of the most threatening global challenges and an area where coherence with sustainable development can and must be improved. CONCORD as part of a broad alliance will continue pushing for ambitious targets on climate change.

Our work needs to focus on the structural and systemic forces that underpin harmful policies and emphasise alternative solutions. Particular attention should be given to the issues that demonstrate common root causes and similar manifestations of poverty and vulnerability inside and outside Europe. Equally important is the use of evidence, data and testimonies to support our policy and advocacy work.

This will mean mobilising new expertise within CONCORD's constituency by tapping into our rich and diverse network. CONCORD should become a natural platform for its experts in specialised fields to exchange evidence and experiences and coordinate their policy and advocacy action on targeted non-development policies. Working more closely with non-development CSOs and other allies inside and outside Europe is key, including building on existing coalitions and partnerships. Clear and targeted internal communications will ensure that advocacy messages are linked up to the campaigning work of members and allies to give muscle to our 'asks', moving us from 'policies to politics'.

2. The rights and responsibilities of citizens and organised civil society, to influence those representing them in governments and EU institutions, are promoted and respected.

An enhanced sharing and learning space to support our sector in transition

CONCORD will continue to value, nurture and empower its diverse and representative membership.

This will require more effective networking and exchange within the confederation to promote better understanding and mutual respect and support. Solidarity between bigger and smaller members will continue and be strengthened through specific actions to ensure the widest possible inclusion in CONCORD work and positions. CONCORD will introduce measures to facilitate the learning from smaller members and underscore the value of all members in successful advocacy.

The capacity building support that was provided to newer platform members by the TRIALOG project will be built upon to ensure the involvement of members that have fewer resources. CONCORD will enable participation and engagement of all members, facilitating interaction and supporting especially smaller platforms to participate fully in CONCORD's governance, work processes and other activities. Enhanced information work (making sure members know what is going on and how they can get involved), training and briefing, mobility to enhance inclusion, exchange and knowledge sharing will be promoted.

This support for participation is aimed at ensuring that all of CONCORD's members remain strong, credible, legitimate actors at national and European level, effective agents of change, and reliable partners for European and non-European actors, in the global struggle for a more just and equitable world.

The Confederation will advocate for civil society as an interlocutor in policy dialogue as well as an actor in implementing sustainable development. Building on the central role and common purpose of CONCORD members since the Confederation's creation, we will continue to represent the interests of globally focused CSOs at EU level, including advocating for adequate resources for our work.

Through its members, CONCORD will continue to pursue better awareness of, critical debates on and public engagement with global justice issues including promoting the sense of global citizenship. Europeans should think and act locally and globally for social justice and human rights. CONCORD and its members will engage in a critical dialogue on the intrinsic, universal values that underpin a global justice agenda through their development education, global learning, campaigning and public fundraising activities. CONCORD will continue the work of European development education and awareness-raising through continued participation in global partnerships and exchange spaces.

CONCORD will prioritise and invest in facilitating exchange within the network and among allies to help negotiate the paradigm shift towards sustainable global development begun in the 'Political Narrative' project. This imperative comes from a realisation that international development CSOs are facing what the International Civil Society Centre in Berlin has called 'disruptive change' and CONCORD needs to be leading the way in negotiating this change.

Supported by the Confederation, members may choose to interact with each other on;

- enhanced networking and communication skills,
- facilitating the link between policy and politics,
- advocacy and mobilisation,
- developing closer links with the public and social movements.

Benefiting from fast improving online platforms and advanced conferencing tools accompanied by training in the art of convening and facilitation to optimize participation, this exchange space will build upon previous work like CONCORDNet. Large and small members should be enabled to interact without having to rely on limited centralised resources from a secretariat or face centralised bottlenecks.

One specific field of learning and exchange that CONCORD will continue to promote is the implementation of the Istanbul principles on CSO development effectiveness. CONCORD will ensure the principles are better known and support its members to help each other 'walk the talk' and lead by example including in terms of governance, environment, participation and gender equality.

III. HOW WE WILL GET THERE – what kind of vehicle is CONCORD, and what does it need to become in order to make the journey?

Principles to support our mission.

Human Rights

Ensuring that our policies and work are governed by a human rights based approach will continue to be a key guiding principle of CONCORD including influencing EU institutions to reflect HRBA in their policies and practices.

Gender Equality

We will integrate gender equality into all aspects of our internal and external work, establish processes for ensuring continued development of CONCORD's practice, and influence EU institutions to reflect gender equality in their policies and practices.

Sustainability

CONCORD will promote environmental sustainability and justice for present and future generations in its policies and work - including seeking to limit our own carbon footprint.

'Practicing what we preach'

Guided by the Istanbul principles on CSO Development Effectiveness, CONCORD will take concrete steps

to implement working practices that speak for our principles. This will be done by looking at and improving current practices and seeking the best examples within our network. CONCORD will also serve as an exchange space for members and others to do likewise.

Participation

We will continue to invest in wider member participation and leadership development in CONCORD to promote the involvement of new people from CONCORD's constituency with different and relevant skills and backgrounds to support the new directions outlined in this strategy. Underpinning this is an acknowledgement that what we produce is better if it is inclusive. This also means disability inclusion, for example accessibility of information and physical access to meetings.

We will foster an environment that encourages the meaningful involvement of a wider range of members in our work through accessible working practices by staff and conveners, including less use of Brussels jargon!

Approaches to increase our impact

Greater prioritisation (– and 'de-prioritisation')

To have greater impact, CONCORD needs to continue its efforts to focus resources and staffing on a limited number of priorities. This will include 'de-prioritising' areas of work when new ones are prioritised. CONCORD will nevertheless remain agile in responding to priorities and will also curate a space where like-minded members can incubate new ideas and future work streams allowing a fast emerging stream to pick up momentum, gain traction and break onto the confederation's agenda.

In identifying priority areas of work we will;

- build upon the current and previous work of CONCORD,
- develop a power analysis,
- focus on policies best tackled at EU level,
- identify better the critical legislative and programming processes and moments to intervene for maximum impact,
- Build on alliances and the expertise and energy of our members.

More open governance to stay agile

Within the scope of our existing Statutes, CONCORD governance will continue to support a member-led

confederation ensuring accountability to members and representativeness (especially in terms of gender, geography, network and national platform, and introducing a balance of age groups in governance structures). CONCORD work should be opened out to encourage new perspectives and to make CONCORD more agile in a changing world. Partners from other sectors of European civil society, youth and global allies should be even more involved in CONCORD's work.

A membership to support new work streams

CONCORD's membership will continue to evolve to mirror our broad representativeness and our new work streams. We will have a blend of organisations bringing representativeness and expertise. Membership will be more open to organisations sharing our values and objectives and with something to contribute – this could include human rights and environmental CSOs, women's organisations, youth organisations, think tanks as well as CSO platforms from non EU European countries. CONCORD will maintain and develop closer relationships with other networks in our sector (fair trade, peacebuilding, humanitarian, human rights) through participation in inclusive alliances promoting issues of common interest and practical work on joint initiatives (European level advocacy or European wide campaigns).

Advocacy backed by campaigns

CONCORD's work will be more incisive if advocacy is backed by campaigns (mainly organised by members and allies) in which the public can be actively involved. In many circumstances, campaigning can put more muscle behind policy or political demands. CONCORD will primarily facilitate members' capabilities and connections to do more effective campaigning – although we get involved as a European level multiplier when appropriate. Our members are the ones talking to citizens directly, putting poverty and inequality on the political agenda in Europe and in the world – we help connect up different members towards shared goals.

We will sharpen our advocacy to make an easier link to campaigning. This will mean being more inclusive, drawing in a wider community of colleagues from the broad membership into our advocacy work, being in closer contact with social and other movements to understand how they work and where the energy is and what they need in terms of messages and demands.

Resourcing for new challenges

CONCORD will build a resource base to achieve the strategy within the limits of members' resources and other contributions. Members will remain the primary resource for CONCORD's work both through membership fees and additional one off contributions to specific projects as well as staff expertise and work and related costs. CONCORD will continue its strategic partnership with the European Commission through a framework partnership agreement aimed at continuing and developing a channel of

consultation and dialogue and joint work on projects of common concern. It is understood as a partnership of common values and interests. However when these diverge, financial relationships must not stifle CONCORD's independence. We will also fundraise from foundations and donors where our values and objectives coincide to support specific projects and work streams.

IV. HOW WE WILL KNOW WHEN WE'VE ARRIVED – what will we look for to show that CONCORD is making the contribution to change that we want?

CONCORD will have consolidated and strengthened its position as an essential interlocutor with the EU institutions driving policy forward that shapes the global agenda. This will be achieved by continuing high quality advocacy work, backed by a constituency truly representative of civil society organisations increasingly linked through alliances to other CSOs and movements. Using this position, CONCORD will have contributed to progressive EU policies that promote human rights, including women's rights and the fight against poverty and inequality.

We will have contributed to the realization of Sustainable Development Goals that live up to the values of putting people and planet first. This will be achieved when EU policies and funding lead to concrete outcomes on SDGs globally, realised through full implementation of a human rights based approach and measured through participatory accountability mechanisms and gender disaggregated data.

To deliver these goals and this approach, CONCORD will have pushed the EU to make and follow through on credible and ambitious financing proposals. We will have promoted other policies coherent with increased equality and the respect for human rights for the poorest and most marginalised globally. To do so CONCORD will be working increasingly, in partnership with old and new allies, on policies beyond the traditional field of development cooperation and official development assistance.

Linked to this will be a clear sense that the space for civil society to operate has been vigorously defended, promoted and is respected in practice. That as CSOs we are not only listened to, supported financially and allowed to operate freely, but that our views actually make a difference in the decision making process.

Through our facilitation of an improved exchange space, CONCORD will have played a role in promoting throughout the EU, across the diverse membership of the Confederation, a refreshed and reinvigorated CSO sector, which has succeeded in regenerating citizens' engagement in global solidarity and promoting an outward looking Europe effectively confronting global challenges.

During the period of this new Strategy, CONCORD will be a part of a strong European civil society engaged within a global civil society effort, working towards transformational change, leading to the realization of sustainable development, human rights, greater equality and justice in the world.

ANNEX

I. HOW THIS STRATEGY WAS DEVELOPED

This strategy has been built over an 18 month consultative process driven by CONCORD's members. It is built upon five key foundations;

- the **midterm review** of the current CONCORD strategy of 2012 (refreshed and reflected upon by CONCORD's Policy Forum in 2014),
- the '**Political Narrative**' project started in 2013,
- **members' responses** to a questionnaire on the new strategy circulated in Spring 2014,
- the 2014 **General Assembly exercise** and discussions, and
- a **workshop** gathering leaders of CONCORD members in November 2014 to test different ideas and scenarios and discuss 'knotty issues'.

It also takes account of inputs from external actors and partners.

This strategy describes CONCORD's vision, mission and ambitions for change. It will be supported by more detailed documents including an operating plan with outputs and indicators and annual work plans describing CONCORD's priorities. These processes to 'operationalise' the strategy will be designed and agreed in a participatory way by CONCORD's members. A mid-term review of this Strategy will be undertaken.

II. WHERE WE HAVE COME FROM – our history, achievements, assets, strengths and learning from experience – including the current Strategy.

European CSOs have been working together advocating for a progressive European development policy, working for the most marginalised around the world, for many years. Before CONCORD, the NGO Liaison Committee was an important interlocutor for the European Commission's development department. Over the eleven years of its existence, CONCORD has become a more political actor. While maintaining strong relations with the EC's Directorate General for Development, CONCORD increasingly sets its own agenda, and seeks to influence wider EU policies that have an impact on poor and marginalised people.

Assets of the confederation include an evolution from a focus on Official Development Assistance (ODA) to being recognised also as an expert policy partner on a wide range of issues. CONCORD has developed the expertise and methodology to produce consistently well formulated advocacy positions, (PCD Spotlight report, CSO Roadmaps, AidWatch) which not only contribute fresh ideas and substance to the debate but also result in a strong identity for members as well as partners, institutional interlocutors,

member states and others. CONCORD is recognised 'by both institutions and other sectors as the lead actor in civil society on development' as the mid-term review 2007-2015 put it.

In terms of the membership, a notable success of CONCORD has been its ability to bring together a hybrid membership of national platforms and networks as a truly representative voice of European development NGOs. Members of members, including smaller and medium-sized organisations, have benefited from being under the CONCORD umbrella, allowing 2,400 individual CSOs access to European level advocacy and action. We have been able to unify a diverse membership and maintain a strong voice even on contentious issues. Newer platform members have also contributed to building up their own countries' development cooperation structures and strengthening their voices at the European level. The principle of solidarity between CONCORD members has remained an important foundation of the CONCORD network, in which each member has one vote while paying membership fees according to their respective means. The initial contract between CONCORD's founding members, that working together we could achieve more despite our differences, has remained strong. As the Belgian national platform puts it 'being part of a confederation is an important tool for gathering intelligence and joining actions to increase efficiency.' As well as benefiting from being part of a collective European CSO community, CONCORD's members have also benefited from the space to exchange and promote their own values and priorities among other members.

CONCORD's independence has been supported by diverse financial sources. Members have remained engaged through their financial contribution and active involvement in the main work of the confederation. In contrast to the Liaison Committee and other networks, CONCORD members rather than a mandated secretariat, lead and take responsibility for the bulk of the confederation's work. While this remains a challenge given competing demands on members' resources, this way of working promotes the greater ownership of CONCORD's members to its work.

There has been a gradual move from a Brussels agenda to a European agenda – making the European policy level work relevant for national contexts around the EU. Our interaction with the European Commission is evolving; rather than mainly reacting to what the EC says, CONCORD is increasingly recognising the need to act more proactively and highlight important issues that are not necessarily on the institutional agenda.

CONCORD has always benefited from strong partnerships, continually seeking to make these relationships more strategic. According to the mid-term review: '...CONCORD has established a reputation for open, effective alliance work. This has enhanced CONCORD's reputation, improved access to institutions, and contributed to some policy advances. It is noticeable that this has largely not been in alliances that have been formally developed through MoUs, and it is doubtful whether this formalised

approach is the most effective for CONCORD.'

CONCORD represents all EU countries but needs to invest in smaller members to ensure a truly representative voice can be found and larger members can continue benefiting from Europe-wide advocacy. 'Capacity building, or creation of space for mutual capacity building...is missed by members, many of whom want a renewed focus in coming years' says the mid-term review.

CONCORD's strength comes from its inclusiveness. This is a challenge due to the varying resources available to different members to travel to meetings, make information available in their own language, and follow multiple work streams. A challenge remains to meaningfully include those members outside Brussels and constituent members of CSO platforms.

III. *WHERE ARE WE NOW – the local and global political economy in which we work, the other actors alongside which we operate, the key challenges which CONCORD needs to address, and the key entry points for CONCORD as a European entity.*

A common understanding in our network is that development cooperation alone cannot deliver an end to poverty and inequality. This was how a new aspiration for our sector was described at the 2014 general assembly. "Let us all work towards being perceived in our societies more as change-makers".

This comes as a result of changing circumstances including: the ongoing economic and austerity crisis precipitated by a massive failure in political and financial leadership; the emergence of new actors around the world who affect decisions on global issues; global challenges like climate change that demand a collective global action. The international order is in a state of flux. Emerging economies have not found their place in the international governance architecture and this creates an uncertain and complex context when assessing where real power lies. In addition, power on the international scene shifting from States to global corporations is another example of an evolving geopolitical equilibrium and power dynamics in the world. Conflict and war – affecting in particular the most vulnerable in society - remain a daily reality. This changing global context in which we seek to define our strategy is well captured in various future scenario studies undertaken by CONCORD's members, among others.

The current context has led CSOs to question how they are perceived by a population suffering increasing hardship, injustice and inequality at home. Challenges that need to be addressed include the changes in our own sector. CSOs have become more professional and complex organisations and have often moved away from their community and volunteer origins. Have CSOs become part of the institutional architecture associated with policies that have failed people?

With increasing globalisation and interconnection, with middle income countries 'graduating out' of bilateral assistance, other policies beyond the EC 'Development Cooperation policy' will promote change towards a world free from poverty, inequality and conflict. Policies led by different institutions; trade, agriculture, environment, financial services and taxation are of increasing importance to our partners. Working in new areas to promote the change we want requires new alliances and relationships, skills and expertise.

Eliminating poverty and promoting social justice around the world is no longer only the domain of classic development cooperation (if indeed it ever was).

From project delivery to social entrepreneurship and alliances with partners working for social justice in other parts of the world, CSOs change their societies for the better.

Traditional donor-beneficiary models of relationship with so-called "southern" communities and partners are being challenged. CSOs are being challenged to practice more overtly the values they promote.

There is less government support for our sector than a decade ago with, in many cases, less support going to campaigning activities and the watchdog role. Whereas governments once acknowledged and financed advocacy and campaigning, now the preference is for service delivery and funds for this once channelled through NGOs are increasingly outsourced to government or UN agencies, private foundations and for profit businesses.

Distinctions between Europe and the rest of the world in terms of the issues we have traditionally worked on are diminishing. Systemic causes of poverty and inequality are increasingly recognised as being universal. This trend is being accelerated by economic crises in Europe. In this context, the role of CSOs with an exclusively external focus is challenged.

Increasingly, our dialogue with non-European partners forces us to confront the question of our role in promoting change within our own society and, in the future, being the European part of a global movement of Civil Society working for social justice, sustainable development and human rights.