



#The Europe We Want

CONCORD Strategy for the 2014 European Parliament Elections

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1. Why the EU?

With less than 2 years to the MDG deadline and reflecting on the future of the world post 2015, the need for leadership and solidarity to address and overcome global challenges like poverty, inequalities, climate change and conflict are brought into focus. Today Europe faces a number of key challenges economically, financially and in terms of its identity. But while tough times are ahead in Europe, even tougher times await the world's poorest people, whether the one billion people who go to bed hungry every night, those who struggle to survive in conflict-torn areas or those who have the misfortune of occupying both spaces.

The EU is still the world's biggest ODA donor and committed to continue to be so. It is leading the global pack when it comes to Policy Coherence for Development, though much remains to be done. It is a trade hub, a leader in multiple negotiation processes dealing with global solutions to global problems affecting humanity such as that of climate change. More than ever it is necessary for the EU's foreign policy to work so that Europe contributes to positive changes around the world.

2. Why the EP?

The EU and its institutions have an important role to play in taking up this global leadership role, being the European Parliament (EP) the only directly elected institution and a key stakeholder in shaping EU's role in the world. The EP decides on key issues that affect everyone, from development to climate change, social funds, environment, etc.

However, throughout the current political mandate, the EP is increasingly becoming more difficult to work with on social and economic positions that defend the public interest. Reasons for this may be the current economic and financial crises that fuels fears regarding economic growth and employment, successful business lobby promoting private interests and general disenchantment with the European project. The impact of these political shifts on social democratic values can already be felt, and a worsening of this scenario would substantially shrink the political space for civil society organisations to advocate.

3. What is at stake in these elections?

Our assessment is that the next parliament's mandate will be crucial for a range of social justice goals which will come onto the European agenda in the next five years: the 2015 post MDG debate and development finance for external actions, tax justice and financial regulation, the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP) and climate and energy policies are just a few of these. All of these key issues are influenced by a corporate power in Brussels and across the EU which is stronger now than ever. For example, during the debate around the tobacco legislation in the EP in September, Phillip Morris were shown to have met half of all MEPs. As much as corporates engage, civil society must also be there to monitor, to play its watchdog and counterbalance role proposing alternatives to Europe's decision makers that promote the common good. The upcoming elections will

not only influence the European Parliament but also the European Commission as the **president of the Commission will be elected for the first time by the Parliament.**

European election observers have warned that the on-going crisis and its effects could unleash in the 2014 EP elections a wave of negative campaigning against European integration, and might bring more protest voters to the polls. With a turn-over of 60% of MEPs, this wave could **consolidate the bloc of populist Eurosceptic lawmakers in the next EP** and severely affect the political landscape both in the EU and in the individual member states. Euro-sceptics might come third after the EPP and S&D. It means that - would they like it or not - they will have to take more responsibilities (for example in committees' leadership and as rapporteurs) and have more influence in the decision-making process. Such a parliament would likely either block key pieces of legislation intended to improve social justice outcomes, or in a Parliament which is hung, meaning that no progress can be made just at a time when crucial decisions need to be made on what direction Europe will take.

Many in the business world fear a political landscape completely overhauled, more polarised with up to **30-40% of extremist, racist, populist or generally anti-establishment party groups.** Thus, the way we are used to work on EU issues i.e. by working with cross-party coalitions of helpful MEPs will be seriously challenged.

The election campaign will focus on the future of Europe with probably little space for issues relating to climate, environment and development. It is why it is so important for **sectorial NGOs to engage in that broader debate about the future of Europe,** which so far is lacking which means that space is left to other actors who have no public interest but private ones. Don't be surprised to end-up with a 'big business' Europe, so one recommendation given is BE POLITICAL during the election campaign.

European elections are in actual fact 'second-order national elections' so it is essential that any campaigning activities are designed within national perspectives. Eurobarometer data confirms that a majority of European citizens would be encouraged to vote is, amongst others, they were better informed about the impacts of EP elections on the ground and about parties' programmes.

If we miss this opportunity to counter the fear and shrinking space, we will have very little advocacy and activism opportunities in the next 5 years. But if civil society at large takes up its duty to actively make the case for an open, democratic and social Europe, and activate the progressive EU vote which otherwise may remain dormant, we will contribute towards social justice goals.

4. Lessons learnt from 2009 EP elections

In the 2009 EP elections, CONCORD wanted to become a credible partner for the EP to get development issue on the EU agenda, influence the political manifestos, do media work, be present for commissioners hearings. CONCORD created a taskforce, which was quite active and worked for a year, and collaborated with the Spring Alliance to produce a joint manifesto, met individual candidates, media work, videos.

After the elections CONCORD produced an analysis, organized meetings with MEPs and assistants, prepared questions for the MEPs, etc. However, the evaluation showed that we tried to include too many demands and should have most probably focus only on a few issues.

- **Manifesto:** The way we have worked on elections in the past (e.g. getting candidates to sign up to a Manifesto) may not necessarily be the best way forward in this changed landscape.
- **Campaigning:** Elections campaigning must include post-election follow up.
- **New narrative:** We need to put the European elections in the context of the work on finding a "New Narrative" i.e. telling a clearer story to the European public and the media, and moving from policy to politics in our work
- **Allies:** The problem we need to solve (the threat of an unhelpful EU Parliament) is so big that we can't win this battle by ourselves, but need to work with a broad coalition with other parts of civil society

- Clear campaign call: We do however want to avoid the risk of a Christmas tree approach to the election campaign, with too many organisations asking for too many things, and would look for leadership and guidance to have a genuinely pan-European campaign umbrella. This campaign will provide a toolkit which includes common activities but also a menu for diverse actions for national engagement.
- Matching those calls with awareness of what the EP can achieve: under our three main calls, we may want to add more concrete goals for MEPs to achieve by 2019 e.g. on inequality, the pursuit of tax justice is something where MEPs were key on country by country reporting for extractives sector in this mandate, but they can go further now to extend it to all.

5. Our Theory of Change

Our long term objective is to contribute towards an EU that is a world leader in promoting sustainable development, human rights, peaceful, tolerant and inclusive societies and fight against the injustice of poverty. Thus, we need EU institutions that are progressive, accountable and that truly represent citizens.

The next European Parliament elections in 2014 are an opportunity to ensure that elected MEPs are supportive of EU international development aims and CSO political space. In order to get as many committed MEPs as possible we need to do targeted advocacy towards candidate MEPs and political parties. We also need to reach out to our supporters to explain that these elections are about inequality and poverty both within Europe and outside its borders– linking to CONCORD’s work on a new political narrative. By contributing to make citizens aware that they have voice and power to influence the election’s results for the Europe they want, they will realise their vote is essential. When sensitized citizens go to vote, a more open political result towards addressing poverty and injustice is achieved.

6. Objectives of CONCORD’s campaign on the 2014 EP Elections

Goal: encourage active citizenship and enable civil society space

Objectives:

- a) 30% elected MEPs are supportive of EU international development aims and CSO political space.
- b) CSO supporters are sensitized on the links between inequality and poverty both within Europe and outside its borders so their vote is essential for the Europe and the world we want.

Strategy:

- 1) Targeted advocacy towards political parties and the MEP candidates.
- 2) Reach out to our supporters/citizens to explain that these elections are about inequality and poverty, about social justice, both within Europe and outside its borders so their vote is essential for the Europe and the world we want.

Messages:

- 1) A FAIRER EUROPE FOR A FAIRER WORLD

In crisis, there is an opportunity to reinvent the European social model and put Europe on a stronger and fairer footing in the world. This means thinking about justice, human rights, poverty and inequality both inside and outside the EU.

CONCORD calls on political parties to have a clear commitment to policy coherence for development in their European political manifestos and to pursue equality within and outside Europe

2) INEQUALITY HURTS US ALL

Poverty is not just about income, GDP and economic development. It is also about inequalities within societies. In countries there are massive gaps between the rich and the poor so that you can live in a middle income country or a high income country which still has high level of poverty. We need to tackle inequality at its root, both in Europe and beyond, and in accordance with the core values and principles of the EU. This can be achieved through key measures such as tax justice, fair and sustainable use of natural resources and a fairer system of food production.

CONCORD calls on political parties to ensure a fairer distribution of resources. First, put an end to tax dodging and to have a clear commitment in their political manifestos to strengthen shorter term and innovative sources of financing such as the Financial Transaction Tax (FTT), to make the FTT global and to ensure that the resources are generated. Second protect our fast depleting natural resources. Third fix the way we produce food.

- a) *Tax Justice:* Tax evasion and avoidance by multinational companies and rich people are global problems that requires global solutions, many of which needs to be taken at the EU level.
- b) *Fair and sustainable use of natural resources:* EU's footprint on developing countries of its economic development model and specifically the EU policies in pursuit of imports from developing countries should not undermine development objectives or lead, directly or indirectly, to additional poverty, human rights violations and conflicts.
- c) *A fairer system of food production:* Today, 870 million people throughout the globe suffer from hunger. Securing access to safe food is a universal Human Right which all States are mutually obliged to respect, protect and fulfil. The EU has a special responsibility in this, being the world's largest actor in agricultural trade.

3) A NEW SOCIAL CONTRACT WITH EUROPEAN CITIZENS

As the only directly and democratically elected institution within the EU, MEPs have both the role and the opportunity to step up the engagement of EU citizens, by giving them reasons to be proud of the EU and by involving organized European civil society more in decision making. In particular to make sure that relevant and representative civil society organisations are involved in the expert and advisory groups or committees that are put in place to support and advise the European Commission and the EEAS in their political and executive tasks.

CONCORD calls on political parties to strengthen participatory democracy and promote active citizenship through consultation and dialogue processes and the inclusion of mandatory provisions for the participation and consultation of civil society actors in all EU legislative text impacting on citizens' rights and livelihoods inside and outside Europe.

Opportunities

- The elections in 2014 are the only opportunity in five years to influence those to be elected and get their commitment to support an effective and progressive EU foreign policy as a means of helping to create lasting solutions to the injustice of poverty.
- It is also an opportunity to mobilise citizens to demand a Europe that deals with inequalities and poverty, both within Europe and outside its borders. This could be seen as an important "test case" for our ambition to define and work with a new political narrative, and be stronger agents of change.
- Concord provides a coordination platform for the whole European development sector, with a capacity to mobilise platforms at a national level that very few other sectors can offer.
- It is also an opportunity to make CONCORD and CONCORD positions known by a broader group of actors both on the official and civil society sides, including the media

Challenges

- Limited capacity and resources by members to undertake this pan-European campaign to scale.
- Crafting a pan-European campaign that has a common driver but has relevance to the national context
- Addressing European issues in certain national contexts is very difficult and even counter-productive.
- Getting the civil society movement to move beyond common ground to common action in a short timeframe (it is clear from the recent EAPN meeting that we are at least at the stage of common ground now with inequality as the rallying call from all).

7. Tactics

Phase 1 – Pre-election (now to end of 2013)

- Gather intelligence, mapping of national contexts, establish our goals, tentative tools and tactics, start networking with other stakeholders as potential allies
- Party manifestos for EU elections are being discussed already, and they are clearly great opportunity to get our issues across. At both EU and national level we should be trying to gather intelligence on the timetable for formulating them, what these contain and try to influence them.
- Pro bono support from professional campaign service would be ideal, linking with others interested.

Phase 2 – Campaign & Elections (January to May 2014)

Possible tools to achieving our overarching goal are:

- helping to reduce abstention and chances of protest vote by informing our members and supporters on the importance of EU elections, working with coalition partners to do the same
- help contrast populist anti EU forces by telling a positive story of what the EU does do well (e.g. development, climate policy etc) with coalition partners
- AND/OR using anti-European sentiment to our favour, i.e. channeling it and trying to tell a clearer story (the “new narrative”) that makes the link between the external and internal economic crisis and poverty & inequality issues in the EU as well as globally, e.g. with a campaign launch in Greece. We need to use simple, clear messages and avoid jargon and shopping lists.
- We need to target politicians directly through our traditional method e.g. Manifesto and we need to use the media to influence politicians and to reach voters.

Phase 3 – Post-elections (May 2014 – Dec 2014)

Really important to follow up with post elections work that determines key roles in the new EC. It might include a development induction pack and/or development immersion trainings.

Steps in Phase 1:

1) TARGET THE EUROPEAN POLITICAL MANIFESTOS

- Topline messages agreed (see above): Inequality, poverty eradication, global responsibility
- Target: Political coordinators and secretary generals for info gathering about process & timeline, presidents of the big political groups (EPP, S&D, LIBE and Greens, GUE) with call to action/ Concord letter.
- Timeline: Sept to Oct
- Tools: Meetings, phone calls and a CONCORD letter

2) CONNECTING TOPLINE MESSAGES TO CONCORD's NARRATIVE

What: Develop more detailed messaging reflecting Concord's new narrative covering: a) why including development in the agenda; b) inequality/ Global responsibility/ poverty eradication and c) concrete recommendations for the new EP. Timeline: Oct-Dec

3) LINKING TO THE CAMPAIGNS OF THE POLITICAL PARTIES

Analyzing the manifestos and linking Concord messages to the priorities/ visibility of the political campaigns: potential themes: unemployment ...

4) DEVELOP A CAMPAIGN TOOL KIT

Either public campaign or advocacy one depending on resources of NP; with toolkit which offers different forms and levels of engagement; campaigning must happen at national level, with communications people involved.

8. Key activities & tools

What	Objective	Comments	Lead/ support
National platform event (8/9 October)	A training targeting Directors of National Platforms should raise awareness about the need and ways to engage on EP elections as well as their buy-in	Sabine will give induction, Natalia mobilized an excellent consultant who will do a power analysis with the NPs. Sabine and MCT team developing it.	Sabine On track, no support needed
Webinar: (beg. November)	Awareness raising of the members around the EP elections and CONCORD's engagement	Reaching out also to Members of members Sabine & Claire are currently preparing a first draft to be shared with the group	Secretariat: Sabine & Claire Here we would need support between mid October and beg. of November Members:
Alliances Building	To decide on next steps for joint forces: how do we want to engage with other networks, defining key essences we all join up for!	We are currently meeting with different networks for initial exchange (please see table below) Sabine was invited to speak at the EAPN conference (European Anti poverty network) and there is strong interest to cooperate, we will meet the members of the Spring Alliance next week as well as Action for Global Health.	Secretariat: Claire and Maarten Members:
Toolkit	A toolkit for National platforms for engaging/ campaigning	This work should start mid October and be finalised end of December	Secretariat: Claire and MCT Members:
Online debates with	To engage members in		Secretariat: Sabine

presidents of political parties	the online debate and to use the visibility of the politicians to pass our messages		&Claire Members:
Bilateral meetings with the presidents of the political parties	Intelligence gathering through informal exchange		Secretariat: tbc Members:
Conference autumn 2014 and breakfasts with new MEPs	To align the newly elected MEPs with our work and messages: Key tools: conference, breakfasts and toolkit		Secretariat: Sabine Members:

9. Table on networks/ Alliances.

Claire is the CONCORD secretariat focal point.

Organisations/ networks	Status /Content of the alliance	Focal point within CONCORD
<u>Spring Alliance</u>	Ongoing - Joint Manifesto is being drafted. Next meeting: 8 October	Claire Guenon Des Mesnards Claire.desmesnards@concordeurope.org Maarten Coertjens - CONCORD Maarten.Coertjens@concordeurope.org
<u>European Anti-Poverty Network</u>	Meeting took place on 1 st October	Sabine Terlecki - CONCORD Sabine.TERLECKI@concordeurope.org
<u>Human Rights and Democracy Network</u>	To be further explored	Lars Bosselmann - CBMI Lars.bosselmann@cbm.org
<u>Action for Global Health (AfGH)</u>	Meeting will take place next week	Sabine Terlecki - CONCORD Sabine.TERLECKI@concordeurope.org
<u>Finance Watch</u>	Meeting around their campaign Change Finance http://www.finance-watch.org/hot-topics/campaign-change-finance/	Natalia Alonso Natalia.alonso@oxfaminternational.org
<u>Climate Action Network</u>	Contacts in June, participation in the June PoFo.	Lies Craeynest Lies.Craeynest@oxfaminternational.org