



A CAMPAIGN OF THE CIVIL SOCIETY
CONTACT GROUP

FINAL REPORT
to
Foundation Open Society Institute (FOSI):
Grant number 20009220

1 December 2002 – 30 November 2003

The act4europe campaign conducted its work according to the proposal submitted to FOSI, and funded under grant number 20009220. We have now completed the program as signed between FOSI and the grantee (Social Platform).

The act4europe campaign coordinator was recruited in January and has taken up work on 17 March to run the office of the campaign and the Civil Society Contact Group. A half-time administrative officer, a stagiere, and since mid November a full-time assistant (replacing the two previous mentioned positions) are also working at the campaign office, located within the office of the Social Platform. The project has been co-funded by the Social Platform and the Charles Stewart Mott Foundation.

The act4europe campaign has been active at national level, continuously building and maintaining contact with NGOs at national level to broaden the network and coordinating information for all sectors, as well as at EU level, in support of the Civil Society Contact Group, preparing their documents and doing public relations for them.

This document contains a broad overview over the actions. All publications, action calls and bulletins of the campaign are available on the web site and we are attaching a selected number of them, which give an impression of the work within the project. The financial report relating to the period of this activities report is also attached.

1. Overview: act4europe activities

The main areas in which act4europe have been active are in relation to

- *Civil Society Network building*: Building a cross-European network of NGO and trade unions active around the Future of Europe debate, in particular focusing upon the involvement of the candidate countries
- *Information analysis and dissemination*: Monitoring and analysing the work of the Convention and subsequently of the IGC, providing information and briefings to EU and national level civil society organisations
- *Campaigning*: Implementing campaigns around the Convention and the IGC at EU and national level in collaboration with the members of the Civil Society Contact Group

The project has succeeded in informing and mobilizing large numbers of civil society activists across Europe, and in raising the profile of issues of concern to civil society within the work of the Convention and the IGC.

Practical management of the project

The recruitment of dedicated staff for the campaign (Coordinator, administrator (50%), assistant), has hugely increased the capacity and effectiveness of the campaign.

The coordinator was recruited after the vacancy was advertised in the European press and within the networks of Contact Group members. An equal opportunities recruitment process was put in place, which led to the recruitment of Nico Beger to the position (*CV was included in the interim report*). As was agreed within the Contact Group, the act4europe office is located within the offices of the Social Platform, and management of the coordinator was carried out by Simon Wilson, Social Platform Director and Secretary to the Contact Group, by Dick Oosting, Amnesty International EU Office Director, and Chair of the Contact Group from July 2002 to July 2003, and since July 2003 by Giampiero Alhadef, Secretary General of SOLIDAR, Chair of the Contact Group.

The appointment of the coordinator has allowed a significant development and elaboration of the work-programme of the act4europe campaign for the remainder of 2003 and 2004, using the newly available staff and financial resources. A final section, *Developing act4europe*, sets out work undertaken to prepare proposed continuation under the additional funding we have received from the Mott foundation in 2004.

In order to support the project an administrator has been seconded on a half-time basis to act4europe from the Social Platform (temporary contract, until end September, Virginie Clech). An assistant from Slovenia has also been recruited in order to assist with activities aimed at civil society within the accession countries from May until September 2003 (Lea Slokar), followed by an intern in September and October 2003 (Ike Picone) until the recruiting for the new assistant (November – May 2004, Markus Held) was completed.

2. Civil society network building

This area of the project has focused around developing national level networking, both through direct contacts with national level civil society organisations, and by using the existing European networks (i.e. the members of the Civil Society Contact Group). To make the campaign successful, information between EU and national level had to be facilitated and both levels needed advocacy work, networking, and monitoring.

Developing existing networks, EU level work (Civil Society Contact Group)

One of the key features of the project was to facilitate the development of the Civil Society Contact Group in order to promote the involvement of NGOs and unions across Europe.

During the period of the project, the Civil Society Contact Group held meetings approximately every two or three weeks (thirty-two times in total), held at the Social Platform office (where the act4europe coordinator is based). These meetings were prepared and followed-up by the office, involving preparing the agenda and minutes. Meetings involved representatives from all of the members of the Contact Group, who together provided the overall supervision of the act4europe project (with day-to-day supervision from the Chair and Secretary). The Contact Group meetings were generally attended by Directors / Secretary-Generals, or elected officers from the network members of the Contact Group, together with their assistants, and the act4europe staff.

Minutes of all of these meetings (and other relevant meeting documents) are available upon request.

These meetings served to *strengthen the cross-sectoral network*, providing a focus for the exchange of information between high-level representatives of the networks concerning *strategies to influence the Convention and the IGC and to increase the involvement of national-level civil society organisations in the Future of Europe debate particularly during the IGC phase (October to December 2003).*

In between meetings of the Contact Group, communication was facilitated and strengthened through the development by the Coordinator of an internal discussion e-mail group for the Civil Society Contact Group. The Coordinator has facilitated many decisions and agreement on actions and letters via e-mail making the CG more flexible and quicker in its reaction.

During the period of the final report the Contact Group agreed and issued several joint statements to the Convention and the IGC, which can be found in the document attached. Each joint statement also resulted in an action for the

act4europe network, but the network was also activated on other occasions in relation to NGO campaigns around the Constitution. In addition, the Contact Group and the campaign issued press releases and the office was involved in comprehensive press-work for EU and national level as well as in publications of NGOs. The Contact Group also adopted an internal strategy plan for the campaign drafted by the office for the period until the end of the IGC, and is now working on the internal strategy plan for 2004. It issued a new vision statement, published a comprehensive bench-marking report for final assessment of the draft Constitution, and an IGC toolkit in several languages.

The Contact Group also arranged several meetings with representatives of the Commission, the European Parliament, the Council, and several Permanent Representations on preparing its work around the IGC. Those meetings were attended by the coordinator and either the Chair of the Contact Group or the Director of the Social Platform.

The coordinator is also taking part in the newly formed NGO working group around the implementation of the Citizens' Initiative in the new EU constitution.

Building direct networks at national level

Initially, much of the work in building direct networks at national level focused upon making individual contacts with interested national level activists (NGO and unions) in order to inform them of the act4europe campaign, provide information, support, and campaign materials. In each case, the objective was to add activists to the act4europe campaign mailing list, so that information could be exchanged, and the network developed, on an on-going basis. Contacts for national-level activists were obtained from two main sources: via the sectoral networks within the Civil Society Contact Group, and through specific events / visits (often themselves arranged by NGO and Foundations in the New Member States or as part of the activities of the members of the Contact Group at EU and national level).

Once the list had been extended to a reasonable size it started to grow by itself on a daily basis. The office called for NGOs willing to act as coordinators for a cross-sectoral national campaign during the IGC and many countries firmly established such coordination. The coordinator traveled to most inaugural events of these new national NGO and Union groups to provide input from the Brussels cross-sectoral experience and aid with information on possible campaigning. Subsequently, most joint actions at national level that were conducted during the IGC were sent to the office and the coordinator helped with further information and advice on the cross-European references.

Some of the meetings attended are listed below.

1. Meeting of the Irish Civil Society Contact Group, Dublin, March 2003

The Chair of the Contact Group attended a seminar organised by the Irish Civil Society Contact Group in Dublin, in order to update Irish civil society actors upon the latest developments within the Convention, and the developments of the act4europe campaign at European and national level.

2. Conference in Budapest around the Referendum in Hungary

The coordinator attended a conference organized by the European House in Budapest around the Hungarian referendum on 10 and 11 April. One of the conference panels included a presentation of the campaign, the Contact Group, and the European NGO structures. Many contacts were formed that led to further invitations in the candidate countries, and to the further dissemination of the act4europe campaign within Hungary and beyond.

3. Developmental conference on the Convention

On 19 May the coordinator conducted a workshop within a BOND (UK development NGOs network, members of the development sector within the Contact Group) event on strategy for further NGO lobbying on the Convention. This allowed network building and dissemination of information relating to the Convention.

4. European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC) Congress, Prague

The coordinator attended the ETUC congress in Prague from 27 to 29 May to staff a stand for the campaign and the Contact Group with the help of members of the Contact Group. The Congress, which takes place once every four years, was attended by over 1000 national level trade union delegates from across Europe (including candidate countries). The ETUC provided the exhibition space free of charge, and the role of the Contact Group, and of act4europe, was introduced within the plenary session to all delegates by the Deputy Secretary-General of the ETUC, and by the incoming Secretary General. The e-card campaign on Social Europe was launched at the Congress and signed by the Convention President, Valerie Giscard d'Estaing there.

The act4europe presence aided a stronger connection between the campaign and the trade union movement.

5. EU conference on civil dialogue in the accession countries, Budapest

The Civil Society Contact Group had been invited to participate in a conference organised by the EU to bring together over 100 civil society organisations from candidate countries with European NGO networks. The Director of the Social Platform addressed the plenary on behalf of the Contact

Group, and the coordinator was also present for networking. Act4europe had an exhibition stand to promote the Future of Europe debate, and the act4europe network, to accession country civil society organisations. Many contacts to social NGOs in Accession Countries were re-affirmed and newly created. The Romanian coordination was set up during the Budapest conference.

6. Civil Society Development Foundation Romania NGO meeting, Bukarest

In July the coordinator was invited to present the act4europe campaign at one of the largest NGO conferences ever held in Romania, bringing together NGOs from all sectors from many regions of Romania to discuss civil dialogue and future development in Romania as well as the implications of EU accession. During the presentation we emphasised the need to get involved in EU issues within a country as accession means that the EU will be in Romania and civil society has a role in shaping it.

7. NGO conference of the Estonian Open Foundation and the Estonian Contact Group, plus training seminar for Estonian NGOs, Tallinn

Early September the former chair of the Contact Group, Mr. Dick Oosting, the representative of the Social Platform in the Contact Group, Mary Mc Phail (EWL), the coordinator, and the assistant attended this large event in Estonia organised just before the Estonian Referendum on EU accession. Mr Oosting, Ms McPhail, and the coordinator had the opportunity for a meeting with the Estonian Government Representative in the Convention, Mr Hololei, who was one of the Contact Group's strong supporters in the Convention before the event. Dick Oosting and Mary McPhail addressed the large NGO conference on the next day on behalf of the EU Contact Group and introduced the act4europe campaign. Together with the liaison officer of the Polish NGOs in Brussels, the coordinator conducted a half-day capacity building training on NGO and Union involvement in EU affairs at national level during a three day seminar for Estonian NGOs. We explained the EU institutions and the possibilities for civil dialogue, how local and national NGOs can make their voices heard in EU NGO networks and how important it is to understand that the EU is in the future shaped in Estonia and with Estonian people.

8. Human Rights Agenda of the EU conference in Sweden

In September, the former chair of the Contact Group, Mr Dick Oosting, director of Amnesty International EU office, presented the act4europe campaign at a cross-sectoral meeting of NGOs in Sweden.

9. Social NGO conference in preparation for the Irish Presidency, Dublin

The social sector of the Irish Contact Group together with the Social Platform organised a conference attended by the Irish Social Affairs Minister on preparing the agenda for the upcoming Irish Presidency. The Contact Group was represented by Mary McPhail on the official panel. The coordinator gave an introductory plenary presentation on the campaign, EU lobbying and civil dialogue as preparation for the working groups on possibilities of joint EU level and national level NGO action. The coordinator also facilitated one of these workshops.

10. Inaugural meetings of cross-sectoral coordination groups at national level

The coordinator attended such meetings in London, Paris, and Lisbon. A representative from the development sector went to the meeting in Madrid and also joint the meeting in Paris.

11. Information and presentations to sector meetings

The coordinator attended sectorial meetings on the Convention and the IGC on a regular basis. He gave presentations on the most recent developments to the Social Policy and Civil Dialogue Working Group of the Social Platform (4 times) and to the working party on Services of General Interest (1), as well as for the regular meetings of the Human Rights and Democracy NGO network (about every three weeks) during the IGC. Act4europe was also presented at the General Assembly of the European Environmental Bureau, and at meetings of national level NGOs of the EU network on Ageing, the European Women's Lobby, OSI, European Citizens Advice Service, ILGA-Europe (International Lesbian and Gay Association), the Quakers, and the European Anti Poverty Network. Most, but not all of these meetings were held in Brussels.

12. National conference of social NGOs in Italy, Rome

The act4europe campaign was presented during a large Italian NGO conference of social NGOs in Rome, November 2003 by the director of the Social Platform, who conducted a workshop and presented the Contact Group and the campaign during the plenary session. A larger number of toolkits and information material was distributed.

13. European Social Forum, Paris

Act4europe was present during the European Social Forum in Paris that brought ca. 50,000 people together on social issues. We staffed an

information stand with a wide array of material (toolkit, flyers, specific ESF summaries of our work, sector campaigns, information leaflets about the sectors etc.). The Chair of the Contact Group, Mr Giampiero Alhadef, spoke on NGO involvement in the constitutional project in one of the large plenaries, and the coordinator conducted – together with a staff member of Eurostep and SOLIDAR – a workshop on the Constitution and the campaign. A member of the development sector in the UK – BOND – produced a newspaper style publication in 4 languages on the complex impact of EU policies in environment, human rights, social affairs, and development. The publication, called ACT4EUROPE TIMES, was produced in liaison with this office and partners in the act4europe campaign at EU and national level. 7000 copies of it were distributed in almost all ESF venues and at every event that related to the Constitution.

14. Meetings with civil society representatives from accession countries and EU Member States in Brussels

In addition to the specific events listed above, the act4europe campaign has also met with civil society representatives from accession countries (and EU countries) and Member States in Brussels on several occasions. Meetings have taken place with larger groups of Romanian, Estonian, Irish, Spanish, German, Hungarian, Polish, and Czech NGO representatives on different occasions, in order to present the act4europe campaign, provide detailed information to aid national level action, and to develop the act4europe network. Some of these meetings were several hours long and included capacity building elements.

15. European Conference of Citizens' Advice Services, Brussels

The coordinator presented the campaign to a conference held by ECAS that brought together all citizen advice services and many NGOs from all across Europe to discuss common future approaches.

16. AEGEE Europe conference on Youth and Globalisation, Brussels

The coordinator was invited to speak on a panel on open dialogue during this youth world summit on globalisation in the European Parliament. The focus was on possibilities of civil dialogue and what the example of a campaign around the constitution project can add to global developments of civil dialogue and solidarity among NGOs.

17. European Policy Center Training Event for Latvian NGOs

On the invitation of the EPC the coordinator gave two training sessions and a workshop for 30 Latvian NGO representatives. The first training session covered NGO structures, options to involve accession country

NGOs in those structures and what the mutual benefit is in terms of joint input into EU civil dialogue outside of Brussels. The second training session focused on learning how to do advocacy work both at EU and national level with practical examples from different NGO sectors. The workshop involved the participants in an example task for which each small working group had to propose a strategic campaigning plan involving national and EU civil dialogue.

2. Information analysis and dissemination

The focus of the work on analysis and dissemination was to provide existing, and newly developing civil society networks, with information on the Future of Europe debate, analysed from a civil society perspective, in order to facilitate the involvement of civil society.

This information work was achieved through five main strategies: the *act4europe bulletins*, the *act4europe mailing list*, the *provision of information for existing communication tools* used by Contact Group members, the *act4europe web-site*, and the development of *act4europe promotional materials*.

1. act4europe Bulletins

The act4europe office has produced fourteen bulletins during the period of the grant. The bulletins, which exist mainly in electronic form, gave updates on the Convention and the IGC, explained and published act4europe campaigns, published campaigns run by the sectors asking for support from other sector NGOs and the unions, gave information about national level activities around the Convention and the IGC, and summarize the actions of the NGO sectors.

The act4europe bulletin, is distributed through the mailing list (see below), and is also sent to all members of the Civil Society Contact Group for further distribution within each sector. This 'double distribution' system ensures both a cross-sectoral coverage within the very large NGO and trade union networks within the Contact Group, but also a direct channel to those civil society activists at national level who have a specific interest in the campaign, and who seek a closer, and more direct level of involvement in the Future of Europe debate.

All of the bulletins produced during this funding period are accessible on the web-site.

2. act4europe mailing list

The act4europe electronic mailing list provides a direct electronic link to national level activists, providing the act4europe bulletins and other briefings, action calls,

press releases and notes, and creating a space for activists from different sectors and countries to exchange information / calls for action via the moderator of the list (coordinator of the campaign). The target subscriber base is for national level activists who can use the information to have a 'multiplier' effect at national level, by re-distributing information within existing national level civil society networks. The target is to achieve a subscriber level of one activist per sector (relating to the sectoral membership of the Contact Group), per country, across Europe, in order to assure the wide dissemination of information. By now there are 183 subscribers to the list, a large majority of which represent NGOs active in EU affairs at national level.

The list is broadened at every opportunity to reach out to more NGOs across Europe. It is moderated as to not flood activists with mail that gets never read and is strictly used for the bulletin, act4europe campaigns and events, and relevant events and campaigns of the sectors or their members. It has also been used on several occasions to distribute unofficial advance copies of Convention and IGC draft documents, in order to give subscribers the opportunity to prepare rapid responses to new developments.

As with other elements of the project, the intention was to use existing networks and capacity, rather than developing entirely new networks wherever possible. For this reason EU-level representatives of the Contact Group members are also subscribers, to ensure that relevant information can be distributed through their sectoral European networks when appropriate – again mirroring the 'double distribution' technique described in relation to the bulletin (above).

In addition to providing a direct channel for the dissemination of the bulletins, the list has been used by subscribers to advertise events for civil society on the Future of Europe, to provide feedback on contacts with national-level members of the Convention in relation to act4europe campaigns, to exchange information on recent developments, and to call for support for specific actions being initiated by a particular sector or country. The information is generally channelled into the bulletin to prevent e-mail floods unless they require urgent action.

3. Provision of information for existing communication tools

The Coordinator, Secretary, and Chair of the Contact Group have also been involved in the provision of information for existing communication tools used by Contact Group members. This has ranged from writing 'special edition' articles for sectoral newsletters on the Future of Europe, to providing briefings for Information Officers from the sectors, who wish to include the latest information on the Convention within their own bulletins and newsletters.

For example, the Social Platform produces a weekly electronic mailing for its members, which includes a Future of Europe / act4europe section. This provides a weekly outlet for the act4europe campaign to the 40 European social NGO

networks within the Platform, who then are free in turn to disseminate this information to their members at national level. The Coordinator contributes on a regular basis to such updates. The Human Rights and Democracy NGO network also runs a joint mailing list to which the coordinator is subscribed and on which act4europe information is regularly posted.

4. act4europe web-site

During the course of the funding period, the act4europe website, www.act4europe.org, which was initially hosted by the Social Platform, has been made independent. The coordinator developed a structure and design, which was enacted by a professional company. It was launched in early June and has been worked on continuously since then. The development of the web site has been a special task of the campaign assistants and it is currently updated on an almost daily basis.

It has provided background documents on the European Convention, the IGC, and the Civil Society Contact Group. It features news and all information on campaigns, contact details, and downloadable versions of the Civil Society Contact Group two Toolkits. It links to all sectors of the Contact Group and provides an online sign-up opportunity for the act4europe mailing list.

See below for statistics on the use of the site between July and November 2003.

5. act4europe materials

In order to promote the campaign, act4europe materials have also been developed during the project period. A logo for the campaign was developed, and appropriate initial materials were produced (letter heads, business cards etc.). A promotional leaflet was then produced, which included the vision statement of the Contact Group, contact details for the members, and information of how to get involved in the campaign. This leaflet was distributed to the different members of the Contact Group, and was used at large-scale events such as the ETUC Congress and the ESF, at all NGO events attended, at hearings of the political groups on the Convention and the IGC, and Convention meetings themselves. Posters to advertise act4europe events were also printed.

Power point presentations about the campaign, the Convention, the IGC, EU advocacy techniques, and EU NGO structures have been developed and are available to all Contact Group members as well as the sectors for use in explaining to their members the role of this innovative inter-sectoral cooperation around the Future of Europe, and the key issues for civil society within the European Convention and the InterGovernmental Conference.

The act4europe campaign has also published two toolkits, one before the grant period and one during it. The first one was written by the Contact Group in early

2002, and provides contact details for all Convention members, information on the priorities of each sector within the Contact Group, and ideas for actions to raise the profile of the Future of Europe debate, and to influence the work of Convention members at a national level. It was widely distributed during the period of the report in electronic form across Europe. The second edition of the toolkit was produced over the summer 2003 and published just before the start of the IGC. It explains the Convention method, how the IGC works, the time-table of the IGC, a guide to effective lobbying and a sample letter on transparency and participatory democracy. The second part is a complete and extended contact list for the IGC structured according to the 25 countries and giving details for Heads of State, Foreign Ministers, ex-Convention Members, and Permanent Reps. The second toolkit was translated into French, Spanish, German. It is available via the web site, but also in print copies, which were distributed at many NGO events and the Social Forum. It was also distributed at the act4europe conference in October 2003.

Act4europe has participated in the making of the ACT4EUROPE times, which was an initiative of a large UK based development NGO, which also bore all of the costs related to this publication. The campaign office helped with contacts in the different sectors to assure contributions, presented itself on the back cover, advertised the publication, and helped with the distribution of thousands of copies during the European Social Forum.

3. act4europe Campaigns

Since December 2002 act4europe has promoted several campaigns on specific aspects of the Convention's work of interest to civil society. Each campaign has taken the form of background information, links to relevant Convention and IGC documents, model lobbying / advocacy materials (letters, e-cards, etc) with different language versions of materials, contact details for Convention and IGC members (in recent times linked to the toolkit). Every edition of the bulletin during the Convention time has included a campaign for national level activists, giving suggested actions, timeframes, and targeting specific Working Groups, or sections within the Convention. During the period of the IGC, the bulletin has focused more on information dissemination since the monitoring of the hardly transparent IGC was much more difficult for NGOs. Action calls were all mentioned in the bulletins, but usually distributed separately. Each campaign has been monitored by the act4europe office to gauge the extent of the actions taken Europe wide. Some of the evaluation of the work done by national NGO networks during the IGC still has to be done.

During the Convention, some campaigns have been initiated by the Civil Society Contact Group as joint actions, whilst other campaigns were the initiative of one or more of the sectoral members of the Contact Group, who then used the act4europe network to develop awareness across Europe of the issues at stake.

During the IGC, all official act4europe campaigns were initiated by the Contact Group and only the bulletin gave regular updates and campaign calls for specific sectoral campaigns or other NGO networks (e.g. Euratom, trade agreements with developing countries, equal civil dialogue).

During the grant period, campaigns were carried out through the act4europe network on the following themes:

- Social Europe Working Group campaign (December 2002-January 2003)
- Campaign on participatory democracy (March - May 2003)
- External actions of the Union campaign (March-April 2003)
- Campaign on the draft protocol on sustainable development (May 2003)
- E-Card campaign on Social Europe (launched 27th May)
- Campaign on transparency and civil dialogue for the start of the IGC (October 2003)
- Campaign on the debate on non-institutional issues (November 2003)
- Press campaign on the danger of losing the constitutional project (November 2003)
- Campaign on the final meeting of the Convention before the end of the IGC (December 2003)

Details of each are available within the bulletins and on the act4europe website.

As a means of raising awareness of these campaigns, and of other concerns from civil society, the act4europe coordinator, and members of the Contact Group (in particular the Chair and Secretary) have attended, and spoken during the Convention, at many meetings with Convention members in Brussels. These have included hearings organised by political groups, information meetings with Convention members organised by the European Economic and Social Committee, and informal meetings with smaller groups of Convention members or individual Convention members on specific campaigns. During the IGC, the coordinator and Chair have organised meetings with Commission, EP, Council IGC secretariat, and experts at the Permanent Representations. The Contact Group has also attempted to organise high level meetings with the Commissioners and the EP representatives in the IGC as well as several Permanent Representatives and the Italian Presidency. Some efforts are still pending in this respect.

The coordinator and assistant have also attended meetings of the European Convention itself upon a regular basis, in order to gather information, and to meet informally with Convention members. During the IGC many contacts were made with legal experts in national delegations and other officials to gather information and channel input from civil society.

4. act4europe events

During the grant period act4europe organised three NGO meetings in Brussels of different size and scale.

The first was an afternoon information meeting for mostly Brussels based NGOs in April 2003 that updated on the Convention and the cross-sectoral project of the Contact Group and the act4europe campaign. This was mainly intended to increase trust in and knowledge about the added value of the campaign office and the Contact Group.

The second event was held in June 2003 under the title: Time to act4europe! Civil Society's next steps after the Convention. It was targeted particularly at national NGO coordinators and Unions, for whom we also provided funding to attend. Almost 150 people attended from EU and national level. The morning was structured around two public panels, a NGO sector panel assessing the outcome of the Convention and a panel with Jean-Luc Dehaene, John Monks (ETUC Secretary General), John Palmer (Director European Policy Centre) and others. The afternoon was spent in a strategy meeting on future campaigning and the most useful form of conducting act4europe information and campaigning together. The idea of the second toolkit was promoted during this strategy meeting. The event also included a press conference. A detailed report of the event is available on our web site.

The third event was held in October 2003 as a larger NGO strategy meeting on the IGC with ca. 50 participants from EU and national level. There was a special briefing meeting with Anne van Lancker, ex-Convention Member and MEP who briefed on the European Parliament position, the plans for the IGC, and possibilities for civil dialogue. The NGO sectors presented their core campaign issues, which jointly made up the campaign focus of the Contact Group and the act4europe campaign. In a third round the coordinator presented the most recent information on the IGC and the strategy ideas for the campaign. A lively discussion followed around awareness of different sector concerns, participation in other campaigns (such as equal dialogue art 51 campaign) and the needs of national level NGO in terms of information and campaigning. A detailed report of the event is available on our web site.

5. Developing act4europe

The act4europe campaign will continue during the period of the European Parliament election and ratification of the Constitutional Treaty until the end of 2004. It will continue to develop the capacity of its member networks to engage

with the InterGovernmental Conference process until it ends. It will then focus upon developing the participation of NGOs and trade unions at national level, so that they can contribute to the national debates on ratification of the draft Constitutional Treaty, and develop an awareness of the implications of the new Treaty for their areas of work.

Act4europe will continue its information work with regular bulletins, the mailing list, and the web site.

As a follow-up to this project, we are currently seeking Commission funding for a further project on ratification under which we will produce another toolkit for NGOs on how to engage with the ratification process, and how to understand the relevance of the draft Treaty for their work and concerns. This project will also aim to organise a larger NGO conference on civil dialogue and implementation of the citizens' initiative, and will organise three capacity building seminars in Accession Countries for NGOs from those countries and current Member States on cross-sectoral work and involvement in EU and national civil dialogue.

Appendix:

Overview over the use of the web site between July and November

The statistics for our website are available from July 2003 onwards. The total visits of the website constantly increased, doubling the 843 of July to 1732 in November (with a reduction in August due to holidays). The total hits of the site tripled in the same time from 25,883 to 70,393. It is interesting to note that the number of visitors that come regularly to our website increased from 85 in July to 227 in November. In addition to that, our presence on the world wide web seems to be more and more prominent, as visits to act4europ.org referred to by search engines are six times higher in November (253) than in July (38). In general, the use of our websites measured in its different forms increased significantly over the last few months.

