

ACT4EUROPE CAMPAIGN: Time to act on the Future of Europe

- agreement 2004-0930/001-001 SC1.1-

Project report May 2004- February 2005

This final narrative report is accompanied by the final financial report relating to the grant period.

The act4europe campaign conducted its work according to the proposal submitted to the European Commission. Yet some variances occurred in the broad political context, as well as within partners' network, which induced several changes of activity and timetable: explanation is provided in the each specific section of this report, as well as in the final section.

This document contains a broad overview over the actions conducted within the project. The main products developed during the project are added to this narrative report, and all publications, action calls and bulletins of the campaign are available on the web site : we are happy to supply the European Commission with any additional material upon request.

Practical management of the project

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 Director of the Social Platform (Simon Wilson) and by the Chair of the Contact Group. Chairs of the Civil Society Contact Group during the period of this grant were Giampiero Alhadeff (CONCORD) and John Hontelez (European Environmental Bureau).

In January 2005, Nicolas Beger was replaced by Elodie Fazi as act4europe coordinator. Markus Held, campaign assistant, was replaced by Vanda Knowles from September 2004 to December 2004.

Co-funding

During the period, the project was co-financed by a grant from the Charles Stewart MOTT foundation.

Summary

The aim of the project was to establish a stronger open and transparent dialogue between the institutions and civil society in its specific NGO sector, not only at EU level, but also at national level, as well as between NGO networks and individual citizens engaged in their area of concern.

Building upon the sustainable large cross-sectoral NGO alliances developed all over Europe by Act4Europe and the extensive networks of the six NGO sectors (environment, social, human rights, development, women, culture) represented in the Civil Society Contact Group, the project 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 linked with the debate on the Future of Europe and the development of participatory democracy.

It stabilised and broadened those networks/alliances to accompany the referenda and ratification processes, so that NGOs increased their capacities to participate in all areas of EU activity and take up their responsibilities as partners in civil dialogue towards the EU, but also towards citizens, who have increasingly looked at them for information and guidance on the impact of the new Constitutional Treaty and the possibilities of active citizenship implied therein.

1. Overview of activities

The main areas in which the Time to Act Project has related to were:

- *Civil Society Network building*: Building a cross-European network of national and European NGOs active around the Future of Europe debate, in particular focusing upon the involvement of the candidate countries and strengthening interactions between European and national networks on cross-sectoral issues
- *Information analysis and dissemination*: Monitoring and analysing the work of the the Inter-Governmental conference and ratification campaigns, providing information and briefings with regard to sectoral concerns and participatory democracy
- *Capacity-building* to foster ownership and involvement of New Member States' NGOs in civil dialogue on European issues

i) Supporting and developing the networks (European and national level)

This area of the project has focused around developing national and European level networking, both through direct contacts with national level civil society organisations and by using and adding capacity to 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 information dissemination, advocacy work, networking, and monitoring.

1. Developing existing networks at EU level (Civil Society Contact Group)

One of the key features of the project was to facilitate the development of the cross-sectoral dialogue of the Civil Society Contact Group in order to promote the involvement of a large circle of NGOs and unions across Europe.

Widening the sectors covered

During the period of the projects, **two European Networks joined** the Civil Society Contact Group and got involved in the project: the European Women's Lobby and the European Foundation for the Arts and Heritage (the latest as an observer). Both organisations were actively involved in the debate on the Future of Europe. The Civil Society Contact Group and its act4europe campaign now bring together six major European sectoral NGO networks, which considerably increased the project's impact and dissemination capacity.

A forum for exchange

During the period of the project, the Civil Society Contact Group **held meetings approximately every month**, 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 contribute to the official civil dialogue of during the IGC and ratification campaigns, and to increase the involvement of national-level civil society organisations in the Future of Europe debate.

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.

Development of common input in the debate on the Future of Europe

During the period of the final report, the Contact Group **agreed and issued several joint statements to the Inter-Governmental Conference**, as well as to the European Parliament's hearing on the Constitutional Treaty, which can be found on the Act4europe Website. Amongst others, it issued a **press release on the outcomes of the IGC** (June 2004) and a **joint statement to European Parliament's hearing** on the Constitutional Treaty (November 2004).

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.

During the **ratification phase (June 2004 onwards)**, Contact Group members met with the President of the Economic and Social Committee, took part in **two hearings** organised by the **European Economic and Social Committee** and the **European Parliament** to present sectoral and trans-sectoral assessments of the Constitutional Treaty. The amendment they presented on this last occasion, inviting European and national institutions to acknowledge the role of civil society organisations and to provide them with appropriate funding within ratification campaigns, was adopted by the European Parliament in its resolution on the Constitution, which confirmed the increased acknowledgement acquired by Civil Society organisations since the beginning of the Convention. Later on, representatives of the Civil Society Contact Group **met with Commissioner Margot Wallström**, in charge of Communication and Institutional Relations, to discuss the future of participatory democracy and the role of civil society organisations in the ratification of the European Constitution.

Further disseminating information among European NGOs, and beyond

During the period of the project, the coordinator attended sectoral meetings of the IGC. He gave presentations on the most recent developments to the Social Policy and Civil Dialogue Working Group of the Social Platform and to the working party on Services of General Interest, as well as for the regular meetings of the Human Rights and Democracy NGO network.

To make the development of participatory democracy more accessible within the members' networks and to a wider scope of citizens, the Contact Group and the campaign issued **press releases** and the office was involved in **comprehensive presswork for EU and national level as well as in publications** of NGOs:

Press Release June 2004

Article for Social Voices (July 2004)

TV interviews Euronews (4. November 2004)

2. Developing direct networks at national level

Next to specific capacity building activities (reported on below), the project contributed to strengthen individual contacts with interested national level NGO activists 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).

Subsequently, most joint actions at national level that were conducted during the IGC and the ratification campaigns were sent to the office and the coordinator helped with further information and advice on the cross-European references.

The impact of this development was multiplied by the capacity building activities held in the New Member States throughout 2004, which reinforced the links established in the previous steps of the programme and established a strong base of exchange and understanding for further cooperation:

Some of the meetings attended are listed below¹:

Towards a European Constitution, conference organised by Federal Trust/UACES, London, July 2004

The Act4europe Coordinator examined the notion of participatory democracy in the Constitutional Treaty and the issues surrounding the implementation of its Article 46. Beger assesses the concept of civil dialogue, the history of interaction between NGOs and the EU institutions and the direction Article 46 would have to take in order to turn participatory democracy into a substantial concept in the EU context.

European Conference of Citizens' Advice Services, Brussels, September 2004

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.

European Social Forum, London, 15-17 October 2004

Act4europe participated in the European Social Forum in London along with the Social Platform in order to promote understanding of the European Constitution. This proved an effective means of out-reach towards the broad social movement engaged within the Forum. Materials produced by the campaign were distributed to delegates, and the Coordinator was able to intervene in debates organised on the Constitution.

Conference on participatory Democracy in Tallinn, October 2004

In October 2004, the act4europe coordinator took part in a conference on Participatory Democracy in Tallinn, Estonia, organized by the Estonian Civil Society Contact group. The conference also provided a unique occasion to develop contacts with Estonian NGOs from different sectors and common work has been developed since then.

Beyond this, the act4europe coordinator met with **groups of NGOs or individual NGO representatives coming to Brussels, mainly from the new Member States, on an**

¹ Please note that most of the travel costs incurred were covered by organizers, which explains why the actual travel and subsistence expenses for staff members (except in relation with capacity-building events) were less important than initially planned.

average of once or twice a week. Among these, we can quote meetings with Estonian NGOs, Hungarian NGOs, Polish NGOs, Armenian NGOs, Finnish NGOs, with representatives of ATTAC Belgium, with members of IRI (the Initiative and Referendum Institute), of the Heinrich-Böll-Foundation, of Local Democracy Agencies. All of these meetings served to strengthen the links between EU-level and national civil society organisations in relation to the on-going debate on the Future of Europe.

ii) Toolkit on civil dialogue around ratification

Programme change

The initial application had foreseen the publication of a toolkit on participatory democracy and the ratification of the Constitution in the first period of the project. As a result of the delays in the achievements of the IGC and uncertainties over its conclusion before the end of the programme, the act4europe team decided to link the toolkit with the European Parliament elections, using a small part of the grant (translation costs only) to publish a first handbook on the European elections, which was identified as a crucial challenge for the development of participatory democracy, particularly in the new Member States, a few days after their accession, and a key staging post towards ratification. A second toolkit was published in February 2005 and translated into French (half of the translation being provided on a voluntary basis by the Civil Society Contact Group secretariat or its members).

Both toolkits were conceived as tools for the empowerment of national NGO at national level: they provided not only general information on the Constitutional Treaty, European elections and participatory democracy, but also targeted tools and recommendations national NGOs have used to get involved at national level (such as contact details, practical recommendations to set up national strategy and build working alliances).

European election toolkit

This toolkit was designed to support national NGOs in the European elections campaigns. It contains general information on the European Parliament and its relevance to NGO work on the Future of Europe, ideas on strategies to adopt in order to lobby parties / candidates, the concerns of the 4 sectors members of the Civil Society Contact Group towards the new Parliament (social, environment, human rights, development) and a list of contact details of parties throughout Europe. Overall the toolkit It has been widely spread throughout Civil Society Contact Group's networks and translated in five languages: English, French, Spanish, German, Estonian.

This toolkit was disseminated in printed and –mainly- electronic version, throughout the act4europe website, mailing list and through the Civil Society Contact Group members' networks.

Toolkit on the possibilities and responsibilities of NGOs in the civil dialogue around ratification – February 2005

This toolkit published in February 2005, aims at enabling and fostering a cross-sectoral and trans-national debate on the Constitutional Treaty amongst citizens' organizations at European and national level by providing European and national NGO activists and a wider scope of citizens with targeted and practical information to engage in ratification campaigns. It :

- gives a sketch of the state of play and main challenges in the ratification process both in Brussels, with the European Institutions, and in each of the Member States
- examines more specifically the role of Civil Society organizations in the ratification process and
- provides **sectoral assessments** contributed by the members of the Civil Society Contact Group, as well as further links to information materials. The sectoral assessments were particularly appreciated for providing a targeted and neutral approach to the Constitutional Treaty (Act4europe did not take any positive or negative stance on the text) that really meet citizens' concerns. Whereas most analyses usually deal with the text as a whole, the sectoral assessments were meant to become a reliable reference on the 6 particular sectors members of the Civil Society Contact Group work on.

200 copies were distributed at the NGO Space for Debate conference, on the day of its launch. It was also disseminated widely by electronic media, throughout the act4europe website, mailing list and through the members' networks.

Members of the Civil Society Contact Group used it for their own events on the Constitution, to foster understanding of other sectoral debates among their members. It has also served as a basis for national and local debates, especially in the countries where capacity-building seminars had been held and raised awareness of the challenges at stake.

iii) Seminar on promoting dialogue on participatory democracy

Programme change

The activity plan proposed to hold a seminar on promoting participatory democracy and the implementation of art. 46 in the Constitution (now article I-47). As the agreement of the Constitution had only been reached in June 2004, and not, as was predicted, in December 2003, it was decided in agreement with the European Commission that the overall aim of the project would be much increased if the focus of the seminar could be the **role of civil society in the ratification process, which implied a widening of its scope.**

Besides, since the democratic evaluation processes of the Constitutional Treaty took much longer within the NGO sectors than anticipated, (many networks were holding consultations with national members or reaching decisions at their annual meetings during the autumn), the project was extended until the end of February 2005, after agreement with the European Commission, and the conference took place on **17 February 2005.**

An invaluable forum for civil society activists from national and European level

Entitled “**NGO Space for Debate: ratifying the Constitution and implementing participatory democracy**”, the conference gathered more than 110 participants in Brussels, of whom many national NGO activists from the six NGO families constituting the Civil Society Contact Group. This was an invaluable opportunity to exchange experiences and discuss the challenges linked to the ratification in the 25 Member States, as well as the interactions between European and national NGOs in this process.

The morning session was organized around **discussions of the sectoral assessments of the Constitution** provided by Members of the Civil Society Contact Group and revealed that, although national NGOs take various stances over the Constitution, most of them are faced with similar challenges – funding, access to relevant information, building of alliances whilst at the same time providing targeted campaigns, independence vis-à-vis political campaigns. After meeting in small groups to discuss strategies around ratification campaigns, participants then had the opportunity to **discuss the future of participatory democracy** and the implementation of article 47 with Mark Gray, Member of Commissioner Margot Wallström's Cabinet.

Strengthening the network, increasing the impact of the act4europe campaign

The conference, attended by several representatives of the European Commission, the European Economic and Social Committee and the European Parliament, was the occasion to assess the strong interest raised by participatory democracy issues throughout the EU and its important development since the beginning of the Act4europe campaign. It also provided an invaluable opportunity to discuss the outcomes of this first stage of the act4europe campaign and gather feedback from national NGOs on how to build upon this experience in the future.

A conference report has been drafted, disseminated to participants and is available on the act4europe website. It can be found in annex to this report.

iv) Capacity-building seminars on active citizenship for NGOs in the new Member States

Programme change:

Initially Act4europe had planned three capacity seminars to take place in Warsaw, Prague and Budapest, pending the decisions of the Commission about funding projects under the same call for proposal in those countries. Since the Czech project partners were successful in their application, act4europe took part in their training programme as a partner, and, thus, changed to Hungary for the third capacity building seminar.

For practical reasons linked with the financial reporting of the project, the activities are here designated with reference to the initial planning (rather than by chronological order).

Fostering ownership and empowerment through innovative methods

NGOs at national, regional, and local level often have no more access to information than the general public about the new Constitutional Treaty and their opportunities for publicly exchanging their views on all areas of EU activities. This is particularly true for NGOs in the New Member States. The seminars aimed at giving NGOs from six different sectors and trans-sectoral organisations the **information** and the **tools** to position themselves in the debate and help their particular constituencies to get actively involved in questions **of the Constitution**, but also in the **long-term possibilities of European citizenship**.

The capacity building activities were provided by an **experienced trainer** (Nico Beger, act4europe coordinator, who had accumulated relevant background in this field through his previous professional experiences), together with the act4europe assistant and **representatives from the members of the Civil Society Contact** who had come to exchange on their specific field of expertise. Each event was organized in **close partnership with NGOs from the host country**, which was crucial to better fit with participants' expectations.

The seminars were organized around the same structure:

- **Provision of a training handbook** by the Civil Society Contact Group, translated into the host country's language (description to be found on section 2)
- **Provision of information and organization of interactive debates on:**
 - the Constitutional Treaty and its implications for different sectors – social, women, human rights, environment, development
 - national strategies for ratification,
 - European NGO structures,
 - lobbying techniques,
 - participatory democracy and the implications of article 47
- **Simulation of a lobbying campaign on the new Gender Directive**

In the seminars which took place in Prague and Warsaw, a simulation of a European and national lobbying campaign based on the EU's new gender directive was organized.

The programmes of each seminar can be found in the list of attached documents.

1. Warsaw, November 2004 (two-day seminar)

The last of the act4europe 2004 seminars in the new Member States took place on 15-16 November 2004 in Warsaw, in partnership with OSKA, a Polish Women's NGO, member of the European Women's Lobby. The Chair and Members of the Civil Society Contact Group presented assessments from their own sectors and members of the Act4Europe secretariat carried the training programme on the EU institutions, lobbying techniques, information sources, NGO structures, Constitution overview, and Participatory Democracy. The Polish NGO participants were very engaged and the discussions were extremely useful for both sides. The **second day focused on a strategy of networking** among Polish NGOs for the referendum.

2. Ljubjana, September 2004

40 Slovenian NGOs participated, the organising NGO centre CNVOS was present with board members and staff, and had managed to bring the national TV to the event as well as the representative of the EU Commission in Slovenia. Overall the seminar was particularly appreciated for meeting the need for such information from and about European NGO work, but also with respect to the opportunity to meet with so many Slovenian NGOs from all sectors.

3. Budapest, October 2004

This seminar was held in October 2004 in Budapest in collaboration with NIOK, the Non-Profit and information Centre Foundation. Its structure was similar to the seminar held in Ljubljana, focusing on Participatory democracy and the role of European NGOs; advocacy techniques; and assessing concerns that NGOs have with the new Constitutional Treaty. A specific session was also organized on **Structural Funds and the issue of partnership**, crucial for the development of NGOs and their involvement in Civil Dialogue in the New Member States.

4. Conference and Training Seminar for Czech NGOs, Prague

In addition, act4europe took part actively in a seminar organised by the initial Czech project partners who were successful in their application: all costs were therefore covered by the partner's project. The conference and training seminar were entirely conducted by act4europe together with a trainer from the European Women's Lobby. The seminar covered amongst others the link between EU policy and the national level, how European NGOs are structured, EU decision-making processes, civil dialogue, and lobbying techniques. The **afternoon session was spent in a simulation exercise** in which participants practically interact with EU institutions, media, and business on the new directive on equality between women and men.

Strengthening trans-sectoral links and ownership of European integration

The four seminars contributed to foster ownership of European NGO structures and advocacy work, which are often perceived as a very technical and specific fields. In this view, the simulation exercise was particularly appreciated: by giving participant a concrete overview of how a European lobbying campaign can be conducted and of who its key actors are, it contributed to foster not only understanding, participants' readiness to further get involved in civil dialogue at national level.

A step towards sustainable cooperation and integration into European NGO networks

Overall the outcomes of the capacity-building activities were perceived as extremely positive, since they paved the way for further collaboration at European, national but also transnational level. The act4europe conference "**NGO Space for Debate**" held in February 2005 provided a timely opportunity to draw up a first assessment of the project. The participants themselves (many of whom had taken part in the capacity-building activities) stressed the positive effect of the campaign which has contributed not only to increase trust, networking and capacity building between European and national NGOs, but also provided a strong impetus for transnational cooperation between national members themselves, either by sector or on a trans-sectoral basis.

The impact of these capacity building initiatives was also reinforced by the setting up of privileged contacts with “transectoral” organisations with a strong dissemination capacity in the new Member States where capacity seminars or conferences were organised, providing a multiplier effect on the campaign’s outcome in these countries.

2. Products developed and disseminated

Next to the two NGO toolkits produced, the focus of the work on analysis and dissemination was to provide existing, and newly developing civil society networks, with regular information on the Future of Europe debate, analysed from a civil society perspective, in order to facilitate their involvement at national level.

1. Act4europe Bulletins for regular information flows and networking

The act4europe office has produced 8 bulletins during the period of the grant. The bulletins, which exist mainly in electronic form, gave updates on the the IGC and the ratification campaigns, explained and published act4europe campaigns, published campaigns run by the sectors asking for support from other sectoral NGOs, gave information about national level activities around the the IGC, the ratification, and summarize the actions of the NGO sectors.

The act4europe bulletin is distributed through the act4europe 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 the funding period are accessible on the web site.

2. Training handbooks: a key step towards the involvement of national NGOs from the new Member States

Specific training handbooks were also developed for the capacity building seminars in the new Member States, in partnership with national NGOs. One English version was provided for each capacity-building activity, which was then translated into the language of the host country and adapted according to the specific requirements of each training.

Intended as a source of reference for participants and other NGOs in the new Member States to get involved in civil dialogue on EU issues, they provide:

- an analysis of EU civil dialogue,
- the demands on implementation of the new chapter on participatory democracy,
- an overview over the structure of European NGO networking and the relevance of EU institutions, as well as a brief lobbying guide.
- a contact list for all European NGOs in the 6 sectors (in English)

3. Development of a training materials on civil dialogue around the Constitution and European integration

3.1. **Power point presentations** about the campaign, the Convention, the IGC, participatory democracy, EU advocacy techniques, EU NGO structures and sectoral assessments of the Constitution have been further 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. They contributed to increase the dissemination of information on the European Constitution, participatory democracy within the Civil Society Members' networks and beyond, as well as their ownership of the project.

3.2. Besides, a **training concept** was developed for the capacity-building seminars: based on the **simulation of a lobbying campaign**. With the aim of setting up a Lobbying strategy for the EU directive on gender equality beyond the sphere of employment, the simulation exercise provided information on the political and strategic background of the directive and of the different stakeholders' views and margin for manoeuvre.

In small groups, participants had the opportunity to **represent some key stakeholders** of the debate (EU Commission, NGOs, different interest groups, media), set up their strategy, and, in interaction with other groups, practice negotiating and lobbying skills.

It contributed to create knowledge of EU integration that is not only cognitive but becomes an experience, fostering understanding of the day to day work of ENGOs and of the position of different actors in their negotiations with each other, and of the legislative process.

Please see attached documents for a more detailed description of the activity.

4. Act4europe toolkits to provide balanced information and further participation tools

Over the time period, the act4europe campaign has also published two **toolkits** (please see above section.)

5. Documentation on participatory democracy

The project produced regular documentation on civil dialogue with NGOs and the citizens' initiative in preparation and conclusion of the NGO seminar to be held in Brussels, which will be disseminated via the web site and e-mail lists. Among them, we can quote several briefings and papers from the act4europe coordinator, such as "*Participatory Democracy, organized civil society and the "new" dialogue*", published in June 2004.

6. Extension of act4europe mailing list to the new member States

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.

In addition to providing a direct channel for the dissemination of the bulletins, the list was used by subscribers to advertise events for civil society on the IGC and the ratification campaigns, to exchange information on recent developments, and to call for support for specific actions being initiated by a particular sector or country.

Following the capacity building activities, and thanks to the contacts tied up with other NGOs activists from the new Member States, the **scope of subscribers was considerably extended** in the new Member States, which contributed to set up a more sustainable information flow and exchange base for the enlarged act4europe network. By the end of the funding period there were over **200 subscribers to the list, a large majority of which represent NGOs active in EU affairs at national level.**

7. Provision of information for Members' 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 contributed 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.

8. act4europe web site

The act4europe website provided background documents on the IGC, the ratification campaign 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 Toolkits. It links to all sectors of the Contact Group and provides an online sign-up opportunity for the act4europe mailing list.

A specific section was developed on the ratification of the Constitutional Treaty, which provides reader with updated table and information on national campaigns, as well as special links to relevant NGO campaigns and activities from European and national NGOs.

3. Impact

Overall the project achieved the following objectives:

- The final conference confirmed that the project has succeeded in informing and mobilising civil society networks to work together around the Future of Europe debate, developing sustainable transnational and transectoral NGO partnership, and networks on the Future of Europe across the human rights, development, environment, women's rights, social, cultural sector.
 - Developing further cross-sectoral alliances at national level between the sectors of civil society represented within the Contact Group.
 - Informing and engaging civil society organisations in the dialogue on the Future of Europe
- Increasing the capacity of national and local NGOs to take up a role in EU civil dialogue in both directions, towards the EU institutions and towards their own constituencies.
- By providing a structured framework for discussion on the Constitutional Treaty for all members of the Civil Society Contact Group, the project facilitated the drafting of assessments of the final Constitutional Treaty by the six sectors, which were then brought together in a common publication
- It contributed to improve knowledge about the new Constitution for many citizens via their NGO networks in relation to social, environmental, development, human rights, women's rights and culture, i.e. from a *trans-sectoral perspective*. Citizens therefore increased their knowledge of the Treaty on a range of issues which is broader range than their usual remit and field of expertise.
- The project strengthened a cross-sectoral dialogue and joint response to the initial design of the new civil dialogue and citizenship rights: members of the Civil Society Contact Group, particularly in relation to the implementation of article I-47.
- The project helped increase the input of NGOs into the media debate around ratification and referenda.
- The project enhanced the capacity of civil society in the new Member States to participate actively in European citizenship and civil dialogue, while facilitating exchange between NGOs in the old and the new Member States, thus increasing the capacity of selected NGOs in the old Member States as well. It paved the way for strong cross-sectoral and trans-national alliances which have been permanently maintained ever since through the act4europe network, by information exchange and might result in common campaigns in the future.
- The project increased the trust of NGOs at local, regional, and national level in the usefulness of participating in EU activity themselves or via their NGO networks.

4. Variances from stated goals, objectives

One variance has occurred during the reporting period: the suspension of the Intergovernmental Conference in December 2003, which was then re-launched in early 2004 until June 2004. Since act4europe is not aimed at taking a simple “pro or contra the Constitution” stance, but promotes the involvement of civil society, particularly in the new Member States, in the debate on the Future of Europe, the failure did not hinder us from continuing the work we set out to do with the campaign.

The precise content of advocacy work together with the NGO networks all across Europe was re-worked as were activities related, for example, to civil dialogue around the ratification campaigns and the future of participatory democracy (please see specific sections for changes in activities).

Please see specific section for details.

5. Follow-up of the activity

The act4europe campaign will continue over the period of the ratification of the Constitutional Treaty until the end of 2006. It will continue to develop the capacity of its member networks to engage throughout the ratification process of the Constitution as well as to take part in developing participatory democracy on areas of common concerns. It has already started developing the participation of NGOs at national level, so that they can contribute to the national debates on ratification of the 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 well as by further developing networking among organisations which are involved in this process.

For the period 2005-2006, the act4europe campaign will be supported by a grant from the Charles Stewart MOTT Foundation to develop a project in direct continuation with the previous one. This new project, “**Participatory Democracy and Access for NGOs in the New Member States and Accession Countries**”. In direct continuation with the previous project, it will aim at:

- Continuing informing on issues of high concern to civil society in the Constitutional Treaty – such as protection of the environment, eradication of poverty, women’s rights, solidarity with developing countries, respect for human rights etc. – which are not sufficiently covered by the information campaigns of the EU institutions and will likely play no role in the national mass media.
- Promoting the concept of participatory across Europe by assessing and increasing the possibilities for NGO participation in EU affairs, with a particular emphasis on NGOs in NMS and Accession Countries.
- Promoting the implementation of art. I-47 in relation to civil dialogue and the citizens’ initiative at EU level and inform NGOs at national level about their opportunities of involvement.

Members of the Civil Society Contact Group will support this new project on their own funds, and decisions for financial support from other foundations are currently awaited.