



## **Strategic Plan 2009-2012 (inclusive)**

### **1. Faith in action**

Aprodev and its member organisations are part of the worldwide ecumenical family. Through our contacts and working relations with bodies like the World Council of Churches, the Lutheran World Federation, Action by Churches Together (ACT) Development and Action by Churches Together (ACT) International, Aprodev is in touch with actors in all corners of the *oikumene* – the whole inhabited earth. The vast majority of these actors are close to local realities. This provides those who are part of the ecumenical movement with the unique possibility to have their ears close to the ground and to engage, together with counterparts all over the globe, in activities which are embedded in, and tailor-made for each particular context. Therefore, these activities have the potential of being more relevant, more effective and more efficient. For the lobby and advocacy work of Aprodev, for example, this means that ‘partner-based advocacy’ vis-à-vis European Union institutions can become a reality rather than a slogan.

A second important feature of Aprodev, besides its worldwide reach, is its identity as a faith-based organisation. The importance of the interactions between religion and development, and religion and politics is increasingly recognised. Sometimes religion can be part of the problem, sometimes it can be part of the solution, but almost always religion plays a role in societal developments – especially in areas other than the secularised parts of Europe. As faith-based organisations, Aprodev and its members are well placed to discern the role of religion and to engage in policies and activities which aim at enhancing the positive role religion can play in improving the livelihoods of people. Inter-religious dialogue is of paramount importance in this respect.

Thirdly, Aprodev and its members are ‘professional’ in the original sense of the word: they profess their faith and beliefs through the ecumenical identity of their organisations. They are, however, also professional in that the members can build on decades of expertise of working closely together with local partner organisations in the areas of development and humanitarian aid. Regarding humanitarian aid, the Aprodev agencies adhere to the SPHERE guidelines and codes of conduct approved by ACT International. The secretariat has, over the years, built up a reputation in Brussels of delivering serious work that is well recognised and respected by the EU institutions as well as other NGOs.

A fourth characteristic of the Aprodev family of agencies is the strong ties they have with the constituencies in their home countries. These constituencies, which are largely but not exclusively church-related groups and parishes, are composed of committed people who are eager to translate their faith and convictions into concrete actions in day-to-day life, in politics, and through generous donating patterns.

Fifthly, Aprodev members share a similar ethos. This contributes to the coherence of Aprodev as a network. One of the elements of this ethos is that, before taking positions on important policy issues, Aprodev members usually consult with each other and with other ecumenical actors. This may result in longer decision making processes but it also means that, once a position is reached, it is consolidated and broadly based.

Related to the ecumenical identity of Aprodev and its members is the sixth characteristic of Aprodev as a network which addresses a broad range of issues. Aprodev is not a “single issues pressure group”, simply because the far flung ecumenical movement has its roots in many different local situations, all struggling with common but differentiated agenda’s. This broad approach also prevents quickly changing agenda’s and guarantees follow through and continuity of policies.

Finally, Aprodev is an independent organisation in the sense that its core programme is fully financed by its member organisations.

With these seven features – global reach, understanding of the dynamics between religion and development, professionalism, strong and committed constituencies, like-minded member organisations, continuity, and independence – Aprodev and its member organisations are in an excellent position to engage convincingly, credibly and effectively in lobby and advocacy vis-à-vis the European Union, thereby putting their faith into action.

## **2. Trends and context**

Aprodev and its member organisations are operating in a context in which the future of development is uncertain. Whereas there will probably always be a need for humanitarian responses to natural and man-made crises, the future of the ‘development complex’ as we know it at present is in a flux. Various trends can be observed:

- There is a growing recognition that development is a multi/dimensional and comprehensive concept. It includes sustainability from an economic, social and environmental perspective, with the relationship between development and climate change gaining importance, as poor people suffer first and foremost from global warming.
- The ways in which development aid is spent, and the channels which are used by official donors are changing. This may result in a diminishing role of Northern NGOs as important conduits for the spending of ODA.
- New actors like private citizens’ initiatives and business companies are appearing on the scene, thereby increasing competition.
- There is a trend to mainstream development and integrate it in other policy areas such as trade, security, environment and migration. On the one hand this presents an opportunity if poverty reduction is indeed elevated as a major objective in these other policy areas, and if policy coherence for development really means that policies regarding the other themes are to be coherent with

development objectives (instead of vice versa). On the other hand, there is a danger that development is 'hijacked' and 'instrumentalised' for other (geo-political) purposes.

- Criticism on development cooperation is on the rise as sceptics claim that half a century of development aid has hardly had tangible results.
- The intensifying process of globalisation has a vastly greater effect on the lives of poor people than development projects and programmes. Therefore, there is a need to re-think and re-visit development co-operation policies in the context of the necessity to 'tame' unfettered globalisation, to reduce the negative and to enhance the positive effects.
- If only because of the process of globalisation, development aid needs to be addressed in conjunction with the larger context including trade policies, climate change, the relation between security and development, agriculture and fisheries policies, and tax justice.
- A case in point is the EU's Global Europe strategy aimed at expanding the number of regional and bilateral trade agreements based on fast and full tariff elimination by developing countries. This EU strategy promotes a one-dimensional template and blueprint for competitive regionalism which ignores development concerns, and is pursued in an aggressive way in conjunction with other elements of foreign policy.
- There is the growing interest and importance of the link between religion and development. This prompts Aprodev and its members to re-think and re-affirm their faith-based identity and their belonging to the broader ecumenical movement. In addition, it necessitates a revisiting of the question what this specific identity means for the choice of, and relations with partner organisations in other parts of the world.

These various trends reflect on European development and related policies – the biotope in which Aprodev works. At the same time, these issues have global dimensions and need to be addressed in a broader ecumenical context. Aprodev is very pleased with the fact that, next to Action by Churches Together (ACT) International, which focuses on humanitarian aid, ACT Development was established in February 2007. The two organisations are planning to integrate their activities into one organisation sometime in the course of 2009. The new ACT should be an important forum to address some of the overarching issues mentioned above (such as the relationship between religion and development). The relationship between Aprodev and ACT has to be organised on the basis of mutual benefits.

### **3. Criteria for programmatic work**

For the selection of programmatic priorities, the following criteria were used:

- The importance and urgency of the issue on the EU and the international agenda.
- The importance of the topic from the point of view of Aprodev's mandate.
- The question whether Aprodev can make a difference and add value.
- The commitment of Aprodev organisations to support the programme priorities (including, where appropriate, their willingness to finance these outside the core budget).
- The available human and financial resources and the expertise in the Secretariat and the Aprodev organisations and/or the possibility to obtain additional expertise.
- Key developments and decision making moments in the EU context.
- The question whether continuity and follow-through can be ensured.

- The importance and relevance of the issue to Southern partners of Aprodev members.

On the basis of the Strategic Plan, annual Work Programmes, covering calendar years, will be drawn up. The Work Programmes include indicators for progress. That process involves the Secretariat, the Working Groups, the Advisory Groups (PAG and GRG) and the Board of Directors. This annual exercise provides an opportunity to reassess the ongoing work and to decide which emphases should be put on the various strategic objectives for the next year, within the overall remit of the Strategic Plan.

#### **4. Strategic objectives, special projects and related projects**

The 4 strategic objectives constitute the core programme and form the main agenda for the 4 core staff persons. There are 3 special projects that are implemented by special staff who are appointed to implement these projects. An important criterion for adopting special projects is the question how much they can contribute to the core programme of Aprodev. In addition, there is a category of related projects. These are projects which go beyond the capacity of the present staff in the secretariat and which are carried out by a working group composed of staff of member organisations, following a lead agency approach. In all this, it is important that coherence between work done within Aprodev on these various issues is established and maintained and that synergies are actively pursued.

##### **4.1 Core programme**

*Strategic objective 1: European Union development policies are based on the principles of ownership, partnership and participation, and contribute to sustainable development, gender equality, human dignity, and the alleviation and eventual eradication of poverty.*

Under this heading, Aprodev will try to ensure that the centrality of poverty reduction objectives and the commitment to Policy Coherence for Development (of the Lisbon Treaty) and the EU Consensus on Development are translated into reality. The focus will be on the EU's policies and practices with regard to the quality and quantity of aid in the context of the international debate on aid effectiveness and beyond, and on the role of civil society in this respect. Special attention will be paid to the issues of climate change, and of integrating a rights-based approach in European Union development and related policies.

*Strategic objective 2: European Union sustainable development and related policies and practices should promote gender equality and equity.*

Through work on this objective, Aprodev will monitor and influence EU gender mainstreaming policies in external relations in the context of Aprodev's strategic objectives. In addition, efforts will be made to ensure that gender relevant issues and analyses inform Aprodev's advocacy and lobby strategies, e.g. through promoting mechanisms for a) knowledge sharing, b) communication, and c) systematic reporting on progress made in achieving gender equality.

*Strategic objective 3: European Union trade and agricultural policies should contribute to sustainable development, poverty eradication, food security and gender equity.*

The Global Europe strategy concerning (regional) trade negotiations will be monitored. Special attention will be given to monitoring and influencing the negotiations for, and the implementation of the Economic Partnership Agreements between the EU and ACP regions. Aprovev will monitor the impact of the EU's Common Agricultural Policy on developing countries and will work on the policy initiative for the Advancement of African Agriculture, with the objective of promoting bio-diversity and ensuring participatory design of local stakeholders in rural and agricultural development. Links will be made with the issue of food security, gender equity, and EU policies concerning climate change and bio-energy/agrofuel.

*Strategic objective 4: European Union policies with regard to climate change should be coherent with the EU's development policies and promote synergies with the objectives of poverty eradication, food security and gender equity.*

The major objective for work on this issue is to actively use Aprovev's resources and influence to ensure that all EU policies which have an impact on climate change, as well as the EU approach to the current UNFCCC processes, promote development and contribute to poverty reduction. This will be on the basis that the EU recognises its historic responsibility for climate change and its obligation to protect and promote the right to development of developing countries.

This issue can only be taken up by Aprovev as a Strategic objective if the Secretariat is enlarged with a temporary additional (seconded) staff person and the necessary financial resources.

#### 4.2 Special projects

The special projects are included in the Strategic Plan since special staff are employed and financed for these programmes of, respectively, the Middle East Working Group (goal A), the Working Group on Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia (goal B), and the Working Group on Central America (goal C). The Working Groups are committed to accompany and be closely involved in the work of the special staff persons. These special projects will be reviewed in accordance with cooperation with ACT.

*Goal A: European Union and Member States policies concerning the Palestinian-Israeli conflict should be coherent and aligned with their commitments to respect international law.*

Work on Goal A focuses on monitoring and influencing EU policy preparation and implementation regarding the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, EU-Israel and EU-Palestinian Authority relations, EU conflict prevention and crisis management, and the European Neighbourhood Policy. In this, close connections between advocacy initiatives in Europe and in Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories, between advocacy initiatives and campaigns undertaken at national levels, and with other like-minded organisations will be established, maintained and nourished.

*Goal B: European Union policies regarding Eastern Europe, the Caucasus, the Balkans and Central Asia should be oriented towards development, poverty eradication, gender equality and fundamental rights, and aim at building up participatory and sustainable societies, and strengthening civil society organisations.*

Work on Goal B will focus on monitoring and influencing the European Neighbourhood Policy and the EU policies towards Central Asia with the objective of ensuring that these policies are more oriented towards poverty eradication and fundamental rights, and are informed by, and are coherent with, EU development policy. In this, close cooperation will be sought with Aprovev partner organisations and their capacity in EU policy analysis and advocacy will be enhanced.

*Goal C: European Union policies regarding Central America, in the context of the Association Agreement, should be based on the principles of ownership, partnership and participation and contribute to respect for human rights, gender equality, and the alleviation and eventual eradication of poverty.*

Work on Goal C will concentrate on monitoring and influencing the negotiations for an EU-Central America Association Agreement. In this, it is important that a permanent and good quality dialogue between civil society and the European Union institutions is established. To that effect, Aprovev will work with civil society partners in Central America to engage in policy dialogue with, and advocacy vis-à-vis the European Union as well as their national governments. In this, synergies will be sought with the work done by Aprovev on the issue of EU trade policies and the programming of aid.

#### 4.3 Related projects

Following the lead agency approach, staff from a number of Aprovev members will cooperate around the issues of migration and development, and security and development. Regarding the former, close cooperation will be sought with the Churches Commission for Migrants in Europe (CCME). Where possible, synergies will be pursued with Aprovev work as described in this Strategic Plan.

### 5. Strategic approaches

The following strategic approaches will be applied by Aprovev during the period of the Strategic Plan:

#### Secretariat and member organisations

- Concentrate on lobby and advocacy activities and, where possible, seek coherence and synergy with policy, lobby, advocacy and campaigning work of the member organisations (lobby and advocacy activities focus directly on decision makers whereas campaigning involves working with a mobilised constituency and via public media). For the member organisations it is important that they, in turn, seek, where possible, coherence with the work that is done in the context of Aprovev.
- Work towards systematically using gender analyses in Aprovev's work, following a two-track approach by both mainstreaming gender dimensions in the ongoing work and by choosing a particular gender focus regarding certain activities.

- Use the paper on *Rights-based development from a faith-based perspective*, which was adopted by the General Assembly in 2008, to guide Aprovev's work.
- Whenever possible, build on and mobilise the strengths and expertise which exist in the member organisations.
- When appropriate and needed, develop a communication strategy in support of specific lobby and advocacy work.
- Improve communication with member organisations, e.g. through upgraded Information Technology and Communication facilities.
- Improve the cooperation between the Board and the chairs of the PAG, GRG and Working Groups, for example, by organising joint meetings on an annual basis.
- Follow a process-oriented approach allowing for flexibility to respond to changing realities during annual planning periods (work programmes).

#### Partner organisations

- Strengthen and intensify work with partner organisations (of Aprovev members) and engage with them in a more structured manner.

#### Other networks and organisations

- Work through CONCORD (including by participating in, and chairing relevant working and other groups) on issues which are best addressed in the context of a broad coalition of NGDOs.
- Continue to seek close working relations with our Roman Catholic sister organisation CIDSE (and Caritas Europa, where appropriate) as well as with other ecumenical organisations in Brussels (such as the CSC/CEC, CCME, Eurodiaconia).
- Seek cooperation with other networks and organisations as appropriate (such as Climate change Action Network-Europe, EPLO, WIDE).

### **6. Ways of working**

In addressing policy issues, Aprovev can follow various different methodologies:

- Working Group with heavy involvement of secretariat staff (watching brief on EU policies, convening meetings, minute writing).
- Working Groups with relatively little involvement of secretariat staff, following the 'lead agency model' (role of secretariat to be determined on a case-by-case basis).
- The advisory groups (PAG and GRG) can form task groups that report to them on specific issues.
- Staff secondment from a member organisation to strengthen the work on a specific issue.
- Improve mechanisms of information for members unable to actively participate in the working groups etc.
- The Board and Secretariat consider different ways by which the commitment to religion and development is taken up in the work.
- Hire consultants.

For each programmatic activity, the appropriate model will be agreed upon between the secretariat and the relevant Aprovech member organisations. Each extra activity creates additional necessity for managerial and administrative support and requires extra efforts to promote coherence and synergy with other Aprovech activities. Given the size of the secretariat, there is, therefore, a limit to the number of activities that can be undertaken in the context of Aprovech.

## **Mandate, Vision and Mission**

### *Mandate*

The mandate of Aprodev is to promote sustainable human development policies through the collaboration between development organisations located in different European countries. According to the Statutes:

1. The activities of Aprodev include the representation of the interests of its Members with the European Union and its bodies, including the European Commission, the Council of Ministers and the European Parliament as well as to carry out all activities directly or indirectly related with these interests and likely to promote them, all this in the widest sense of the word.
2. Aprodev will pursue its objectives by, *inter alia*, carrying out lobby and advocacy activities vis-à-vis bodies of the European Union.
3. In addition, Aprodev can develop any activity that contributes directly or indirectly to the realisation of above mentioned idealistic non profit purposes, including the subordinate commercial and profitable activities within the scope of what is legally allowed and the proceeds of which are at all times destined for the realisation of the idealistic non profitable purposes.

### *Vision*

- As the association of ecumenical development and humanitarian aid organisations in Europe which are related to the World Council of Churches, Aprodev and its associated organisations are inspired by the liberating message of the Gospel and the ministry of Christ who shared the human condition with us and who brought Good News to the poor.
- The Aprodev organisations believe that all human beings are created in the image of God. In their efforts to work alongside poor, marginalised, oppressed and excluded women and men, they seek to underline the equal value of all human beings, irrespective of race, colour, sex, creed, national, ethnic or political affiliation.
- The Aprodev organisations share the ecumenical understanding of development as a multifaceted and holistic concept which comprises social, cultural, spiritual, political, environmental and economic aspects. Basically, development is about overcoming the root causes of poverty, liberation from hunger and unjust power structures, respect for the dignity and rights of women and men, and providing equal access to vital resources. For this, Aprodev considers gender equality a prerequisite.
- The Aprodev organisations share a common understanding of partnership, which implies a high level of transparency, mutual support, trust and reliability, respect for pluriformity and diversity of gifts, commitment to gender equality, and the integrity of different points of view. On the basis of this understanding of partnership, Aprodev actively seeks alliances with those actors in civil society who share these convictions and this ethos.
- Aprodev's vision of the European Union is that of a Union which promotes justice, peace and sustainability through both its internal and external policies, which unites around a common goal of the eradication of poverty, which upholds multilateral approaches, and adheres to and promotes fundamental human rights and international law.

### *Mission*

- In efforts of working towards its vision, Aprodev and its member organisations engage in common programmes and projects aimed at promoting European Union development and related policies which focus in a coherent way on overcoming the root causes of poverty, the enhancement of peace, human dignity and human security, gender equality, fundamental rights, and the liberation from unjust structures.
- To this effect, Aprodev and its member organisations promote the strengthening of civil society organisations which share our basic convictions, and engage with these, both inside and outside of the European Union, in common actions to achieve our goals. At the EU level, Concord – the European NGO Confederation for Relief and Development – is an important channel through which Aprodev tries to achieve its goals.
- Aprodev's activities are informed by the experiences and concerns of partner organisations. In carrying out its mission, Aprodev co-operates closely with other ecumenical bodies such as the World Council of Churches, the Lutheran World Federation, the Ecumenical Advocacy Alliance, ACT (Action by Churches Together) Development and ACT International.