



European Forum for providers of EU information and training to not-for-profit organisations

Brussels, 29-30 November 2001

Beyond the Forum: the future of the “Network on European information and training for not-for-profit organisations”

The Network was formed in 2000 by seven organisations from Belgium, France, Germany, the Netherlands and the UK, which are all involved in providing information, training or consultancy to voluntary and other not-for-profit organisations. They deal with different aspects of the EU, which are relevant for NGOs: funding, legislation, policy, citizens' involvement, as well as lobbying of EU institutions. The tasks of the Network were originally defined as:

- Organising a forum for the exchange of ideas and initiatives open to all organisations in Europe active in providing EU information and training to not-for-profit organisations;
- Widening the network to other organisations in the field.

This document is based on the final plenary session of the Forum and the subsequent meeting of the Core Group of the Network, which answered positively to the question: is it useful and feasible to maintain and extend the original Network on European information and training for the not-for-profit sector? Participants of the Forum and other interested organisations are invited to comment on this document and to join us in building the Network.

Reflection and discussion on aims and future activities of the Network can take place on the web or by sending your comments to ID's (for technical details, see below).

Aims and Activities

Basic aims of the Network are:

1. increasing the visibility of organisations providing information and training to the not-for-profit sector, and
2. promoting the exchange of information, experience and expertise between them, at a regular Forum like this one and by other means. In more detail, this could include:
 - Being a major source of information (website, bulletin board, ...) on activities of participating organisations and other relevant issues;
 - Serving as a think tank on issues around EU information and training;
 - Organising regular meetings on “current EU issues”;
 - Serving as a clearing house for setting up partner search, common activities, etc. ;
 - Informing Network participants about new EU developments in the field;
 - Regularly, e.g. (bi-)annually, organising a Forum like the one of 29-30 November 2001;
 - Regularly informing and liaising with the European Commission and other players on the needs of the not-for-profit sector with regard to information and training;
 - Establishing a directory of European information and training resources;
 - Creating website hyperlinks between permanent network participants for easy cross reference.

The near future and the next Forum

It will be necessary to draft and agree on a joint charter, clearly formulating not only the main philosophy of the Network in general terms but also its actual aims and activities. In any case, the Network does not deal with policy substance such as youth, environment, social affairs et cetera, for which there exist effective national and EU-wide umbrella organisations. These may well be involved in the Network on common interests with regard to information and training.

With regard to priorities and possibilities in 2002, it was agreed that organising a next Forum may be considered for autumn 2002 at the earliest, or spring 2003 at the latest. It should be focused on specific content and allow participants to learn from speakers and from each other. Suggestions included 'benchmarking' on training on fundraising, use of information retrieval and distribution from and through the Internet.

The Network should avoid being monolingual and work at least in English and French.

Financial and organisational commitments

It will be difficult to 're-create' the network every year around a Forum, so a minimum commitment (also financially and in kind) and common activity throughout the year is necessary.

In the initial stage of the above process, contributions by current and future partners may include cash payment for covering direct administrative costs (the amount of 1000 euro per partner was suggested), time, skills and facilities, presupposing sufficient discussion, agreement and realistic prospects for achieving the practical aims of the Network.

A necessary condition will be to ensure substantial EU or other external funding (including consecutive EU presidencies who may be willing to do something extra). This must be supplemented by a participation fee or other forms of co-financing, also taking different levels of financial possibilities of larger and smaller organisations into account.

It was agreed that ID's keeps the role of co-ordinating partner.

Present at the Core Group meeting (original Network partners marked *):

Bank für Sozialwirtschaft*: Berthold Becher & Susanne Knäpper
Boutique des Associations: Guy Bernard & Sylvie Israël
CEDEGES (consultancy on the social economy - agence conseil en économie sociale): Christian Noiret
European Briefing Unit, Univ. of Bradford*: Margareta Holmstedt, Jennifer Raper, Jaroslava Riley
Fundado de la solidaritat i el voluntariat de la comunitat Valenciana: Sergio Serrano
ID's*: Emmanuel Klimis, Manuel Ribeiro Bacelar, Peter Sluiter, Laurence Wattier
Informal European Theatre Meeting: Anne Lamouler
Juris Services*: Fabrice Suplisson
KLEIS / OPPEF – Overleg Partners Particuliere Europese Fondsen: Hans De Vriese
Union of European Experts Chambers: Riccardo Jacobbi
Union of European Citizens: Mario Alvisi
Janos Lukacs, facilitator

You are invited to comment on this document and join the Network.

(Please use the online facility on <http://www.europassos.com/wwwboard/> or write to info@idseurope.org)