



07 May 2009

Discussion paper for the Informal Directors' Meeting

Setting new objectives for the Network and designing its Secretariat

This paper is proposed by the Core Group for the reflexion of Members' Directors. It presents for discussion some possible ways of further developing the Network activities and analyses different options for the future setup of the Secretariat. Achievements so far are reviewed in annex.

Context and stand point

In 2008, some members expressed their desire to enhance the visibility of the Practitioners' Network and to widen the scope of its activities beyond thematic groups by adopting a flexible approach for collaboration between European development institutions. It is important to make sure that activities are always demand-driven, do not duplicate other existing initiatives and that capacities for a possible follow-up are in place.

A reflexion has been started during the European Development Days, in November 2008. The first conclusions were that:

- Network activities should be enhanced and extended where needed: they do not have to be limited to the scope of thematic groups, as the Network should be a place to communicate and support all initiatives from Members to work together with other European partners on a particular topic or project;
- The Secretariat should be entrusted with a more pro-active role (e.g. proposing themes), while taking care to not generate projects or activities that would not be demand-driven or where capacities for follow-up are not sufficient;
- The setup for the Secretariat should remain as simple as possible in order to avoid excessive costs.

Further developments for the Network

Meanwhile more ideas have been expressed in the Core Group about the development of the Network's activities, which can basically be organized around two axes:

- 1) **Using the Network in a more flexible way** for the organisation of various initiatives between European practitioners.

To foster this, the Secretariat might regularly screen the EU Agenda and Members' priorities and planned activities, in order to identify and prioritise possible subjects of common interest, and to propose subsequent joint activities.

The Secretariat would also be prepared to provide logistical support to Members for the organisation of workshops or other joint activities. However, the lead should in all cases be taken by one or two member organisations as "sponsors", which would ensure that the planned activities correspond to a real demand.

This would require from the Members a willingness to open their operations, seminars, reflexions, etc. to other European practitioners. An example of this "new kind" of activity is the proposal to create a kind of European market place for offers and demands of training sessions or secondments, which will be proposed by AFD.

- 2) Using the network and its **website as a more comprehensive information and communication tool** (i) on the network itself, (ii) on/for its members, (iii) on all existing European initiatives, experience and best practice between two or more European practitioners, and (iv) on current development issues which are relevant for European development cooperation.

This might include a range of new tasks which would be endorsed by the secretariat, such as:

- Feeding the website with the news and documentation or links concerning the above mentioned domains of information,
- Giving more visibility to the Network through various means (e.g. setting up a stand during the forthcoming European Development Days),
- Producing and sending out a newsletter (every 3 or 6 months),
- Drafting a short annual review / highlights of Members' activities, which should not overlap with other reports.

How to prioritise and implement these and possible other ideas step by step should be discussed.

Evolution of the Secretariat

KfW has confirmed its willingness to provide the Secretariat in its current setup until the 2010 annual meeting. As a consequence, the following issues have to be considered:

- options for the future setup of the Secretariat after May 2010,
- level of service expected during the interim period until the next annual meeting,
- commitments of the Members to share the Secretariat's cost.

1. Medium-term options for the Secretariat

1.1. Options for the setup

In terms of structural setup, **basically two options** can be considered:

- Either to continue on the basis of a Secretariat provided by one of the Members located at their headquarters, which would then rotate every couple of years,
- Or to establish a permanent Secretariat in a location which, to maximise the opportunities for European contacts and coordination would be Brussels.

The Core Group makes the following preliminary **proposals**:

- The Secretariat should preferably not change every year. It is good that the presidency rotates, giving the possibility to all members to assume that function, but **the Secretariat should provide stability and institutional memory**. Depending on the network members' needs and means, Secretariat functions could gradually be upgraded. Willingness of some members to assume this task **for up to 5 or 6 years** will be solicited.
- The possibility for the network to become more formalised through the establishment of a legal entity is considered undesirable at this stage. Instead, the Core Group proposes to consider the possibility of **creating a common fund whereby one member institution would receive the contributions from all Members and would on their behalf, as agreed in a MoU, manage the Network's accounts**.

- In terms of location, **the option of renting some space e.g. in the joint KfW-AFD office in Brussels** could be considered.
- Members are invited to be creative about services expected from the Secretariat. E.g. Members who do not have a representation office in Brussels may be interested to resort to the Secretariat for some services.

1.2. Evaluating costs

The current activities of the Secretariat consume 40 to 50% of the working time of a senior officer. Other costs related to Network activities have been borne so far by the founding members and by the acting Presidency on a case by case and voluntary basis.

Concretely, maintaining the level of service would encompass principally:

- Part of the salary of a senior officer, as well as office operation costs
- Travel costs for core group meetings, the annual meeting and the Dev Days + occasionally participation in a workshop (€ 4,500 to 5,000)
- The costs for the designing and printing of the Network leaflet and of the Side Event leaflet (altogether around € 3,500 without taxes).
- Minimal costs for the maintaining of the website (technical assistance by a consultant, 2 days a month maximum).

The overall costs of a **full-fledged office** can be estimated with reference to the representative offices of other networks similar to ours, such as NEFI (www.nefi.be), EUNIDA (www.eunida.eu) and EDFI (www.edfi.be). They can vary from € 50,000 to €400,000 a year, depending mainly on staff costs. The cheapest solution would be to enrol a local officer part-time, while the most expensive one is to send an expatriate to Brussels with the related costs and indemnities. However, this solution has advantages in terms of experience, internal knowledge of our institutions and long-term commitment.

As regards upgrading the level of service, this could occur step by step and the related costs would be evaluated accordingly. For that reason, it is not foreseen that the costs would increase substantially right from the beginning, except for some “full-time-equivalent” per month and additional travel costs or external services. The interim period will provide the occasion to experiment the level of these marginal costs, if additional services are required from the Secretariat.

1.3. Sharing of costs

Basically, two possible contribution principles can be considered:

- a) either the contribution is the same for all members¹ (on the basis of 11 active members, the annual fee would roughly amount to between €5,000 and €40,000)
- b) or the “biggest” and more established institutions pay a higher fee (say 5 times that of “smaller” Members). In that case, as an example, the 5 “big ones” could pay a fee of between €8,000 and €65,000 while the small ones would pay between €1,600 and €13,000 annually

¹ For information, by the End of April, the members are the following: ADA, AECID, AFD, BTC/CTB, CzDA, DFID, EuropeAid, GTZ, KfW Entwicklungsbank, InWent, LuxDevelopment., SlovakAid

The Core Group members have already indicated their preparedness to adopt a contribution key related to the size of the institution, provided that the less costly solution would be preferred.

2. Interim options for the Secretariat until the next annual meeting

Given that KfW will continue to bear the costs incurred for Secretariat activities, including time allocation, for one more year, the foreseeable costs for other Network members are limited. Those would be, for example, the costs related to the European Development Days: cost of organising the side event (e.g. travel costs and per diem of moderator and invitees), cost of preparing a stand for the Network (external services: posters and handouts). So far, possible contributions by members have been identified. It might be sufficient to look for “sponsors” on a case by case basis. However, it would be useful to know in advance who would be the possible sponsors within the Network.

3. Next steps

Senior Management is requested to provide clear indication about:

- additional services that they expect from the Network / the Secretariat :
 - o Newsletter
 - o Support for the organisation of workshops
 - o Support for identifying other co-operation possibilities with other European Practitioners (such as co-financing)
 - o Annual review
 - o Other (suggestions)
- Willingness/ability to provide financial support to punctual costs expenses in the coming year to May 2010
- Willingness to contribute financially to the costs of a full-fledged Secretariat after May 2010 and preferred/acceptable options :
 - o Contribution key (uniform or differentiated)
 - o Means/setup of the Secretariat
 - o Location
- Willingness/preparedness to manage the common fund for the Network over several years or to pay contributions to a fund managed by a trustee member.

Ideally, commitments would be made during the informal Directors' meeting and the way forward would be communicated to all participants during the afternoon session on the future of the Network. Alternatively, if some directors can only provide indicative positions, those would have to be confirmed in written before the end of June 2009. The Core Group would then be mandated to decide upon the future options and would communicate its decision to the whole Network.

Annexes

Annex 1: Review of the Network's achievements so far

Annex 2: Thematic groups, workshops and other activities

Review of the Network's achievements so far

The Network has already brought real benefits which must be recognised:

- People have become more familiar with each other, notably within the official members of the Network, who are regularly present in common activities. A closer relationship has been established in particular between core group members.
- There is an updated list of contacts from which it is possible to mobilise participants for specific issues, within or outside the scope of thematic group activities.
- The website provides some visibility to the Network as well as information and documents of interest to a broader audience.
- The Core group meets regularly to monitor the network activities and prepare future events. Not only the founding agencies KfW and AFD, smaller agencies are active.
- High representatives of European "practitioners" have come together on several occasions to deliver messages about the importance of coordination within the European donor community, especially on the occasion of the European Development Days.
- Bilateral co-operations have been intensified (e.g. between the Czech and the Austrian development agencies).

The Thematic groups

The idea of establishing Working Groups (WG), each one of them gathering a few voluntary institutions to work on issues of common interest (by reference to the example of Train4Dev), was adopted at the launching of the Network in February 2007. Five WG are currently established and are described on the website. They form one of the main modalities of the Network activities.

From the beginning, participating organisations and particularly core group members have been emphasising that WG should show concrete results. Upon or before launching, each WG has issued terms of reference and specified its expected outputs. Each network meeting so far (annual meeting, core group meetings, European development days) has been an occasion to report and evaluate WG activities.

Further to the last annual meeting, working groups have been renamed into thematic groups. In fact, the groups are often not composed of specialists and they will rather be entrusted with identifying, within their thematic, specific needs for collaboration or exchange of views between European aid practitioners and to organise the necessary meetings or contacts between experts.

Thematic groups have the merits to:

- Gather institutions who have a declared interest in the relevant subject. The relevance of the current subjects was confirmed during the last annual meeting.
- Involve members who are not the usual contact persons for the Network but who have a link to the subject (e.g. on climate change, on quality management)
- Are steered by a group leader, who should be looking for concrete results that the group will then share with the whole network.

The existing thematic groups have shown so far mixed, but some effective, results:

- Recent workshops have mobilised many organisations who confirmed their interest in further deepening subjects such as delegated cooperation, division of labour/co-financing, joint monitoring.

- The thematic group on Climate change gathers a smaller number of participants, but has held several workshops on concrete methodological issues.
- Some of the thematic groups have met only once or not at all, but those had initially gathered expressions of interest from several practitioners. The fact that they did not really start is rather due to temporary lack of capacity within the group leaders and the question of activating these groups is still open.

In light of the above, thematic groups appear as a relevant working method within the network, provided there is a periodical review of the relevance of existing or planned thematic groups. We should make sure that they are demand-driven and that leaders have enough capacities to lead and follow-up. Thematic groups should also not remain the only working method of the Network.

The Core group

The Core group is currently composed of the troika, currently CzDA (president), ADA and AECID, which receives support from working group leaders AFD, EuropeAid and KfW and from the Secretary. The Core group has met regularly (e.g. 4 times since the last annual meeting). It has prepared common events (the Side Event during the European Development Days, the Annual Meeting), discussed and set orientations for the activities of the Network (including the preparation of this proposal) and supervised the management of the website. Core group members share a common commitment to the project underlying the Network.

The website

The Network's website was re-launched ahead of the 2008 European Development Days under a new, more user-friendly content management system. The website may since then be updated by the secretariat, and thereby be used as a real information platform.

Since its launching, the website seems to have attracted visitors fairly broadly within the practitioners' community and probably out of it (with 692 unique visitors since the launching in November 2008). However, its use remains confidential (about 1,200 visits altogether) and the short average time spent on the site (less than 4 mn) tends to demonstrate that it is rather a tool to find some information of a simple nature, but not a working tool. Indeed the contents so far have remained of a rather general and informative nature (general information about the Network and its members, announcement of meetings and workshops, reports and presentations). The Website could now be appropriated by Network members to use it also as a tool for more operational purposes (e.g. information about on-going joint operations, templates, database...).

Let it be also reminded that there is also a non-public website, which is a space for discussion and exchange of documents, hosted on the "Global Campus" platform of InWent. This facility remains almost unused but could be interesting to exchange non public (although non confidential) information.

The Secretariat

The Secretariat has been so far provided by KfW. Its activities reflect the current scope of the Network and can be summarised as follows:

- Supporting the Core Group, the Presidency and thematic group leaders in their respective activities: preparation of meetings, drafting conclusions etc.
- Maintaining and feeding the website.
- Maintaining the contact list

Developing the Network activities may imply a greater involvement of the Secretariat. How this will be insured has to be considered both for the period until the 2010 Annual Meeting and for the future.

Thematic groups, workshops and other activities

1/ Thematic groups	No. of meetings since the Vienna annual meeting	Comments and perspectives
Climate Change, Energy Efficiency and Renewable Energies (lead : KfW)	2 workshops - 6 Nov. 2008 : Assessing Climate Change Mitigation Impact of Energy Projects - 4 March 2009 : Assessing carbon footprint of development projects Attendance by a limited number of, but regular, participants : mainly AFD, EIB and KfW	No topic has been defined for a new specialised workshop yet. The workshop on 13 May might be used to inform participants about the activities of the thematic group and to test the interest of Network members for new specific issues.
Division of Labour and Modes of Delivery (lead : AFD)	1 meeting, 17 March 2009. Main subject : delegated cooperation with the Commission and between bilateral institutions. Broad participation (33 participants from 14 organisations).	Next step is a workshop on 13 May (topic still to be agreed upon)
Quality Management (lead : EuropeAid)	1 meeting on 27 January 2009 on "joint monitoring". Good attendance (39 participants from 15 organisations)	EuropeAid has prepared a matrix which still has to be filled in to provide an overview of existing monitoring systems. Need for a follow-up workshop still has to be evaluated
Human Resources and Institutional Setup (lead : CzDA)	No meeting, principally due to temporary lack of capacity with CzDA and InWent (who intended to provide support)	New resources are available within InWent, who again is prepared to provide support to the thematic group. A 3-session workshop is due to be proposed on 13 May
Civil Society Development (provisional lead : AFD)	No meeting. SNV first indicated their interest in taking the lead, but did not confirm. AFD not organised in this domain yet.	Effective launching of the thematic group to be considered during this annual meeting.

2/ Other initiatives	Achievements	Perspectives
Relationship with the EU Parliament	- Interview of the DEVE-Commission with representatives of AFD, KfW and CzDA in August 2008 - Hearing on budget support in November 2008	
European Partnership Agreements and development issues	1 meeting on 23-24 October 2008 with representatives of Practitioners, Commission, European Parliament, experts etc.	The theme will probably come back in the EU priorities some time after the European elections
European Aid architecture	High-level discussions initiated by AFD in December 2008 and continued by DFID on 28 April 2009	