



Conclusions of the core group meeting Prague, 27 January 2009

Participants :

CzDA	Petr Jelinek, Michal Prochazka, Martin Náprstek and Tereza Fidlerova
ADA	Petra Schirnhofer
AECID	Miriam Álvarez de la Rosa and Christian Freres
AFD	Isabelle Richard (Brussels) and Alexander von Kap-herr
Secretary	Benoît Mauduit

Petr Jelinek announced that he was about to change position from the 1st of February and introduced Martin Náprstek, Deputy General Director, who will take over from him as Director of CzDA. He also introduced Ms Tereza Fidlerova, who will support Michal Prochazka for the preparation of the Annual Forum.

Discussion paper about the future of the secretariat

The position of the Members with regard to the proposed options and scenarios can be summarised as follows :

- The Secretariat should rather 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 then 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 formalized through the establishment of a legal entity was considered undesirable at this stage. Instead, the group agreed to consider the possibility of creating a common fund whereby one member institution would receive the contributions from all Members and on their behalf, as agreed in a MoU, manage the Network's accounts.
- The issues of managing the funds, designating or hiring the staff of the secretariat, the scope of the secretariat functions and of location of the secretariat could be considered separately. In terms of location, the option of renting some space in the joint KfW-AFD office in Brussels could be considered.
- Core Group Members are invited to be creative about the expected services. E.g. If the Secretariat is in Brussels, Members who do not have a representative office in Brussels may be interested to resort to the Secretariat for some services.

Next steps :

- *Reactions from Core Group members to the options / scenarios and indications on their willingness to participate in costs are expected within the next two weeks. Some members have already expressed their readiness to financially contribute to Annual Meeting costs in Prague. A first exchange of views showed that there is a preference for a contribution scheme based on the size/financial means of practitioners' administrations and agencies. Core group members should express what kind of functions they are expecting from the secretariat.*
- *A draft paper to be presented to the Annual Forum will be elaborated (Benoît). Exchanges per e-mail should take place between Core Group members in February/March in order to have an already elaborated draft for the next Core Group meeting;*
- *That paper should notably include options and costs related to the legal setup of the secretariat;*

- *The paper should leave all options open, even if Core Group members agree on a preferred option. The options presented should include the status quo, just for information about the current activities and related costs.*

The Website

The new version of the website is considered good by the Core Group. As the website will grow, it might be useful to think of a glossary of terms, and of a search tool.

By contrast, the working space (on Global Campus) is almost unused, but it raises a number of questions, linked to the lack of maintenance:

- The list of participants has never been updated but however, it is no longer possible to log in under some of the names (eg a.garcia);
- It is not possible to come back to the open website
- Uploading documents for the Core Group is not possible (it has to be done under one working group)
- It would be useful for the Core Group to have a working space, be it only for posting the regular updates of the contact list. The interest of thematic groups for the working space has to be checked again.

Next steps (Benoît) :

- *check which members have posted a link to the Practitioners' website on their own website and who have not. A remainder should be sent.*
- *check with Thematic Group leaders on their interest for being enabled to maintain the webpage concerning his/her group.*
- *Clarify with InWent how the working space can be maintained and what is the current status of the technical support contract for the open website.*
- *Location of the website (which server) should be integrated as a side-issue into the 2010-Package about the new secretariat.*

Presidency of the Network after 2010

The member who will take over the presidency after 2010 will enter the Troika after the Annual Forum next May (and ADA will leave the Troika).

- Lux Development has announced their possible interest in taking over the presidency. They would confirm this after further internal consultations.
- Lux Development's interest is very much welcome. Nevertheless the Core Group considers that we should not just remain with one candidate and that we should consider others. The choice might depend on how the Network priorities best fit those of the new President (eg the importance of pushing forward the issue of delegated cooperation). Moreover, a Nordic presidency could contribute to opening the circle of active members.

Next steps :

- ⇒ *CzDA asks DFID and SIDA about their interest for taking over the presidency*
- ⇒ *If we have several candidates, a vote could be proposed at the Annual Meeting*

Annual Forum 2009

- The forum would start early in the afternoon of the 1st day and end after lunch on the 2nd day. The 1st half-day would be in plenary sessions and the 2nd day would be left to thematic group meetings and to the conclusions.
- The plenary sessions would bear on one thematic issue and on one technical issue. The priority for a technical issue seems to be clearly about delegated cooperation (both between bilaterals and the Commission and between two or more bilaterals). This issue should be touched with concrete cases / best practice examples (eg from members who have already been through the process with the Commission).

- Concerning the thematic issue, which would be the subject of a keynote speech, a consensus emerged on the issue of the financial and economic crisis: from a practitioner's point of view, what will the crisis change within our partners' needs, our activities and priorities etc.? The focus should not be too much put on the resource side (drop in budgetary resources), but on the implications and consequences for donor agencies.

Next steps :

- ⇒ *The date of the Forum still has to be set. It would be either 12-13 May or in the second half of May. Core Group Members should ask their respective directors about their possibilities*
- ⇒ *CzDA prepares a first draft agenda*
- ⇒ *All Core Group members are invited to make internal consultations and to make suggestions for further elaboration of the themes, for the choice of a keynote speaker, for panellists, for a moderator (although ECDPM remains an option, as the moderation by Paul Engel last year was good).*

Thematic groups

- **The Climate Change** Group plans a new workshop on "Measuring the carbon footprint of projects" at the beginning of March.
- **Quality Management:** The workshop on Joint Monitoring organised by EuropeAid was a success in terms of participation. A follow-up workshop might be organised in the future but some homework will be done beforehand. A report is on the Network's website.
- The possibility to activate the other thematic groups will be verified during the annual Forum :
 - The pace of the technical seminars of the EU COM is slowing down, so that there might be some room now for meetings of the Group on **Division of Labour**. It was suggested to follow up on 1) delegated cooperation between bilaterals and 2) to address the issue of delegated cooperation with the EC (exchange of experience, status quo of negotiations with the EC) within the thematic groups. Details for such events would have to be discussed. Moreover, AFD now has almost gone through the process of a delegated cooperation with the Commission in Mali, which could be used as a case study for all members.
 - The AFD new division in charge of relationships with NGOs has been launched but is not yet fully fledged. It should be able in May to actually launch a thematic group on **civil society** if the interest of other members is confirmed.
 - The **Human Resources and ID** Group could not launch its intended seminar due to the change of priorities by InWent and declining interest by other members, except for DFID.

Inviting non-EU European Donors

The Core Group considers positively inviting NORAD and the Swiss (DEZA / SDC) to attend the Annual Forum. Although they are not concerned by the issue of working with the Commission, there are synergies in the field (ADA with DEZA).

Next meeting

Further Core group consultations will be needed to fine-tune the preparation of the Annual Forum. However it was finally decided to work preferably through e-mails exchanges and to convene a conference call in April if needed.