



the  
**Amazon  
Conservation Team**

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## **ACT Europe**

### **Report of activities 2017-2020**

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## **1. Introduction**

ACT Europe was set up in 2008 as a Foundation in the Netherlands in order to fundraise for the field activities of ACT in the Amazon. However, during almost ten years little to no income was generated. In February 2017, ACT HQ hired a consultant to look at potential opportunities for more and better fundraising in Europe. The consultant was Dominiek Plouvier, a senior expert in conservation, who had been the Director of WWF Guianas from 2006-2014.

For 3 months he undertook a short-term consultancy in order to prepare a solid three-year plan to restructure and strengthen ACT-Europe, as a key office for fundraising in Europe for the ACT field activities in the Amazon. The 3-year Plan was presented at the ACT Board of Directors Meeting in June 2017 in Washington DC and approved. At the same meeting, Dominiek Plouvier was appointed ACT-Europe Director by the ACT Board with a 6-month short term consultancy contract, which was then subsequently renewed on an annual basis.

ACT Europe is a branch of ACT with a main goal to fundraise for the field programs of the Amazon Conservation Team in Suriname, Colombia and Brazil. It is registered in the Netherlands as a separate entity within the Chamber of Commerce and ANBI registered. It has both a Supervisory Board and a Management Board, as per the amended Statutes in 2019.

The ACT-Europe Director is responsible for oversight of all of ACT-Europe's general operations and local fundraising in Europe to support ACT programmatic activities in alignment with the organizational strategic plan and liaising with ACT Headquarters. The ACT-Europe Director is expected to follow ACT-US reporting and management procedures, as well as to develop work plans for local activities as appropriate.

The Amazon Conservation Team or ACT is a US based NGO founded in 1996 with a mission to partner with indigenous peoples in order to save the Amazon. It has field offices in Colombia,

Suriname and Brazil. Total ACT staff is about 150 people with an annual turnover of 4-5 million USD.

ACT Europe is small and mainly dedicated to fundraising, including communications and visibility. From 2017 onwards till 2020, the main activities of ACT Europe have been:

- To reform the ACT Europe Board with new members from different European countries and keep regular ACT Europe Board meetings (3 times per year)
- To reform the ACT Europe Statutes in order to allow for broader fundraising outside the Netherlands
- To prepare project proposals in close collaboration with ACT HQ and ACT field offices for respectively WWF Netherlands, DOB Ecology and the Dutch Postcode Lottery.
- To fundraise in other countries outside the Netherlands in close collaboration with ACT HQ and ACT field offices.
- To raise the visibility of ACT Europe in the Netherlands and beyond
- To set up an ACT Europe office in Brussels and recruit an assistant
- To strengthen the relationship with ACT HQ and staff, in order to work more efficiently in fundraising in the coming years.

## **2. Strengthening ACT-Europe**

### **2.1. ACT Europe Board and change of Statutes**

During the year 2017 ACT Europe was reformed through a long and tedious process. The old ACT Europe Board members accepted to resign at a transitional Board meeting in Amsterdam in August 2017, where Johan van de Gronden was appointed as new President of the ACT Europe Board and Mark Plotkin, ACT President, joined the Board. Later on Gilles Kleitz (France) and Sandra Charity (UK) were approved as members of the new ACT Europe Board. In 2018 Anne Marie Mijnsbergen joined the ACT Europe Board as Treasurer. Since then, Anne Marie has worked on the reform of the Statutes, in close collaboration with the ACT Europe Director and the ACT USA Director of Finance and Operations, Karla Lara Otero. Changes of the Statutes were approved in the ACT Europe Board meeting of April 2019.

The ACT-Europe Director made efforts to find high profile Board members for ACT-Europe with the following characteristics:

- high interest in, knowledge of and commitment to the Amazon and its people
- highly respected individual in their country of residence
- strong ability to liaise with Foundations, GAA (Government Aid Agencies), and wealthy people in their specific country

Per the new Statutes, it was decided to have maximum 9 members in the Board; new members need to be sought in Germany, Norway, Sweden and Switzerland, as these were highlighted as the countries with the highest potential for funding ACT's field work. Visits to Norway and Switzerland were done but without success to find the right Board member.

## **2.2. ACT Europe's day to day functioning**

During 2017 till 2019 the ACT Europe Director worked from his home place in Belgium, as a consultant of ACT USA. From 2019, an office was hired in Brussels, Belgium, the center of fundraising in Europe, where the offices of the European Commission are installed. Since mid-2019, an ACT Europe assistant has been hired in order to help with all the practical issues regarding communications, fundraising, IT, logistics, administration, etc. She is equally a consultant of ACT US.

Over the last 3 years, the ACT Europe Director undertook more than 20 visits to the Netherlands in order to meet key people for fundraising and get strategic advice. As per 2020, ACT Europe is also a member of the IUCN Netherlands. Furthermore, several travels to Norway, UK, Sweden, France and Switzerland were made in order to find the right Board member and to meet key people of Government Institutes, NGOs and Foundations.

The ACT Europe Director went several times to Suriname in order to prepare the DOB Ecology regional proposal (Suriname, Guyana, Brazil and French Guiana). During these visits, the ACT Europe Director also made visits to Guyana and French Guiana in order to support the ACT Suriname Director with the needed contacts at high level in these countries. Logically, some visits were paid to ACT HQ in order to understand better the functioning of ACT HQ, and have direct contact with the staff in the USA.

## **3. Fundraising**

### **3.1. Developing project proposals for Dutch organizations**

With the advice and support of Johan van de Gronden, President of the ACT Europe Board, ACT could prepare and submit 3 project proposals to Dutch Foundations and Organizations over the last years : WWF Netherlands, DOB Ecology and the Dutch Postcode Lottery.

Seed funding was sought at **WWF Netherlands** in order to put money in the development of ACT Europe. The ACT Europe Director paid three visits to meet the CEO and other key staff in Zeist. After the visit of both Presidents of the Board, a 3-year program proposal was finalized beginning of January 2018 and submitted. However, the proposal was not approved due to many reasons, the main one being the reduction of general income for WWF NL during the last year, which largely impedes funding new initiatives.

Greater success was obtained with the Foundation **DOB Ecology** in the Netherlands. Several visits were paid to their offices in Veessen. The DOB Ecology Director Maas Goote finally requested a concept paper and expressed a desire to visit the fieldwork of ACT-Suriname in March 2018. The visit was well organised by ACT Suriname, and took a full week. Apart from 2 day office meetings, a visit was held to South Suriname to meet the Indigenous Peoples and the work of ACT at Palumeu, Tepu and Kwamala. A project proposal was prepared and a deep dive was done in July 2018 in the Netherlands in order to strengthen the proposal. The project proposal "The Last of the Wild Places" was re-written several times and finally approved in

September 2019 for a total budget of 4 million Euros, covering 4 countries: Suriname, Guyana, Brazil and French Guiana.

A third project proposal "Saving the last Isolated tribes" was prepared for the **Nederlandse Postcodeloterij (NPL)**. A visit was paid to the offices of NPL at their Amsterdam location in April 2018. Almost all funding (300-400 million Euros annually) of the NPL goes to Dutch NGOs, who are well known in Dutch society and work on humanitarian or environment related issues in the Netherlands and abroad. Although ACT Europe is a Dutch registered foundation, it is hardly known and hence not eligible. However, there is a category "Special Projects" that is attributed to non Dutch-organisations in areas where Dutch organisations cannot deliver. Since ACT's original work on Isolated Tribes in Colombia and the results booked in 2018, we agreed to prepare a project proposal and submit as ACT USA. All the guidelines of NPL were closely followed, and a proposal of 2,5 million Euros was submitted 2 times already but in both occasions ACT was unsuccessful.

### **3.2. Fundraising in Europe outside the Netherlands**

Two visits have been paid to **Norway** (October 2017 and October 2018) by the ACT Europe Director in order to look for a Board member and meet key Foundations, Government agencies and NGOs. He understood from various actors that there are hardly any foundations in Norway, but that there are more in Sweden. The most important funding in Norway for ACT is the quadrennial call for proposals from NICFI/NORAD to the international civil society, to meet Norway's REDD policy worldwide. The call went open in January 2020 and a project proposal has been worked out by May 2020 for the Call NICFI/NORAD Civil Society 2021-2025. Rainforest Foundation Norway is a key NGO as to Rainforests in Norway and ACT Colombia prepared a proposal for collaboration in 2019 but we were unsuccessful.

As to **Sweden**, ACT's President Mark Plotkin visited the Tenure Facility in Stockholm in 2018. The Tenure Facility has recently moved from Washington, DC to Stockholm, Sweden with additional funding from NORAD and SIDA. ACT Europe needs to start fundraising in Sweden. For Sweden, we have started together to do some research on key Foundations (IKEA, H&M,...) to organize a joint trip in 2020.

The ACT Europe Director has paid 3 visits to Paris in **France** to find a good ACT Europe Board member and meet UNESCO, Afd, FFEM, various Ministries and IUCN France. Gilles Kleitz became ACT Europe Board member and some opportunities have been identified. However, there are few resources available in France.

One visit was paid by the ACT Europe Director to the **United Kingdom** to meet the new ACT Europe Board member and give a speech at WWF UK. It is intended to meet other NGOs and Foundations in due time in the UK.

In **Belgium**, several business people have been met but few interest has been drawn. A project proposal was prepared for the Flemish Fund Tropical Forests but was not approved. On the other hand, several contacts were made with other key NGOs based in Brussels such as IUCN Europe WWF Europe, CI Europe. Several meetings were held with the CEO of CI Europe to look for win-win opportunities. Follow up needed in close collaboration with HQ.

Brussels is equally the seat of the **EU**, where quite some funding is available as long as ACT Europe has a truly European face and not be seen as a USA based NGO. Some meetings were held with Philippe Mayaux, Head of Biodiversity in DEVCO Unit C2 and his staff in the offices in Brussels, in order to present the work of ACT through PowerPoint presentations and videos/website. Some key International meetings were followed as well.

In February 2018 the ACT Europe Director paid a visit to **Switzerland** in order to meet the Oak Foundation, a big Foundation in Switzerland, with branches in the US, India, Denmark, UK, etc. No potential however for the Amazon. More work to be done in this country.

No real work has started in one of the key countries of Europe as to fundraising for ACT: **Germany**. When finally a visit was planned for April 2020 to meet KfW, GiZ and IKI, the trip needed to be cancelled due to COVID 19.