



Martine de Schutter (Netherlands) has been the coordinator of AIDS Action Europe since its launch. "The 2004 Open Forum served as a platform to reach consensus among the over 100 participants on the priority actions for the new network. Despite the diversity in backgrounds and needs of the participants the meeting ended with clear agreements on the way forward. We found common ground for working together to halt the further spread of HIV and protect the human rights of people with HIV".

In the past 5 years AIDS Action Europe has worked on several projects and activities to achieve its mission to unite civil society to work towards a more effective response to the HIV epidemic in Europe. In 2008 the network successfully finalized the project European Partners in Action on AIDS, which included a series of good practice seminars and the development of the Pan European Clearinghouse on HIV [www.hivaidsclearinghouse.eu](http://www.hivaidsclearinghouse.eu). "With the Clearinghouse, there is now a platform with the power of connecting organizations working on similar topics", says Chris Lambrechts (Belgium) former chair of the AIDS Action Europe Steering Committee. "Moreover, in a rather short period of time, AIDS Action Europe has given voice to the needs of organizations working on HIV and AIDS all over Europe". Chris' Swiss successor Harry Witzthum agrees with him. "AIDS Action Europe has been very successful in integrating the voices of NGOs into many advocacy initiatives, including the EU Civil Society Forum on HIV and AIDS".

Human rights of people living with HIV has been and will continue to be an important cornerstone in the work of AIDS Action Europe. "The ongoing economic crisis is making life even more difficult for the most vulnerable among us. Our history has taught us that our nations are capable of the worse when it comes to exclusion and oppression of some populations, especially in times of economic uncertainty. We must assertively focus on the needs and rights of the people most at risk and this includes people living with HIV", according to Arnaud Simon (from AIDS Action Europe's French member organisation AIDES).

In the coming 5 years the focus of AIDS Action Europe will continue on strengthening NGOs to make an effective contribution to European HIV policies through advocacy and public policy dialogue and on facilitating continuous exchange among NGOs on good practices related to HIV. Together we work towards a more effective response!

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20091010/MVDM/PER

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