



Annual report 2014

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ASEED Europe in 2014

Legal and general information

Registered name : A SEED Europe (Action for Solidarity, Equality, Environment and Diversity Europe). Often the organisation is simply called ASEED.

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History and background

ASEED Europe (Action for Solidarity, Equality, Environment, and Diversity Europe) is an international campaigning organisation, giving importance to involving youth in direct democracy activities. ASEED Europe targets the structural causes of environmental destruction and social injustice.

We do this by campaigning on multinational corporations and their national and international influence spheres and control tools. At the same time we promote sustainable alternatives. Currently ASEED Europe focuses on issues related to the global food chain: the decline of biodiversity in agriculture and the availability of seeds, genetic engineering and power concentration by global agro/biotech giants. Our general agriculture campaign goal is to promote food sovereignty. In the recent past we have been campaigning on the massive production and imports of soy, climate change and international financial and trade institutions.

ASEED was established by young engaged people in 1991 in response to the UNCED Earth Summit proceedings in Rio de Janeiro and aimed to forge alliances among young people committed to social and environmental justice. Since 1992, the ASEED decentralised network grew and regional “hubs” were created in Europe, Asia, North America, Africa, Latin America and Japan. Each hub had its own level of activity, linking youth groups and individuals in their region. By now each hub has developed in its own way, working independently from each other.

ASEED Europe works with about 7 people in the interactive office in Amsterdam, and together with many contacts in the rest of Europe and abroad on the following objectives:

- Initiating and coordinating actions and campaigns on environmental, development and social justice issues;
- Promoting discussion and disseminating information about critical emerging issues;
- Empowering local youth groups and grassroots organisations via trainings, joint projects, and knowledge sharing;
- Establishing partnerships between various organisations and groups worldwide and facilitating international cooperation and networking;
- Preparing projects from the ASEED Europe office and working with local grassroots organisations.

Mission statement

ASEED Europe believes that people have the potential to change their lives and communities for the better and we aim to support and empower both groups and individuals who are striving to do so. We believe that the roots of the ecological destruction and poverty which is ravaging our planet today can be traced back to the colonial and imperialist past when the populations and natural resources of entire continents were ruthlessly exploited.

We see today's profit-obsessed 'free' market globalisation which is fuelled by the increasing mobility of capital as a continuation of this phenomenon. Our campaigns are based on the need to act in solidarity with the millions of people in the Global South whose already precarious livelihoods are being ruined by unfair competition and disastrous privatisation programmes imposed by bodies like the International Financial Institutions and trade agreements in the name of 'free' trade and globalisation.

So far, globalisation has led to more inequality and the concentration of resources into fewer hands. ASEED Europe believes that everybody counts and that decisions that can make or break lives should be taken locally, not on the stockmarkets of New York and London or behind the closed doors of international financial institutions.

We support the rights of individuals and communities to determine their own lives and so we work with groups which promote local democracy and social justice as well as taking these principles as a starting point in our own campaigns.

Our commitment to equality is reflected in our non-hierarchical working practises, whereby decisions are made by consensus.

One of ASEED Europe's most fundamental standpoints is that humans are a part of nature, not apart from it. Modern economic systems, regardless of their political hue, continue to regard nature as a resource to be exploited and recent treaties aimed at slowing down ongoing environmental degradation, climate change and the alarming loss of bio-diversity are doomed to failure because short term economic growth is always given precedence over the long term future of the planet.

It is imperative that we develop new, sustainable alternatives to our current consumption

patterns. ASEED Europe's campaigns focus on exploring alternatives and networking with groups working to promote viable alternatives and sustainable development. ASEED Europe strives for the preservation of both cultural and biological diversity. We reject and work towards ending discrimination based on age, class, disability, gender, race, religious beliefs and sexual preference.

Vital tools that we use to realise our aims are: the promotion of grass root organisation, education, mobilisation and non-violent direct action so that people can act to achieve social justice and environmental integrity on both the local and global level.

Team and office

The office team consists in a core group of 7 people.

Meike Vierstra: coordinator

Flip Vonk: campaigner

Paulina Novo: campaigner

Alex Reuter: financial administrator.

Ivan Mammana (Italy), Maria Westin (Sweden) and Sonia Conchon (France): European volunteers who are part of ASEED through the European Voluntary Service programme, under the "Youth in Action" 7-year plan.

The board members are the following.

Anne Jessica Assehn – Chairperson – in the board since 04/07/2007

Johanna, Katharina Jager – Treasurer – in the board since 31/10/2006

Tjerk Dalhuisen – Secretary – in the board since 27/10/2014.

In addition, other people regularly contribute to ASEED's activities in the fields of research, event organisation, fundraising and actions. In the summer 2014, ASEED has welcomed Louisa Truxius, a German intern who helped with the organisation of the Sowing Diversity project.

An internal document, **the ASEED Guide**, has been written this year in order to make the office run more smoothly. It compiles all useful information for newcomers, volunteers and regular team members, from protocols and practical tips to lists of resources for every campaign topic.

IT means

Equipment

In 2014, ASEED has replaced all its work stations with newer second-hand computers. The server has also been improved after going through a lot of small and big issues.

ASEED has now a better and safer archive system and 7 work-stations, including one dedicated to book-keeping.

Website

The website has gone through a big makeover! aseed.net has taken a leap into the present-day and is now accessible from a smartphone or tablet. The address remains the same, but visitors can notice big changes: a nice design which makes the content easier to read, clearer menus, more pictures, small widgets here and there...

Campaigns

In 2014, ASEED has engaged in two main campaigns under the umbrella topic of food sovereignty: seeds and TTIP (Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership). Besides activities connected to these campaigns, ASEED has kept on organising other smaller activities and participating in various networking events.

Seeds

Background: why this campaign?

The Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) reported in 2010 that 75% of the world's crop diversity had already been lost. Meanwhile, commercial 'high yielding' varieties are proving less effective with climate change, resulting in greater farmer vulnerability. In fact, the advent of industrial farming with its push for commercial seeds has been responsible for a great loss in agricultural biodiversity. Additionally this dynamic has brought both farmers and consumer to be dependent from large corporations and the agro-industry which aim is to make profit and not to feed people in a sustainable way.

On the other hand, for thousands of years, generations of farmers across the globe have been observing, selecting, nurturing, breeding and saving seed. Farmers have creatively cultivated ever more crop varieties to deal with many different challenges of soils, climates, nutrition, flavour, storage, pests and diseases. Women, in particular, play a critical role in their communities as the custodians of seeds.

Urgent action is needed to ensure that farmers can grow resilient crops and nutritious food for us all, in the face of climate change and other challenges. Farmers' complex farming knowledge and their right to save, adapt, exchange and sell seed must be recognised by reeregulations and protected in pro-active policy and practice. Otherwise who will feed us in the future?

Source: <http://www.twinside.org.sg/title2/susagri/2014/sa325.htm>

What are our goals?

- To inform consumers, farmer community and policy makers about seed issues.
- To denounce the strategies of transnational corporations to take over global seed production and distribution their influence on NL and EU policy making.
- To promote alternatives to save the biodiversity of vegetables, fruits and grains.

What are the activities organised within this campaign?

Voedselanders conference on food sovereignty, Wageningen University, 21-22 February

>> More than 800 participants in the conference

>> ASEED workshop with Vandana Shiva

>> online report: <http://aseed.net/en/report-workshop-seed-freedom-and-the-eu-seed-law/>

More than 800 academics, students, activists and farmers from many different countries and networks have joined this unprecedented the Food Otherwise conference on food sovereignty. ASEED has organised a workshop on seed freedom and the EU seed law together with the Indian activist Vandana Shiva. The room was packed with at least 60 people who asked many questions at the end of each presentation.



Reclaim the Seeds in Haren (Groningen), 8-9 March

>> workshops, discussions, practical activities, visits of local initiatives and seed fair.

>> more than 1 000 visitors.

>> read the report here: <http://www.reclaimtheseeds.nl/index.php/verslagen/verslag-2014>

This was the third edition, following on from previous events in Amsterdam and Den Bosch. The seed fair offers a wide range of interested parties the opportunity to exchange seeds and knowledge about seeds, sustainable agriculture and the current threats to seed diversity.

This time, we have focused on creating more exchanges between Netherlands and the north of Germany and other European regions. In several countries there are now

interesting initiatives to preserve heritage, regional and other interesting crops. The current climate in Europe around seed laws means it is almost imperative to keep strong connections across borders and to continue to exchange seeds.

The new seed law proposal and its mechanisms have been debated and analysed, while promoting positive alternatives and sharing means of resistance.

Reclaim the Seeds 2014 was a successful weekend, showing the growing interest for seeds, agricultural biodiversity and alternatives to industrial agriculture in the Netherlands and Europe.



Approaching the Dutch candidates to the EU Parliament, May

In May we approached different political parties to ask them about their views on the new seed law proposal and on the TTIP.

A summary of their answers has been published online: <http://aseed.net/en/dutch-candidates-about-seed-law-and-ttip/>.

Sowing Diversity, 1st-5th October

- >> Youth Exchange funded by the European Union through the Erasmus + programme
- >> 31 participants sent by organisations from 5 countries
- >> workshops, lectures, experience-sharing, practical activities and fun time!

Between Oct 1st and Oct 5th, more than 30 young people gathered in Amsterdam to share their experiences about their favourite topics: seeds, farming, biodiversity and community gardening. Thanks to the youth exchange programme set up by the European Commission, ASEED was able to invite people from Denmark, Germany, France, Austria and the Netherlands to spend 5 days together in the city. The participants were attending group discussions, set up hands-on workshops, went to visit local initiatives and exchanged ideas and heirloom seeds they brought from their own regions. Pictures and the list of participating organisations are online here: <http://aseed.net/en/sowing-diversity-a-short-report/>



Seed People portraits on www.aseed.net

Through the written portraits of people involved with seeds, the “Seed People” project casts the light on issues such as biodiversity, seeds choice, legal situation, etc. It aims at promoting promising and interesting alternative practices, as much as protests and actions against unfair practices or laws. Focusing on people’s path, this series of portraits introduces you to very diverse women and men who devote a fair part of their life to seeds of all kinds. Read the interviews here: <http://aseed.net/en/topic/seeds-3/seeds-portraits/>

Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP)

Background: why this campaign?

The Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership, or TTIP, is a bilateral treaty between the EU and the US that is negotiated in secret. Some negotiating documents have however been leaked and their contents are worrying, despite controversial claims of the economic growth and “job creating opportunities” that this agreement supposedly might lead to. The negotiations focus on limiting ‘non-tariff barriers’ to trade, which translates into lowering environmental and health standards as well as diminishing worker conditions on both sides of the Atlantic. The corporate lobby naturally supports these developments.

ASEED has produced a position paper, explaining why we should stop the TTIP. It has been released online here: <http://aseed.net/en/why-the-transatlantic-trade-and-investment-partnership-ttip-must-be-stopped/>

STOP
corporate globalisation



STOP
the Transatlantic Trade
and Investment Partnership

What are our goals?

- to block the TTIP/ put agriculture out of it;
- to find out the real impact of TTIP on EU and NL food and agricultural policies;

- to support/ build a base of solid activists, academics, students to organize to block the TTIP.

What are the activities organised within this campaign?

Information events

ASEED has organised info-nights and workshops in The Hague, at the annual Pinksterlanddagen in Appelscha and in a social center of Amsterdam, de Vrankrijk. It was the opportunity to explain what is at stake with the TTIP and to meet with local networks and activists.



Actions and demonstrations

ASEED has participated in a demonstration against the TTIP in The Hague on 19th of May, during the hearing of various organisations and corporations on this topic by the Parliament. We were the only organisation present which was not a political party.



ASEED was also part the coalition that organised the local international day of action against TTIP in Amsterdam, on October 10th on Beursplein. The event included several speeches from unionists, activists and local politicians. A 3-meter-high wooden Trojan

horse was simultaneously built on the square, to symbolise the corporation-friendly laws and regulations that the treaty would force into the EU (and the US) in the name of free trade.



Production of diverse material

6 different humorous stickers were created and printed in Dutch and English to raise awareness about the dangers of the TTIP. They were spread in social centers in the country and given away during demonstrations and events.



Flyers explaining the reasons why we should stop the TTIP have been used at various events as well.

ASEED has also translated into English a [German infographic about TTIP](#) made by Camp'Act.

Other related activities

March against Monsanto

On May 24th another global day of action against Monsanto took place. In the Netherlands five Marches Against Monsanto were organised, and ASEED took part in three of them, in

Groningen, Amsterdam and the Hague. In Amsterdam, ASEED had an info stall and set up the Monsanto Quizz. About 10 teams of 2-5 people played the game, answering questions about the corporation and learning new facts. One game took part on the podium, making it accessible to all people present on the Dam square.

Starbucks action

On December 17th, ASEED organised a flyer and banner action at the newest Starbucks store in Amsterdam, in de Pijp neighborhood. The goal was to inform customers and passers-by about some of the practices of the company regarding GMO's. Starbucks is indeed member of the Grocery Manufacturers Association (GMA) who is suing small US state Vermont for wanting to let consumers know what they eat by labeling GM food. On top of not respecting people's right to information of what's in their food, corporations should not be using lawsuits to overturn legitimate, democratic decisions! 400 flyers were distributed with the address of an online petition, many positive comments about our actions were heard and a short article was released in [Het Parool](#).



Donors campaign

At the end of 2014, ASEED needs donors support more than ever. In order to make ASEED's financial situation more stable, we have focused on attracting more regular donors with a goal of 200. The entire donation page of the website has been reshaped, with new options for potential donors. Messages have been published on the website and the social media.

Towards 2015

In May 2015, 2 new European volunteers will join the ASEED team. ASEED has already defined some goals for this year and we also rely on them to bring some fresh ideas and to create their own projects.

Here are some activities we would like to work on in 2015:

- A benefit dinner and donors party in Amsterdam in the beginning of the year to get more regular donors, thank the existing ones and spread awareness about ASEED's activities.
- The 4th edition of Reclaim the Seeds! In Driebergen
- In the year of the COP21 UN climate summit in Paris, linking climate issues to industrial agriculture and push alternatives and action in a summer action camp in

the Netherlands.

- Publishing a brochure on TTIP to inform farmers and consumers of the danger of free-trade agreements.