

AIDS Action Europe Ethical Code for Partnerships and Sponsoring

1. Introduction

AIDS Action Europe attaches great importance to partnerships with other organizations and with the private sector, in order to generate a social and/or financial added value. Such partnerships may be related to specific projects, like an information campaign, or they may be of a more general nature, such as structural sponsoring for the secretariat or a specific action plan. In principle every activity, every programme, service or project of AIDS Action Europe is eligible for sponsoring, on the condition that it corresponds to the specific mission and objectives of AIDS Action Europe.

Although partnerships with the private sector produce some evident advantages, AIDS Action Europe is aware that these partnerships may entail some risks as well, which may affect the credibility of AIDS Action Europe and may question our independent position towards governments, prior target groups and sponsors. Therefore AIDS Action Europe has developed a proper ethical code, providing guidelines for partnerships with the private sector.

These guidelines are based on the ethical code of the International Planned Parenthood Federation.

AIDS Action Europe also subscribes to the Code of Good Practice for NGOs Responding to HIV/AIDS.

2. General principles

- Partnerships should sufficiently guarantee the independent position and the integrity of AIDS Action Europe. Hence they should have no influence on the information, advice, trainings and services with regard to sexual health and HIV offered by AIDS Action Europe, or they should at least avoid suspicions about such an influence. This is one of the reasons why agreements between private companies and AIDS Action Europe on the promotion of specific products are out of the question.
- AIDS Action Europe refuses to conclude partnerships with companies that take up stands on sexual health and HIV that are contrary to the positions of AIDS Action Europe.
- On the basis of its public mission, in particular the promotion of sexual health and a better quality of life for people with HIV, AIDS Action Europe refuses to conclude partnerships with companies that provide products or show business activities that are harmful to health.
- AIDS Action Europe expects possible partners to take up their corporate social responsibility. This means among other things that they pursue an adequate social and environmental policy and that they respect human rights. In case of any doubt, AIDS Action Europe can call in the advice of an impartial third organization.
- Partnerships based upon contracting goods and/or services or purchasing medicines should comply with the usual *best practice* guidelines concerning the price/quality ratio.

3. Transparent procedures

- Every cooperation agreement has to be put down on paper and signed by both parties. The agreement should clearly define what the cooperation implies and which objectives both partners want to achieve. If the agreement also includes a financial contribution for AIDS Action Europe, the amount has to be mentioned, as well as the way in which this budget will be spent. At the special request of third parties it should be possible to make the cooperation agreement publicly known, in order to avoid misunderstandings about a possible preferential treatment.
- AIDS Action Europe may conclude partnerships with individual commercial companies, on the condition that they do not take any financial advantage of the results of the activities they are sponsoring. If such a partnership involves clear advantages for AIDS Action Europe and there is no reason for any conflict of interest, AIDS Action Europe applies a transparent selection procedure that is open to several companies. Such a cooperation agreement may also include a clause of exclusivity.

4. Partnerships with pharmaceutical companies

1. Partnerships with pharmaceutical companies should comply with all European laws.
2. AIDS Action Europe should always be able to prove that the cooperation does not exert any influence on its own policies and practices concerning the safety, effectiveness and acceptability of all medicines with regard to sexual and reproductive health and the prevention and treatment of HIV/AIDS.
3. AIDS Action Europe should not support any product in a way that implies that it would be better than any other similarly composed products. Neither should it sustain the claim of producers that their products are superior to other similarly composed products, unless this has been independently and scientifically proven.
4. For specific events, publications, campaigns, etc. AIDS Action Europe should try to get support from several commercial companies, in order to avoid the risk of being identified with one single firm. Partnerships with only one company should be regularly evaluated.
5. Companies must not use the name nor the logo of AIDS Action Europe for marketing purposes of their products, unless the agreement contains a clause that explicitly stipulates the conditions for using the name and logo of AIDS Action Europe.
6. Partnerships that include a large contribution in kind, in particular pharmaceutical products, should not pursue promotional objectives, and the distribution of these products should correspond to the existing *best practice* standards. The products should be distributed on the basis of objective criteria with regard to selection of the receiving target groups/programmes and/or projects.
7. Staff or members of the board of pharmaceutical companies must not be on the board of AIDS Action Europe.
8. Voluntary workers and staff members of AIDS Action Europe are only allowed to receive gifts and presents with a nominal or fixed value, like pens or flowers, from commercial suppliers or from pharmaceutical companies. All other amounts, such as sponsoring for participation in international congresses, must be reported to the Steering Committee of AIDS Action Europe. In that case the Steering Committee should guarantee that these volunteers/collaborators cannot influence political decisions concerning the purchasing policy and practices, in order to avoid that sponsoring companies or commercial suppliers get a preferential treatment.