

## Minutes

### From the first meeting of the TACSO Serbia Local Advisory Group (LAG)

The meeting was held at the premises of the TACSO office in Belgrade, on 29. December 2009 from 12:00 to 14:30.

Participants: Svetlana Đukić, Ivana Ćirković, Milica Marković Tomić, Dragana Stevanović Kolaković, Dubravka Velat, Milica Mima Ružičić, Igor Stajić, Tanja Bjelanović, Ana Segedinski (LAG members), Nataša Savić Janjić, Aleksandra Galonja, Aleksandra Čalošević (guest participants), Zorica Rašković, Lidija Paradinović, Sergej Vujačić (TACSO team)

During the first part of the meeting, the participants were presented with information on the TACSO project, the TACSO Serbia team, the framework of the Work Plan for the next 4 months, and some recommendations regarding the procedures for the functioning of the LAG, after which they were invited to an open discussion regarding all these issues.

#### **Work Plan: Information, Views, Recommendations:**

-The Project should try through the TACSO Web site to form a database of potential partners for CSOs, since EU projects for CSOs will mostly include a dialogue with EU partner organisations.

- In spite of a large number of trainings already held on this subject, it is still necessary to provide further capacity building to the Sector in the area of writing and submitting applications for EU Projects. Special assistance is needed for particular types of CSOs such as professional associations or unions, as they have little experience, and few opportunities to obtain the means to provide for or organise their own training in this area.

On the other hand, small organisations also have trouble gathering funds, and they should be taught not only to write EU Project Proposals, but also to obtain the financial support of local self-government. EU funds are welcome as support to the sector, but they have brought about a situation where larger organisations thrive, and weaker and smaller ones have fewer opportunities. In that sense TACSO should ensure that the Civil Sector learns to lean on domestic sources of funding.

- Focus largely on supporting the cooperation between CSOs, the government, and the private sector.

- There is a campaign being run currently to promote the formation of a national fund which would provide matching funds for CSO projects – the Poverty Reduction Team and the Sector of European Integrations are working on it. An assessment should be made regarding the potential role of the TACSO office in this effort.

– Local examples of best practice (Leskovac), where CSOs have received matching funds from the city for all IPA projects applying for EU funds, should be promoted through the TACSO Project. The specific local model



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developed in Vojvodina through the facilitation of the Fund for the Development of the Non-Profit Sector (signing an MoU with Municipalities) can be used as a referential framework for others.

-There is no uniform implementation of EU Programmes, much depends on the implementing partner organisations. TACSOS could be the communication channel – a medium for articulating ongoing difficulties and arising issues CSOs are faced with and their communication to the EC Delegation/ EU.

-The process of EU Integrations is accelerating, and currently the State Institutions know more than CSOs regarding the new trends and policies regarding the changes in cooperation with the EU. TACSOS should include the promotion and distribution of EU best practices, relevant documents and information in its activities..

-Use of existing resources - GOPA has carried out a high-quality, thorough needs assessment regarding CSO priorities which could be useful in further TACSOS activities .

-The TACSOS Open Calls for trainers and/ or participants can be posted at the EC Delegation Web site, as well as all the Web sites/ networks accessible to any of the LAG members. These communication channels need to be established, and information needs to be disseminated regularly through them.

-CSO activities are insufficiently based on development strategies from certain areas. CSOs are insufficiently familiar with these strategies. It would be useful to find a way to place all the relevant information regarding the existing strategies on the TACSOS Web site, thus facilitating CSO access to such information.

-It's important to develop an approach of focusing on the missing elements. There is a large number of functioning mechanisms which are contributing to capacity building at the local and national level, and TACSOS needs to determine the gaps in this development. The main focus of the TACSOS project should lie within its role of providing a link to the EU – this is a weak point that needs further strengthening. TACSOS can contribute to and build upon existing activities currently being carried out nationally, but it needs to strongly assert its role as a project to provide stronger and better cooperation with the EU. (a good example – gathering CSO recommendations for changes to the PRAG guidelines, training relating to financial management of EU projects etc)

-GOPA plans to list all EU policies – ensuring that CSOs gain more knowledge about them (links, ideas about what sorts of activities similar CSOs in Europe undertake within their areas of work, specific examples of good practices). Such activities should be linked to the work of the TACSOS office.

- CSOs in Serbia aren't informed about the work of CSO networks in the EU. Very few Serbian CSOs are members of international CSO networks, because they are unfamiliar with application procedures. TACSOS could provide easier access to such information.

-CSOs should be taught to use resources for the implementation of various policies provided by the Government, and not only the designated budget line no. 481. Focus should be placed on financing CSOs from funds allocated for the general financing of local policies and strategies.

-The media are much easier to access through seminars for journalists and other active and participative content than mere press conferences. Media are a lot more approachable on the local level. Trainings for journalists and editors, invitations to media representatives as guest speakers in TACS0 activities etc can be a good mechanism to ensure their involvement. CSO projects include contacts with the media in their project plans, but an emerging practice is that media participation in CSO projects must be paid for, as fewer media are willing to report on such events if they are not financially compensated for it.

-ISC is planning a research project in 35 cities across Serbia involving major media editors to address the issue of poor communication between CSOs and the media – what are the main errors in communication, and how can they be remedied? The findings should be available by the end of January 2010, and will be provided to the TACS0 office to serve as a basis for planning of further activities in this area.

-Contacts should be made with independent journalists' associations, which technically belong to the Civil Sector and share the interest of joining the EU – they can be used as a resource to promote the project and develop a better approach to the media in general.

-The Law now provides for equality of service providers in the area of Social Services, but many organisations still don't recognise this opportunity, believing that services are something the State needs to provide and an area they have no business being involved in. TACS0 should try to provide relevant best practice examples from the EU, demonstrating practically how EU CSOs working to promote the rights of marginalised social groups have found their place in the system as real social service providers. This could help local CSOs see their own position and societal role in a new light.

#### Procedures for the functioning of the LAG

- The suggested framework of procedures is basically a good basis for regulating the work of the LAG.
- The advisory and monitoring roles of the LAG are pivotal, but the LAG should also serve as a means for exchanging information and connecting the institutions/ organisations represented in it, thereby enhancing cooperation and coordination of work.
- LAG members will be a multiple resource to the TACS0 office, by being periodically engaged as experts to participate in TACS0 activities, or recommending other appropriate candidates to carry out trainings or provide various services to CSOs as part of TACS0 activities. Also they will help TACS0 spread information about its work through all the networks they are able to access.
- LAG members believe that there is no pressing need to select a Chairperson or to introduce a voting system, as the LAG is an advisory body only and will not be expected to make any decisions. Views will be clarified by reaching a consensus, and if there are any differing opinions these will be clearly stated as such.

- LAG meetings will be facilitated by the TACSOS team, and if the subject discussed requires the expertise of one of the LAG members, the members will agree upon this prior to the meeting.
- The recommended work dynamic will be generally adhered to, but on occasion the consultations with LAG members can be conducted over the phone or by e-mail.
- The LAG will have occasional guest members in line with the particular topics discussed at each meeting.
- In case of a need for the participation of one of the LAG members in a TACSOS event or activity, the invitation will be extended to the LAG member most closely familiar with the subject, or those members who are able to spare the time to prepare and take part in the event.
- All information will be transparently shared with all LAG members.
- LAG meeting minutes and recommendations are a public document – before being made available to the public, they are to be sent to all LAG members for additions/ comments.

Other:

The LAG considers that TACSOS should invest every effort to enable KOSOVO (RSC/1244) representatives to participate in TACSOS Regional Events that would be held in Serbia. The Team for Social Inclusion and Poverty Reduction is ready to assist in the facilitation of establishing contact with the appropriate authorities in the Ministry of Interior of the Republic of Serbia, as well as to try and obtain further information on the requirements and all legal possibilities for Kosovo (RSC/1244) representatives to travel to Serbia.

An initiative should be raised with the Regional TACSOS Office in Sarajevo to ensure that the TACSOS Web site is accessible to persons with disabilities – particularly those with impaired sight. The contact person regarding this initiative is the LAG member Mima Ružičić.

On 30.12.2009.

Minutes drafted by  
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