

## **MINUTES FROM THE FIRST MEETING OF THE LOCAL ADVISORY GROUP (LAG)**

### **«Civil Society Organisations, Capacity Building in IPA Countries» (TACSO – Technical Assistance to Civil Society Organisations)**

**Date:** 11. February 2010

**Time:** 15:00 – 17:40

**Venue:** TACSO Office Montenegro

#### **Participants:**

1. Aleksandar Perović, Ozon, Nikšić
2. Mikan Medenica, Natura, Kolašin
3. Ljupka Kovačević, Anima, Kotor
4. Sanja Elezović, Foundation Open Society Institute, Representative Office in Montenegro
5. Vanja Starovlah, Union of Municipalities
6. Paola Petričević, Center for Civic Education, Podgorica
7. Aleksandra Gligorović, Association for democratic prosperity ZID
8. Danka Latković, Government Office for Cooperation with CSOs
9. Nikola Bertolini, EU Delegation in Montenegro, Head of Operations Section
10. Jadranka Milić, EU Delegation in Montenegro, Task manager

#### **TACSO Team**

1. Goran Đurović, Resident Advisor (RA)
2. Stevo Muk, Project Officer (PO)
3. Jasmina Vojnović, Administrative and Financial Assistant (AFA)

**Chair person:** Goran Djurovic, TACSO Resident Advisor

#### **List of documents distributed at the meeting:**

1. Agenda (in Montenegrin)
2. Needs Assessment (NA) Report (in Montenegrin)
3. TACSO Montenegro Office Work Plan from December 2009 – June 2010. (in Montenegrin)
4. Rules and Principles of the functioning of the Local Advisory Group (in Montenegrin)
5. TACSO Brochure (in English and Montenegrin)

## **AGENDA:**

1. Information on previous and current CSO project activities
2. Presentation of the Needs Assessment Report
3. Presentation of the two-year Work Plan (with special attention focused on activities planned until May 2010)
4. Rules and Procedures of the LAG functioning

## **Discussion:**

The meeting started with a short introduction of the members of the LAG with the project's ongoing activities. LAG members attended the first kick-off event and had the opportunity to become more familiar with these implemented activities.

The second meeting topic started with an introduction to the LAG members of the findings of the Needs Assessment with a brief overview from the RA on the activities which were undertaken at the regional and national level, concentrated on the establishment of the Local Advisory Group for the TACSO Project.

Mrs Sanja Elezovic expressed the need for LAG members to have a detailed regional working plan. Mrs Ljupka Kovacevic raised the issue of the tax framework for CSO work asking for some explanations. TACSO AFA explained how some of the tax regulations, particularly the VAT, function were in practice. Ljupka Kovacevic noted that the Women Studies programme conducted by Anima is missing from the list of Alternative Educational Programs in the Needs Assessment Report. She added that women's rights should be emphasized in the human rights related sections within the NA.

TACSO Resident Advisor explained that the draft NA passed through two consultation rounds and that no suggestions in that regard were received.

Mr Aleksandar Perovic expressed the need for detailed information on CSO representatives participating in different government and local government committees and working groups. He considered that number of these representatives have no or at least questionable legitimacy. Their contribution and work in such bodies have to be based on a transparent electing procedure for CSO representatives.

Mr Mikan Medenica presented problems that CSOs have in relation with the Pension and Invalid Fund (PIO), Tax Administration and Employment Agency.

Several members raised the issue of co-financing for CSO projects financed by the EU. RA mentioned that this issue is part of the Strategy for Cooperation with CSOs.

Mr Nicola Bertolini considered that the NA is a good basis for planning. TACSO RA presented the National working plan for two years and a detailed plan for the first six months in 2010. TACSO RA informed the LAG that the national web page for Montenegro will be available in March.

In regard to the third meeting topic related to the Work Plan, especially towards planning for training on EU funding, Mr Nicola Bertolini expressed the opinion that many trainings lack effectiveness and have severe shortages in explaining the Logical Framework Assistance (LFA), which is the key element for project planning. Mr Bertolini mentioned that there are 18 projects being implemented with EU support (National IPA Support for Civil Society and EIDHR). Mr Bertolini expressed interest in the details of the monitoring visits format and dynamic. TACS SO RA explained that Monitoring is much more a technical assistance and support for internal monitoring within organisations. This assistance will be provided only upon request by the CSOs. LAG Members have been informed that TACS SO Office will send official letters explaining the details of the monitoring component to CSOs, which implement projects funded by the European Union.

Ms Jadranka Milić emphasized that the LAG is not a steering but advisory body. Mr Bertolini was interested in the possibilities of engaging other donors which support civil society in Montenegro with LAG activities. It was agreed that, at the next meeting, this issue will be solved through an improvement of the LAGs' Rules and Procedures document.

After the discussion, whether the LAG should have a permanent or rotating presiding, it was concluded that rotation is a better solution. Mrs Ljupka Kovacevic was elected as the first LAG president.

TACS SO RA explained the possibilities and invited LAG members to directly observe some of the TACS SO activities through direct participation, especially two regional kick-off events planned for the end of February.

## Conclusions:

- TACS SO Office to present regional plan for at least one year in order to have better planning of activities in Montenegro
- Find out technical possibilities in providing periodical updated versions of the NA
- Head of The Government Office to submit updated information for additions to the NA
- To introduce in the TACS SO Work Plan, activities which will adjust practices in the work of tax administration at the municipal level and harmonize practice to meet specific needs of the CSO sector
- To present to LAG training guidelines with precise methodology for planned training topics by mid-March
- To add monitoring visits to the national working plan in accordance with agreement between TACS SO Office and EU Delegation in Montenegro
- To prepare detailed plan for round tables on the establishment of a CSO Government Council
- To have meetings **at least every 3 months** and additional meeting when there is a specific need
- EU Delegation to prepare additional procedures for LAG to involve other donors engaged in support to civil society
- To have a rotating LAG presiding
- LAG member Ljupka Kovacevic was nominated as the first LAG chairperson