

Second Meeting of the Local Advisory Group (LAG) Minutes

Date: 13 January 2010

Time: 10:30-12:30

Venue: EC Delegation – Skopje

Present:

LAG Members: Ahmet Jasarovski, Zoran Ilieski, Zoran Milkov, Irena Ivanova, Lulzim Haziri, Metodija Sazdov, Petre Mrkev, Fani Karanfilova Panovska

Chair person: Fani Karanfilova Panovska

Present members from the TACSO project office: Suncica Sazdovska, Mirjana Pehcevska Pop-Iliev, Valentina Atanasovska, Galina Rizova

Present members from TACSO regional office: Palle Westergaard – project's Team Leader

Guest: Suzana Nikodievik – Filipovska, General Secretariat of the Government of the Republic of Macedonia

Absent:

LAG members: Vladimir Misev, Eli Cakar

List of documents distributed at the meeting:

1. Meeting Agenda
2. National Action Plan for period December 2009 – April 2010
3. Concept for Kick-off event
4. Logical framework of the project

Agenda and discussion

1. Introduction and presentation of the Team Leader and the Regional Senior Advisor
2. Possibilities for regional project activities, *Presentation and discussion*
3. National Action Plan for period December 2009 – April 2010
Presentation and discussion
4. Concept for the national kick-off event of the project
Presentation and discussion
5. Conclusions and next steps

1. Ms. Fani Karanfilova Panevska – chairperson of the meeting welcomed all present at the meeting and presented the Agenda. The LAG members, the guest from the regional office Mr. Palle WesterGaard, (project’s Team Leader) and Ms. Galina Rizova, Regional Senior Advisor presented themselves.

2. Mr. Palle Westergaard presented the regional aspect of the project – Technical Assistance for CSOs, as well as the project’s regional activities. He emphasized the partnership events and the possibilities for establishing contacts with CSOs at the regional level by the regional activities and the set objectives at the regional level. Mr. Westergaard stressed that the project should be seen as one of the important actions which in the long run would surely have a positive impact on the CSOs in the region.

3. Ms. Suncica Sazdovska presented the National Action Plan for December 2009 – April 2010. She elaborated the project’s components with the key activities as well as the period for which they were planned.

Regarding the planned informative events for promotion of the new law on civil organisations it was pointed out that if needed those informative events could be organised as public debates before passing the law.

Mr. Zoran Milvko stated that it was planned for the Law to be passed, i.e. to be discussed in the Assembly, approximately in May 2010 and the Ministry of Justice had already planned 5 public debates for CSOs on the new Law.

Ms. Suzana Nikodievik – Filipovska clarified that these informative events/sessions aim at facilitating the dissemination of information about the new law and the law changes.

Ms. Suzana Nikodievik – Filipovska emphasized that with respect to the announcement for state funding of the CSOs additional informative meetings were always welcomed i.e. the more the merrier. As a matter of fact, in general those meetings were always organised in partnership with other donor organisation, i.e. they had been organised with OSCE and EU funds in the previous years.

Mr. Metodija Sazdovski added that the transparency of financing and allocating state funds to CSOs was small and special attention should be paid to that process. The project should support events related to financing CSOs by other institutions, for instance by Ministry of Environment.

Ms. Irena Ivanova emphasized that perhaps the activity title should be changed in order to clarify that those activities should aim at capacity building of CSOs. She proposed jointly with EC Delegation’s support to organise events for informing CSOs regarding the whole possible support planned for the year so that CSOs would know in which parts they could be involved and could choose in which type of financing/support would like to be involved.

Mr. Palle Westergaard added that such a partnership event/conference for CSOs on environment had already been organised in Ohrid, Macedonia, which was a very good example for organising partnership events. That could be taken into account for the future when organising partnership event or conference on any topic or area of CSO operation. Mr.

Westergaard stressed that all those needs stated by the CSOs for establishing contacts could be achieved at that kind of partnership event which could certainly be on regional level and could involve CSOs from the countries in the region covered by the TACSO project.

Ms. Irena Ivanova stressed that it would be very important for all participants attending any training outside the country after returning to share their experience with the remaining CSOs by organising focus groups or other similar activities.

Ms. Sazdovska clarified that that had already been taken into account by all trainings to take place at the regional level. As a matter of fact, after the training all participants were responsible to transfer their acquired skills and knowledge on training in their country. That requirement had already been emphasized in the open call so that the applicants would accept their responsibilities during the application process.

Conclusions

- In case there was a need for more than 5 public debates on the new law on association of citizens the informative events organised by TACSO project could be used for that purpose.
- Instead of 2 informative meetings foreseen in the Action Plan, to organize at least 4 informative sessions/meetings for informing CSOs, particularly at the local level, about the announcement for state funding of CSOs.
- The focus of the project should be on capacity building of CSOs and not on supporting other institutions.
- If needed, representatives from other institutions, for instance Ministry on Environment, should be invited to some of the next meetings.
- The National Action Plan should be distributed to the LAG members before it was approved on regional level so that their comments could be incorporated in the plan, as long as that was feasible by the project's budget and time frame.
- To give regional dimension to the planned activity such as the CSO fair (to organise regional fair of CSOs), as long as that was budget feasible, aiming at facilitating networking and establishing contacts with other CSOs in the region.

4. Ms. Sazdovska elaborated in-depth on the concept of the kick-off event. Further on, she stressed that it was very important at the meeting to collect proposals for the discussion topics on the parallel sessions planned on the kick-off event.

Ms. Fani Karanfilova Panevska also saw the conference as very good opportunity for CSO gathering and a place where they could share their experience, ideas and plans. She emphasized that it was very important to propose interesting topics for discussion which would attract CSOs.

Mr. Zoran Ilieski proposed for the discussion topics to result from the interviews conducted by the TACSO project in the preparation of the Needs Assessment Report. In his view, a possible topic was: "What are the biggest challenges for the CSOs in their operation and how can they overcome them?"

Ms. Ivanova proposed for the facilitators and the key-note speakers to be from the Local Advisory Group depending on the topic and that could be a possibility for them to present

themselves and CSOs that they present. Further on, she proposed the discussion topic Cooperation of the non-governmental sector regarding advocacy and lobbying.

Ms. Galina Rizova stressed that in case that topic was included then representatives from the legislative body should also be involved, otherwise, it would not be productive.

Mr. Petre Mrkev proposed that during the registration of the participants for the kick-off event they could choose which topics they would like to be covered so that at the end it would be decided for the topics with the highest interest expressed by the participants.

Ms. Ivanova proposed in case only 2 topics were chosen to be discussed then those topics could comprise broader discussion which would be instigated by the introductory speeches or presentations and they could comprise more sub-topics related to each other.

Conclusions

- The exhibition of networks represented by the LAG members could take away the focus of the participants from the event itself, and that is not needed, but also, the LAG members did not want to be favored more than the other networks or CSOs.
- Regarding the topics it was concluded that the project team should propose topics and send them to the LAG members by 20 January. The LAG members would give their recommendations on these topics.
- It was proposed that instead of 4 discussions, i.e. 2 plus 2 parallel sessions, to have only 2 discussions which would not overlap, thus, the participants would be able to participate in all discussions.
- Still, based on the statements on the priority topics the project team should have the final say and decide whether 2 or 4 discussion sessions would be covered.

5. It was discussed about possibly adding additional LAG members, the nomination and selection of the chairperson and the Agenda for the next meeting. Further on, the participants were informed that the transportation costs for the LAG members outside of Skopje would be reimbursed in line with the principle used for the project team.

Conclusions

- LAG members should send proposals to the project team for an additional member representative from organisations working on inter-ethnic issues, preferably representative from the Albanian ethnic community.
- The LAG meetings to be organised after 11:00, taking into account that many LAG members are travelling from other cities
- Chairperson for the next meetings to be Mr. Petre Mrkev.
- The date of the next LAG meeting to be set once a date for submitting the second part of the Action Plan covering the period until the end of the year was given by the regional office.
- For the next LAG meeting, the National Action Plan covering the period until the end of the year to be reviewed.

Minutes taken by
Mirjana Pehcevska Pop-Iliev