

Technical Assistance for Civil Society Organisations (TACSO) - Kosovo Constitutive Meeting of the Local Advisory Group - LAG

Meeting Minutes

Call to order

Ms. Ardita Metaj Dika, the Resident Advisor, TACSO, called to order the constitutive meeting of the **Local Advisory Group at 13:10 on 17 December 2009 in Prishtina, at the European Commission Liaison Office.**

Participation

The following persons were present:

Government representatives:

1. Ms. Sadete Demaj, Senior Human Rights Officer, Office for Good Governance, Office of the Prime Minister
2. Ms. Trendelina Duraku, Civil Society Coordinator Agency for Coordination of Development and European Integrations, Office of the Prime Minister
3. Mr. Rexhep Ahmeti, Head of NGO Registration Division, Office for Registration of NGO's in Kosovo

Donor community:

4. Ms. Edis Agani, Task Manager-Social Development Team, ECLO
5. Ms. Tatiana Jancarkova, Task Manager-Social Development Team, ECLO
6. Ms. Vera Pula, Program Coordinator, Roma & Minorities and East-East Partnership, Kosovo Foundation for Open Society (KFOS)

Local level representation:

7. Mr. Sazan Ibrahim, Executive Director, Association of the Kosovo Municipalities

CSO's representatives:

8. Mr. Taulant Hoxha, Project Coordinator, Kosovo Civil Society Foundation
9. Mr. Gezim Abazi, Executive Director, Handicap Kosova
10. Mr. Vuk Mitrovic, Deputy Executive Director, Center for Development of Civil Society
11. Mr. Bariu Zenelaj, Executive Director, NGO "ATTA"
12. Mr. Erkan Vardari, Executive Director, European Union Integration Resource Center
13. Mr. Valmir Ismaili, Program Manager, Kosovo Democratic Institute

TACSO Project

14. Mr. Åke Sahlin, Project Director, TACSO
15. Ms. Ardita Metaj Dika, Resident Advisor, TACSO
16. Ms. Shqipe Svecla, Project Officer, TACSO
17. Ms. Elhame Selmani Rexhepi, Admin and Finance Assistant, TACSO



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Not present:

1. Igballe Rogova, Executive Director, Kosova Women Network
2. Luljeta Gjonbalaj, USAID

Meeting Agenda

13: 00 **First Session**

- Welcome and Introduction of the meeting objectives
Ardita Metaj–Dika, Resident Advisor, TACSO -Kosovo
- Presentation of the TACSO Project
Åke Sahlin, Project Director, TACSO
- Project activities in Kosovo
Ardita Metaj–Dika, Resident Advisor, TACSO - Kosovo

13:30 *Coffee Break*

13:45 **Second Session**

- Structure and Establishment of the LAG
- Discussion and the approval of Rules and Principals of the Functioning of the Local Advisory Group (LAG)
- Appointment of Chairman of the LAG
- Next LAG meeting
- Conclusions of the meeting, LAG Chairman

Meeting minutes- First Session

- Welcome and Introduction of the meeting objectives by Ardita Metaj–Dika, Resident Advisor, TACSO -Kosovo
- Introduction of the participants

- **Presentation of the TACSO Project by Mr. Åke Sahlin, Project Director**

Mr. Sahlin expressed his pleasure in the opportunity to be present at the first LAG meeting. He delivered a presentation on the SIPU organisation a structure/firm established in Stockholm with more than 20 years of cooperation activities, its projects in the world, focusing on the TACSO Project, its mission, project objectives and activities, funding, project's regional dimension, and its partners. TACSO project is a two year regional effort to support CSOs' activities, together with four partners from Romania, Poland, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Turkey.

TACSO is a regional European Union project with a regional office in Sarajevo which coordinates planning and supports activities for the nine offices in the eight beneficiary countries –IPA countries, (Turkey – 2 offices). Each country office has three staff members a Resident Advisor, Project Officer and Administrative/Finance Assistant. There is a substantial resource to support in country project activities with 53 days/ senior experts and 78 days/ junior experts, with a total of 147. 296.00 thousand Euros for program costs /incidentals. This amount presents the division of 70% of the project resources equally to each country – national offices, apart of Turkey with 2/9 of allocated resources.

TACSO project currently is preparing the regional project Web page, and eight national Web pages in the appropriate languages. The Regional Office in Sarajevo supports project activities on the regional dimension – regional events, where target institutions that will be invited are Government institutions, NGOs, private sector, partners and stakeholders. We will provide training assistance through project help desks, and support promotion of networks. Project is managed by senior management committee (Stockholm), steering committee (Brussels) and Local Advisory Groups (LAG) at the country level. The LAG in each country will assist the project to promote further capacity building of CSOs.

- **Project activities in Kosovo by Ardita Metaj–Dika, Resident Advisor, TACSO - Kosovo**

Ms. Metaj-Dika, delivered a PowerPoint presentation on up-to-date project activities in Kosovo, focusing on CSOs' Needs Assessment report, and the Local Advisory Group (LAG) composition and establishment. The needs assessment report tends to reflect the status of civil society organisations in Kosovo exploring seven aspects of the overall functioning of the CSOs. The following issues were elaborated: legal framework, the role of the CSOs in the democratic process, general conditions for CSO funding, CSO capacities, institutionalized

cooperation between the government and CSO sector, CSOs' participation in local government processes, and public trust and image of the CSOs.

The second part of the presentation was focused on the role and composition of the Local Advisory Group in Kosovo, serving a nationwide resource group for civil society development, policy making, strategic planning, advocacy and so on, also as a natural link between the government institutions/units in charge of cooperation with CSOs on the central and grassroots level. The role of the LAG is to ensure that the project's outputs match the needs of the beneficiary CSOs; providing advisory input to the project implementation, potentially acting as a capacity-building resource for the project and its role to act as a link between the project and local civil society was emphasized.

13:45 Second Session

➤ Structure and Establishment of the LAG

Ms. Metaj-Dika described the composition of the LAG representing governmental institutions, local level representation, civil society organisations and the donor community. Ms. Metaj-Dika explained the reasoning on why having this composition and the role of each organisation which is part of this group.

➤ Discussion and approval of the Rules and Principals of the Functioning of the Local Advisory Group (LAG)

Ms. Metaj – Dika gave a short description of the Rules and Principals of the Functioning of the LAG and explained that they are common for the IPA Countries/Project Offices and asked from the members of the LAG to give their comments, suggestions/proposals on the rules in order to develop them into a final draft.

The members of the LAG went through the draft and discussed it part by part.

Ms. Edis Agani: her comment was that the functions of the LAG are described as wide, too ambitious and noted that the regional dimension of the LAG functioning is missing. She recommended that the progress/conclusions in the region should be shared with others. Also due to the big workload, the 6 week timeframe of the meeting is too intensive. She recommended the meeting to be held every 8-10 weeks.

Ms. Ardita Metaj-Dika: Agreed that the LAG rules and principles should also reflect the regional dimension, and that the conclusions and suggestions of LAG meetings in other project countries should be shared.

Ms. Trendelina Duraku: Agreed with Ms. Agani remarks, and saw the LAG mechanism as very valuable for establishing a dialogue of cooperation between the government and CSOs.

Ms. Vera Pula: agreed with Ms. Agani on the regional dimension. Her comments were focused on the selection procedures of the chairperson -LAG. According to her it is a waste of time the selection of the chairperson on a rotational basis – every meeting to select a different chairperson so she proposed to elect a permanent chairperson with one year time mandate.

Mr. Ake Sahlin explained that there was actually an idea to have a chairman of the LAG be part of the steering committee in Brussels, part of the regional activities – training events, exchange of information. Currently all the possibilities are being explored.

Mr. Rexhep Ahmeti – sees the project as very important, a substantial one that will help the office for NGO registration. According to him, the rules in general are good. Additional comments will be submitted during the next meeting if necessary.

Ms. Ardita Metaj-Dika – the project will look at the forms for productive cooperation with your office.

Ms. Sadete Demaj – it is very good that Kosovo is involved in this regional project where beneficiaries will be CSOs and the government. In general the rules and functions are good. At point 1- there is a need for clarification of the functions. In point 1.1 there is a need to strengthen the monitoring role of this group. Point 3 – 3.4 is not very clear – the group needs to be equal. We will analyze the rules further and give our comments.

Mr. Valmir Ismaili –the establishment of the group is very important. The recommendation is to extend the number of CSOs in the composition of this group.

Mr. Gezim Abazi- expressed the need to better define the definition “handicap persons” in the text of the Rules and principles. According to the Ministry of Education we need to use the term “disable persons”. Regarding the substance of the rules if we have any other comments we will submit them.

Mr. Bariu Zenelaj – Is of the opinion that the media should be part of this group, suggestion would be association that gathers journalists – the Association of Professional Journalists.

Mr. Taulant Hoxha- expressed satisfaction with the composition of the LAG and at the same time supports the inclusion of Media in this group. Regarding the rules of principles KCSF will provide written comments after analyzing the draft.

Mr. Vuk Mitrovic – promised to inform the network members about the establishment of the LAG since they have recently established the network of the minority NGO’s operating in Kosovo. He committed network contribution to the work of the LAG in order to ensure good results. Pleased to see the members of the NGO Registration office present in this group that will enable to address difficulties of the organisations from Mitrovica that need to come to Prishtina to register their NGO’s. He also expressed the satisfaction to continue

cooperation with CSOs that they worked together in the past that presently are members of LAG.

Ms. Ardita Metaj– Dika: regarding the regional dimension of the LAG I propose to see the comments and suggestions of the LAG in the rest of project countries. Can we conclude that the group prefers to have a chairperson with a one year mandate?

Vera Pula: What about the right of the chairperson to be re-elected?

Edis Agani– do we have the substantial role of the chairperson described enough in the rules of the LAG? I can only see the logistic role of the chairperson!

Ardita Metaj-Dika : the functions of the chairperson are different from the rest of the LAG members – Chairperson will need to provide more engagement when preparing the agenda of the meetings, to moderate meetings , establish conclusions of the meeting etc.

Vera: this is not described well enough on the draft rules.

– LAG group proposed to draft a separate section outlining the role of the chairperson-

Edis Agani: relation between RA and chairperson is not described clear enough in the draft rules! How will the chairperson contribute to the work of the RA?

Ake Sahlin: The RA and helpdesk will support the work of LAG.

Ardita Metaj-Dika: As we can see there is a need to specify the role of the chairperson and relation between RA-chairperson!

Vera Pula: I suggest leaving the appointment of the chairperson for the next meeting –after the definition of his role, in the meantime we can appoint acting chairperson of the LAG.

Ake Sahlin: you can leave the selection of the chairperson for the next meeting – send the nomination via mail so in the next meeting you can decide.

Edis Agani: after the approval of the inception report by Brussels I propose to distribute it to LAG.

Ardita Metaj-Dika: next meeting will tentatively be in mid-February

Rexhep Ahmeti: Raised the need to include private sector in the composition of LAG.

Ardita Metaj-Dika: It is up to the LAG to decide about involvement of the media and private sector in the group.

Bariu Zenelaj: suggested to have a Chamber of Commerce as part of the LAG– as an umbrella of Kosovo business.

Ake Sahlin: you will need to decide in your group about their participation / whether on an ad hoc bases.

All the participants expressed satisfaction with the composition of the LAG including their commitment and willingness to be part of this group. Media and private sector are proposed to be included on the LAG-Kosovo.

➤ **Appointment of the Chairman of the LAG**

Chairman will be elected in the next meeting of LAG which will be an ad hoc meeting. Nominations for chairperson will be done via e-mail.

➤ **Next LAG meeting**

Election of the LAG Chairperson, the nominations for chairperson will be done via e-mail; Items for the next LAG meeting:

- Revision and approval of the rules and principals;
- Election of the chairman
- Discussion of the inception report
- TACSO-Kosovo project work plan.

➤ **Conclusions of the meeting**

Below are the conclusions drawn from the first LAG meeting:

- ✚ regional dimension of the LAG functioning needs to be defined;
- ✚ separate section outlining functions and responsibilities of the chairperson needs to be drafted;
- ✚ relation between the RA and chairperson need to be better described;
- ✚ rules and principles need to contain a paragraph with principles on amendment of these rules and principles;
- ✚ rules and principles should be informal;
- ✚ LAG –Kosovo will elect a permanent chairperson with one year mandate;
- ✚ LAG-Kosovo proposed to expand the composition and include media and private sector
- ✚ LAG-Kosovo working language is to be according to the applicable law and structure of the LAG that means: Albanian, Serbian and English as required.

Adjournment

Ms. Metaj-Dika adjourned the meeting at 15:20.



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Minutes submitted by: **Shqipe Svecla**

Minutes approved by: **Ardita Metaj-Dika -RA**, TACSO-Kosovo on the **25 December 2009**.