

# **“Technical Assistance to Civil Society Organizations”**

External Independent Report  
On  
Assessment of TACSO Serbia Activities Impact

Project implementer: SIPU International

Donor: European Union

Period covered by the report: August 2009. - February 2011.

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Belgrade, July 2011.

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## OLISTOFABBREVIATIONS

EUD - Delegation of European Union

TACSO - Technical Assistance to Civil Society Organizations

CSF - Civil Society Facility

IPA - Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance

EC - European Commission

SIPRU - Social Inclusion and Poverty Reduction Team

CI - Civic Initiatives

CRNPS - Centar za razvoj neprofitnog sektora (Center for Non Profit Sector Development)

BCIF - Balkan Community Initiatives Fund

CSO - Civil Society Organization

LAG - Local Advisory Group

P2P -People To People

BCSDN -Balkan Civil Society Development Network

STE - Short Term Expert

SEIO - European Integration Office of Government of Serbia

SEKO - Sektorske organizacije civilnog društva (Sectorial Civil Society Organizations)

## 1 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report represents the findings of the external assessment of the project activities impact of TACSO Serbia office. The purpose of this assignment is to help TACSO proof own results and learn the lessons for the TACSO 2 period. Also, as stated in TACSO Serbia LFA matrix, expected outcomes were to be assessed, based on selected indicators.

The general objective of TACSO project is to strengthen the overall capacities and accountability of the Civil Society Organizations (CSO-s) within the IPA beneficiaries and to guarantee the quality of services of CSO-s and a sustainable role of the CSO-s in the democratic process. The main purposes of the project are to increase and improve the capacity and actions of CSO-s, and to improve the democratic role of CSO-s.

The key findings by the Project components:

- 1. The outcome: The project is visible for and supported by both CSO-s and other external stakeholders, has been achieved to the significant degree.** *According to some opinions, activities should be implemented in order to improve the image of TACSO in front of some strategic CSO-s and institutions.*
- 2. The outcome: Service delivery of CSO-s is improved, has been achieved.** The 100% of CSO-s that received TACSO assistance at the field of New Law and responded to the survey are re-registered. A high percentage of CSO-s that responded the survey on training courses confirmed that their work improved after the trainings (81%), that they use products created on training in their everyday work (79%) and that they established cooperation with other organizations (81%). TACSO in the next stage should define important terms in compliance to EU ones and make them clearly visible, so that the project indicators could be easier proved. Rural CSO-s representing marginalized social groups such as people with disabilities, Roma, IDP-s, ethnic minorities have been included in TA assistance in significant number. At least 50 % of total TA services are given to CSO-s representing marginalized social groups
- 3. The outcome: Enhanced competence of CSO-s, has been achieved.** At training on CSO management there were products of 13 organizations attached to the STE report, at one (out from three) trainings on EU project proposal writing, there were LFA of 13 organizations attached to the STE report, at the trainings “CSO-s as service providers“, 4 policy papers were produced and attached to the STE reports, at the trainings on CSO Public Relations and Media Networking, each training resulted with joint products shared by participants after the training. In survey conducted among these trainings participants, they declared that they used products in their work. Number of CSO-s applying for EU funds increased by 40% in 2010 (285 applications) in comparison to 2009 (174 applications) on CfP within Strengthening Serbia-EU civil society dialogue.
- 4. Outcome for component 4: Strengthened cooperation between CSO-s and the government, the private sector and the public was partially achieved.** Examples of improved procedures for CSO-s participation in decision making process on local level has not be implemented by the end of the observed period. This segment of the project is initiated and should give results in the future period. The training courses which aimed at networking among CSO-s and media showed that cooperation of CSO-s and media improved but there were no newly established procedures in terms of protocols, networks, or other forms of systematic and strategic cooperation in the local community. This indicator could be changed or erased since protocols on cooperation are not a guarantee that CSO-s will be adequately presented in local media. Promotion of examples of the best practices on cooperation CSO-s and private sector has been implemented, through “Place in the Heart” prize. 19 examples of best practices were published in the brochure.

By analyzing available data on this project, the conclusion is that the project purpose: Increased and improved capacity and strengthened democratic role of CSO-s is partially achieved and that TACSO 2 will much more contribute to it. The activities in area of both selected indicators are at the initial point: *The National office Cooperation with CSO-s* has been established but it is not fully operational for almost a year since decision on establishment was adopted. TACSO Serbia gave its' contribution to the establishment of this mechanism, and there is, according to the last quarterly report, the advocacy activities in cooperation with national CSO-s are intensive in order to provide full support to the office and conditions for its' work. Concerning the level of involvement of CSO-s in the process of National IPA programming, until the end of the observed period, the TACSO Serbia office is involved in establishing a consultative mechanism for involving CSO-s in the process of programming IPA funds. A call for CSO-s has been completed during February 2011. and 6 applications for 6 different sectors of civil society which would be the representatives of CSO-s from these fields. Since this segment is in the initial phase too, this is the place to note that TACSO is seen by all stakeholders as direct connection between CSO-s and EU, and this fact should play important role in TACSO planning of future activities in this field. Concerning the position of TACSO in front of strategic CSO-s and government institutions, in several interviews it was mentioned that the ownership on the main processes of strengthening of civil society in Serbia is the issue. National CSO-s need ownership under enhancing their democratic role, and on the other hand, institutions needs ownership under the process of dialogue with CSO.

**General recommendations for further work:** development of the enabling and transparent context for CSO in Serbia, support to CSO in establishing of transparent strategic, financial and legal framework for their work, advocacy for change of financial and administrative procedures for CSO-s in front of EU, i.e for their simplification and equalization with EU CSO-s, to transfer EU identity, EU standards and policy to CSO in Serbia; to promote EU in front of CSO-s and vice versa, to promote CSO-s in front of EU, establish more focused programs and services, continue investing in cooperation with strategic CSO-s in order to work on the ownership issue, invest more in administration of the project in terms of increasing standards for STE reports and internal data base on CSO-s, work further on developing of the component 4 in order to provide more opportunities for, but also educate and share best practices in partnership and networking at local and national level, work further on visibility of civil society sector in Serbia. Since significant number of activities are relevant for indicators in both component 2 and component 3, TACSO could consider to merge component 2 and 3 into one project component in which training in specific topics is one segment of TA and help desk more developed, focused to the wider range of activities with more resources, especially human resources. On the other hand, a great value of the project is this horizontal connection among components and great possibility to recognize one activity as „multifunctional“ i.e. serving to more than one outcome.

## 2 INTRODUCTION

### 1.1. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

In the period May -July 2011, TACSO Serbia engaged short term expert to conduct external assessment of impact of the activities implemented by TACSO Serbia office within the project “**Technical Assistance to Civil Society Organizations**”. The project has been conducted within the framework of Civil Society Facility (Support to the civil society) which is funded by the European Union, and implemented by a consortium led by SIPU International (Swedish Institute for Public Administration).

The general objective of TACSO project was to strengthen the overall capacities and accountability of the Civil Society Organizations (CSO-s) within the IPA beneficiaries and to

guarantee the quality of services of CSO-s and a sustainable role of the CSO-s in the democratic process. The purpose of the project in Serbia was to increase and improve capacity, and strengthen democratic role of CSO-s.

The purpose of this assessment was to help TACSO proof own results and learn the lessons for the TACSO 2 phase. Also, as stated in TACSO Serbia LFA matrix, expected outcomes were to be assessed, based on selected indicators.

TACSO Serbia office was established at the moment while Republic of Serbia has still being negotiating for status of candidate country. At 2008 Serbian civil society finally got new Law on Associations of Citizens which provided more enabling framework for establishing and developing of civil society sector. This Law was the formal signal that the Government is willing to improve the context for civil society organizations but this step was significantly stimulated from the international community and in line with other activities within EU pre-accession process. Taking into consideration that this Law again does not provide a clear support to CSO in terms of fiscal benefits, it can be concluded that there is a wide field for further work both, of CSO-s and the government in order to really establish a society with strong and sustainable civil sector.

Government has established new bodies and institutions whose mandates are EU integrations. Foreign donors who were present in Serbia from 90-s to beginning of 2000s withdrew, and the main source of funds for civil society organizations in Serbia have become EU funds, governmental funds (again from EU mostly), and several bigger donors from USA and Western and Northern Europe. During 2004-2005, EU introduced IPA as new pre-accession instrument for 2007-2013 which has the role to support Serbia in process of approaching to EU. The Government took the task to establish consultation mechanisms in the process of IPA programming, which is still ongoing and TACSO is involved in this process. Civil society organizations have developed stronger cooperation at the national level by creating several networks of which FENS was the most representative, coordinated by Civic Initiatives. Civil society started advocacy for establishing of the mechanisms for institutional cooperation between government and civil society. In April 2010 the Office for Cooperation with Civil Society was finally established but is working with very limited resources. The process of real, transparent consultation with civil society sector in general is at the beginning stage in Serbia, and the level of involvement of CSO-s in decision making at the national or regional level is not high. On the other hand, within the CSO sector itself, there is ongoing process of structural and functional organization which should bring more representative bodies/mechanisms which should communicate with policy makers as "speakers" on behalf of the CSO sector. According to the latest research<sup>1</sup>, CSO-s in Serbia improved their capacities comparing to the previous period, but still need support in order to become sustainable. There is also the fact that national CSO-s have been put into the position to compete with organizations from EU countries which are also eligible to apply for EU grants and that there has been and still ongoing debate in the region about the approach of EU, especially in terms of IPA Civil Society Facility Programme<sup>2</sup>. At August 2009 SIPU International started implementation of one of the IPA Civil Society Facility pillars, the Technical Assistance to Civil Society Organizations project. This is the report on assessment of so far achieved results and outcomes within the TACSO 1 project.

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<sup>1</sup> Civic Initiatives, 2009

<sup>2</sup> See

The main purposes of the project are to increase and improve the capacity and actions of CSO-s, and to improve the democratic role of CSO-s.			
	Outcomes by project components	Result area	Expected results
1	<p><b>PROJECT VISIBILITY component:</b></p> <p>The project is visible for and supported by both CSO-s and other external stakeholders</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Development of communication strategy</li> <li>• Development and testing of project brand</li> <li>• Establishment of contact network</li> <li>• Development of promotional material</li> <li>• PR and communication activities</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Communication strategy used by all project offices</li> <li>• Project brand is used in all project materials</li> <li>• Network of beneficiaries and stakeholders has been established</li> <li>• Visibility of the project is ensured</li> <li>• One promotional film/video (or similar tool) produced</li> <li>• Relations with media and communications products are established and maintained</li> <li>• Best practices and examples are accessible to the public via national media, WEB page, newsletter</li> </ul>
2	<p><b>RESEARCH, HELP DESK AND GUIDANCE component:</b></p> <p>Service delivery of CSO-s is improved</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Desk research and needs assessment is performed</li> <li>• Webpage and database developed and maintained</li> <li>• Helpdesk and information clearing house is set up and functioning</li> <li>• Project monitoring and guidance system for EC funded projects</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Eight national need assessment reports and a regional summary report published</li> <li>• Web page/portal with a high visiting frequency</li> <li>• A well functioning helpdesk is operational throughout the project duration</li> <li>• Improved effectiveness of EC funded projects</li> </ul>
3	<p><b>CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT component:</b></p> <p>Enhanced competence of CSO-s</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Generic course agendas and training methods are developed</li> <li>• Pilot training session is organized</li> <li>• On-line e-learning tool is developed</li> <li>• National capacity building initiatives are developed and implemented</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• CSO-s institutional capacity and sustainability increased</li> <li>• Pilot project training implemented and evaluated.</li> <li>• Pilot training modules introduced in all beneficiary countries</li> <li>• Training courses including materials, on-line mini-lectures and chat room available through the project web-portal</li> <li>• CSO-s institutional capacity and sustainability increased</li> </ul>
4	<p><b>RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN CSO-s AND EXTERNAL STAKEHOLDERS component:</b></p> <p>Strengthened cooperation between CSO-s and the government, the private sector and the public</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Kick-off events</li> <li>• Information and partnership events, facilitation service</li> <li>• Strengthening administrative capacity of government to cooperate with NGOs</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Beneficiaries and stakeholders aware of the project and its activities/services</li> <li>• Strengthened network of CSO-s and other relevant stakeholders in the country</li> </ul>

Table No 1: Expected outcomes and results of TACSO project in Serbia

## 1.2. METHODOLOGY

This assessment is mostly oriented to the review of the implemented project activities, using limited resources and set of methodology instruments, focused on giving brief overall picture of so far achieved results and outcomes of the project. The assessment was performed by insight to the two perspectives, besides TACSO Serbia office as the source of information: the perspective of the CSO-s which received TACSO assistance, and the perspective of influential individuals at the national level who have wider approach to the context.

*The assessment is based on the following activities<sup>3</sup>:*

- 1) review of project documentation (the project LFA, Needs Assessment Report, National Work Plans, five Quarterly Narrative Reports for the period August 2009 - February 2011., STE reports),
- 2) review of TACSO publications and web site,
- 3) review of relevant EU and national policies, national legal framework,
- 4) introductory semi-structured interview with the TACSO Residential Advisor,
- 5) semi-structured interview with the 4 members of TACSO Serbia LAG,
- 6) semi-structured interview with 1 representative of CSO in Serbia, president of the BCSDN board,
- 7) questionnaire for CSO-s which participated the TACSO national training courses,
- 8) short questionnaire for CSO-s members of the mailing list,
- 9) short questionnaire for CSO-s which participated TACSO trainings "CSO-s Public relations skills development",
- 10) short questionnaire for CSO-s which participated 6 kick-off/Info events on promoting the TACSO project and provide relevant information on the new CSO Law
- 11) semi-structured interviews with 4 winners of the "Place in the Heart" Prize

The instruments and assessment plan are given in annexes of this report.

The level of results and outcomes achievement during the 18 months of the project implementation (October 2009. - February 2011.) is assessed in the first part of the report. There follows an appraisal of the project purpose achievement.

In the closing part of the report, the recommendations for the programming the next TACSO stage in Serbia is given.

## 3 FINDINGS

<sup>3</sup> The Assessment plan with methodology is given in Annex 1



### 3.1. COMPONENT 1: PROJECT VISIBILITY

#### a) RESULTS AREA

- **Development of communication strategy**

At the beginning of the project implementation TACSO Serbia office drafted document of the Communication Strategy which complied with the Regional strategy, and this document in some segments served as the strategy, in some as action plan and as practical guide for staff. The Communication strategy was used in contact with the media, and CSO-s who participated the Media Training activities. While implementing the Strategy, it was noted that the document was too ambitious for the existing human resource capacity of TACSO Serbia office, and this document was further simplified and separated into Visibility Action Plan for the TACSO Project and Visibility Strategy for Serbian CSO-s. They were used by the office until the end of 2010 when a new centralized Communication Strategy was drafted by the regional TACSO office.

The findings of this assessment show that the Communication strategy for Serbia should be as much as possible specifically tailor made (keeping in mind the human capacities of the office, if there are no plans to increase the number of staff) in order to work further on positioning of the TACSO office and its' image among CSO, but also government stakeholders at national level. This is important because several interviewed individuals pointed that TACSO should in the following period communicate with CSO-s "...to sit around the table and agree who is going to do what..." Also, interviews and survey showed that additional promotion of the concrete services provided by TACSO should be implemented in the field, among smaller organizations.

- **Development and testing of the project brand**

Parallel to the communication strategy development, the development and testing of the project brand was undertaken. The project logo was created and is used in all project communication, correspondence and publications (for ex., 500 hard copy pieces and 500 electronic greeting card and annual calendar for 2010). According to the analyzed documents and impressions of the interviewed individuals, TACSO Serbia managed to develop recognizable brand, regardless the fact than few of them gave negative connotation to the technical assistance implemented by EU in general, and not in regard to TACSO Serbia office in particular. In brief, it can be concluded that TACSO brand is closely connected to the EU one, that EU is one of the main associations while mentioning TACSO and this is good room for further work on connecting EU with civil society in Serbia.

- **Establishment of contact network**

The contact network for the project has been established through meetings with various stakeholders (CSO and institutions representatives), mailing list, and informational and promotional events.

The communication with CSO-s has been established and maintained through at least **16 meetings**<sup>4</sup> (kick-off, meetings with strategic CSO-s, information exchange and consultative meetings) and other events such as P2P conference, CSO fair, National conference "Serbia - a step towards the accession". These events gathered at least 961 organizations<sup>5</sup>. TACSO Serbia also held 10 meetings with national and regional government representatives: Ministry for interior affairs, Deputy Prime Minister Office - Team for Social Inclusion and Poverty reduction, Provincial Secretariat for Local Self

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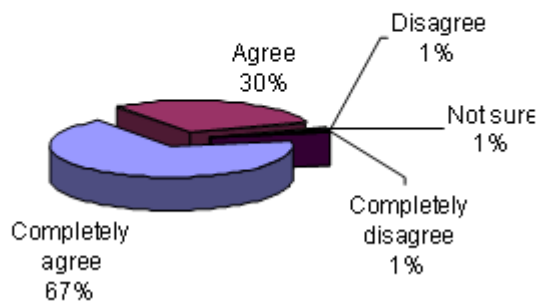
<sup>4</sup> As listed in five quarterly reports of TACSO Serbia, but there certainly were more such meetings held as side events to other TACSO activities

<sup>5</sup> The number of organizations is calculated by combining STE reports and quarterly reports of TACSO Serbia office and is approximate

- Government and Inter-Municipal Cooperation, Provincial Fund for Non-Profit Sector Development, Office for EU accession of the Government of the Republic of Serbia. There were contacts with the private sector too (Erste Bank, Microsoft, Telenor and Siemens) in the context of "Places in the Heart Best CSO Practice Award" initiated by BCIF, and Ministry of Finances. In establishing **contact network with media**, 34 media were attracted and 3 round tables for 77 representatives of various media held. TACSO also held number of inception and working meetings with the representatives of the embassies and international organizations and programs - British and Swedish Embassy, OCS, EIDHR, GOPA etc, 16 of them mentioned in internal reports, and attended the events where took advantage to establish contacts, promote TACSO project and look for cooperation possibilities. This way, the mailing lists have been developed and updated, so until the end of this reporting period, the **mailing list of CSO-s has 1630 members, and media list 641 members.**

As the **mailing list**, important channel of communication and information dissemination to CSO-s in Serbia has been developed; one of the surveys conducted during the assessment addressed the CSO-s mailing list members. **The short questionnaire was sent to 1630 addresses, and 194 (12%) of them replied.**

The information we receive over TACSO mailing list are well-timed for our organization

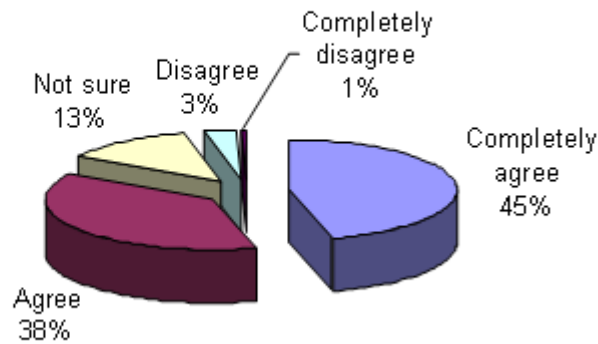


*Graph No. 1: CSO-s opinion on timing of the information on mailing list*

According to the 194 CSO-s answers, 190 of them (97%) find the information they receive over the list as well-timed.

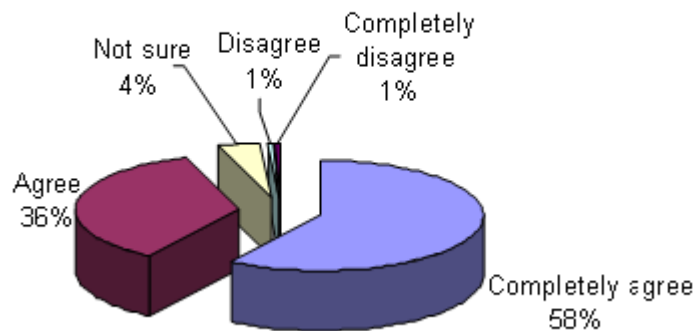
Only 4 organizations gave negative answer to this question, declaring that they would need earlier information in order to react.

The information we receive over TACSO mailing list we use in everyday work of our organization



Graph No. 2: Do CSO-s use information in their everyday work?

The information TACSO distributes over mailing list are very relevant to the context in which our organization works



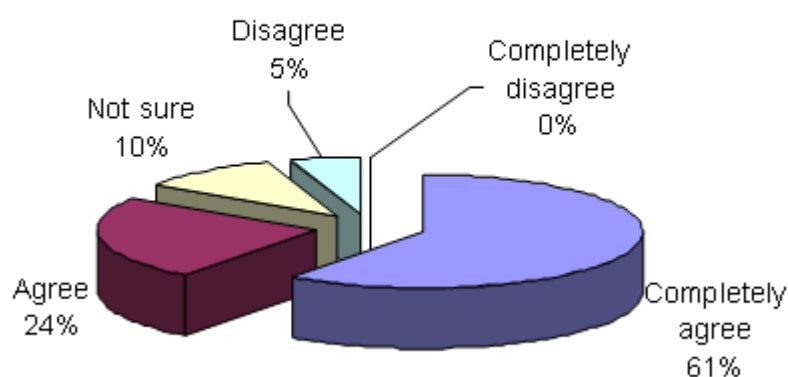
Graph No. 3: The relevance of information on TACSO mailing list

Also, as one can see in Graph No2, high percentage (84%) of CSO-s use this information in their everyday work, which complies with the opinion of 95% of those who declared that the information disseminated over the list are relevant to their local context (Graph No 3).

The 13% of those who were not sure in Graph 2 didn't have specific comments regarding this question. Some of them work on specific issues and sometimes they receive information that is not related to their work.

In general, there were several suggestions in terms of need to share information on more specific issues such as culture, media, and women rights. Organizations mostly find the mailing list as the list with general info about various opportunities for CSO-s.

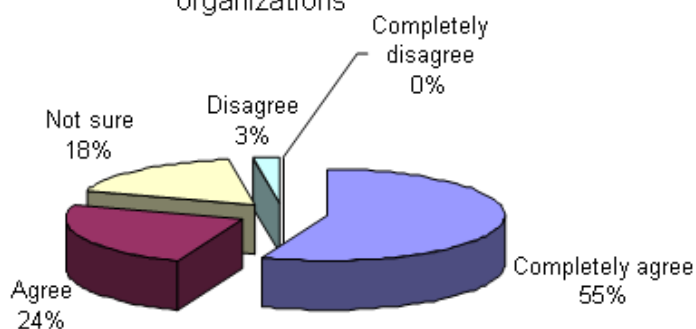
The information we receive over TACSO mailing list we generally do not receive from other sources



Graph No 4: Exclusivity of information on TACSO mailing list

The percentage of those who claimed that the information they receive over mailing list are exclusive was 85%, which also contributes to the conclusion that the mailing list is, in most cases, relevant as a channel of communication and in terms of sort of information distributed through it.

TACSO mailing list provides the possibility of interaction with other organizations



Graph No 5: Possibility for interaction

Also, significant number of organizations found that the mailing list provides opportunity for interaction, and some of them expressed need for more interaction. There was suggestion for TACSO to develop new, more interactive platforms for communication, with more room for discussion.

- **Development of promotional material and PR and communication activities**

**Visibility of the project is ensured and the promotional films produced.** According to the internal project reports, at least 40 press clippings were collected during the assessed period, by contracted media agency. All media materials were positive in regard to TACSO activities, and as stated in the internal reports, *the project has been especially well received by local TV stations*. Most of the media coverage in the first period was related to “Places in the Heart” prize, and afterwards to TACSO trainings and P2P. TACSO representatives were present on TV periodically, in average ones per month, and mostly relating concrete activities they initiated or joined. In one of the reports there was noted that the human capacities of the Serbia office do not allow high frequency of such activities, which is understandable and there is room for changes in this segment of visibility component. **Good tactic was to select a limited number of most influential media and to keep**

intensive communication with them<sup>6</sup>, which brings better efficiency in PR activities (i.e less activities with wider territorial coverage). On the other hand, contacts with local media should be kept and developed further since local media have important local influence and are more sensitive to specific local issues. Local media can also be most important local promotional channel for bringing EU closer to civil society.

Some of the interviewed individuals who won “Place in the Heart” Prize recognized TACSO by its’ logo, although don’t have info about what exactly TACSO is. Also, one of the LAG members mentioned in the interview that TACSO visibility materials/accessories are even too much for our context (relating to the expenses of such materials).

TACSO office translated and prepared a variety of promotional materials in the first reporting period, according to the work plans. For example, around 800 promo sets<sup>7</sup> (folder, pen, notebook, brochure), were distributed. **This way, the visibility of the project is ensured, in terms of printed materials and their distribution on the events organized/joined by TACSO.**

TACSO is also present on web sites of the LAG members’ organizations and institutions and others also (SEIO, BCSDN). National monthly newsletter has been issued in 3 issues by the end of August 2010. The newsletter on English had 6 issues. **According to the interviews and survey results, printed educational materials (manuals, newsletters, guides) and TACSO web site are most appreciated channels of communication with CSO-s and therefore should be further nurtured as best way for TACSO promotion.**

#### **b) OUTCOME for component 1:**

**Taking into consideration that most of the activities in the component of VISIBILITY have been implemented in compliance to the national work plans 1&2, it can be concluded that the outcome has been achieved to the significant degree.**

- TACSO Serbia is visible among national CSO-s, and CSO-s which used some of the TACSO services
- TACSO Serbia is visible among national and regional authorities and institutions in compliance with the mandates defined by the project.
- TACSO Serbia is present in national media in moderate degree

*According to some opinions, activities should be implemented in order to improve the image of TACSO in front of some strategic CSO-s and institutions.*

Based on the collected and assessed available data for defined indicators, it can be concluded that **the targets are fulfilled. The scope of projects visibility activities in regard to balanced territorial coverage and actors has been involved.** EU Technical assistance to CSO-s reached CSO-s and other stakeholders’ representatives from more than 70 % cities throughout Serbia: at the moment, according to the available data, 961 organizations from Serbia have been covered by TACSO activities, and 50% of them (480) belong to underdeveloped municipalities<sup>8</sup>. Among 961 organizations, those which are led by or provide services for vulnerable groups are present in high percentage: more than 50% of them.

**CSO practices have been identified and promoted in several occasions.** During the contest “Places in Heart”, 39 organizations for 3 prize categories applied (19 of them for the best example of local partnership). **The brochure of the best practices is not visible on TACSO web site, or at BCIF web site, although 300 of hard copies were distributed. According to the interviewed winners, their practice was widely promoted and they highly appreciate, beyond the financial component of the prize, benefits they got in terms of visibility and credibility. They mentioned that they were visible on internet and other electronic media.**

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<sup>6</sup> TACSO project National Work Plan No 2

<sup>7</sup> TACSO Serbia quarterly reports

<sup>8</sup> The list of groups of municipalities is given in Decree on establishing a single list of regional development and local self-government units development for 2001 (Official Gazette RS No 51/2010).

### 3.2. COMPONENT 2: RESEARCH, HELP DESK AND GUIDANCE

#### a) RESULTS AREA

- **Desk research and needs assessment is performed**

TACSO Serbia team conducted the needs assessment during the first quarterly reporting period and produced **NA Serbia report** which is available from January 2010 on regional web site both, on English and Serbian language. Other publications were produced too: a **Guide to EU CSO Networks**, in cooperation with the government Office for European Integrations and the Team for Social Inclusion and Poverty Reduction. The Guide was printed in **1000 copies** and distributed to CSO-s in Serbia, 570 so far. The guide is available on regional web site, and web sites of other institutions and organizations. Through mailing lists, the information with the link was sent to more than 2000 addresses.

- **Helpdesk and information clearing house is set up and functioning**

The meetings with stakeholders have been held: according to the quarterly reports, at least **30 meetings**, with the purpose to inform CSO-s' about the project and familiarize with project help desk, and this number is certainly significantly bigger<sup>9</sup>. The help desk is promoted through web site, TACSO mailing lists, other CSO-s mailing lists, TACSO events and media. According to the available data, **at least 450 requests** have been received from grass roots level organizations, mostly regarding training opportunities, TACSO TA Sessions, PADOR database, re-registration process, info about EU, and funding opportunities. The interest for P2P was continually increasing over the observed period. The organizations which receive info over mailing list, and participated on TACSO trainings, address TACSO for further assistance. Among 98 CSO-s answered the questioners for participants on TACSO trainings, 20 of them said that they addressed TACSO office for some kind of assistance besides the training. The structure of the requests complies with the internal report data, and some of the comments were:

- *“We addressed TACSO regarding E-learning tool, and with suggestions to provide more training opportunities for small organizations in rural areas. I think that such CSO-s are in general a little bit marginalized and need stronger support.”*
- *“ We asked about trainings relating rural development, old crafts...You told that you don't provide that kind of trainings and that you will contact us if there were such. Since we aim to develop enthusiasm for our tradition and culture and to move our village from status quo, all other training about women problems, children, entrepreneurship...are interesting for us.”*
- *“Information on PADOR registration: the support was great. Other request was for EIDHR Cfp info: we didn't receive info since you didn't have them.”*

**Some of these answers confirm the relevance of the TACSO approach to provide TA for small organizations, in rural and underdeveloped regions.**

According to the quarterly project reports, 10 CSO-s acting on the national level asked assistance relating VAT exemption procedures relevant for their regional projects, ROM methodology, advanced trainings (in particular on EU policies and partnership building) and in supporting in project proposal writing.

Besides providing information, TACSO delivered **9** field TA sessions on organizational development and EU PPW<sup>10</sup>, for 160 participants from 115 organizations, and 3 PADOR registration sessions for 29 participants. According to the TACSO National work plans 1 and 2, TACSO assisted EUD in announcing

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<sup>9</sup> At least including the meetings reported in the Visibility section.

<sup>10</sup> In the observed period August 2009-February 2011

P2P calls and in pre-selecting participants. They received 118 applications from CSO-s for six study tours, and 24 selected CSO representatives participated in P2P study visits.

Concerning this result, there is room for improvement in terms of system for collecting of these data, taking into consideration overall human capacity of the office. It is needed to simplify the system, by, for example, the formats for registration of the contacts with CSO-s who request the assistance.

A well functioning help desk has been operational during the project, but the capacities for internal monitoring and learning from the monitoring are limited due to the fact that the existing number of staff in TACSO Serbia office is small comparing to the number of data expected to be collected.

The internal data base of CSO-s (with services delivered for them) should be coherent, consistent and comprehensive.

- **Project monitoring and guidance system for EC funded projects**

TACSO Serbia managed the application process for 6 calls for P2P trainings, received 118 applications and 24 of them were selected. The **questions from 20 organizations** on PADOR, EU partners, financing procedures, PRA, and procedures for VAT exemptions were answered. Also, TACSO Serbia provided assistance to **10 CSO-s from the “Partnership action between cultural organizations”** call, in relation to the VAT exemption issue. The procedures for implementation of monitoring on projects from the call “Civil society dialogue” were developed in cooperation with EU Delegation and GOPA, and 3 STE were selected to do monitoring visits on 27 projects. There is no data on the dates of the first monitoring visits yet. Regarding prioritized site visits, TACSO provided guidance and support on at least 5 sessions, and one of them was delivered by regional TACSO training participant as follow up activity from the regional training.

**Taking into consideration that monitoring of GOPA projects is still ongoing, the proper assessment of how TACSO contributed to improved effectiveness of EC funded projects will be possible after the monitoring was done. Indirectly, it can be concluded that through guidance sessions, field visits and help desk with concrete products, TACSO had its contribution in this aspect.**

**b) OUTCOME in component 2: Service delivery of CSO-s is improved**

If taking into account targets identified under the defined indicators for this outcome, the assessment has shown that this outcome has been achieved:

**1. The 100% of CSO-s that received TACSO assistance at the field of New Law and responded to the survey are re-registered. At the moment, around 15.000 CSO-s in Serbia are re-registered.**

**2. A high percentage of CSO-s that responded the survey on training courses confirmed that their work improved after the trainings (81%), that they use products created on training in their everyday work (79%) and that they established cooperation with other organizations (81%). These three components are considered as relevant for the area of organizational capacities and since the 20,3% of trained CSO-s responded, it can be concluded that the sample is big enough to give positive evaluation to this target. In some of the interviews the issue of “capacity development” germ definition has been raised, as well in some publications issued by the BCSDN network. Hence TACSO in the next stage should define important terms in compliance to EU ones and make them clearly visible, so that the project indicators could be easier compared and proved.**

**3. Rural CSO-s representing marginalized social groups such as people with disabilities, Roma, IDP-s, ethnic minorities have been included in TA assistance in significant number. 50 % of total TA services are given to CSO-s representing or supporting marginalized social groups**

### 3.3. COMPONENT 3: CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT

#### a) RESULTS AREA

- **Generic course agendas and training methods are developed**

In order to contribute to the expected result “CSO-s institutional capacity and sustainability increased” in area of training, TACSO Serbia worked along with other national offices in the region and developed training programs and initiated development of training manuals. According to the quarterly reports, by the end of February 2011, training manuals were still in the process of translation. The sets of materials for the replication of regional trainings were created in Serbian language, should be placed on the TACSO Serbia web page under the category “online courses”, to allow access to the information on training activities to those organizations who were not able to directly participate. Regarding **pilot training session**, 12 persons from Serbia participated. Concerning other indicators present in this part of the project matrix, there are no activities mentioned in project quarterly reports.

- **On-line e-learning tool is developed**

This segment of the component 3 has shown as most interesting for all stakeholders consulted during the assessment. **The e-learning facility as part of the web-portal has been established, and according to the CSO-s and individuals involved in assessment, should be available on the wider basis, for more organizations, since these training courses including materials, on-line mini-lectures and chat room are, for now, available only for the organizations that participated these trainings.**

- **National capacity building initiatives are developed and implemented**

The trainings were delivered by national STE selected from the STE pool formed at the beginning of 2010. The training programs for these trainings, not all of them, were elaborated as replications of regional trainings, and materials for participants were prepared. Other trainings were created by trainers. According to the available data (internal project reports and STE reports) there were 37 national training events with 750 participants from at least 550 organizations. This segment of the project implementation was most difficult to present in figures because there is slight difference and inconsistency in data given in quarterly reports and folder with STE reports<sup>11</sup>. Also, it can not be guaranteed for the precision of data on No of organizations because of incompleting some of the STE reports.

By analyzing STE reports on trainings delivered in various topics, it can be said that the average mark for any aspect of any training was around 4, 50, which is very high. Also, in the survey conducted during this assessment, participants showed high level of appreciation and non-criticism regarding the effects of the trainings.

	Training Course	No of trainings	No of participants
	Development and management of EU funded project	3	TOTAL 63: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Subotica 22, Zlatibor 18, Novi Sad 23</li> </ul> participants from 63 medium-size CSO-s with no prior experience in writing EU projects
	Training on Civil Society Organisations (CSO) Management	1	TOTAL: 19 participants FROM 19 CSO-s (3 ecological organisations, 4 democratic/civil society development, 2 youth organisations and 10 focused on vulnerable groups - women, people with handicap, people affected by HIV, forced migrants, etc)

<sup>11</sup> For example, the list of participants doesn't show the same number of participants that it is reported in STE report-possibly because some of participants didn't sign the list, etc.



	<b>Training on Citizen's Participation in Decision-Making Process</b>	<b>1</b>	TOTAL: 21 participants from 21 CSO-s (focused on local community development, people with disabilities, women, research and advocacy...)
	<b>Fund raising</b>	<b>1</b>	TOTAL: 19 participants from 19 CSO-s
	<b>CSO as service providers</b>	<b>4</b>	TOTAL: 95 participants from 95 organizations <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 23 participants from 23 CSO-s social service providers,</li> <li>• 22 participants from 22 organizations service providers in the area of rural development,</li> <li>• 28 participants from 28 organizations service providers in the area of local development (24 from Serbia and 4 from the FYR of Macedonia)<sup>12</sup></li> <li>• 22 participants from 22 organizations service providers in the area of environment protection</li> </ul>
	<b>Advocacy and lobbying</b>	<b>2</b>	TOTAL: 44 participants, no data on exact No of CSO-s <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ivanjica, 18 participants from 18 CSO-s,</li> <li>• delivered by regional training participant for 26 participants from CSO-s from Vršac region,</li> </ul>
	<b>CSO Public Relations and Media Networking</b> <i>(synonyms used to name these trainings: CSO Public Relations Skills Development, Media and CSO Cooperation)</i>	<b>5</b>	TOTAL: 105 participants, from 78 organizations Niš 21, Kragujevac 25, Subotica 21, Užice 15, Novi Sad 21 participants from various organizations: ecology and environmental protection, support to people with disabilities, local community development, democracy and human rights, Roma organizations, humanitarian organization and local media.
	<b>One-day workshops "How to Access EU Funds"</b> <i>(synonyms used to name these trainings PPW orientational sessions)</i>	<b>9</b>	TOTAL: 169 participants from 115 CSO-s
	<b>Capacity Development in Relation to the New Law on Associations and the Re-registration Process Workshops<sup>13</sup></b>	<b>8</b>	TOTAL: 189 participants from 149 CSO-s from 26 municipalities
	<b>PADOR registration</b>	<b>3</b>	TOTAL: 26 participants, no data on exact No of CSO-s <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Kikinda 9, Čačak 5, Vranje 12</li> </ul>
	<b>Total:</b>	<b>37</b>	<b>750 participants, and at least 550 organizations</b>

*Table No 2: TACSO National trainings & workshops in figures*

During the assessment, the questionnaire was sent to the 481 addresses of those CSO-s who participated national training courses organized by TACSO, and 98 (20,3 %) of them responded. In table 3 one can see how many organizations participated per each training course. Please note that the sum in the table is not the same as the number of respondents since some of these organizations participated on more than one training. In particular, most of the organizations (65 of them) participated only 1 TACSO training, 27 organizations participated on 2 trainings, 12 organizations on

<sup>12</sup> The data are from the list of participants, although in the internal report it is said 23 from Serbia and 5 from Macedonia

<sup>13</sup> The data on these one day trainings are different in the quarterly report and available STE reports-number of trainings in the internal documents is 9 (2 groups in Kragujevac), and No of participants 183, and only 5 STE reports were available to compare this data.

3 trainings. Also, 3 organizations took advantage to participate 4 training events, and one in even 5 trainings!

Training event:	No of organizations which participated
Development and management of EU funded project:	36
Training on Civil Society Organisations (CSO) Management:	18
Training on Citizen’s Participation in Decision-Making Process:	12
Fund raising:	12
CSO as service providers:	26
Advocacy and lobbying:	14
One-day workshops “How to Access EU Funds”:	30
PADOR registration:	6
Strategic planning:	2
Other:	15

*Table No 3: Trainings on which CSO-s who responded questionnaire participated*

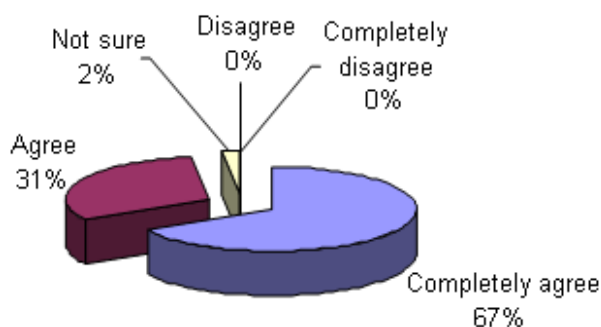
CSO Public Relations and Media Networking participants were not included in this questionnaire. They were sent separated one, because the survey intended to measure the effects of the training in the area of partnership with media. According to the data from training survey, civil society organizations in Serbia find TACSO trainings as relevant response to their needs.



*Graph No 6: Logistic organization of the training events*

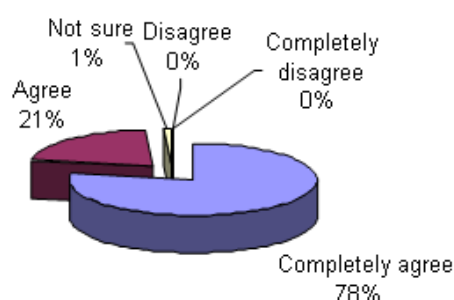
According to the responses, the trainings logistic was good for most of the participating organizations - 98% of them.

We got a lot of useful and new information during the training



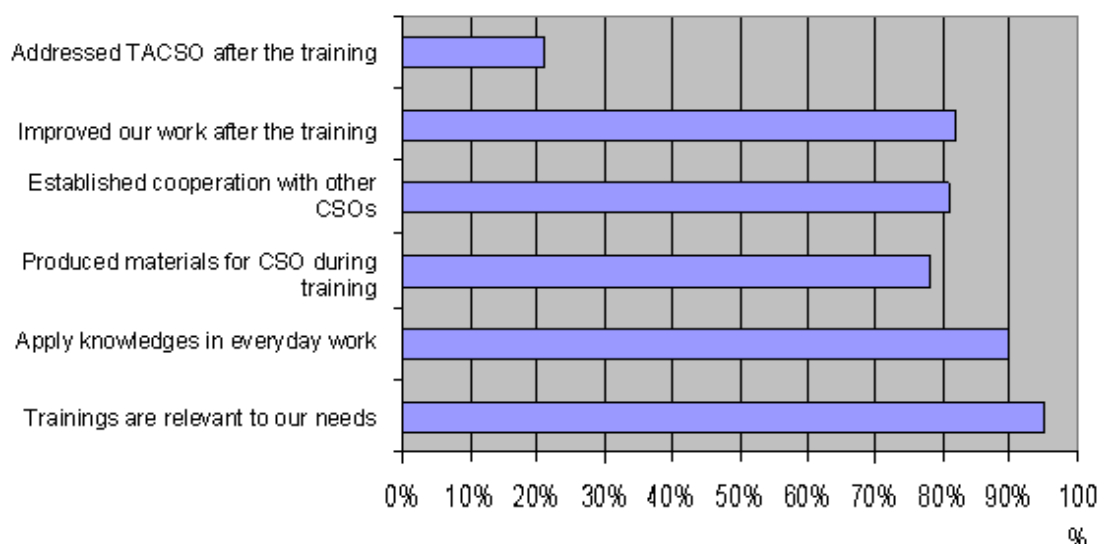
*Graph No 7:* Also, 98% of responded organizations declared that information were new and useful for them.

TACSO trainers did their job professionally



Graph No 8: Trainers’ work evaluation

It is good to notice that the trainers selected to deliver training courses were given high marks; 99% of positive impressions on their professionalism. Only one responded with “Not sure” and commented that the trainers should have more practical experience in the issue.



Graph No 9: How training participants evaluate the effects of trainings

In general, TACSO training events are evaluated very well by the participants. Among 98 organizations, 95% of them told that the training/s was/were relevant to their needs. 90 % of them apply knowledge that they gained during the training in their everyday work, and those who are not sure (7%) or disagree (3%) commented that TACSO should communicate with CSO-s more often, that one-day trainings are not enough to learn something concrete and that more attention should be paid to small organizations. In relation to this, the usefulness of the training products was also evaluated very well: 79% of participants use them in everyday work. Among all trainings, according to the analysis of STE reports and internal project reports, the most complete and content-full training reports were on CSO management, CSO-s as service providers, one-day workshops on “How to apply for EU funds” and one training on Writing project proposals for EU funds which had attached participants’ products. TACSO office should increase standards in terms of demands for trainers in the process of the reporting.

Regarding training follow-up, 81 % of respondents established cooperation with other organizations after the training, and **also 81% of the declared that their work improved after the training.** Most of those who addressed TACSO for another kind of support besides training, did so in **searching info**

on PADOR registration, funding opportunities, P2P and info about EU in general. Analyzing the answers to the next question, one can recognize that the most negative were some of those organizations who were somehow “missed” in the previous period. For example, they did not get any answer to their application for other events (positive or negative answer) etc, or were repeatedly refused.

The most positive impressions from TACSO trainings: respondents mostly appreciate the trainers (their professionalism and kindness), excellent and comprehensive handouts, possibility to share experiences with other participants, interesting topics, and working atmosphere. The negative impressions are related to the heterogeneous groups in terms of different level of participants' knowledge (to be aware on great difference between rural, small CSO-s and urban, big CSO-s who participate the same training event), follow ups (sending lists of participants, further communication with participants etc), short trainings with ambitious goals (to put less topics in one day training, or to organize additional workshops...).

Follow up assistance by TA desks to support the application of knowledge and methods gained at trainings was provided for 21% of the CSO-s which responded the survey, and most of them (16 out of 20) shared positive experience from this communication regardless on kind of TACSO answer they got (for example, if the CSO was not selected for P2P or particular training course, it still had good impressions on TA assistance in terms of kindness and professionalism of the staff). Two CSO-s didn't give the explanation, and two gave negative comments; one in relation to the English speaking criteria for P2P and another in relation to E-learning request (they didn't get access to E-learning).

In terms of CSO-s expectations from TACSO office in the future, the conclusion is that TACSO is mostly seen as opportunity to get more new knowledge, skills and information. Other words, CSO-s have need for training and information, and since TACSO has been provided these services, they expect the prolongation of such work. CSO-s “from the field” do not make big difference in terms of who was going to provide these services, as long as they are available and free of charge, even in the limited scope. Only few organizations see TACSO as link & communication channels with EU, but in the other hand, significant number of answers pointed out that CSO-s needs more networking in the region and sharing experiences. As all interviewed individuals pointed that TACSO should act as link between CSO-s in Serbia and EU, this assessment shows that there is a room for great further work in this area.

#### **b) OUTCOME for the component 3: Enhanced competence of CSO-s**

According to the available data, and led by identified targets, it can be concluded that this outcome has been achieved.

Indicator: Number and percentage of trained CSO that produced useful deliverables after trainings such as FR strategy, EU Project proposal, Advocacy action plan, Organization Strategic plan.

Regarding the target for this indicator (at least 60 % of trained CSO-s produced useable document in training related fields), it can be said that the, according to the survey among training participants, it is achieved. Also, according to STE reports, the participants produced deliverables during the following trainings:

- At training on CSO management there were products of 13 organizations attached to the STE report,
- At one (out from three) trainings on EU project proposal writing, there were LFA of 13 organizations attached to the STE report,
- At the trainings “CSO-s “ as service providers, 4 policy papers were produced and attached to the STE reports,
- At the trainings on CSO Public Relations and Media Networking, each training resulted with joint products shared by participants after the training. In survey conducted among these trainings participants, they declared that they used products in their work.

Indicator: Number of Serbia CSO-s applying for EU funds on IPA national and multi beneficiary calls is assessed and according to the available data, number of CSO-s applying for EU funds increased by 40% in 2010 (285 applications) in comparison to 2009 (174 applications) on CfP within **Strengthening Serbia-EU civil society dialogue**.

### 3.4. Component 4: Relationship between CSO-s and External Stakeholders

#### a) RESULTS AREA

- **Kick-off events**

The kick-off events were planned and organized jointly with partner organization Civic Initiatives. According to the Civic Initiatives report it can be concluded that **the beneficiaries and stakeholders who participated the events are aware of the project and its activities and services**. In total, 6 events were organized for the purpose of promotion of both TACSO project and new CSO law. There were 521 participants instead of planned 300, from 410 CSO-s instead of planned 300, and 72 targeted towns instead of planned 30. The 21 media covered these events, according to the CI report, which was the biggest presence of media on their events ever. These figures are much beyond planned, for two reasons: attractive topic and good logistic organization by both, CI and TACSO. *“...Gathering a large number of diverse CSO-s in local municipalities, most of the time, the biggest event of such kind in each municipality had a special effect on the local networking. Additional value was provided by support from the local partner organization, local municipality, and wide coverage of the media. These events were genuinely unique in the selected municipalities with number of CSO-s being “awakened” after years of passivity and with attendance of CSO-s that are not usually perceived as NGOs by the rest of the sector. We believe that over time, there will be more positive results and effects...”*<sup>14</sup>.

During the assessment of TACSO project activities impact, participants of kick-off events were asked on follow up in terms of re-registration. 45 of them answered (around 10 % of total No of participants), and all of them re-registered their organizations in the meanwhile.

Following quarterly reports of TACSO Serbia office, it can be seen that there were follow up activities, but some of them such as Strategic planning are not elaborated in quarterly reports nor supported by STE reports or participants lists. That’s why these trainings are not included into the final list of the trainings and participants in component 3. The other training courses were developed according to the needs assessment conducted during kick-off events, which also explains the high percentage of positive answers on questions about the relevance of the trainings.

- **Information and partnership events, facilitation service**

This segment of the project should mostly contribute to strengthening network of CSO-s and other relevant stakeholders in the country. The local advisory group has been established and held 5 meetings during the observed period. As noticed by interviewed LAG members, this group is representative and contained of respectful persons whose credibility and support could play important role in the future TACSO period too. TACSO Serbia office maintains its’ contact network through meetings which are also mentioned under the component 1 (round tables, kick off events, trainings, conferences). Government institutions are also involved in TACSO activities, not only at

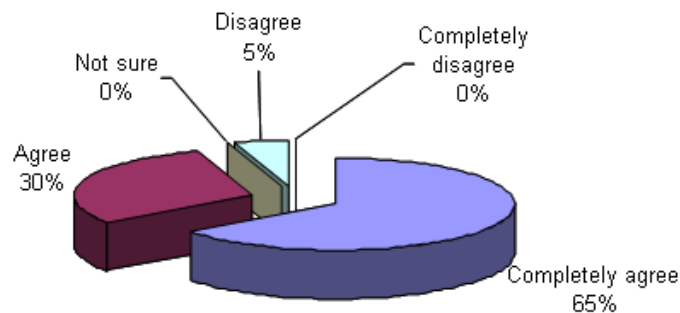
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<sup>14</sup> Civic Initiatives report on Kick-off events

meetings but also on trainings, conferences. **Web-portal is recognized by all interviewed individuals, and also by CSO respondents to questionnaires as significant reference point for CSOs and other stakeholders to exchange information and share expertise which should be further improved and developed.**

During the TACSO project activities impact assessment, the questionnaire was sent to CSOs which participated trainings on cooperation with media. It was sent to 88 addresses and 20 of them responded. Although the sample is small to give more significant data, here follows brief picture of their responses on how trainings contributed to their networking with media and other organizations.

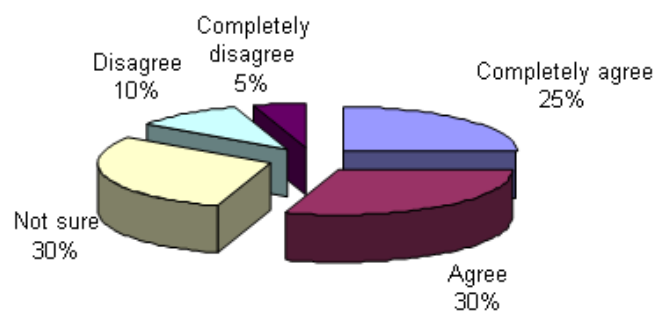
During the training, we gained very useful knowledge and skills for improvement of cooperation with media



*Graph No 10: Knowledge and skills for cooperation with media gained on trainings*

Almost all respondents, 95% of them, find the training useful in terms of skills and knowledge that they gained.

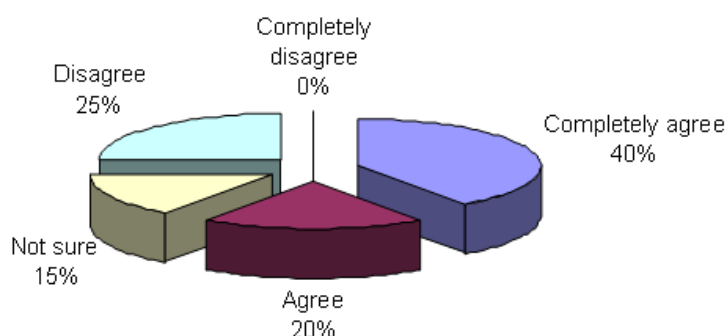
After the training, we developed closer cooperation with media in our community



*Graph No 11: Cooperation with media after the training*

On graph 12, one can see that 55% respondents declared that their cooperation with media improved after the training. Some of them established first contacts with some media and found out mutual interest to cooperate. Others learned that by updating the contacts they increase visibility in front of media and media contact them more often. Also, by improving skills and using some specific tools, they became more acceptable by media for communication and cooperation. Among those who were not sure or disagreed, the comments were or that the cooperation kept the same level or that they still were not happy with it (saying that media are not interested in CSOs activities, that they ask for money to broadcast CSOs stories etc). None of the respondents declared that they signed a protocol on cooperation with media or established systematic cooperation with some of the media at the local level although there were some attempts.

After the training, we developed cooperation with other organizations



*Graph No 12: Cooperation with other organizations after the training*

According to the answers presented in graph 13, 60% of respondents established cooperation with other organizations after the training, which is very good. One of explanations given by TACSO office was that these training courses were regional and possibly played the trigger role: organizations participants had already knew each other, but needed such event to identify areas of cooperation and establish closer contacts. The cooperation was described as preparation of joint project proposals, even one joint application, consultation about their activities, sharing best practices examples, sharing experiences, friendships, and most of them at the level of exchange of information. Among those who answered negatively, the comments were mostly in terms that they just kept cooperation which already existed before the training.

**By supporting the contest for the “Place in the heart” prize, TACSO contributed to the promotion of CSO best practices.** This contest was organized during 2010 and TACSO joined by supporting the newly established prize for the best example of partnership with public/private actors. According to the work plan, 100 applications were expected, and 39 organizations for 3 prize categories applied (19 of them for the best example of local partnership). The brochure of the best practices is not visible on TACSO web site, or at BCIF web site, although 300 of hard copies were distributed. TACSO, as supporter, was visible in BCIF announcement of the prize contest, and web site. **According to the interviewed winners, this prize greatly contributed to the improvement of their work, visibility of their organizations and their positions in local community. One of them increased significantly its membership, and other got additional funds from the municipality for follow up of the rewarded project.**

In the field of strengthening administrative capacity of government to cooperate with NGOs, TACSO Serbia mentioned few events and occasions in the sections of the quarterly report. On the other hand, by interviewing LAG members, it can be seen that TACSO plays the role in communication between EU Delegation in Serbia, government institutions and CSO-s. There is consensus among all stakeholders consulted during this assessment concerning one important role of TASSO: **to represent EU in front of CSO-s and vice versa.** In supporting the process of strengthening administrative capacity of government to cooperate with NGOs, two interviewed individuals confirmed that TACSO contributed to the establishment of the National Office for Cooperation with Civil Society which had already been initiated by national CSO-s advocacy.

At the local level, TACSO also held meetings organized and supported events that gathered various local stakeholders and the overall impression is that the local level should be more in focus in the future period if TACSO intended to continue work with CSO-s in underdeveloped regions.

**b) OUTCOME for component 4: Strengthened cooperation between CSO-s and the government, the private sector and the public was partially achieved.**

1. Examples of improved procedures for CSO-s participation in decision making process on local level has not be implemented by the end of the observed period. This segment of the project

is initiated and should give results in the future period.

2. The training courses which aimed at networking among CSO-s and media showed that cooperation of CSO-s and media improved but there were no newly established procedures in terms of protocols, networks, or other forms of systematic and strategic cooperation in the local community. This indicator could be changed or erased since protocols on cooperation are not a guarantee that CSO-s will be adequately presented in local media.
3. Promotion of examples of the best practices on cooperation CSO-s and private sector has been implemented, through "Place in the Heart" prize. 19 examples of best practices were published in the brochure.

### 3.5. The project purpose

**By analyzing available data on this project, the conclusion is that the project purpose: Increased and improved capacity and strengthened democratic role of CSO-s is partially achieved and that TACSO 2 will much more contribute to it.**

The activities in area of both selected indicators are at the initial point:

- *The National office Cooperation with CSO-s* has been established but it is not fully operational for almost a year since decision on establishment was adopted. TACSO Serbia gave its' contribution to the establishment of this mechanism, and there is, according to the last quarterly report, the advocacy activities in cooperation with national CSO-s are intensive in order to provide full support to the office and conditions for its' work.
- Concerning the level of involvement of CSO-s in the process of National IPA programming, until the end of the observed period, the TACSO Serbia office is involved in establishing a consultative mechanism for involving CSO-s in the process of programming IPA funds. A call for CSO-s has been completed during February 2011. and 6 applications for 6 different sectors of civil society which would be the representatives of CSO-s from these fields.

Since this segment is in the initial phase too, this is the place to note that TACSO is seen by all stakeholders as direct connection between CSO-s and EU, and this fact should play important role in TACSO planning of future activities in this field. Concerning the position of TACSO in front of strategic CSO-s and government institutions, in several interviews it was mentioned that the ownership on the main processes of strengthening of civil society in Serbia is the issue. National CSO-s need ownership under enhancing their democratic role, and on the other hand, institutions needs ownership under the process of dialogue with CSO.

**As the interviews were conducted with several persons who have wide view on the situation in CSO in Serbia, here are the main points on how they see the role of TACSO:**

- TACSO is very clear channel to EU; it represents a direct communication channel between CSO and EU Delegation in Serbia.
- TACSO Serbia residential advisor has excellent knowledge on the national context, and has very wisely recognized the resources in national civil society sector, found the ways how to add a new value to the existing initiatives and involve these resources in TACSO activities.
- TACSO office has taken a flexible approach, has been very open for cooperation with institutions.
- TACSO has contributed to the quantity and quality of CSO initiatives in Serbia by providing logistic support and financial support. This lead to the synergy which, according to some of the interviewed, should be appreciated more, and according to others, is not so needed, i.e. „it would be done without TACSO too“.



- There are certain overlapping between TACSO activities and activities of national CSO-s. Some of the interviewed concretely named: training courses on strategic planning, fundraising, EU project proposals writing, participation, advocacy...The only new topic has been PADOR registration.
- TACSO as the concept, not the Serbia office itself, is seen as an issue, because of the EU approach chosen in providing TA to CSO-s in the region.
- TACSO acts as sort of a classroom for CSO-s on EU topics and should continue such work in the future.

## 5 RECOMMENDATIONS

### *In general TACSO should work further on<sup>15</sup>:*

- development of the enabling and transparent context for CSO in Serbia,
- support to CSO in establishing of transparent strategic, financial and legal framework for their work,
- advocacy for change of financial and administrative procedures for CSO-s in front of EU, i.e for their simplification and equalization with EU CSO-s,
- to transfer EU identity, EU standards and policy to CSO in Serbia; to promote EU in front of CSO-s and vice versa, to promote CSO-s in front of EU,
- establish more focused programs and services,
- continue investing in cooperation with strategic CSO-s in order to work on the ownership issue
- invest more in administration of the project in terms of increasing standards for STE reports and internal data base on CSO-s,
- work further on developing of the component 4 in order to provide more opportunities for, but also educate and share best practices in partnership and networking at local and national level,
- work further on visibility of civil society sector in Serbia

Since significant number of activities are relevant for indicators in both component 2 and component 3, TACSO could consider to merge component 2 and 3 into one project component in which training in specific topics is one segment of TA and help desk more developed, focused to the wider range of activities with more resources, especially human resources. On the other hand, a great value of the project is this horizontal connection among components and great possibility to recognize one activity as „multifunctional“ i.e. serving to more than one outcome.

### *Concretely,*

### *In VISIBILITY COMPONENT TACSO should<sup>16</sup>:*

- further develop mailing list with involving more specific topics such as women issues, rural development, culture...
- keep intensive online communication with organizations from rural regions; if 85% of questionnaire respondents told that TACSO information they receive are exclusive, that means that TACSO is maybe the only source of relevant information for them
- Keep update of EU CfP-s, and other EU info on the mailing list
- Focus on web site, and provide more opportunities for interaction among national civil society organizations. According to the survey among CSO-s which participated national training courses, there is a need for online interaction, communication, debates, sharing experiences and best practices. By making such opportunity for them, the web site can become very influential and recognizable TACSO segment.
- and more than that, TACSO should use web site more, as powerful tool for mutual promotion: EU in front of Serbian CSO-s and CSO-s in front of EU.

<sup>15</sup> Mostly based on interviews, but also at some extent on comments from the surveys

<sup>16</sup> Mostly based on the surveys among CSO-s, but also on interviews and desk analysis

- further develop communication with local media

***In RESEARCH, HELP DESK AND GUIDANCE component TACSO should<sup>17</sup>:***

- continue with P2P assistance and develop this program as “O2O” (organization to organization) in the region, if possible. This came up both, from survey and interviews; that CSO-s would welcome possibility to visit other CSO-s in the region and learn from their field work.
- provide as much as possible information on EU: best practices, standards, research, funding opportunities...
- consider development of the field support in terms of mentoring in preparing project proposals etc
- share best practices examples through all available communication channels,
- continue publishing of the newsletter,
- E-learning tool should be available to wider range of CSO-s, since interest in this tool for learning is big
- continue with assistance in PADOR registration
- continue with more specific needs assessment of small organizations, in rural and underdeveloped regions and provide more tailor made assistance for them.

***In CAPACITY BUILDING component TACSO should:***

- strongly recommended to work on development and publishing of printed and electronic educational materials (guides, brochures) both on EU topics and other CSO relevant topics (CSO management, networking, partnership, specific topics such as rural development, culture etc). These materials should be available as much as it is possible, free of charge, to local CSO-s.
- develop curricula for more specific and advanced training courses which have not been delivered by many other organizations
- provide more follow up from the training events; connect with the component 4 in terms of networking, and use internet as communication channel.

During the assessment, it came up that there is great need for very basic education in civil society sector, due to great number of newly established CSO-s but also fluctuation of the human resources. This is the issue around which TACSO could support civil society, in terms of defining which would be the ways in responding to these needs, and as noted in the survey results, in terms of helping CSO-s in fundraising for these activities.

***In RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN CSO-S AND EXTERNAL STAKEHOLDERS component TACSO should:***

- use web-portal as communication channel and resource for networking among CSO-s and that way provide more opportunity to exchange information and share expertise
- provide more follow ups after the events were the groups of CSO-s were present
- in area of strengthening government capacities, find balance in terms of the scope of support to the institutions in order to avoid being seen as support to the Government more than support to CSO-s.

Also, number of already mentioned suggestions are relevant for this component: field visits and P2P events, publishing and promoting best practice examples.

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<sup>17</sup> Mostly based on the surveys among CSO-s, but also on interviews and desk analysis