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Sent: 19 February 2020 16:17
To: welcome@tacso.eu
Cc: Kelmend Zajazi; NALAS SECRETARIAT
Subject: Consultation on IPA 3

Dear Ladies and Gentlemen,

Allow me briefly to reflect on the last consultation question: *“Do you have other comments or suggestions?”* (*)

Local authorities, local government associations, and civil society organizations (CSOs) are natural partners for promoting and safeguarding local democracy (Window 1), to enhance governance (Window 2), for nurturing active citizenship and ensuring sustainable local development. At the same time, their knowledge and representativeness of the “situation on the ground” is an essential asset for the EU enlargement process, allowing it to become a bottom-up approach that will connect both central government and the EU with the grassroots. Promoting partnership and stronger cooperation between CSOs and local authorities should be an important segment of the IPA III and should aim to support these actors in order for them to play a bigger role in local sustainable development strategies. Such future programming within IPA can build upon similar programmes such as CSO-LAs that already exist for the European Neighborhood and at a global level. It is managed by DG DEVCO as part of the Development Cooperation Instrument (DCI). Although the instrument is global, it is still not accessible to IPA beneficiary countries.

LA and CSOs are the main strategic stakeholders to foster sustainable and inclusive development at local and regional level based on the partnership principle and shared responsibility. Unfortunately, this fact is not reflected in IPA III and only Window 5 (Territorial and Cross-Border Cooperation) in its last of a total of 5 priorities states *“Improved capacity of Local and Regional Authorities to tackle local challenges”*. It is quite unfortunate, to use diplomatic terms, that this Window among the 5 Windows has been allocated the smallest percentage points with only 5%.

Now, if the EU is still committed to the enlargement perspective of the Western Balkans, and serious in tackling key challenges like balanced territorial development and cohesion, migration, climate changes and sustainable development, then the new IPA III needs to reflect those priorities by involving not only national but also local and regional governments in close coordination and cooperation with the civil society sector. Citizens and local governments can be drivers of change, and therefore local authorities in strategic partnership with CSOs need to be considered by the EU as both stakeholders and beneficiaries in the accession process. In this context, decentralization along with PAR (Public Administration Reform) as cross-cutting/mainstreaming themes of IPA III would stress the importance of strategic partnership in shared responsibility between CSO-LA.

(*) Consultation of CSO in preparation of IPA III

Best regards

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