



Contract: IPA/2018/402-893

Title: Technical Assistance to CSO (TACSO 3) in the Western Balkans and Turkey

**Call for Applications to
Support the Monitoring of the State of Civil Society Development for 2020
under the EU Guidelines for Support to Civil Society in Enlargement Region,
2014-2020**

This research is commissioned within the framework of the EU-funded Technical Assistance to Civil Society Organizations (EU TACSO 3) in the Western Balkans and Turkey (www.tacso.eu)

Objectives and Purpose of EU TACSO 3 project:

The overall objective of the Civil Society Facility, of which EU TACSO 3 project is a part, is to strengthen participatory democracies and the EU approximation process in the Western Balkans (Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo*, North Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia) and Turkey. The main goal of EU TACSO 3 is to strengthen the capacity of civil society organisations (CSOs) to actively take part in the democratic processes and to stimulate an enabling environment for civil society and pluralistic media development.

The specific purpose of EU TACSO 3 is to set-up a Regional Technical Assistance project which will provide services to the target groups in 6 main Result areas:

1. CSOs organisational and operational capacity development
2. Enabling environment for civil society development
3. Communication and visibility of civil society
4. Development and monitoring of the civil society and Media Guidelines
5. Effective relations between EU and CSOs
6. Events management (including the People-to-People Programme)

The project is funded by the European Union and is implemented by the consortium led by GDSI Limited.

*Kosovo - This designation is without prejudice to positions on status, and is in line with UNSCR 1244/1999 and the ICJ opinion on the Kosovo declaration of independence.

Terms of Reference

General Background of this Assignment:

In 2007, civil society development and civil society dialogue have been laid down as one of the priorities of the Enlargement process. With the publication of Communication “The Roots of Democracy and Sustainable Development: Europe’s Engagement with Civil Society in External Relations”² in 2012, the European Commission (EC) laid down the set of preconditions that have to be in place in a country for functioning of the civil society.

For the Enlargement countries, these conditions were in 2013 “translated” into more detailed tool for monitoring of the civil society development for Enlargement countries – the *Guidelines for EU Support to Civil Society in Enlargement Countries, 2014-2020* (the Guidelines)³. Consequently, since 2014 civil society is treated as a separate part of Political criteria in the EC Annual Country Reports and has as of 2008 been supported through a one single comprehensive financial framework – the Civil Society Facility (CSF).

The Guidelines form the *result and monitoring framework* guiding both assessing progress via the EC Annual Country Reports and directing financial assistance, mainly through the CSF. In this, the Commission seeks to support both the enabling or conducive environment and civil society organizations’ (CSOs) development and their capacities to be able to participate actively and contribute to the EU integration and reform process. More concretely, through defining concrete objectives and targets, the EC seeks to support development of an appropriate legal, judicial and administrative environment for exercising the freedoms of expression, assembly and association. This includes rights for CSOs such as formalised, transparent and non-discriminatory registration procedures, free and independent operation and co-operation between citizens and the absence of disproportionate or unwarranted state interference etc.. The Guidelines now broadly define the standards that the public authorities are expected to achieve in terms of civil society development and media freedom to achieve EU members status. In short, the Guidelines now present the soft civil society Acquis.

In the current phase of EU TACSO 3 project, a self-standing methodology of data-gathering and analysis including also testing of qualitative indicators and methods of data-gathering has been developed and tested for the monitoring of the situation for 2019 based on the Guidelines result framework. EU TACSO 3 projects is tasked to perform monitoring against this result framework on an annual basis.

Approach and Scope of Work:

EU TACSO 3 project implemented the monitoring cycle in 2019, as part of its needs’ assessment exercise. The monitoring was conducted in two phases. The initial desktop phase was conducted in June-July 2019 and included desk analysis and assessment. Since the readily available data on CSO capacities were scarce and in order to provide an in-depth insight on which project’s capacity development activities could be designed, the second phase included monitoring focused on field research. The field work applied additional research instruments such as survey, focus groups, interviews. The draft synthetic report was validated through intense consultations organized in close cooperation with National Resource Centers (NRCs) and EU Delegation in each respective country with nearly 700 CSOs, public institutions, donors and other stakeholders during December 2019 and January 2020. During the Western Balkans and Turkey Regional Civil Society Forum 2020 held on 22-

² <https://eeas.europa.eu/sites/eeas/files/2012-communication-roots-of-democracy-and-sustainable-development.pdf>

³ https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/sites/near/files/pdf/civil_society/doc_guidelines_cs_support.pdf

23 January, 2020 in Skopje, North Macedonia the report was shared and discussed with over 112 stakeholders from the region. Based on the inputs received, the final analytical report titled: *Assessment on the State of the Enabling Environment and Capacities of Civil Society against the Guidelines for EU support to Civil Society in Enlargement Region, 2014-2020 for the period 2018-2019⁴* was prepared and published.

Due to the on-going COVID-19 pandemics, the year 2020 has seen many developments in terms of enabling environment and focus of the work of CSOs. This is also the year, for which the current Guidelines framework period comes to an end and its review and update for the period 2021-2027 is under development. For the above reasons, the project will undertake an in-depth monitoring of the state of affairs with specific focus devoted to the COVID-19 pandemic effects on the enabling environment (civic space) and capacities and resilience to changing conditions in which CSOs currently work. Moreover, the research will take stock of any effects traced on the Guidelines has had on improving the support both in the enabling or conducive environment and development of CSOs in the period 2014-2020.

Assignment:

Specific objectives:

- ✓ Assess the state of enabling environment and capacities of civil society against the Guidelines, including effect of the COVID-19 pandemics;
- ✓ Trace effect the Guidelines have had on enabling or conducive environment and development of CSOs in the period 2014-2020;
- ✓ Inform the preparation of the Commission's Country (Progress) Reports for the Enlargement countries and Civil Society Facility (CSF) programming cycle in 2021;
- ✓ Check the indicators of the result framework for measuring so far impact of the EU TACSO 3 project.

Phases:

The monitoring exercise includes two phases: data-gathering and synthesis of the data into a regional synthetic report. **Data-gathering** will include desktop analysis of available secondary sources and field-work, including *direct survey* with civil society in each of the seven countries; focus groups (incl. one focused on COVID-19) and in-depth interviews with stakeholders (CSOs, donors, business, media etc.). Data-gathering will be conducted based on the existing EU TACSO 3 assessment methodology (i.e. Methodological guide) and Guidelines' result framework. Once the relevant data is gathered for each country and under each data-gathering instrument **analysis** and **synthesis** data in to a regional synthetic report accompanied with country briefs/overviews will be prepared. It is assumed that the data collection, analysis and synthesis would be based on the previous work undertaken in 2019 in order to note any trends and developments in each of the specific Guidelines' result framework areas monitored. Moreover, the data-gathering and synthesis shall build-in into any already planned or on-going data-gathering exercise in order to avoid any duplication and to ensure coordination.

Once finalized, EU TACSO 3 project will organize **consultation** and **validation sessions** for each country and a regional one (modalities depending of the COVID-19 pandemic) in order to present findings and discuss the recommendations put forward in the report. These consultations will be organized in close cooperation with NRC and EUDs in each respective county. Based on the input received in the consultation and validation sessions, the final regional synthetic report will be consolidated.

⁴ <http://tacso.eu/first-coherent-picture-of-civil-society-capacity-and-conditions-in-the-western-balkans-and-turkey-for-the-period-2018-19-full-report-and-country-briefs-available/>

1. DATA-GATHERING

Desk analysis serves to collect quantitative and quality data from available secondary sources (studies, reports etc.) with focus of the existing regulatory framework on enabling environment. This means that this phase will aim to collect data in terms of legal changes and actual data on the overall picture of civil society (number of CSOs, target groups, areas of work etc.) are in most cases not readily available. Therefore, the use of free access to information and secondary data in such cases should be employed. As EU TACSO 3 has been preparing the Monthly overviews on the state of civil society development in each country, these will be used as a basis for the desktop analysis. Moreover, the *Mapping and Needs Assessment of the Regional Networks and Regional Projects Funded within Civil Society Facility in the Western Balkans and Turkey* Report and other reports data and analysis conducted by EU TACSO 3 team will be integrated into the desktop analysis.

Survey serves to collect quantitative and quality data from the wider civil society actors through a *direct survey* with CSOs on the practices and implementation of results, objectives and indicators defined the Guidelines' result framework. The survey will enable to detect any gaps, best practices in specific areas. The survey will be conducted by an external research team. The research team will ensure the widest distribution of the survey targeting to reach all active CSOs within a respective country and with a response rate within expected statistical parameters. In the distribution, close cooperation with NRC and EU TACSO 3 Country Coordinators is expected.

In-depth Interviews serves to gather information on the perspective of relevant stakeholders on the state of enabling environment, collect the information on useful secondary data, and also get their insight into the capacity needs of civil society. There are several groups of interlocutors that will be interviewed in the seven countries:

- ✓ NRCs and other organisations providing capacity-building and technical assistance to civil society;
- ✓ CSOs and CSO policy networks dealing with enabling environment for civil society;
- ✓ CSOs, think-thanks, donors, state institutions conducting similar analysis;
- ✓ Public institutions;
- ✓ EUDs;
- ✓ Donors investing in civil society development;
- ✓ Media sector representatives to feed in the public perception and image of CSOs.

There will be approximately 10 – 15 interviews per country. The interviews will deepen the findings on enabling environment, and also help in identifying key gaps and needs for capacity building of civil society. Except from collecting the inputs on capacity-building needs, these will serve to provide assessment of the EU TACSO 3 on the existing capacity-building assistance, avoiding overlapping and create synergies as well as checking achievements against the EU TACSO 3 LogFrame that EU TACSO 3 team will conduct based on the research team gathered data. Depending on the COVID-19 pandemic and its anticipated worsening over winter, the interviews should be organized through line tools (Zoom, Skype etc.).

Focus groups composed of CSOs primarily serve to provide an in-depth insight into specific issues steaming from desktop and survey. They will also include some of priority areas that have already been identified such as: EU thematic flagship initiatives; networks, gender etc.. Moreover, focus groups should also address the issue of COVID-19 pandemic effects on civil society.

In order to reach grassroots and community level, at least one specific focus group will be organised in every country in order to recognize their needs. Focus groups will, to a smaller extent, serve also to

check the findings on the enabling environment bringing in the cases from practice and recommendations when it comes to legal, financial and CSO-government cooperation framework. There will be 3 - 5 focus groups per country. Due to the depending of the COVID-19 pandemic and anticipated worsening, the focus groups should be organized through line tools (Zoom, Skype etc.).

EU TACSO 3 assessment methodology (i.e. Methodological guide) and detailed Guidelines' result framework will form the basis of the field-phase data-gathering methodology to be used by the research team. The team will be required to updated it to extent need to adapt to the specific issues outlined above (e.g. COVID-19, grass-roots). If emerged through the process, several case studies might be produced as a follow up of the assessment process. This is to be decided at the later stage in consultations between the experts, EU TACSO 3 team and the DG NEAR.

Close coordination with NRCs for field data-gathering in each country will be crucial, to make sure that already existing analysis done by them or other country-based CSOs are included. Since they are a natural resource for the information on capacity-building needs, they will be consulted in the process of selecting and mobilising interlocutors for interviews and CSOs for focus groups. EU TACSO 3 Country Coordinators role will be to ensure and oversee that the field data-gathering in the respective country is conducted effectively and with all relevant stakeholders.

2. SYNTHESIS

Once the relevant data is gathered for each country and under each instrument, the research team will proceed to synthesis of data gathered during the field data-gathering and considering the desktop analysis provided by EU TACSO 3 on the country level based on the provided format for data-set entry against the Guidelines framework as well as synthesis in given format provided by the EU TACSO 3 team.

The findings and provisional recommendations following the data-gathering and draft synthetic report composed of a regional report and country briefs/overviews will be presented at specially organised in-country consultation and validation meeting and a regional one organized by EU TACSO 3 to ensure the involvement of CSO representatives and other stakeholders in the validating findings and recommendations. This participatory approach will ensure local ownership of findings and ensure they are broadly acceptable as an agenda for change at the local level. The input from the meetings will serve to finalize the final regional synthetic report to be delivered by EU TACSO 3. The research team is expected to participate to the validation and consultation sessions to present the synthesis and provide any update needed into the preparation of the final regional report with country briefs.

Timeframe (indicative):

| Instrument | Primary purpose | Division of labor | Indicative timeline |
|---------------|---|-------------------|---------------------------------|
| Desk analysis | Collect and update quantitative data from available secondary sources | EU TACSO 3 team | End December 2020- January 2021 |
| Survey | Collect quantitative and quality data from the wider civil society actors through a direct survey with CSOs | Research team | End January – February 2021 |
| Focus groups | Collect data and information on specific thematic issues and with focus on (legal) practice | Research team | February 2021 |

| | | | |
|---|---|---------------|------------------------------|
| | Follow-up on issues identified through survey and explore them in-depth | | |
| Interviews | Collect data and information from CSOs and stakeholders on their views on key issues | Research team | February – early March 2021 |
| Synthesis of data-gathered | Analyze data and information collected during field data-gathering and prepare a synthetic document with findings at the regional level per each of the Guidelines areas and recommendations, accompanied with seven country briefs/overviews | Research team | End March – early April 2021 |
| Validation and consultation sessions | Present and validate findings and recommendations from the synthesis of data-gathered | EU TACSO 3 | April - May 2021 |
| Final regional synthetic report with country briefs | Prepare the final report based on the synthetic document and updated with any input from validation and consultation sessions | EU TACSO 3 | May – June 2021 |

Key outputs of the assignment:

- Data-sets of data gathered during field-work;
- A synthetic document on the state of enabling environment and capacity of civil society in the Western Balkans and Turkey, incl. executive summary and accompanied with country briefs/overviews. The document has to be drafted in excellent English;
- Power Point presentation with summary preliminary findings and recommendations.

Linkage to EUCSG 2021-2027 review:

Preparation of the Guidelines framework for the period 2021-2027 is under way based on the review and update of the current result framework. For this reason, the data-gathering process will be organized back-to-back with the planned consultation process for the new Guidelines result framework in order to enable wide outreach and feedback from civil society stakeholders on the situation in the enabling environment and CSOs capacities for 2020. Moreover, data and analysis of the situation for 2020 will inform setting of the baselines for the targets to be set in the Guidelines result framework for the period 2021-2027.

Task management: The team of experts (represented by the Lead Researcher) will report to the EU TACSO 3 Team Leader, EU TACSO 3 P2P Manager and GDSI Project Director. In each of the countries, the research team will liaise with EU TACSO 3 Country Coordinator.

Timing of the activities:

The assignment should be carried out from **January 2021** until **May 2021**, whereby the desktop analysis will have already been undertaken during December 2020 by EU TACSO 3 and the field data-gathering phase by research team would commence between January - February 2021 and the synthesis between March – April 2021.

Expertise requirements:

The research team should consist of one Lead Researcher and Country Field Researchers that are together able to cover the field data-gathering and synthesis in all seven WBT countries. It is expected that the Lead Researcher will be responsible for: coordination of work with EU TACSO 3 team, including adjustment of methodology and field data collection tools, coordinating the team of Country Researchers, conducting data analysis, synthesis and reporting.

Lead Researcher:

Qualification and skills:

- University degree in social sciences, public administration, non-profit management, education, law, political science, international relations, EU studies or equivalent (i.e. 8 years of professional experience following secondary education);
- Excellent research skills, including data collection, analytical, writing and communication skills;
- Fluency in English is required and knowledge of any local languages of Western Balkan countries and Turkey is considered an advantage.

General experience:

- At least 10 years of professional experience preferably in the field of civil society development/management;
- At least 5 years of experience related to the issues of civil society needs assessment and enabling environment;
- Experience in data-gathering and research on civil society needs assessment and enabling environment in Western Balkans and Turkey and/or EU (new) Member States is considered a distinct advantage;
- Strong knowledge of the objectives of the EU Enlargement and EU Civil Society Guidelines is considered an advantage.

Specific experience:

- At least 5 years of practical experience in the development of research methodologies and data collection and analysis;
- At least 5 years of practical experience in undertaking data-gathering and analysis in English (list of documented work to be inserted in the CV under section Publications);
- Experience of working with/in Western Balkan countries and Turkey is an advantage.
- Proven advanced knowledge on the Western Balkans and Turkey civil society landscape;
- Familiarity with civil society capacity building approaches and initiatives.

Country Field Researchers:

Qualifications and skills:

- University degree in social sciences, public administration, non-profit management, education, law, political science, international relations, EU studies or equivalent (i.e. 5 years of professional experience following secondary education);
- Excellent analytical, research, presentation and communication skills;
- Fluency in English and local languages of Western Balkan countries and Turkey is required (i.e. all presented CV should demonstrate ability to conduct all field data-gathering tools in all local languages).

General professional experience:

- At least 3, preferably 5 years of professional experience, preferably in the area of civil society;
- At least 3 years of experience related to the issues of civil society capacities and/or enabling environment and/or conducting field data-gathering and analysis;
- Experience in research on civil society needs assessment and enabling environment in Western Balkan countries and Turkey and/or EU (new) Member States is considered a distinct advantage;
- Strong knowledge of the objectives of the EU Enlargement and EU Civil Society Guidelines is considered an advantage.

Specific professional experience:

- At least 3 years of practical experience in the development of research methodologies and data collection and analysis;
- At least 3 years of practical experience in undertaking data-gathering and analysis (list of documented work to be inserted in the CV under section Publications).
- Experience of working with/in Western Balkan countries and Turkey is an advantage.
- Proven advanced knowledge on the Western Balkans and Turkey civil society landscape;

Language requirements:

The primary language of the assignment is English. All written outputs shall be provided in English (native English language proficiency level). Field research instruments and data-gathering will be conducted in local languages of the Western Balkan countries and Turkey.

Expressing interest:

Interested experts and entities are invited to apply to express their interest by writing to: welcome@tacso.eu with the following information:

TECHNICAL PROPOSAL:

1. **RATIONALE:** Any comments on the description of the assignment for the successful execution of activities, in particular regarding the objective and purpose (i.e. field data-gathering and synthesis), thus demonstrating the degree of understanding of the assignment. An explanation of the risks and assumptions affecting the execution of the assignment;
2. **STRATEGY:** An outline of the approach proposed for the assignment implementation, i.e. field data-gathering and synthesis. A list of the proposed tasks considered necessary to achieve the objectives, their sequence, duration, proposed inputs, and outputs to be produced;
3. **RESEARCHER(S)/EXPERT(S):** Profile(s) and CV of researcher(s)/expert(s) proposed for the implementation of the assignment. Justification for engagement of proposed researcher(s)/expert(s);
4. **TIMETABLE OF WORK:** The detailed timing, sequence and duration of the proposed tasks, taking into account travel time. The identification and timing of major milestones in executing the assignment. The expected number of working days required;
5. **BACKSTOPPING:** A short description of the support facilities (back-stopping) that the contractor will provide to the team of researcher(s)/experts during the execution of the assignment;
6. **PRESENTATION** of researcher(s)/experts' and/or entity's experience on similar assignments;
7. **PROOF** of previous similar work.

FINANCIAL PROPOSAL:

1. ITEMISED BUDGET requested for this assignment.

Application evaluation

The selection of the Contractor for this assignment will be done in accordance with the Quality and Cost Based selection method, in line with the following points:

| Criteria, sub-criteria, and point system for the evaluation of the applications | Points |
|---|--------|
| 1. Rationale | 10 |
| 2. Strategy | 30 |
| 3. Expert(s) | 30 |
| 4. Timetable | 10 |
| 5. Backstopping | 5 |
| 6. Specific experience of the consultant relevant to the assignment | 15 |

The weights given to the technical and financial proposal of the application are:

Technical proposal = 0.8 and Financial proposal = 0.2

No subcontracting is allowed in the implementation of this assignment.
Successful applicants will be invited for contract negotiation.

Eligible costs

Eligible costs to be presented in the itemized budget include:

- Expert fees (all inclusive);
- Costs for survey, interviews and focus groups (e.g. covering cost of on-line tools);
- Necessary translation and proofreading costs for data-gathering and report preparation;
- Currency exchange if required;
- Bank charges.

Deadline

Interested research teams/entities can request clarifications on this assignment by writing to the EU TACSO 3 at welcome@tacso.eu till **Monday, 21 December, 2020 17:00hrs CET**.

The deadline for submitting applications is **Thursday, 24 December, 2020 17:00hrs CET** by e-mail to welcome@tacso.eu.