



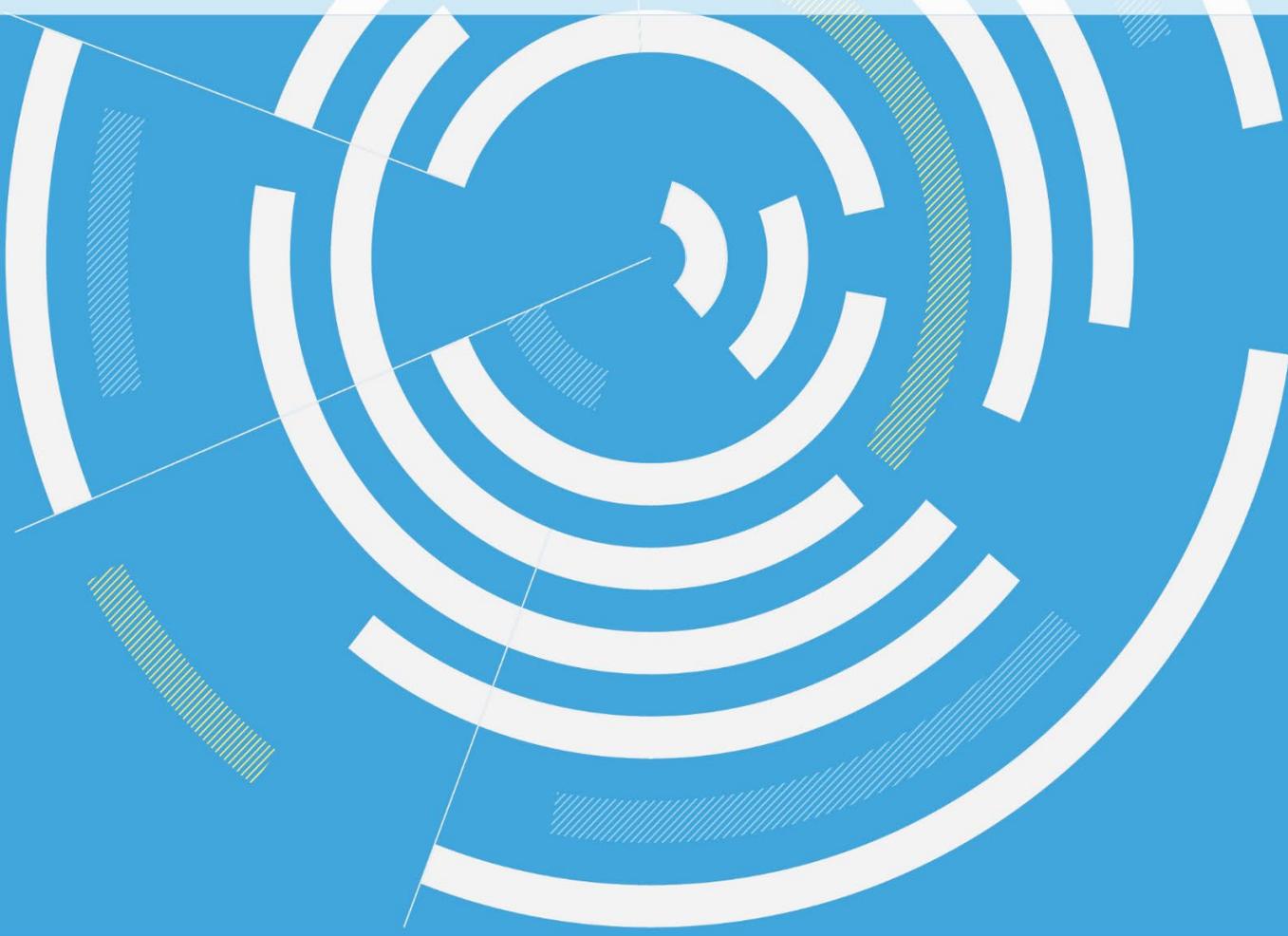
EU TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE
TO CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANISATIONS
IN THE WESTERN BALKANS AND TURKEY

COUNTRY CONSULTATION

KOSOVO*

24 FEBRUARY 2021

Guidelines for EU Support to Civil Society in the Enlargement region, 2021-2027





SHORT REPORT

BACKGROUND

For the needs of the European Commission, the Directorate-General Neighborhood and Enlargement Negotiations (DG NEAR), and in cooperation EU Office in Kosovo* (EUOK), EU TACSO 3 project organized an online meeting to launch the Consultation regarding the EU Guidelines for Support to Civil Society Enlargement Region for the Period 2021-2027 for Kosovo on Tuesday, 24 February 2021, from 10:00-12:30hrs CET.

The Consultation concerned the revision and updating of the Guidelines that have already been in place and used in 2014 - 2020. The Guidelines explain how the EU will support civil society in the region in 2021 -2027, mainly through its Civil Society Facility. They are aimed at three audiences:

- For **EU staff**: to assist them in preparing and implementing EU support to civil society in the Western Balkans and Turkey; in monitoring the effectiveness of the support; and in analyzing the evolution of the IPA beneficiary state of affairs concerning civil society;
- For **policy-makers and administrators in the Western Balkans and Turkey**: to understand the standards towards which DG NEAR is aspiring in terms of IPA beneficiaries own support to civil society in the context of the EU enlargement – notably in terms of the enabling environment for stimulating participatory democracy and civil society involvement in public policymaking and the EU integration process;
- For **civil society in the region**: to know the standards towards which DG NEAR is working in terms of their capacity, effectiveness, resilience, independence, and accountability.

Furthermore, the Guidelines, particularly their results framework, provide concrete objectives, targets, indicators, and benchmarks in support of these efforts.

The revision of the Guidelines has been carried out in a participatory way. The previous version of the Guidelines and the first draft of the revised Guidelines results framework is available on www.tacso.eu. In December 2020, TACSO issued a call for written inputs for the revision from civil society organizations. In January 2020, a regional consultation for civil society and public authorities took place in Skopje. Consultations have been organized in each IPA Beneficiary country to present and discuss the Guidelines with civil society organizations, public institutions, donors, and others to receive feedback for their finalization.

A Call for Participation was launched on 16 February to invite CSOs in Kosovo to register and participate in the consultation event. As a result, fifty-three (53) CSOs were registered. Public institutions representatives and donors' representatives were invited by direct invitation. In total, seventy-eight (78) representatives of CSOs, public institutions, donors, and other stakeholders operating in Kosovo have confirmed participation, while forty-four (44) representatives attended in full or in part (See detailed list in Annex 2: List of participants).

* This designation is without prejudice to positions on status, and is in line with UNSCR 1244 and the ICJ Opinion on the Kosovo Declaration of Independence.



INTRODUCTION SESSION

In the beginning, **Tanja Hafner Ademi, EU TACSO 3 Team Leader**, provided information about the event's purpose. She addressed the audience by informing the participants that this meeting was organized by the EU TACSO 3 project and EU Office in Kosovo. Instructions about language translation and other administrative modalities were provided. The event was held in English, but participants could use either Albanian or Serbian language translation.

Liselotte Isaksson, Head of Section, Western Balkans Regional Cooperation and Programmes Civil Society and Social Inclusion (D.5), DG NEAR, emphasized the importance of the Guidelines and the development and prospect of the civil society as key priority for the EU. Civil society is considered an important actor that actively promotes and supports the fundamental rights that are at the heart of the EU, such as freedom of expression, rule of law, democracy and respect for human rights including the minority rights. Active civil society represents the views and aspirations of the citizens and holds the institutions accountable. In addition, she talked about the important role civil society plays in service provision to the communities and the recent very specific role of supporting the communities in emergencies. CSOs are important partners also in proposing a vision for the society and in testing and promoting innovative solutions to sustainable development challenges. Regarding the Enlargement process, she emphasized the importance of civil society in deepening the understanding of citizens about the reforms that are needed to qualify for membership. The EU needs CSOs that are capable, professional and resilient, but also public institutions that will put in place the enabling environment for work of civil society. In addition, there should be also good systems to facilitate the cooperation and exchange between civil society and government. She explained that the Civil Society Facility (CSF) was established since 2009 with the role to channel both the bilateral support such as that to Kosovo as well as the support at the regional level. In the previous period, approximately 3% of the budget of IPA I and II have been allocated for civil society whereas the average annual amount is around 80 million EUR. This orientation of the EU to support civil society will remain at the same level in the future period through IPA III. She reflected on the importance of the Guidelines in this new financing period 2021 – 2027 and the need to revise them in a participatory manner and with active participation and understanding of all stakeholders such as public institutions and civil society. She emphasized the three-fold purpose of the Guidelines. First for the EU to plan, monitor and analyze the support provided to the civil society, second to the policy makers and public officials to understand the standards and expectations that the EU has in terms of enabling environments for civil society and the involvement of civil society in public policy making. In addition, the Guidelines are seen as assisting in the development of the strategies for cooperation between governments and civil society. The third purpose of the Guidelines is for the CSOs in order to know the standards towards which they should work in terms of their own capacities. She shortly reflected on the structure and the results framework that also includes indicators to measure the progress and that are anchored in the international standards and legal framework.

Dario di Benedetto, Team Leader, Cooperation, EU Office, noted that the Guidelines are a product of an extensive consultation process. Additionally, the Guidelines assisted in drafting much clearer indicators and enabled a shared vision of the region for wider interventions. This was useful for structuring dialogue in the region between CSOs and public institutions. Through these Guidelines, apart from many other reports, it is important to mention the EC Country Report, which receives a structured input as a result of these Guidelines. In Kosovo, there is a Strategy and the Action Plan for cooperation with CSOs, and this is the Government mechanism for cooperation with CSOs. Additionally, there is a Council, which also included representatives of CSOs, which have a role in cooperating with the Government. In terms of capacities, CSOs in Kosovo are uneven in terms of professional standards. However, compared to other IPA Beneficiaries, there is a positive trend for CSO



enabling environment in Kosovo. So, there are positive signs for the sector, as this is a sector that delivers.

PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION

Session 1: EU Civil Society Guidelines for the Enlargement region, 2021-2027

This session was composed of two parts: the background and the structure of the document, as well as the detailed presentation of the results framework. Tanja Hafner Ademi, Team Leader, EU TACSO 3, presented main changes in the Guidelines, common objectives and goals, the structure of the result framework, monitoring methodology, and Area 2: CSO Capacities and Resilience. Emina Nuredinoska, P2P Manager, EU TACSO 3 who also worked on the updated of the result framework, presented in detail Area 1: Conducive Environment and Area 2: Changing relations CSOs and IPA beneficiary authorities.

The presentation noted that "Guidelines are the result and monitoring framework guiding assessment of progress via the EC Annual Reports and directing financial assistance, mainly through the Civil Society Facility. They are developed in 2013 via an inclusive process (CSOs, public authorities, stakeholders). EU TACSO 3 project role is to monitor, consult and document progress under the Guidelines and does this through various assessment means. The old Guidelines for the period 2014-2020 form the basis for the new guidelines. The Guidelines document is composed of an introduction and result framework". The result framework was the focus of this presentation. The consultation process was ongoing throughout 2020, and the review process was composed of three parts: structure of the results framework, methodology, and operationalization.

The main upgrades of the Guidelines are based on the requests from contributors, such as issues related to money laundering, public consultations, etc. Additionally, in terms of the structure of the framework, the table/Logframe and its contents were explained in detail. Benchmarks and Regional Standards is a new column added to the result framework to highlight the link of the specific objectives with the existing standards within the international and regional human rights framework. In all three areas, strategic objectives with relevant benchmarks and indicators were presented in detail.

Area 1: A conducive environment for civil society

- An enabling legal and policy environment, for the exercise of fundamental freedoms and rights, with a focus on the association, assembly, and expression;
- An enabling financial environment, which supports sustainability of CSOs, with adequate funding of the sector.

Area 2: Strengthened relations between CSOs and IPA beneficiary authorities/institutions

- Civil society and public institutions are working in partnership through dialogue and cooperation, based on willingness, trust, and mutual acknowledgment around common interests.

Area 3: Reinforced CSO resilience and capacity

- Capable, transparent, and accountable CSOs;
- Strategically-led and supported CSOs;
- Resource-based CSOs.

All changes and new additions to the framework were presented in detail, including the reasoning behind these changes.



EU TACSO 3 prepares the monitoring reports annually, and the one for 2020 is in the pipeline. The current methodology focuses on qualitative and quantitative data, data gathering through legislation and practice review, a survey with CSOs, focus groups, and interview with stakeholders. Improvements are needed in data collection by public institutions. The same methodological approach in monitoring for the period 2021-27 will be undertaken.

Session 2: Discussion

In this session, Aferdita Pustina, EU TACSO 3 Country Coordinator for Kosovo, as the facilitator of this part of the event, provided the ground rules for discussion and asked participants to present their questions in writing in the Chat or verbally by raising their hand. The chat was managed by Natasha Mazari, EU TACSO 3 Country Coordinator for Albania, for the Albanian language, and Aleksandra Gligorovic, EU TACSO 3 Country Coordinator for Montenegro, for the Serbian language. All questions and comments made by different participants are presented below in consecutive order:

Dren Puka, Kosovo Civil Society Foundation

Raised two general comments and outlined that he would send written comments on more specific issues in writing: First, we are observing a deterioration of the environment in which civil society generally operates in the region. We have very severe cases in Serbia with money laundering issues, but that is not the case in Kosovo. He noticed that the indicators on money laundering had been involved. Secondly, regarding the definition of civil society, there are various definitions, so he suggested that even organizations/groups that are not officially registered should be considered as equal players in public life.

Halil Kurmehaj, Iniciativa e Pavarur e të Verbërve te Kosovës

Offered a more general comment on how to access the funds available for the civil society through IPA: First, he was interested to know the available ways to apply for IPA funds because there is a lack of information in this regard. Funding options for formal and informal CSOs should clearly define how unregistered organizations can be beneficiaries of these funds, for example, for individuals, to define who is considered physical person, and that should be based on the national legislation. In addition, the way of monitoring the funds given to CSOs should be added upon receipt of the funds. In relation to the indicators measuring the impact, something should be added to measure the impact of the fund that was given. For example, if an advocacy campaign is supported, after the finalization of the campaign, the impacts should be measured, what has changed, what regulations have been approved or what legal structure has changed. Secondly, to add a part in terms of training provision for registered and unregistered NGOs on how they can benefit from IPA, as we do not clear how to use this instrument especially to the organization the speaker belongs to.

Boris Sekulic, OSCE

Was happy to see several OSCE documents are used as a baseline for developing some aspects of the Guidelines and asked to know details on the OSCE documents that have been used as a reference. EU TACSO 3 experts offered more information on the Joint Guidelines for Freedom of Association (Venice Commission) linked in the Guidelines result framework.

Milica Jakic, New Social Initiative in North Kosovo

Offered concrete feedback on specific indicators:

Indicator 2.4 - financial benefits are available for CSOs. Within this indicator, it should be assessed to what measure these benefits are easily accessible. There are tax exemption policies, but how clear and easily accessible are these procedures.

Indicator 2.5 - The law on youth empowerment should be taken into account here with the analysis of the framework indicator.



Indicator 4.2 – CSOs in the Enlargement region are able to communicate the result of their activities to the public – here, add other specific indicators or put as a means of gathering data within this indicator. In general, it is not difficult for CSOs to communicate their activities to draw the attention of the public, but it is difficult to communicate clear messages to the audience. The audience remains uninterested regarding what CSOs are doing. This is also because CSOs have weak communication strategies, or their messages are too complicated, or some of the issues they are dealing with do not relate to a larger population.

Egzon Krasniqi, PhD scholar

He asked if there were any opportunities for individuals and researchers that are not part of any organizations to apply and receive funds in order to contribute in different ways to the development of Kosovo? Can you enable in the Guidelines such opportunity for people that are not members of any organizations to apply for funds?

In the presentation, it was mentioned that one way of measuring the indicators was to ask CSOs what opportunities they have to access funds and to get support from the institutions. This is good in a way, but that requires triangulation. He suggested that EU TACSO 3 should have another mechanism in place to measure their abilities and not just leave that to their ability because that can be subjective and can impact the trustworthiness of the data being collected for the monitoring reports.

Saranda Cana, Swiss Embassy in Kosovo

Considered the Guidelines a very comprehensive framework. She is more interested in area 3 and found all aspects such as public trust in CSOs, networking, internal governance of CSOs, transparency and accountability, and constituency for legitimacy very important. Some specific indicators are very interesting for their monitoring purposes and most probably will be included in the result framework of their new cooperation strategy. She offered to be in contact bilaterally to identify the opportunity to align some indicators and their source of verification.

CONCLUSIONS & NEXT STEPS

In the last session, it was concluded that the consultation event was useful in exchanging constructive feedback from different actors and with EUOK. After the consultation event, participants were invited to submit written contributions to EU TACSO 3 at consultations@tacso.eu until Friday, 12 March 2021. Organizations were informed that contributions could be in the form of a comment, suggestion, useful study or report, etc. Consultation information is available on the EU TACSO 3 website www.tacso.eu.



Annex 1. Agenda

**GUIDELINES FOR EU SUPPORT TO CIVIL SOCIETY IN ENLARGEMENT
REGION FOR THE PERIOD 2021-2027
CONSULTATION
KOSOVO
24 FEBRUARY, 2021
Online public Consultation
AGENDA**

Wednesday, 24 February 2021

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|---------------|---|
| 10:00 – 10:15 | Introduction, objectives of the process <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Liselotte Isaksson, Head of Section, Western Balkans Regional Cooperation and Programmes - Civil Society and Social Inclusion (D.5), DG NEAR• Dario di Benedetto, Team Leader, Cooperation, EU Office• Tanja Hafner Ademi, Team Leader, EU TACSO 3 |
| 10:15 – 10:45 | EU Civil Society Guidelines for the Enlargement region, 2021-2027 <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Presentation of the 1st draft framework• Q&A |
| 10:45 – 12:15 | Discussion <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Moderated by Afërdita Pustina, Country Coordinator for Kosovo, EU TACSO 3 |
| 12:15 – 12:30 | Conclusions & next steps |

Annex 2: List of participants

No.	Name	Surname	Organization
1	Trim	Kabashi	Sbunker
2	Shpat	Ejupi	Instituti i Pavarur i Ushqimit
3	Aurora	Xhorxhi	Austrian Institute of Excellence
4	Rinor	Qehaja	Instituti EdGuard
5	Regjë	Mulaj	OJQ, „VISION 02”
6	Fatbardha	Restelica	Instituti për Politika Zhvillimore (INDEP)
7	Aida	Topanica	AUTIZMI
8	Halil	Kurmehaj	Iniciativa e Pavarur e të Verbërve e Kosovës
9	Egzon	Krasniqi	Make A Difference
10	Rinor	Ahmeti	Network of Organizations for Rural Development of Kosovo
11	Jehona	Jashari	Ura sociale
12	Shykran	Berisha	Asociacioni i Gruas Feminae
13	Syzan	Xhekoviç	Shoqata per perkujdesjen e te moshuarve "Shtepia ime"
14	Ekrem	Citaku	Radio Vala Rinore
15	Reshat	Reshiti	Shoqata ekologjike „Ambienti,, (SHEA)
16	Vlora	Shabiu	IPKO Foundation
17	Dren	Puka	Fondacioni Kosovar per Shoqeri Civile (KCSF)
18	Pranvera	Selimi	Balkan Green Foundation
19	Asllan	Qyqalla	SHOQATA E KRIJUESVE, ARTISTEVE E LETRAREVE
20	Dardan	Kryeziu	Civikos Platform
21	Milica	Andrić Rakić	New Social Initiative
22	Miloš	Vukadinović	Institute for Development of Civil Society "Innovate"
23	Luljeta	Gjonbalaj	USAID Kosovo
24	Anna	Kuznetsova	USAID Kosovo
25	Vladislav	Stevanovic	German Embassy Pristina
26	Saranda	Cana	Swiss Development Cooperation SDC
27	Vlora	Nushi	UN Women
28	Erol	Arduc	UNHCR
29	Shkelqim	Shehu	UNHCR
30	Drita	Gorçaj - Mumxhiu	UNHCR
31	Bardha	Keça	UNHCR
32	Milena	Tasevska	UNHCR
33	Cécilia	Marronier	French Embassy
34	Liridon	Blakaj	Italian Embassy
35	Juraj	Melioris	Czech Liaison Office
36	Boris	Sekulic	OSCE Mission in Kosovo
37	Gurjeta	Zeka	Office of Prime Minister/Development Cooperation Office



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IN THE WESTERN BALKANS AND TURKEY**

38	Vjosa	Shehu	Ministry of Local Government Administration
39	Edi	Gusia	Agency for Gender Equality
40	Art	Jashari	Ministry of Finance
41	Linda	Sanaja	UN Women
42	Jean	Baptiste-Kastel	DG NEAR
43	Rexep	Vasolli	MoF
44	Victor	Dragutan	DG NEAR