



Consultation meeting on IPA III programmes and status of civil society in Kosovo

27 APRIL, 2022
Short Report

INTRODUCTION

On behalf of the European Union Office in Kosovo* (EUOK), EU TACSO 3 project organised a **Consultation meeting on IPA III programmes and status of civil society in Kosovo** with Vassilis MARAGOS, Head of Unit for Bosnia and Herzegovina and Kosovo, DG Neighbourhood and Enlargement Negotiations, European Commission. The meeting took place on **Wednesday, 27 April 2022, 09:00-10:30 at Europe House, UÇK str. 90, 10000 Prishtina, Kosovo.**

The aim of the meeting was to discuss with civil society the needs and challenges of the sector, potential opportunities for cooperation, as well as sharing of relevant information over the plans related to the Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance (IPA III).

The specific objectives of the event were to:

- Present EU partnership with civil society and status of IPA III in Kosovo; and
- Inform participants and collect feedback on the status of civil society in Kosovo.

The invitation was sent to 23 CSOs in Kosovo as per recommendations of the EUOK. Fourteen (14) representatives of CSOs, and media organizations and Government participated at the event. ([Annex 2: List of participants](#)).

DISCUSSION

Introduction, objectives, expectations

The meeting was opened by **Afërdita Pustina, EU TACSO 3 Country Coordinator for Kosovo**, as the facilitator of the event. A brief history of the process was provided to the participants, followed by the purpose of the event. The main guest was presented and an overview of the agenda was provided ([Annex 1: Agenda](#)).

EU partnership with CS and status of IPA III in Kosovo

Vassilis MARAGOS, Head of Unit, DG Neighbourhood and Enlargement Negotiations, European Commission opened the session and laid out the foundation of the consultation meeting. The speaker highlighted that IPA III is based on the EU funds that are an investment for the region, a process of significant importance to the EU. IPA III remains as a support mechanism for the beneficiaries to adopting reforms of political, institutional, legal, administrative, social and economic nature. The reforms are needed for alignment with the values of the EU. The latest IPA III is in harmony with the priorities of the "[Economic and Investment Plan for the Western Balkans](#)" (October 2020).

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



IPA III will leverage support to reforms fostering sustainable socio-economic development and bringing the partners closer to the Union's values and standards. In this context, it is considered that the assistance provided so far, was highly important and therefore it will continue in the upcoming years. Amongst many fields, it was noted that there are planned interventions in the field of disinformation, hybrid threats and media literacy. This is especially important in the newly noted developments such as the recent conflict in the area. In this regard, the approach of IPA III and the civil society will also be country specific. In some countries, the role of CSOs will have to be converted to a more consultative role rather than current opponent role. Countries that are subject to conflict will also have to undergo changes.

In relation to the planned assistance in Kosovo, it is generally expected that projects will have to be at a different maturity stage than in the previous period. This is because it is now considered that basic level projects have been completed so it is expected that the assistance will increase its complexity. As indicated, it is an imperative that the assistance is linked to the "[Economic and Investment Plan for the Western Balkans](#)". Additionally, the link will be ensured with other Independent fiscal institutions (IFIs) and the Western Balkans Investment Framework (WBIF) which includes: The Western Balkans Enterprise Development and Innovation Facility and the Western Balkans Guarantee Facility. In this context, the EU IFIs will serve as a guarantee for the private sector, where challenges of the lack of expertise remain. The approval of IPA III is expected in early 2023.

Luigi Brusa, Head of Cooperation Section, EUOK noted that the IPA III Programming Framework reflects the specific objectives of the regulation and is focused on the priorities of the enlargement process, articulated in five thematic windows¹, which mirror the clusters of negotiating chapters as per the revised enlargement methodology:

- Window 1: Rule of law, fundamental rights and democracy;
- Window 2: Good governance, acquis alignment, good neighbourly relations and strategic communication;
- Window 3: Green agenda and sustainable connectivity;
- Window 4: Competitiveness and inclusive growth;
- Window 5: Territorial and cross border cooperation.

In terms of W1, projects are planned with Ministry of Justice for a variety of topics of interest. In this window there is also a significant cooperation expected with the media sector. Additionally, funds will be provided through Council of Europe for projects related to anticorruption and money laundering.

Under W2, cooperation will continue with the Office of Prime Minister and the Ministry of Economy and Transfers. Specifically, internal management of data will be simplified. Additionally, efforts will be made to fight informal economy and support will be provided to the Office of Auditor General of Kosovo to increase transparency of Government operations.

Under W3, very targeted projects will take place. These relate to treatment of hazardous waste and also interventions to preserve protected areas bases on the principles of Natura 2000, which is the largest coordinated network of protected areas in the world. Additionally, under this window, support will be provided to the KEDS electrical substations, which in essence improve the supply with electricity in Kosovo.

¹ https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/default/files/about_the_european_commission/eu_budget/programme_statement_-_ipa.pdf



Under W4, support will be provided to education, specifically to digitalisation of the education system in schools. The aim is to apply the principles of “The Youth Guarantee” which is a structural reform to improve school-to-work transitions and thus support young people in finding jobs faster.

Under W5, efforts will continue to support cross-border cooperation projects.

Florim Canolli, Head of NIPAC Office, OPM noted that, amongst other, IPA III will indeed be of great support, especially to the hazardous waste treatment which is now a pressing problem. Additionally, the infrastructure projects of importance such as the opera hall will also be finally constructed as per the plan. In essence, IPA II was subject to fixed amounts, whereas IPA III is dynamic and more pressure will be applied to Ministries for better absorption of funds and appropriate planning. The assistance will be based on principles rather than details. It is also expected that CSOs will be more seriously engaged in the process for policy making, such as public consultations, etc.

Discussion and exchange of opinions

Taulant Hoxha, Executive Director, Kosovo Civil Society Foundation (KCSF) noted that the conversation regarding the Kosovo’s path to the EU ten years ago was at a different stage. At the moment from the perspective of the CSOs, it is very difficult to use the EU as a leverage when engaging with citizens and other counterparts. In essence, there are negative trends in terms of discussion with CSOs when it comes to the EU. It was noted that political support for the CSOs is crucial. At the moment the new EU Civil Society Guidelines are still pending and there is no indication when will they be published. This document is very important as it underwent several consultations but also, provides a basis for the cooperation between CSOs and the EU. In terms of the Government support and cooperation with CSOs, there are some good signs, however, there more needs to be done to improve the consultation process with CSOs and inclusion of the same in areas of interest.

Dajana Berisha, Executive Director, Forum for Civic Initiatives (FIQ) noted that support is of utmost importance to be provided based on factors of transparency. Otherwise, monopolies are created and this endangers the independent work of the sector.

Jehona Gjurgjeala, Executive Director, TOKA noted that it is important that CSOs receive feedback from the EU on their inputs provided to various consultative processes. The education and youth sector are on top of the list as a priority in need of support. In terms of the plans to support the digitalisation of education in Kosovo, it was noted that the funds should rather be focused on teacher quality instead of digitalisation. Because “tech cannot replace humans”, the digitalisation is viewed as challenging in genuine evaluation of students, specifically their behaviour.

Diana Metushi Krasniqi, Senior Advocate and Project Manager, Kosovo Democratic Institute noted that the digitalisation of the education is happening, but is also problematic and has its challenges. The assistance should be based on a cooperative approach rather than a reactive approach. CSOs should be consulted beforehand before the planning of projects rather than post factum.

Miodrag Milicevic, Executive Director, AKTIV noted that the current government has little to no dialogue with community representatives. Political dialogue between Kosovo and Serbia has ended up in a circle and there is a mismatch in the dialogue and community priorities. Community support is needed as there is a significant divide but also a lack of information in community languages. The noted isolation affects the social and political life.



Besa Luci, Editor in Chief, Kosovo 2.0 noted that more should be invested in media literacy but under the condition that it is a targeted support. Specifically, this very important field should be connected to the education system and should be included in the curriculum. Journalism production quality should also be taken under consideration for support, and media outlets should be considered as CSOs.

Nicole Farnsworth, Programme Director, Kosovo Womens Network noted the importance of inclusion of CSOs in the IPA process. Projects should continue with CSOs and the process should be widely publicized in the media to be more comprehensive for the public. Operational grants should be included to ensure sustainability of the projects. There is a good basis for gender equality under the GAP III that is ongoing and ex-ante gender impact assessment for all EU-funded projects. Relationship with the Government should be transparent and accountable, but also engaging for CSOs and the consultations process.

Marigona Shabiu, Executive Director, Youth Initiative for Human Rights highlighted the challenges in the EU documents consultation process, as there is a gap between input provided by CSOs in the meetings and the recommendations taken under consideration. In relation to the Government, often the CSOs need to intervene in the basic forms, and an example was provided where the Draft Strategy for Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian community was not translated into Roma language by the Government. There is a need for focus of interethnic relations as there are tensions noted following the conflict in Ukraine, where the communities in Kosovo are clearly of opposite sides. Kosovo still suffers from the breach of human rights where we have the latest case of non-voting of the legislation that enables the same sex marriage.

Vassilis MARAGOS, Head of Unit, DG Neighborhood and Enlargement Negotiations, European Commission acknowledged the inputs by CSOs as valid and important. To the future steps in cooperating with the CSOs, the speaker highlighted the importance of cooperation with the EUOK as a bridge between local CSOs and the EC. Additionally, at the meeting it was confirmed that the Government commitment is clearly there and that Kosovo is in fact in a privileged position in the region, due to having the cooperation with the Government. There is always room for improvement of the consultation process, however, it is clear that that input from CSOs was considered at the biggest extent possible. The speaker also noted the openness of a variety of programmes of EC such as Youth European Ambassadors and asked the CSOs to encourage members to apply and represent their interests.

Dario Di Benedetto, Cooperation Section/Team Leader - Social Development, EUOK noted that the consultation between the EC and CSOs is an important process. It is crucial to continue to get the inputs of the stakeholder during the development process, and the EUOK makes sure to reflect their comments taken from consultation events. It is expected that EUCSG will be finalised soon, and despite the noted challenges in timing, there is a clear improvement of the process of programming for CSOs. The process is now streamlined as compared to 6-7 years ago which was more of scattered initiatives. There is also a noted diversification of the committee for Foreign Policy Instruments (FPIs) for Kosovo. The CSOs have open doors at the EUOK for any issues of interest, challenges and partnerships to come to common solutions, especially in the areas of interest. The important news is that Kosovo remains stable in terms of having an enabling environment for CSOs and this is a privilege considering the situation in various countries. Topics that are of interest were mentioned under the various windows such as media literacy and journalism and the EUOK will continue its efforts to support CSOs and the sector in Kosovo in an articulated and organised manner. It was finally considered that the EU pre-accession funds are a sound investment into the future of both the enlargement region and the EU itself.

END OF EVENT



Annex 1. Agenda

Consultation meeting on IPA III programmes and status of civil society in Kosovo

Wednesday, 27 April, 2022

Europe House, Prishtinë/Priština

AGENDA

08:45 – 09:00	Arrival of participants
09:00– 09:10	Introduction, objectives of the meeting <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Afërdita Pustina, Country Coordinator for Kosovo, EU Technical Assistance to Civil Society Organisations in the Western Balkans and Turkey
09:10 – 09:45	EU partnership with CS and status of IPA III in Kosovo <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Vassilis MARAGOS, Head of Unit, DG Neighbourhood and Enlargement Negotiations, European Commission
09:45 – 10:30	Discussion and exchange of opinions <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Moderator: Afërdita Pustina, Country Coordinator for Kosovo, EU Technical Assistance to Civil Society Organisations in the Western Balkans and Turkey
10:30	End of event

Annex 2: List of participants



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

EUROPEAN UNION
EUROPEAN UNION OFFICE IN KOSOVO /
EUROPEAN UNION SPECIAL REPRESENTATIVE

Attendance List
Meeting with Civil Society Organizations regarding the IPA III Programming
April 27 2022, 09:00-10:30
Europe House

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9	Wahab Kuvshin	AATV	044/015-998	wahab.kuvshin@aatv.org
10	Mariagona Shabiu	YHR	043/795-100	mariagona@yhr.org

April 27, 2022

EUROPEAN UNION
EUROPEAN UNION OFFICE IN KOSOVO /
EUROPEAN UNION SPECIAL REPRESENTATIVE

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	Isabelle W.	-DG NEAR		
	Dario Di Benedetto	-EUO		
	A. Tahiri	-EUO		
	Vassilis Moragos	-DG NEAR		
	Anastasios Frangos	-DG NEAR		
	Michael McGuire	-DG NEAR		
	Giulio Crespi	-EUO		
	Arianna Caba	-EUO		

April 27, 2022

Annex 3: Photos of the event: <https://www.instagram.com/p/Cc4w0ovKibQ/>