



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

**COUNTRY CONSULTATIONS**

**SERBIA**

**26 FEBRUARY 2021**

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





## SHORT REPORT

### BACKGROUND

For the needs of DG NEAR and in cooperation with the Delegation of the EU to Serbia, the EU TACSO 3 project organized an on-line consultation on the Guidelines for EU Support to Civil Society in the Enlargement Region for the period 2021-2027. The consultation concerns the revision and updating of the Guidelines that have existed throughout the period 2014 – 2020. The consultation took place on Friday, 26 February 2021 from 9:30 till 12:00hrs CET.

The event aimed to present and discuss the Guidelines with civil society organisations, public institutions, international donors and others, with a view to receiving feedback for their finalisation. Call for participants to take part in the consultation event was published on the EU TACSO 3 website and sent directly to 47 persons in public administration, 15 in donor community and approximately 1550 CSOs and CSO networks. The event was organised on-line. Sixty-eight (68) people, of which 49 representatives of CSOs, 11 from public institutions and 8 from donors, attended in full or in part (See details in Annex 2: List of participants). The contribution to the discussion was recorded and noted both throughout discussion as well as through the chat. Agenda of the event is provided in Annex 1.

### INTRODUCTION SESSION

Tanja Hafner Ademi, EU TACSO 3 Team Leader, provided information about the purpose of the event, as well as technical details regarding the participation list and recording of the event.

**Alessandra Viezzer, Deputy Head of Unit, Western Balkans Regional Cooperation and Programmes, DG NEAR** explained that the development of prosperous civil society is a priority for EU as it is a key to build democracy, support accountability of public administration and express the views and aspirations of citizens. Civil society is a key partner for providing a vision of where society is headed in many areas (environmental, social inclusion etc.). In the Enlargement context, they can also play the role of helping citizens understand the aspects of accession. They are an actor in achieving societal change. That is why, the EU need civil society that is capable, professional, accountable, and resilient and that public authorities that are putting in place an environment that is enabling its development, as well as development of cooperation between civil society and public institutions. The EU is supporting this objective through its key tool - the Civil Society Facility - that brings together actions of bilateral and regional support, managed both by the Delegations and DG NEAR headquarters. Under the previous multiannual financial frameworks, in IPA 1 and IPA 2, approximately 3% of funds were allocated for support to civil society and this will continue in IPA III. Now, it's a good time to revisit the Guidelines to see if they are fit for purpose and what should be changed. The Guidelines will support the Enlargement process and the negotiation on fundamentals. The enabling environment and the relation of civil society and public authorities is an important element of these fundamentals. The specific objective and three focus areas are the same as they were in the previous Guidelines. One important novelty is a more specific results framework as there is the need to sharpen how they measure in short and medium terms the impact of EU interventions. And the results framework is where we need most inputs to see if they are calibrated correctly. Indicators are drawn based on international standards, important international conventions, and other documents and in the domain of resilience are based on Global Standards for CSO Accountability and CIVICUS Civil Society Index. She reiterated that they look forward to fruitful discussion to the betterment of the Guidelines.



**Yngve Engström, Head of Cooperation, Delegation of the European Union to Serbia** welcomed the participants and reminded the convention of the idea of the Guidelines; putting a framework on EU support to civil society. The Delegation sees work as extremely important for the development of society. They are always available to listen to civil society and provide support. Recently, the focus is on the grass-root organizations in support of monitoring decisions at local and national level. Guidelines can always be better, but for Serbia, a number of things have not yet been achieved even in the scope of previous Guidelines. The new Ministry in Serbia is formed which encompasses the former Office for Cooperation with Civil Society and they are very keen to cooperate with the Delegation. However, there has to be a clear ambition from the Government on changing things that would make environment for civil society better (e.g. VAT exemption, financial tools, financing from public sector, dialogue tools, possibility to make difference through policy dialogue with government). He invited participants to provide inputs on how to support civil society and improve accession process.

## PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION

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

In this part of the event, Tanja Hafner Ademi and Emina Nuredinoska, EU TACSO 3 P2P Manager presented in detail the background of the Guidelines, process timeline of review and review approach. This session was composed of two parts: the background and the structure of the document, and the detailed presentation of the results framework.

Tanja Hafner Ademi, Team Leader, EU TACSO 3, presented the main changes in the Guidelines, common objectives and goals, structure of the result framework, monitoring methodology and Area 2: CSO Capacities and Resilience. Emina Nuredinoska, P2P Manager, EU TACSO 3 presented in details 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. The first Guidelines were developed in 2013 through a participation of different stakeholders. Previous Guidelines for the period 2014-2020 presented the basis for the new Guidelines for the period 2021-27.

EU TACSO 3 project role is to monitor, consult and document the progress under the Guidelines and does this through various assessment means. The consultation process was ongoing throughout 2020, and the review process comprised of three parts: structure of the results framework, methodology, and operationalization.

All three areas, strategic objectives with relevant benchmarks and indicators were presented in detail. Area 1: A conducive environment for civil society encompass: an enabling legal and policy environment, for the exercise of fundamental freedoms and rights (association, assembly, and expression) and 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 entitles that 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 covers the aspects related to 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.

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.

## **Session 2: Discussion**

In this session, Jelena Pajovic Van Reenen, EU TACSO 3 Country Coordinator for Serbia, as the facilitator of this part of the event, welcomed the participants and asked them to present their comments or questions regarding the presented draft Guidelines, in writing in the Chat or orally by raising their hand.

**Jelena Avramovic Nikolic (USAID)** asked how frequently monitoring report on the Guidelines will be published. It was explained that the expectation is that Monitoring reports will be published on an annual basis.

**Vanja Dolapčev (European Policy Centar)** stressed that it is particularly important to see the goal related to the relation between civil society and IPA beneficiary authorities/decision makers. It is good to see indicators related not only to participation but also the quality of participation.

**Bojana Selakovic (Civic Initiatives, National Resource Centar)** raised following points:

- More political ownership over the Guidelines from the EU side. In terms of recognizing the Guidelines as a regular tool for comprehensive monitoring of the states and providing more space for civil society in the Progress (Enlargement) Reports. We need to compare it to similar processes and mechanisms that had impact such as PAR and regional cooperation. Since the first Guidelines were brought about, some aspects especially cooperation, is even worse than at beginning of the process, so we need external push from the Commission, because this seems to work in some other areas;
- Possible synergies with other tools such as PAR monitoring (measuring state capacity and impact of CSO work);
- Need to spread the information about the Guidelines further and make it a regular tool for Ministries. They can use them as their monitoring tool for cooperation with civil society. There is sometimes a misunderstanding on the side of the Government what should be the role of civil society in public policy- and decision-making and some government official recognize their opinions based on research as acts of political opposition.
- Regular monitoring of the Guidelines is crucial; i.e. make a sustainable framework that will monitor the timeline dynamics and especially for the 3 areas of the Guidelines- relevant samples of CSOs for research (in previous monitoring it was very narrow sample in the entire region). It is important to know the scope of monitoring (bearing in mind that there are new actors on the civil society scene) and to know how the trends will be monitored.

**Biljana Dakic Đorđević, Trag Foundation, member of NRC and SIGN network**

- Qualitative indicators are well noted change in comparison to the previous period. It important to go beyond the legal framework, as the laws are good in most of the region, but we need to have insights in their implementation;
- We will see the consequences of the COVID-19 situation, where CSOs were very much limited in obtaining funding from state and companies. In situations where everything was channelled towards the state institutions and Government took additional measures to make privileged donations to state institutions. For example, VAT exemption was for the first time introduced, but

only for the philanthropy toward public institutions. She shared two useful documents on this issues<sup>1</sup>;

- Dialogue and influence part: Qualitative indicators and case studies (i.e., Council on philanthropy activity, case or Directorate Prevention of Money Laundering) show that implementation of laws can be very problematic;
- In revised Guidelines, the focus is on the capacities of central institutions to take part in dialogues and the question is how the local authorities will be monitored to take on the same role;
- Resilience –indicators are very detailed and reflect new needs, but it is not sufficiently noted in terms of the need for a more flexible approach and support to CSOs, especially when it comes to support networks (although networks are recognized as indicator). There is room to introduce strategic support to development of networks and longer-term institutional support;
- Digital gap in the capacity of CSO and age gaps are visible especially as consequence of COVID-19;
- Public trust: there is an increased trust at local level and decreased trust on the national level and how to measure those two levels is an unresolved issue.

**Biljana Djusic (SDC)** noted that it is good to see that additional focus is put on “organizations being led and rooted by its members/constituency”. What might be added is the CSO role in the mobilization of citizens for participation in decision-making processes (local and national).

#### **Slobodan Martinović (Center for Policy Research Argument)**

In addition to dialogue between government and civil society, there is a lack of dialogue within civil society itself. Because civil society is divided into organizations that receive grants and organizations that point out problems in the community. An imbalance has been created, which has led to activism from an individual perspective being a pure luxury practiced only by well-paid individuals and organizations. The EU itself contributes to this imbalance through bureaucratic procedures. Money is now the driver of change rather than a just and better society. The Guidelines should help CSOs develop their services in the community. This is how we are constantly in the advocacy process without clear changes. Research and analysis services in particular need to be strengthened, as it is essential to strengthen expertise in the development of society.

#### **Reflection on the issues raised in the first part of the discussion:**

Quality indicators in the part of inclusion of CSOs in policy-making are very important. It is very important to detect extraordinary procedures by public institutions (sometimes EU flagged) as well as the information available prior to public consultations, right to information throughout the process as well as feedback to comments that are received, so it can be considered dialogue. It is important that not only policy, laws, bylaws, but also local regulations that influence the life of local communities are included as indicators.

In terms of monitoring approach and sample for Area 3, the biggest dilemma is should it aim to measure the state of overall civil society or focus on CSOs funded by the EU. Between those two extremes, what the current approach ensures is that the gathering of data is done through civil society, but are complemented with practice from public institution and donors. Validation of findings and recommendations with all stakeholders is performed currently to ensure the assessment reflects the facts and facilitates taking appropriate steps to improve the situation.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://tragfondacija.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/Filantropska-agenda.pdf>, <https://tragfondacija.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/Izvestaj-Srbija-daruje-neprofitnom-sektoru-2019.pdf>



For local level, in most of cases, the data is within public institutions and in some cases, there are limitations to getting this data. The proposal is to remain flexible so that data at local level can be collected in cases where they are available.

Alessandra Viezzer underlined that the Guidelines bring together in coherent manner standards that are already binding, and that oblige IPA Beneficiaries, although the Guidelines itself itself is not binding. The focus is on the indicators as they are allowing measurement of how far the IPA Beneficiaries are progressing toward those standards. So the political dimension is there, they will be used to see how much progress has been made and since they are not formally adopted, they bring flexibility and allow change over the next seven years. She also stressed the importance of the inclusion of all actors, civil society and public institutions, and the inclusion of all types and size of CSOs. They all have a role to play. The Commission is aware of the complexity of EU funding and does not want to turn all civil society actors into project managers. That is why sub-granting mechanisms have been introduced and have to be optimised, so no one is excluded.

**Goran Nikolic (People's Parliament)** said that the Guidelines bring many good points and offer some solutions. Two suggestions:

- Specific objective 3.1 Area 2- Central authorities need to include but also enable CSOs- this is important for local organisations that have practical obstacles to participate in decision-making. Enabling would mean that working groups are formed and except applications from CSO, but demanding experience in previous working groups that in many cases exclude CSOs that didn't have chance to participate previously;
- Area 3, Resilience and capacity Indicator 6.1.b Donors: Donors never asked for example CSOs in Southern Serbia what is needed even if they plan a program for Southern Serbia. Word decentralization in particular of EU funds, which are centralized and most of the funds intended to CSO support goes to Belgrade-based CSO. Overcoming might be re-granting, but it's not a perfect solution.

**Milena Nedeljkov, Ministry for Human and Minority Rights and Societal dialogue** stated that the Guidelines are important, not only for planning, but for overviewing what has been achieved. Indicators are detailed and particularly good, and in Serbia there is a good legal framework, but its implementation needs further improvement. She gave an overview of the status with regard to the following areas:

- Indicator 3.1 – All strategies that were adopted during 2020 were in accordance with the Law on Planning Systems and involved consultative process. In 2020, the implementation of the Guidelines for inclusion of CSOs Working groups through public calls has started and the Ministry is preparing report on the implementation of this Guidelines and recommendations for the improvement of this process. The Ministry will post all relevant reports on their website;
- The Ministry as its priority envisages preparing the Strategy for enabling environments for civil society in a wide participatory process;
- When it comes to the area of public funding, the former Office was preparing the Annual Reports. This activity was taken by the new Ministry. The application is being developed that will allow enable the tracking of annual public funding, both of public calls on all three levels of government (local, provincial and national), as well as the results of the calls;
- Consultations- the Ministry plans to publish the report on the process of consultations that will include qualitative dimension.

**Milica Bulajic, Office for Combating Drugs** stressed that they have very good cooperation with CSOs and open an invitation to CSOs to sign a memorandum of cooperation with the Office on the website. Representatives of CSOs are included in the Action Plan for combating the misuse of drugs and this

cooperation is a rising trend. The Office will further work on developing criteria for including CSOs in development of relevant laws.

**Vladimir Stojcic (Young Farmers of Serbia)** noticed that Serbia has heavily centralized power and local “barons” that are kept to enable central power, but their cities are left without freedom to information, journalism, activism and CSOs are struggling to get even the basic information. The human factor is falling behind the legislation that is pretty good.

**Slobodan Martinović, (Center for Policy Research Argument)** added that the Guidelines should also deal with political participation from which many people have been excluded, i.e. including the possibility to change the government through elections.

**Stanka Parac Damjanovic (Local Democracy Agency Subotica, BNLD)** stated that it is also good to see the rephrased concept of local community initiatives, instead of using grass-root organisations. However, it would be important to emphasize the role of civil society in communicating and in deepening the understanding of the EU integration reform process. There is also a missing link - the role of CSO in education for active citizenship with particular focus on local level as part of getting back to fundamentals.

**Dragiša Mijačić (InTER)** wrote in Chat that methodologically is important to make a typology of CSOs, since they can't be considered homogeneous entity. There is a huge difference between community-based organisations and think tanks, between advocacy-based and value-based organisations, humanitarian/charity organisations and social service providers, member-based and non-member-based organisations. Putting all of them in the same basket methodologically will not lead to comprehensive results.

**Sasa Kovacevic, Office for IT and e-Government Serbia** informed that the Office for Information Technology and Electronic Administration is working on the development of the e-Participation Portal. The Portal is in the finalization phase and is expected to be launched soon. The e-Participation Portal will be the central place for publishing all information related to the consultative process of law-making or public policy, and the implementation of the electronic consultation process. In addition, the Portal will support the collection of initiatives by the economy and by citizens to amend already adopted regulations. This will allow visitors to the portal to be able to point out difficulties, unnecessary administrative procedures or unnecessary costs to the authors of the regulations.

#### **Reflection on the issues raised in the second part of the discussion.**

Alessandra Viezzer thanked for all inputs and stressed the importance of result frameworks to measure the progress in the region. New Enlargement methodology stresses the importance of fundamentals and the state of civil society is part of fundamentals. When it comes to EU funding, it is public money and in the moment of crises it is going to increase for IPA Beneficiaries. But with money comes the need for strong accountability. Civil society is not monolith and there is a work being done and more should be done to support civil society in all its diversity. She invited all actors to contribute to the Guidelines through inputs and make the Guidelines fit for purpose.

**Ekmele Cizmecioglu, Program Manager for civil society and human rights in the Delegation of EU to Serbia** thanked for all inputs. He especially thanked for inputs related to the funding as it is important to make funding flexible and transparent. Financial support to third parties allows support to local CSOs, but also informal groups. There is always room for improvement, and he invited all civil society actors to provide inputs on programming of the CSF 2021-23 for Serbia.



## CONCLUSIONS & NEXT STEPS

It was concluded that the consultation event was useful in exchanging constructive feedback from different actors. After the consultation event, participants were invited to submit written contributions to EU TACSO 3 at [consultations@tacso.eu](mailto:consultations@tacso.eu) by Friday, 12 March 2021. Organizations were informed that contributions can be in the form of a comment, suggestion, useful study or report etc. to draft Guidelines. Written contributions can be submitted both in English and Serbian languages. The final version of the document is expected to be presented and promoted it in April 2021.





Annex 1. Agenda

## GUIDELINES FOR EU SUPPORT TO CIVIL SOCIETY IN ENLARGEMENT REGION FOR THE PERIOD 2021-2027

SERBIA  
26 FEBRUARY, 2021

### Online public consultation process AGENDA

Friday, 26 February 2021

- |               |   |
|---------------|---|
| 09:30 – 09:45 | <b>Introduction, objectives of the process</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Alessandra Viezzer, Deputy Head of Unit, Western Balkans Regional Cooperation and Programmes (D5), DG NEAR</li><li>• Yngve Engström, Head of Cooperation, Delegation of the European Union to Serbia</li><li>• Tanja Hafner Ademi, Team Leader, EU TACSO 3</li></ul> |
| 09:45 – 10:15 | <b>EU Civil Society Guidelines for the Enlargement region, 2021-2027</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Presentation of the draft framework</li><li>• Q&amp;A</li></ul>  |
| 10:15 – 11:45 | <b>Discussion</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Moderated by Jelena Pajovic Van Reenen, Country Coordinator for Serbia, EU TACSO 3</li></ul>  |
| 11:45 – 12:00 | <b>Conclusions &amp; next steps</b>   |



**Annex 2: List of participants**

No.	First Name	Last Name	Organization Name
1	Jelena	Ankić	Caritas Serbia
2	Tamara	Bosic	Renewables and Environmental Regulatory Institute – “RERI”
3	Biljana	Dakić Đorđević	Trag Foundation
4	Irena	Damjanovic	Center for youth work
5	Sara	Dereta	Belgrade Center for Human Rights
6	Bojan	Elek	Belgrade Centar for Security Policy
7	Tamara	Filipovic Stevanovic	Independent journalist association Serbia
8	Nataša	Gligorijević	Center for sustainable development of Serbia
9	Marina	Grnja Klaić	Novi Sad School of Journalism
10	Ivana	Jelaca	Media Diversity Institute Western Balkans
11	Milica	Joković	Ethnicity Research Center
12	Sladjana	Jovanović	Ecumenical Humanitarian Organization
13	Vanja	Kalaba	Center for youth work
14	Nataša	Konstantinović	Trag foundation
15	Vladimir	M. Pavlović	Belgrade Open School
16	Iva	Marković	Right to water / Polekol
17	Slobodan	Martinović	Centar for research in policies Argument
18	Dragisa	Mijacic	Institute for territorial economic development- InTER
19	Snežana	Milošević	Ecological society Bujanovac
20	Jelena	Milutinovic	Youth initiative for human rights mladih
21	Goran	Mitrovic	People’s Parliament
22	Tanja	Mrkalj	Junior Achievement Serbia
23	Stanka	Parac Damjanovic	Local Democracy Agency , LDA Subotica
24	Slavka	Popić	Association for assistance to persons with mental disabilities "Pearl"
25	Aleksandar	Popovic	Association Independent Cultural Scene of Serbia
26	Mirko	Popovic	Renewables and Environmental Regulatory Institute – “RERI”
27	Nataša	Rašković	Pro.Tok21
28	Svetlana	Radosavljevic	Trag foundation
29	Marijana	Radovanovic	Ceves
30	Dragan	Roganovic	IDA
31	Aleksandra	Šanjević	Open Society Foundation Serbia
32	Bojana	Selakovic	Civic Initiatives
33	Ana	Toskić Cvetinović	Partners Serbia
34	Jelena	Unijat	Group 484
35	Ljiljana	Vasic	Children and Youth Support Organization CYSO
36	Aleksandra	Vesic	Catalyst Balkans
37	Maja	Vranic	Foundation Ana and Vlade Divac
38	Milica	Zaric	Municipality Srbobran



39	Ivan	Živkov	Citizens upheaval
40	Žaklina	Živković	Right to water / Polekol
41	Jelena	Zlatkova	Association "World of words"
42	Ivona	Gvozdenovic	National Convention on the EU
43	Tanja	Mrkalj	Junior Achievement Serbia
44	Marija	Vujković	Civic Initiatives, NRC Serbia
45	Dejana	Stevkovski	Civic Initiatives, NRC Serbia
46	Slavka	Popić	Association for assistance to persons with mental disabilities "Pearl"
47	Marinela	Sabo	Association for assistance to persons with mental disabilities "Pearl"
48	Vladimir	Stojcic	Young farmers of Serbia
49	Ivana	Lazarević	National Convention on the European Union
50	Vladimir	Vukicevic	Ministry of Justice
51	Bojan	Šarenac	Ministry of Trade, Tourism and Telecommunications
52	Milica	Bulajić	Office for Combating Drugs
53	Marija	Bojic	Commissariat for Refugees and Migration
54	Bogdan	Banjac	Commissioner for Protection of Equality
55	Milena	Nedeljkov	Ministry for Human and Minority Rights and Societal Dialogue
56	Sasa	Kovačević	Office for Information Technologies and E-Government
57	Jelena	Todorović	Ministry for Human and Minority Rights and Societal Dialogue
58	Tina	Janjatovic	Ministry of Environmental Protection
59	Jovan	Dragumilo	Public Policy Secretariat of the Republic of Serbia
60	Vladimir	Vukicevic	Ministry of Justice
61	Brian	Ebel	Embassy of Canada
62	Nenad	Petkovic	UNDP RELOAD
63	Valdete	Osmani	OSCE
64	Biljana	Đušić Radmilović	Embassy of Switzerland /SDC
65	Aleksandra	Kalinić	Embassy of the Netherlands
66	Grégoire	Soria-Metais	Embassy of France
67	Bertrand	Millet	Embassy of France
68	Jelena	Avramovic	USAID