



Technical Assistance for  
Civil Society Organisations  
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BusinessMacedonia



## National Conference Report

# COOPERATION BETWEEN CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANISATIONS AND LOCAL SELF-GOVERNMENT

Ohrid, Hotel Inex Gorica, 27-28 June 2011

The National conference **Cooperation between Civil Society Organisations and Local Self-Government** was organized by the TACSO project in partnership with 4 Civil Society Organizations which were participants at the regional TACSO regional conference on this topic, and they are: National Council for Gender Equality, Center for Promotion of Sustainable Agricultural Practices and Rural Development-CeProCARD, Business Confederation of Macedonia and Association of the Units of Local Self-government ( ZELS).

The overall objective of this national conference was to transfer the experiences gained from the TACSO regional conference on the topic **“Cooperation between Civil Society Organisations and Local Governments”**, held in February 2011 in Becici, Montenegro, and to create a possibility for Civil Society Organisations to discuss this topic together with all relevant stakeholders. The working sessions of the conference were focused on exchange of perspectives and identification of recommendations of what to be undertaken in the direction of strengthening the cooperation between CSOs and the Local Self-Governments. The conclusions and recommendations of the conference should be a basis for further mutual steps of CSOs and Local Self-Governments for better cooperation at local level.

The participants of the conference were 108 representatives of the Civil Society Organisations, mayors and other representatives of the Local Self-Governments in our country, journalists and media representatives.

The event consisted of four panel sessions and three parallel workshops.

During the introductory session the objective and programme of the conference, as well as the importance of the topics for discussion were presented. During the opening the Resident Advisor of the TACSO project in Macedonia, Suncica Szdovska stressed the importance of this event, experiences from the regional conference in Montenegro on the same topic, which were the basis for defining the proposed conference programme, as well as the preparation activities.

Ms. Dusica Perisik from ZELS in her opening address talked about the role of ZELS and their existence of many years, having as an overall objective the improvement of Local Self-Government operation. She mentioned the competences of municipalities and experiences of ZELS in all the topics proposed for a discussion, as well as the existence of the training center of ZELS. She emphasized the cooperation with CSOs as especially important in the operation of municipalities.

In the second session which was moderated by Ms. Savka Todorovska from the National Council for Gender Equality, four keynote speakers took part. The topic of **Transparency and accountability of the Local Self-Government** was a guideline for the opening addresses of the participants of this session.

Mr. Mihail Volkanovski, the mayor of Resen talked about the sustainability of one society which is deeply connected with the cooperation between Local Self-Governments and CSOs. He stressed the accountable functioning of the municipality of Resen and the importance of existence of the municipal web site, as well as the initiatives for debates, gatherings and public events in Resen. He talked about the tools used by the municipality for informing the citizens and their greater involvement. The public monthly magazine "Prespanski aber" was used as an example which this municipality has and uses to announce projects and transparency of the municipality of Resen.

Mr. Aleksandar Pisarev from CSRD Forum talked about the research conducted by this organization in order to analyze the positive and negative practices of ULSG in 84 municipalities. The results from the research, in his opinion, show the level of democratization in the municipalities related with the manner of communication with the citizens. He raised the question of whether the contents of newsletters and municipal newspapers objectively reflect the situation in municipalities. The report, as he stressed, has reviewed in detail both rural and urban communities. According to this research, the participation of CSOs has been marginalized and they almost have no role in decision making and spending of budget money.

Mr. German Filkov from the Centre for Citizens' Communications presented his research, which together with two CSOs under the auspices of USAID, have conducted in the municipalities. He talked about the situation, recommendations and challenges for a transparent and accountable functioning of the municipalities, which have resulted from this research. He presented in detail the research objectives, results, used methodology and involvement of 1371 citizens, CSOs and municipalities. With respect to the conclusions he pointed out that there are no unified solutions, i.e. each municipality has different problems and each municipality should adequately solve those problems.

Ms. Irena Nikolov from ZELS presented in detail the role of ZELS and ethical standards, as well as their successful application. She presented the programmes and projects of ZELS and ways of exchange of good practices and examples of different municipalities.

The third session was titled ***Fundraising and activities at local level***. This session was moderated by Ms. Irena Nikolov from ZELS.

Mr. Ivica Konevski, the mayor of municipality of Aerodrom talked about the forms of communication with the citizens used by this municipality, the existence of e-mail addresses for contact with the citizens and the presence in media, such as 138 articles in 2010 and 782 announcements in published media as well as the monthly newsletter of the municipality which dedicates a part for questions and answers for the citizens. He stressed the involvement of citizens in relation with making decisions about the budget and educational institutions as well as the 3D animation made to attract investments, which proved as very successful.

Mr. Mile Boskov from the Business Confederation of Macedonia – employers' association talked about their organisation and its members. He stressed the cooperation of CSOs with the association. The participants showed a great interest for the topic of local economic and social councils presented by Mr. Boskov. He provided the example of Kavadarci for signing of this kind of agreement and its influence to the decision making process. He also presented the tools and products which they use for lobbying of the business associations and about the Law on Public-Private Partnership and Corporate Governance. In regard to the ways of long-term fundraising he mentioned the free economic zones in many municipalities. Mr. Mile Boskov took responsibility to distribute the model for agreement for establishing local economic councils to all participants and to all municipalities in the country.

The fourth session was titled ***Participation of CSOs in decision making at local level*** and it was moderated by Mr. Aleksandar Jovcevski from the Business Confederation of Macedonia.

Ms. Liljana Tanevska from CeProSARD talked about the objectives and processes of decentralization, European Charter for Local Self-Governments, and how to make the local government administration to be closer to the citizens, the forms of citizens' participation in the decision making process at local level, local government and the decision making process in the rural areas and local communities. She mentioned some examples of institutionalization of citizens' participation in the rural areas in the European Union, as well as the experiences in Macedonia.

Mr. Igor Tasevski from Centre for Civic Initiatives talked about the importance of citizens' participation and described the process, about the formal and informal groups and involvement of the citizens in these processes. He presented the practices of effective citizens' participation and its benefits. He mentioned the forms of citizens' participation such as gatherings, panel discussions, referendum complaints, suggestions and surveys.

Ms. Katica Chadieva who represented the municipality of Veles informed the participants about the positive practices which have been used by this municipality in the last 6 years. She emphasized the database of CSOs based on areas or sectors of operation. She said that CSOs in this municipality participate in the development of draft documents, in the activities of the Council of the town of Veles, in commissions, and she also stressed the positive example of the green coalition about the problems with the smelting factory.

Ms. Savka Todorovska from National Council for Gender Equality talked about the levels of participation of CSOs in the decision making processes such as information, consultation, dialogue and partnership. She stressed the 6<sup>th</sup> steps of the decision making process and good practices related with the steps. She stressed especially the establishment of the first commissions about equal opportunities in the pilot municipalities where they have been conducted.

In continuation of the first day of the conference, the participants worked in 3 working groups. The workshops had the following topics:

- Transparency and accountability of the Local Self-Government
- Fundraising and activities at local level
- Participation of CSOs in decision making at local level

The conclusions and discussion related with the conclusions of the working groups were presented during the second day of the conference when all the participants had an opportunity to ask questions and to discuss these three topics.

### **Working group 1: Transparency and accountability of the Local Self-Government**

*Facilitator and reporter: Savka Todorovska and Dragana Drndarevska*

#### **Conclusions and recommendations:**

1. Using the existing and new forms of cooperation of municipalities with CSOs and citizens
2. Education about higher transparency and accountability of the Local Self-Government administration and counsellors
3. Full decentralization of the municipalities
4. Promotion of the Local Self-Government as service for all citizens
5. Citizens and CSOs should be informed more about ways to use the mechanisms of transparency and accountability at local level
6. Strengthening of the importance of various mechanisms which open the possibility for cooperation among the social partners
7. Days for meetings between the Local Self-Governments and CSOs

8. Lower influence of the political affiliation in problem solving at local level
9. Partner relation between the Local Self-Government and CSOs (in implementation of mutual activities, preparation of mutual projects and applications, development of strategies, action plans and budgets)

### **Working group 2: Fundraising and activities at local level**

*Facilitator and reporter: Irena Nikolov and Lidija Nedelkovska*

#### **Conclusions and recommendations:**

1. More frequent and strengthened communication between ULSG, Civil Society Organisations and business sector
2. Increase of influence of Civil Society Organisations in the transparent allocation of finances from the municipal budget to the Civil Society Organisations
3. Involvement of CSOs in determining the priorities for financing CSOs
4. Lobbying to the municipal counsellors for advocating the interests of CSOs
5. Establishment of local funds for support of CSOs for their co-financing in the application for EU funds
6. Compliance with the standards for social responsibility
7. Establishment of local economic and social councils and inclusion of CSOs
8. Provision of a fund for a start-up of good and sustainable projects.

### **Working group 3: Participation of CSOs in decision making at local level**

*Facilitator and reporter: Aleksandar Jovcevski and Liljana Tanevska*

#### **Conclusions and recommendations:**

1. Implementation of the existing forms of participation of CSOs in decision making at local level
  - Being implemented in some of the municipalities
  - For example: in Kocani, Strumica, Veles public panel discussions and initiatives are being carried out
  - Adoption of strategies and documents – Skopje, Veles
  - Local referenda, Stip
2. A need for introduction of a binding act for inclusion of CSOs in the decision making processes at local level
  - In cooperation with the Councils
  - Cooperation with the municipal administration
  - Keeping CSOs informed
  - Realization of the right to Referendum for the citizens
3. Use of the possibility for cooperation for implementation of assigning competences
4. Changes in the Law on Local Self-Government in the part for local government and decision making at local level
5. Increase of the capacities of CSOs about the operating system of LSG
6. Definition and announcement of the criteria for allocation of finances from the budget dedicated to CSOs
7. Stimulating LSG to have equal treatment of CSOs
8. Sustainability of CSOs
9. Implementation of sanction measures for LSG for not carrying out the activities stipulated in Chapter 4 of the Law on Local Self-Government
10. Use of tools which are part of the Aarhus Convention for general use for CSOs and cooperation with LSG
11. Violation of the regulations for financing the organizations for people with intellectual disability

## 12. Development of the capacities of LSG to include CSOs in the decision making processes at local level

At the end of the final plenary session when the topics of the three working groups were discussed, Mirjana Pehcevska Pop-Iliev from the TACSO project summed up that the conference contributed to an improved understanding of the situations and challenges in the cooperation of CSOs with the Local Self-Government. She emphasizes that it is necessary to make a more detailed analysis of the already established mechanisms of communications for its improvement where it is necessary. The positive practices of certain municipalities such as the municipalities of Resen and Veles are good practices for the legal obligation of the municipalities for inclusion of the citizens in decision making processes. There is a necessity for education of both the municipalities and CSOs for their better cooperation, partner relationship and non-discriminatory policy. The examples of economic and social councils and the inclusion of CSOs in them are good examples and their establishment should be continued in more municipalities. In regard to the allocation of finances from the budgets it is necessary to determine precise criteria and to exclude the selective approach to certain CSOs.

At the end, the participants made an **evaluation of the conference** through an evaluation questionnaire. The summarised data of the evaluation show that the participants have expressed very big satisfaction with the contents of the conference, the methodology which was used and the preparedness of the keynote speakers. They have considered the topics covered by the conference as very relevant. The organisational and logistic aspects of the conference have also been highly rated.

### **Annexes**

Annex 1 Programme

Annex 2 List of participants

Annex 3 Presentations of keynote speakers

Annex 3 Presentations of the working groups result

**NATIONAL CONFERENCE  
COOPERATION BETWEEN CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANISATIONS AND  
LOCAL SELF-GOVERNMENT  
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**Programme**

**Objectives of the national conference:**

Main objectives of the national conference is to transfer experience gained from the regional conference on the topic “**Cooperation between CSOs and local governments**” however, at the same time also to create possibility for the Macedonian CSOs to jointly discuss on this significant topic with all relevant stakeholders. The working sessions on the conference will be targeted at exchanging perspectives and identifying recommendations that will be undertaken for strengthening the cooperation between CSOs and local governments. The conclusions and the recommendations from each working group will be the basis for the follow-up steps which should be jointly implemented by CSOs and local self-governments aiming at strengthened and improved cooperation on local level.

The national conference is organized by the TACSO project together with 4 CSOs who participated in the regional conference on the same topic: National Council for Gender Equality, Center for Promotion of Sustainable Agricultural Practices and Rural Development - CeProSARD, Business Confederation of Macedonia and the Association of Units of Local Self-Government.

**Key elements of the conference agenda:**

- **General elements for cooperation between CSOs and the local self-government**

1. *Transparency and accountability of the local self-government*

(information targeted at citizens, diversification of canals for rightful information distribution, analysis of the deficiencies, the established information and communication mechanisms, and the need for their improvement, if needed)

2. *Fund-raising and activities on local level*

(research in the possibilities for using the model of Public-private partnership, passing and effective implementation of the standards for social responsibilities)

3. *CSOs' involvement in decision making on local level*

(Effective participation of CSOs in the decision making process, research about the possibilities for adopting codex for involvement in decision making process, referendum as a method for increased participation of citizens in decision making process).

- **Overview of the institutional structure – government structures competent to support CSOs**

(unit for cooperation with CSOs in municipalities)

- **Legal frame** – current laws and other regulations related to this issue

**Other important elements for the conference programme:**

Based on the regional conference on cooperation between the CSOs and the local government, the main conclusions were grouped in the following three topics:

1. *Transparency and accountability of the local self-government*

2. *Fund-raising and activities on local level*

3. *CSOs' involvement in decision making on local level*

Pursuant to this, the working group discussions will be targeted at these three topics.

**Participants**

- Invited guests (key-note speakers from CSOs) – presentation of good practices and examples about cooperation between CSOs and local government
- Representatives from the local self-government (mayors and other representatives)
- Representatives from Ministry of Local Self-Government
- Representative from ZELS
- Journalists/media representatives

**Conference materials:**

- TACSO report from the regional conference Cooperation between CSOs and local government
- Presentations from key-note speakers
- Conference agenda

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Ohrid, hotel Ineks Gorica, 27-28 June 2011**

**Monday, 27 June 2011**

|               |   |
|---------------|---|
| 10:00 – 10:30 | Registration of participants  |
| 10:30 -11:15  | Opening speech <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Suncica Sazdovska</b>, TACSO Resident</li> <li>• <b>Dusica Perisic</b>, Association of Units of Local Self-Government (ZELS)</li> </ul>  |
| 11:15 – 12:00 | Introduction to the first conference topic<br><b>Transparency and accountability of the local self-government</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Mihail Volkanovski</b> – Mayor of municipality of Resen</li> <li>• <b>Aleksandar Pisarev</b> – Centre for strategic research and documentation - Forum</li> <li>• <b>German Filkov</b> – Center for Civil Communications</li> <li>• <b>Irena Nikolov</b> – ZELS</li> </ul> <i>Moderator: Savka Todorovska – National Council for Gender Equality</i>              |
| 12:00-12:30   | <b>Coffee</b>   |
| 12:30-13:45   | Introduction to the second conference topic<br><b>Fund-raising and activities on local level</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Mile Boshkov</b> – Business Confederation of Macedonia (BCM)</li> <li>• <b>Ivica Konevski</b> – Mayor of Aerodrom</li> </ul> <i>Moderator: Irena Nikolov – ZELS</i>  |
| 13:45-15:00   | <b>Lunch</b>  |
| 15:00-15:45   | Introduction to the third conference topic<br>Involvement in decision making <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Liljana Tanevska</b> – Coordinator for local development (CeProSARD)</li> <li>• <b>Igor Tasevski</b> – Center for Civic Initiatives</li> <li>• <b>Katica Cadieva</b> – municipality of Veles</li> <li>• <b>Savka Todorovska</b> – National Council for Gender Equality</li> </ul> <i>Moderator: Aleksandar Jovcevski – Business Confederation of Macedonia</i>   |
| 15:45-16:15   | <b>Coffee</b>   |
| 16:15 – 17:30 | Work in 3 different groups:<br>Working group 1 Transparency and accountability of local self-government<br>(discussion leader – <b>Savka Todorovska</b> , time coordinator, note-taker, reporter)<br>Working group 2 Fund-raising and activities on local level<br>( discussion leader – <b>Irena Nikolov</b> , time coordinator, note-taker, reporter )<br>Working group 3 CSOs’ involvement in decision making on local level<br>( discussion leader – <b>Aleksandar Jovcevski</b> , time coordinator, note-taker, reporter ) |
| 19:00         | <b>Joint dinner</b>   |

**Tuesday, 28 June 2011**

|              |                |
|--------------|----------------|
| 9:30 - 10:00 | Morning coffee |
|--------------|----------------|

|               |  |
|---------------|--|
| 10:00-11:00   | <p>Overview of the previous day (overview of the Agenda for both days)<br/> Reporting about the results from the group work discussions -<br/> Working group 1. <i>Reporter</i><br/> <i>Questions and possibilities for discussion of all participants</i><br/> Working group 2. <i>Reporter</i><br/> <i>Questions and possibilities for discussion of all participants</i></p> <p>Working group 3. <i>Reporter</i><br/> <i>Questions and possibilities for discussion of all participants</i></p> <p><b><i>Moderator: Mirjana Pehcevska Pop-Iliev TACSO project officer</i></b></p> |
| 11:00 -11:30  | Summarizing the conclusions from the discussions and closing the national conference   |
| 11:30 – 12:00 | Evaluation of the conference   |
| 13:00-14:30   | <b>Lunch</b>   |