



## EU TACSO 3 Meeting Notes

People-to-People Programme Event/Regional Event Number 63

### EU Accession Negotiation Process Learning Exchange between CSOs from Montenegro and Serbia with CSOs from Albania and North Macedonia

March 30 and 31, 2023, Tirana, Albania

## Introduction

### Purpose

These meeting notes are based on the outcomes of a People-to-People event organised by the EU TACSO 3 project in Tirana, Albania on 30-31 March 2023.

The aim of the event was for “CSOs from Albania and North Macedonia to have learned about the best practices used by CSOs from Montenegro and Serbia to prepare, influence, and improve the results of EU accession negotiations.”

The event gathered 45 participants from Albania, Montenegro, North Macedonia, and Serbia. Please refer to the enclosed Annex A Master List of Participants\_P2P EU Accession Event March 30-31 2023 Tirana, AL.

This event also involved participants from the governments of North Macedonia, Albania, Serbia, and Montenegro. As such, the target audience was broader, enriching the discussion and leading to greater cooperation and understanding between civil society and government representatives coming from four countries.

This meeting note summarises the main points that arose during the event by theme rather than by a strict sequence of the agenda.

## Background

The EU granted the candidate status to Montenegro in December 2010 and to Serbia in March 2012. In March 2020, the General Affairs Council decided to open accession negotiations with Albania and North Macedonia.

Montenegro and Serbia have substantively longer candidate status than Albania and North Macedonia, and their CSOs have participated in and/or observed processes of negotiations with the EU. The proposed P2P event aims to share the experiences of CSOs in Serbia and Montenegro with CSOs in Albania and North Macedonia, who are involved or considering being involved in accession negotiations, chapter working groups, or similar. At the event and following the event, the CSOs from Albania and North Macedonia will benefit from the experience of their peers from Montenegro and Serbia. The event will be the platform to ask complicated questions, get answers and build on gained knowledge and experience.

The European Commission presented to the Council draft negotiating frameworks for Albania and North Macedonia on July 1, 2020, laying out the guidelines and principles for their accession talks. The Commission was invited to submit these proposals in March 2020 by the General Affairs Council when it decided to open negotiations with both IPA Beneficiaries. On the other side, there was not much-

made progress in the process of involvement of civil society organisations in working with respective governments in the process of consultations. Also, based on the First Assessment Report's preliminary results on DG Near Guidelines for EU Support to Civil Society in the Enlargement Region 2021-2027 implementation, the involving CSOs in consultations is far from stellar. *In North Macedonia, the Code of Good Practice promotes the participation of CSOs in public decision-making, however, their inclusion has not been satisfactory. In 2021, only four ministries included CSOs in consultations and did so for only 16 of the 46 working groups established for this purpose. In Albania, the Roadmap for the Government Policy toward a More Enabling Environment for Civil Society Development 2019-2023 is not accompanied by an appropriate budget, and the responsibility for the implementation of the strategy is shared among different ministries. Virtually no measures planned for 2021 were implemented, and there has been no report on monitoring and evaluating the progress of the roadmap implementation.*

Both Albania and North Macedonia have been preparing the models and framework for the negotiations, including proposals for CSO involvement.

### Existing fora for CSO government cooperation

Throughout the region, there are various opportunities for government–civil society cooperation. These include:

- the Councils for Government – Civil Society Cooperation, which provide a main forum for CSOs and governments to engage on issues more specifically related to the enabling environment for civil society;
- the IPA monitoring committees, in which CSOs and other stakeholders work with government representatives to programme IPA funding and monitor implementation.

The accession negotiation structures are distinct from these and follow the formal, usually legally established, mechanisms for government – EU international treaty negotiations.

## EU Accession Negotiations – current situation for the newly opened negotiations Albania

The collaboration between political institutions and civil society in Albania is being emphasized as a crucial aspect of the EU integration process. Efforts are being made to enhance efficiency and inclusiveness, allowing for a more proactive engagement of civil society. In 2019, a platform on EU integration was established, conducting 33 round tables for civil society discussions. However, there is a need to further improve this mechanism and explore ideas to make it more effective.

Currently, the screening process is ongoing, with the reports still pending. Bilateral meetings have been concluded for Clusters 1 and 2, while Cluster 3 is awaited. Round tables have been established for all 23 chapters, but adjustments are needed to ensure their effectiveness. Another platform for discussion is the National Council on Civil Society, which brings together CSOs and government actors, including the Ministry of Health. Furthermore, the Law on Public Information and Consultation enables e-consultation on laws and by-laws approved by the Council of Ministers.

To strengthen cooperation, a roadmap for enabling civil society has been drafted for the period up to 2023, with this year being the final implementation year. A report has been presented to the National Council, emphasizing the need to prepare a roadmap for the next cycle up to 2030 to align with policies and policy frameworks. The key challenge lies in the EU integration process. Additionally, there is a Register of CSOs based in the Court of Tirana, and managed by the judicial system. The Agency for Civil Society has been providing grants since 2010, while a government agency focuses on communication

with the public. Recently, the Committee on Open Government Partnership met to approve an action plan.

Information, consultation, communication, and involvement of civil society, interest groups, the academic world, and local government in the process of negotiations for membership in the European Union as well as in the Stabilization-Association process is carried out through the Partnership Platform for European Integration and Consultation Tables.

However, all three stages – inclusion, empowerment, and engagement need improvements. The consultations should not be only provisional – “tick the box”, but factual. Engagement of the CSOs is still low, there is a need to improve their interest, while at the same time, they lack relevant technical experience and support.

### North Macedonia

On March 26, 2022, the European Council decided to start accession negotiations with North Macedonia. Fifteen years after receiving the candidate status and after ten recommendations from the European Commission, North Macedonia finally began membership negotiations.

In 2018, after signing the bilateral agreement for the settlement between the Republic of North Macedonia and Greece, the EU renewed the recommendation for starting the negotiation process in June 2019 with a conditional date. After this settlement, the Unit for Cooperation with Civil Society Sector at the Government, at the 82<sup>nd</sup> Government session in 2018, adopted a decision for the inclusion of the CSOs in the negotiation process at all levels, screening process, participation in the working groups, and monitoring the negotiation process. The selection process of the CSOs representatives was defined as well as the register of CSOs per area was created.

The level and extent of the CSO’s participation - what type of members of the working groups they would be, was the only one lacking definition at this stage. North Macedonia’s efforts were supported by the IPA Project “Dialogue with CSOs – the platform for structural participation in EU Integration” implemented from April 2019 to March 2022 that was supposed to:

- a. develop a platform for structural participation of the CSOs in the consultation and decision-making for EU integration,
- b. enhance the formal mechanisms for consultation with the CSOs, and
- c. enhance the influence and impact of the CSOs in the negotiation process.

However, due to the veto from Bulgaria and the blocked negotiation process, this project ended without fulfilling the main objectives, although provided the core prerequisites for this process.

By the end of 2021, the Secretariat of European Affairs with the help of Nordic Support for Progress of North Macedonia<sup>1</sup> (NSPNM), engaged an expert from Montenegro that in cooperation with SEA<sup>2</sup> and the existing structures and documents for EU negotiations, developed a model that was presented by the end of March 2023 to representatives of the CSO sector. The model is based on three pillars and clearly defines the level of engagement of the CSOs, although is yet to be adopted. In the meantime, the EU IPA Project SUPRAE “Support to the Management of EU Funds” which started at the end of 2022, would also contribute, together with the NSPNM to adopting the model of CSOs’ inclusion. The current situation is that in the non-existence of the adopted model, the screening

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<sup>1</sup> [Nordic \(nordicsupport.org.mk\)](http://nordicsupport.org.mk)

<sup>2</sup> [Organization | Secretariat for European Affairs \(sep.gov.mk\)](http://sep.gov.mk)

process of the country has started without CSOs' inclusion. Noteworthy is that at the moment there is strong political will in North Macedonia, which is significantly important for the process.

The general feeling is that the EU accession seems to be quite a long and exhaustive process for the country. At the same time, there is a wide-opened interest through the years among the CSOs regarding EU accession and the models of inclusion.

In terms of capacities, the most prominent and renowned CSOs working in the area of EU accession, are quite well-resourced and aware of the process thanks to knowledgeable personnel previously working with the Secretariat for European Affairs<sup>3</sup>. Moreover, the IPA Project focusing on dialogue with the EU, established a fund that would continue its work in the area of EU accession. They along with the Unit for Cooperation with the CSOs already developed registers of CSOs for the different chapters of negotiation. Recently, the Government of North Macedonia has republished the call for updating the data. The challenging thing at the moment, in terms of capacities, is the blocked Council for Cooperation, which needs to have a key role in the process, but still, after more than a year is boycotted.

The main challenges that remain are:

- adoption of the model of collaboration;
- need for stronger CSOs' participation in the negotiation process, and sustaining their role as overseers of the process;
- CSOs should represent in the negotiations process the CSOs' sector per se, instead of representing themselves as individual organisations or as their representatives;
- lack of open and frequent communication within the CSO sector;
- Lack of prominent and knowledgeable CSOs for specific chapters;
- Factual inclusion in the process instead of "only-on-paper" one;

## The Montenegro Model

CSOs and civil society representatives are formally and legally involved in the work of negotiating working groups for chapters of the Acquis. There is a Joint Consultative Committee between Montenegro and the EU, made of the representatives of the Chamber of Commerce, the Union of Employers, two trade union associations, and representatives of two CSOs from Montenegro.

The legal base for the involvement of CSOs is the Decree on the election of representatives of non-governmental organizations in working bodies of state administration authorities and conducting public discussions related to the preparation of laws and strategies. This decree is adopted in 2018. All members of working groups have the same status, as determined by the Rules of Procedure of working groups, which is adopted by all members of working groups, and therefore there is no, from a governmental perspective, difference between members who come from state administration bodies and CSOs.

Law on free access to Information provides more efficient access to information, better monitoring of the work of the state administration, better reporting, and proactive access to information.

IPA III funds the 2021-2023 Civil Society and Media Instrument Programme, with EUR 93.75 million allocated for the Western Balkans and Türkiye, where the Strengthening Civil Society to Support

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<sup>3</sup> [Organization | Secretariat for European Affairs \(sep.gov.mk\)](https://sep.gov.mk)

Sustainable Socio-Economic Development of Montenegro project is to be implemented from January 2023 to June 2025.

Pre-requisites and main challenges for Montenegrin CSOs to influence the accession negotiations are the capacity-building of CSOs, their mid-term and long-term financial sustainability, reliability and predictability of state-provided funding, and the genuine effort of the government to include CSOs in the negotiations process, appreciating their inputs. The strengthening of civil society is in line with the Strategy of cooperation between State Administration Bodies and NGOs 2022-2026.

The preliminary data coming from the analysis coming from the Centre for Development of Non-Governmental Organisations<sup>4</sup> (CRNVO) on the participation of CSO representatives in the EU accession process presented at the P2P event show:

- ▶ Average satisfaction with the overall participation in the work of the Working groups (1-5): 2.88
- ▶ A quarter of the participants were informed of the activities and meetings of the working group in an adequate and timely manner.
- ▶ Satisfaction with the frequency of the meetings and work dynamic of the Working group (1-5): 2.4
- ▶ The overall conduct of the rest of the Working groups towards the CSO representatives and their opinions (1-5): 3.5
- ▶ On average, CSO representatives grade their capacities to work in the Working groups as slightly higher than those of the rest of the WG members (4.16 to 3.8).
- ▶ The CSO representatives have pointed out the need to revise the current mechanism to appoint members based on competencies rather than the amount of support.
- ▶ A need to inform the public more thoroughly through various channels of communication and updating [EUME | EU4ME ME4EU](#) has been outlined, to improve transparency.

Pan-European Union reports that key achievements in Montenegro are:

- ▶ CSOs helped increase the general visibility of the overall EU membership negotiation process.
- ▶ CSOs provide their inputs and comments on various legislative and other negotiation-related documents.
- ▶ Montenegro is the only EU membership candidate that included civil society representatives in its negotiation framework.
- ▶ Inclusion of CSO representatives in the accession negotiation process is supported by the EU and other international partners.
- ▶ EU-Montenegro Joint Consultative Committee (JCC): civil society platform of the EESC and civil society in Montenegro.

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<sup>4</sup> [CRNVO – Centar za razvoj NVO](#)

## The Serbia Model

In December 2022, Serbia had approximately 36,500 registered civil society organizations (CSOs), according to data from that time. These CSOs are registered through the Serbian Business Registers Agency/Associations ([apr.gov.rs](http://apr.gov.rs)).

The Law on Associations was enacted in July 2009 to provide a new legal framework for the establishment and functioning of associations in Serbia. This law, in line with the Constitution and international standards, addresses various important aspects related to the establishment, operation, and regulation of both domestic and foreign associations.

The number of associations experienced a significant increase after the Law on Associations came into effect in 2011. The conditions for establishing associations were simplified and liberalized, and a unified register of associations was created. Existing associations were required to undergo re-registration or face removal from the register of the Serbian Business Registry Agency<sup>5</sup> (SBRA) if they were considered inactive.

In 2010, Serbia introduced two crucial laws: the Law on Volunteering and the Law on Endowments and Foundations. These laws were complemented by the adoption of the Strategy for Creating an Enabling Environment for the Development of Civil Society in the Republic of Serbia between 2022 and 2030. A corresponding Action Plan was also established, outlining the responsibilities of relevant ministries and institutions.

The process began in 2005 when the Ministry of European Integration (MEI) initiated the signing of a Memorandum on cooperation with civil society organizations (CSOs). Subsequently, in 2010, the Office for Cooperation with Civil Society was established by the Decree on the Office for Cooperation with Civil Society. This office serves as an institutional mechanism to support and foster civil dialogue between government institutions and CSOs.

In 2020, the Office for Cooperation with Civil Society was incorporated into the Ministry for Human Rights and Social Dialogue, now known as the Sector for Cooperation with Civil Society.

The newly formed Ministry of Human and Minority Rights and Social Dialogue, appointed by the government in October 2022, has initiated the establishment of the Government Cooperation Council for collaboration with the Civil Society. In the same year, the government adopted guidelines for the involvement of civil society organizations (CSOs) in working groups responsible for drafting public policy documents and proposals. This ensures the participation of CSOs in the early stages of the decision-making process. CSOs are selected through a public call based on predefined criteria.

In February 2022, the Serbian government adopted a strategy aimed at fostering the development of civil society until 2030. This strategy is accompanied by an action plan, and relevant ministries and institutions have committed to fulfilling their obligations outlined in the strategy through annual action plans. The process began in 2005 when the Ministry of European Integration<sup>6</sup> (MEI) initiated the signing of a memorandum on cooperation with civil society organizations (CSOs). Subsequently, in 2010, the Office for Cooperation with Civil Society was established through a government decree. This office serves as an institutional mechanism to support and promote civil dialogue between government institutions and CSOs.

In 2020, the Office for Cooperation with Civil Society merged with the Ministry for Human Rights and Social Dialogue, now known as the Sector for Cooperation with Civil Society. In 2022 appointed, the

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<sup>5</sup> [Агенција за привредне регистре | Home \(apr.gov.rs\)](http://apr.gov.rs)

<sup>6</sup> [MEI - Ministry of European Integration](#)



Ministry of Human and Minority Rights and Social Dialogue initiated the establishment of a Government Cooperation Council to work together with Civil Society.

Also in 2022, the government introduced guidelines for the involvement of civil society organizations (CSOs) in working groups responsible for drafting public policy documents and proposals. These guidelines regulate the process of selecting CSO representatives and ensure their participation in the early stages of decision-making. CSOs are included in working groups through a public call with pre-established selection criteria. This functions in the way that citizens, whether individually or through civil society organizations, can actively engage in decision-making processes and contribute to social and political life beyond elections, using participatory democracy mechanisms. The involvement of citizens and civil society organizations in the creation and implementation of public policies is crucial for democratic development.

In 2021, the government introduced the “e-Consultations” portal ([eKonsultacije](#)) to facilitate the digital participation of citizens in the preparation and adoption of public policy documents and regulations. This platform allows citizens to access and contribute to various draft documents, providing suggestions and proposals.

Civil society organisations’ representatives serve as members of advisory bodies established by different levels of government. These include the Council for the Advancement of Persons with Disabilities, the Youth Council, the Council for the Advancement of Roma, and other advisory bodies.

The first intergovernmental conference between Serbia and the European Union was in January 2014, initiating accession negotiations. To date, Serbia has opened 22 chapters and closed only 2.

Serbia's European integration process differs significantly from previous enlargements due to the new negotiation methodology and the complex international situation. However, the importance of internal reforms, essential for progress, remains unchanged.

The Enabling Environment for civil society development is a political criterion for EU membership. A strong civil sector indicates societal democratization, serves as a key indicator of the application of the Rule of Law, and relates directly to meeting the EU's political criteria.

*“European integration and membership are of concern to governments, political parties, and the entire society. Citizens need to experience and understand the benefits and costs of the process to make informed decisions in a future referendum. Civil society plays a crucial role as a watchdog, monitoring and critiquing the functioning of the state. They bring new knowledge and experiences to the negotiation process, contributing to citizens' comprehension of necessary reforms along the way.”* said Ms. Nataša Savić-Janjić, a contributor to the event, The Ministry of EU Integration, the Republic of Serbia

In March 2016, the Negotiating Team for Serbia's EU accession adopted guidelines for cooperation with civil society organizations, the National Convention on the European Union, and the Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Serbia. These guidelines incorporate principles of civil society participation based on the Council of Europe's Code of Good Practice. They recommend that the bodies of the Autonomous Province and local self-government units adhere to these principles when adopting regulations. The guidelines also outline consultations with CSOs, the National Convention, and the Serbian Chamber of Commerce as per the Decision on the procedure for considering the negotiating position proposal in the EU accession process. When criteria for opening a chapter require the adoption of a document, it must be submitted for consideration and consultation with CSOs, the National Convention, and the Serbian Chamber of Commerce.

The EU-Serbia Joint Consultative Committee<sup>7</sup> (JCC) is a civil society platform established between the EESC<sup>8</sup> and the civil society of Serbia (social partners and other civil society organisations). The JCC's mandate comes from Decision n. 1 of the EU-Serbia Stabilisation and Association Council of 21 October 2013, adopting its Rules of procedure (Art. 14). The Civil Society JCC complements, with a civil society point of view, the EU institutional framework related to the Stabilisation and Association Agreement between the EU and Serbia. The Civil Society Joint Consultative Committee comprises members from each side. The JCC allows civil society organisations from both sides to monitor the path of Serbia toward the EU, and to adopt recommendations for the attention of the government of Serbia and the EU institutions.

Civil society in Serbia has formed coalitions such as the National Convention on European Union (NCEU). Established in 2014 by 17 prominent civil society organizations (CSOs), NCEU involves over 700 CSOs. Its main objectives are to support the EU negotiation process, monitor reform progress and the implementation of benchmarks, and provide timely and informative updates to citizens.

The National Convention on the European Union<sup>9</sup> (NCEU) is an institutionalized consultative mechanism. Since 2014, it has been involved in the adoption of Negotiating positions in the Parliament's Committee for EU integration. The government recognized it as a channel for public information on the negotiation process in August 2015. The NCEU is consulted by the Negotiating Team in the development of negotiation positions. The Guidelines of the Negotiating Team outline the NCEU's involvement and participation throughout all phases of the EU negotiation process, covering relevant documents and policies. The NCEU serves as an institutionalized platform for communication and consultation with civil society during accession negotiations.

The [prEUgovor - prEUgovor](#) coalition consists of seven civil society organizations in Serbia specializing in policies related to chapters 23 and 24 of EU accession negotiations. Established in 2013, their mission is to oversee policy implementation in the judiciary, fundamental rights, justice, freedom, and security. They provide independent reports on Serbia's progress in these chapters twice a year.

The Coalition 27, formed in 2014, comprises civil society organizations focused on monitoring and contributing to the harmonization and implementation of environmental and climate change policies in Serbia (Chapter 27). They advocate for solutions that enhance environmental protection and citizens' quality of life. Their annual 'Shadow Report' assesses achievements in Chapter 27 and provides recommendations for improvement.

The 2022 European Commission Progress Report on the Republic of Serbia highlights several points. It acknowledged Serbia has adopted a strategy and action plan for the development of civil society, recognizing the need to improve cooperation between public authorities and CSOs.

However, further efforts are required to establish a council for civil society cooperation and create an enabling environment for the development and financing of civil society organizations.

The report also notes that verbal attacks and smear campaigns against these organizations persist.

There is significant potential for enhancing cooperation between civil society organizations (CSOs) and the state, including the government and parliament, throughout the EU accession journey.

To achieve this, the following actions are recommended:

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<sup>7</sup> [The EU-Serbia Joint Consultative Committee | European Economic and Social Committee \(europa.eu\)](#)

<sup>8</sup> [European Economic and Social Committee | \(europa.eu\)](#)

<sup>9</sup> [Pocetna - EU Konvent](#)



- ▶ Strengthen cooperation between CSOs and public authorities by regularly organizing consultations and considering CSO proposals. This will foster continuous dialogue and ensure CSOs' valuable input in areas crucial for European integration.
- ▶ Harness the expertise of CSOs, particularly in promoting the implementation of the Rule of Law, protecting fundamental rights, combating corruption, and addressing organized crime. By utilizing their knowledge, we can enhance security and socioeconomic development.
- ▶ Encourage more CSOs to actively monitor the progress of the EU accession process. Their involvement will contribute to increased transparency and accountability.
- ▶ Collaborate to raise public awareness and understanding of the substantive aspects of accession negotiations and the benefits associated with related reforms. This shared effort will empower citizens to actively engage and participate.
- ▶ Enhance the legal protection of CSOs' members and human rights defenders, ensuring their rights are safeguarded effectively.
- ▶ By fostering stronger collaboration and creating an enabling environment, the way will be paved for one meaningful and inclusive engagement between CSOs and the state, ultimately driving positive change and progress on the path to EU accession.

Since 2012, MEI has been launching open calls for funding and co-funding CSO projects focused on EU-related information and Serbian EU integration. Through seven annual public calls, MEI supported 43 projects from 13 cities across Serbia, with over 230,000 euros. MEI at the beginning of 2023 launched the eighth call, with a total budget of approximately 55,000.00 euros.

Collaboration with CSOs is daily, particularly with the permanent body, the National Convention on European Union (NCEU), in various matters. This includes presenting draft laws to NCEU working groups, considering amendments proposed by CSOs, and sharing different analyses and initiatives.

Furthermore, MEI actively invites CSO representatives to participate in the preparation of IPA 3 operational plans, recognizing CSO's valuable insights and expertise. MEI encourages CSO representatives to join the Open Call Commission for Cross-Border Cooperation (CBC) projects.

MEI strives to provide accurate and timely information, ensuring that questions from CSOs are promptly addressed. It values close cooperation with civil society organizations (CSOs) and sees them as natural partners working towards the same goal of internal reforms and EU membership.

The National Convention on European Union (NCEU), initially established in Slovakia for EU accession, has also been implemented in Albania and MK (North Macedonia). Compared to other models, the Serbian model of the National Convention has been adapted and expanded beyond EU negotiations. It is now registered as a network with multiple founders, including the European Movement, allowing for wider ownership within the civil society sector. The Convention operates through working groups, each with its dynamics and memberships, focusing on specific topics chosen as advocacy channels. The Secretariat of the National Convention receives direct financing for its operations.

In terms of consultation and influence, all governmental institutions are obliged to consult the NCEU on any documents related to EU accession, such as laws and by-laws. This has strengthened the position of civil society within the decision-making process. Some governmental institutions, such as the Ministry of Défense and the Ministry of Internal Affairs, have started cooperating with civil society, recognizing the benefits of consultation. The biggest challenge lies in the fundamentals/Cluster 1 and

Chapters 23 and 24. However, all countries have received notifications indicating some progress, although the Shadow reports of the NCEU have often been more critical than the EU reports.

While an adopted strategy exists for the general environment of civil society, the absence of a Council has led the NCEU to assume the role of the institutional channel for communication between the government and civil society. However, there is currently limited space for constructive dialogue. Nevertheless, the NCEU provides an opportunity for direct communication with the government, allowing individual civil society organizations to have a voice through this platform.

The main focus of the Coalition 27 is to monitor the negotiation process in Chapter 27/Cluster 4, which includes environmental protection. It started as a non-formal coalition several years ago and has remained informal to this day, consisting of eight organizations. Given the scope of Chapter 27, these organisations can cover almost all areas within it. Their main product is the shadow report, which specifically targets Chapter 27. Other organizations within Coalition 27 produce shadow reports on topics they are interested in, typically published in the autumn following the European Commission's report.

Coalition 27 operates beyond individual projects and produces comprehensive reports with recommendations. Some recommendations tend to repeat each year. However, there are challenges associated with coordination among the organizations, slow reactions, consensus decision-making, and limited funding, which comes from bits of project budgets. Despite these challenges, Coalition 27 has achieved notable results. Their shadow report is well-recognized by international stakeholders, including the European Union, granting legitimacy to the individual organizations and providing them with access to relevant institutions.

Overall, Coalition 27's efforts in monitoring and producing the shadow report have contributed significantly to their recognition within the international community and the EU. They have provided valuable insights and recommendations while serving as a platform for individual organizations to engage with institutions. However, ongoing coordination, timely responses, and sustainable funding remain important areas for improvement within the coalition.

## Conclusions, Challenges, and Next Steps

- Each country should develop its model according to the needs and capacities of the CSO sector within the country.
- Collaboration between CSOs and governmental institutions will continue beyond the P2P EU Accession event cross-countries.

There are challenges that they should work together and exchange best practices on:

- a. how the CSOs would be included in the process, and at the same time remain a corrective mechanism of the process itself.
- b. whether CSOs representatives should be paid for their participation in the process of negotiations, and if not paid how long they may sustain working *pro bono*.
- c. How to ensure transparent and open communication with the CSO sector and represent the views and attitudes of the majority of the CSOs, as well as the minority of the CSOs?

Specifically:

### Albania:

- Focus to strengthen collaboration between political institutions and civil society to enhance efficiency and inclusiveness in the EU integration process.
- Work on improvements for the effectiveness of platforms and round tables for civil society discussions on EU integration.
- Prepare a roadmap for the cycle up to 2030 to align with policies and policy frameworks.
- Address the challenges of low engagement, lack of technical experience, and support for civil society organizations (CSOs).
- Ensure factual inclusion of civil society in the EU accession process.

### North Macedonia

- Address the blocked negotiation process caused by the veto from Bulgaria to progress further.
- Adopt and implement the model of CSOs' inclusion in the negotiation process.
- Strengthen CSOs' participation and role as overseers of the process.
- Improve communication and transparency within the CSO sector.
- Build capacities of CSOs for specific chapters of negotiation.

### Montenegro:

- Continue the involvement of CSOs in negotiating working groups and decision-making processes.
- Work on the establishment of mid-term and long-term financial sustainability for CSOs.
- Improve communication, transparency, and information dissemination to the public.
- Strengthen the capacities of CSOs for effective participation in the accession negotiations.
- Work towards adopting the model of collaboration and revising the current appointment mechanism for CSO representatives.

### Serbia:

- Boost the cooperation and collaboration between government institutions and CSOs.
- Implement the Strategy for Creating an Enabling Environment for the Development of Civil Society.
- Ensure the active participation of CSOs in the decision-making process through public calls and advisory bodies.
- Utilise digital platforms, such as e-Consultations, for citizen engagement in policy-making.
- Continue internal reforms and meet the EU's political criteria for progress in the accession negotiations.

At the end of the People-to-People Programme event, participants were given access to the Padlet<sup>10</sup> application-based exercise, where they could discuss in mixed CSOs/Governments' people groups, and provide answers on:

1. Questions on Serbia's EU Accession Negotiations
2. Questions on Montenegro's EU Accession Negotiations

Their answers and comments follow on the following three pages, without any editing.

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<sup>10</sup> [Padlet: Beauty will save the work](#)



## Group 1: Questions on Serbia's EU Accession Negotiations

ALEKSANDRA GLIGOROVIC MAR 29, 2023 07:40PM UTC

### What were the key challenges faced during EU accession negotiations, and how did civil society and the Government overcome them?

It is hard to advocate and be supported for other initiative or something that is not a priority at the moment and its not in the relevant Chapter

### Frequent elections which produce institutional changes, which slows down the processes started

The focus in the reforms was placed on ticking the boxes but not on monitoring of the reform implementation  
Lots of laws were adopte under shorten procedure under without consultations under the excuse it iils eu related reform  
Civil servants do not have power to make decisions in the policy making and they need to consult the political level on proposals by CSOs  
Frequent change of political leadership is a challenge

### How did CSOs in Serbia contribute to negotiation process/role they play in improving the quality, transparency & accountability?

The CSO can play very important role when defining the measures in the Action plans after the screening process

The cooperation on the OGP is a great example of cooperation  
On some specific topic the contributions by CSOs to legislation and policy issues were accepted by the government  
CSOs contributed to the quality of the Action Plans on Chp 23 and 24

### The most important lessons that North Macedonia and Albania can learn from CSOs engagement in Serbia's negotiation process?

By including CSOs in monitoring you can have better assessment of impact of the reforms  
CSOs should play better role in communicating the benefits of the reforms how it will change their everyday life  
Building partnership between the government and CSOs is important for effective implementation of the reforms

### How did the EU support Serbia during the negotiation process, and what were the areas where the EU needed to be more supportive?

EU to be consistent when communicating with the Government, to insist on implementation and not to turn a blind eye.

### Biggest donor for public sector reform

Offered direct help to the administration in terms of expertise  
Needs to give more help in the area of Fundamentals





padlet

padlet.com/aleksandragligorovic\_mne/group-2-questions-on-montenegro-s-eu-accession-negotiations-9i9j3i10nclev1aa

## Group 2: Questions on Montenegro's EU Accession Negotiations

ALEKSANDRA GLIGOROVIC MAR 29, 2023 07:55PM UTC

### The main challenges faced during EU accession negotiations, and how did CSOs and the Government manage to overcome them?

The civil society is not part of bodies and groups because they are not being heard and they are over voted.

They can help us in working groups (more than the bodies) - governments opinion. We did not learn to implement aki of Eu (CSO should insist).

The previous government wanted to control everything and restricted access to information that was not confidential.

How we engage in the reform process in our country? What changes?

### One key issue is fatigue that is experienced by CSO's that are tired and pessimistic after 20 years of a lack of meaningful change.

Public debates for the commission to accept (depending of the importance of the law)

What challenges are you facing when there is a change in the key stake holders?

3 governments in 2 years in order to protect your group, see who is monitoring the. The CSO needs to advocate. (Who is doing this/that, also we do monitor, but usually you have to dig deeper - they can manipulate with the informations).

External and internal factors, what are the main challenges?

Usually its internal - changing of people.

Eu could have done more, because we were always the good example, but nothing came from it. Eu needed to be more vocal.

The CSO pointed whats happening, not Eu - CSO proactive. Communicate with Eu, tell them your problems, the government won't tell them all.

### What role did CSOs play in improving quality of negotiations, and how did they ensure transparency & accountability of process?

Be as present as possible in the media, be were vocal, spread the message. Work with media they are your ally - "translate it" to the media language.

be very vocal\*

Besides media, what?

Adapt program language to ordinary people language

How was the dynamic with the coalitions, is something changing since start?

there were cases where All NGO in one voice were together for something

Formal coalitions?

Add hoch alliances, but there are also formal coalitions on more important questions





Coalition 27 - its not as sustainable, they are doing it through project (project 2/3 years) - we need a few organisations (competent, sustainable..) Serbian system is good for that. Show the donor.

How to build a bridge within the civil organizations

We are helping each other, share informations..

Do you organise consultations with other NGOs before going to the meeting?

Depending on the case an culture but there was a case when series of consultations happened with NGOs from all parts of Montenegro - for example the law for NGOs.

## **What lessons can North Macedonia and Albania learn from Montenegro's EU accession negotiation process?**

How do you ensure there is an engagement after someone (from CSOs) is part of working body?

Balance of pragmatism and rules.

Do I have an obligation to communicate with other coalitions on the same subject? Moral obligation?

We think that its important to be honest towards everyone, get all the informations (there needs to be flow) - MKD opinion.

You are representing the civil society.

**ngo should monitor the gov**

## **How did the EU support Montenegro during negotiation process, and what were the areas where the EU needed to be more supportive?**

**are there are mechanisms to support the cso? donors?**

**pooling the funds from other resources to influence**

Tell us the methods about coverage

Be creative, mass media - instagram, facebook, podcasts..

Issues that connect people

These above are for the third part.

Forth question -

Whats been the most effective way with communication with Eu?

Evidence based, not just talking.  
You need to invite them to important events

Are you always satisfied with Eu?

Sometimes they are too technical.  
Make them hear you, they are not agains you.

Do public opinion researches !!!

\*\*\*\*\*



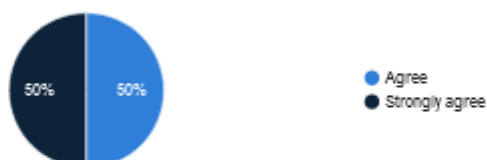


## Evaluation of the Event

### Chart results

*Evaluation: EU Accession Negotiation Process Learning Exchange between CSOs from Montenegro and Serbia with CSOs from Albania and North Macedonia*

#### a. The event met my expectations



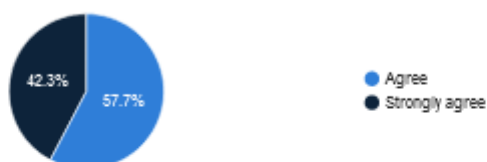
Number of responses: 26

#### b. The content of the event was relevant to the interests of my organisation



Number of responses: 26

#### c. I understand more and feel better informed about issues than before



Number of responses: 26

#### d. The event allowed to share good practices and lessons learnt



Number of responses: 26

## Sources for further information

### Resources

[Public Consultations for the European Commission's 2021 Annual Report on Albania | EEAS \(europa.eu\)](#)

[Cluster 1 Albania – Cluster One EU Negotiations Platform – Albania \(C1-EU-NPA\)](#)

[Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs \(punetejashtme.gov.al\)](#)

[Delegation of the European Union to Albania | EEAS \(europa.eu\)](#)

[Partners Albania for Change and Development – Partnerët Shqipëri për Ndryshim dhe Zhvillim](#)

### [ANRD](#)

[Home New - Komiteti Shqiptar i Helsinkit \(ahc.org.al\)](#)

[Home \(eden-al.org\)](#)

[Home - Vizion OJF](#)

[ROMA ACTIVE ALBANIA \(namati.org\)](#)

[IDRA \(idracompany.com\)](#)

### [ANTTARC](#)

[Ministria e Drejtësisë \(drejtesia.gov.al\)](#)

[Refleksione.org – Gjërat janë gati të ndryshojnë](#)

[HERSTORY \(gadc.org.al\)](#)

[Crnogorska Panevropska Unija PanEvropa.me](#)

[Centre for Civic Education – Democracy is to be learnt \(cgo-cce.org\)](#)

[Evropski pokret u Crnoj Gori | | European Movement in Montenegro - Aktualnosti \(emim.org\)](#)

[CRNVO – Centar za razvoj NVO](#)

[Ministry of European Affairs \(www.gov.me\)](#)

[Home – Eurothink](#)

[Macedonian Center for International Cooperation \(mcms.mk\)](#)

[Дијалог кон ЕУ \(dijalogkoneu.mk\)](#)

[\(25\) European Policy Institute - Skopje: Overview | LinkedIn](#)

[Secretariat for European Affairs \(sep.gov.mk\)](http://sep.gov.mk)

[Home page - Myla](#)

[Home - Finance Think](#)

[IMPETUS – Center for Internet, Development and Good Governance](#)

[Центар за правни истражувања и анализи \(cria.mk\)](#)

[National Convention on the European Union in North Macedonia | Европско движење \(europeanmovement.org.mk\)](#)

[Metamorphosis](#)

[Center for Change Management \(cup.org.mk\)](#)

[Home | Coalition 27 | Spokespeople for the environment \(koalicija27.org\)](#)

[MEI - Ministry of European Integration](#)

[Pocetna - EU Konvent](#)

<https://dijalogkoneu.mk/>