BRANDING SURVEY
TACSO

Under
Tender Submission for:

Technical Assistance Service Contract for the implementation of the project

"Capacity Building of Civil Society in the IPA countries and Territories (Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, FYR of Macedonia, Kosovo under UNSCR 1249/99, Montenegro, Serbia and Turkey).

EuropeAid/127427/C/SER/Multi

TERM OF REFERENCE

for branding survey

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TERM OF REFERENCE

for branding survey

Background of the assignment

The general objectives of this project is to strengthen the overall capacities and accountability of the Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) within the IPA beneficiaries and to guarantee the quality of services of CSOs and a sustainable role of the CSOs in the democratic process. The main purposes of the project are to:

- Increase and improve the capacity and actions of CSOs and to
- Improve the democratic role of CSOs.

An important activity under this heading is raising the visibility, aiming at increasing the knowledge about the TACSO, which basically is about achieving the main purposes of the project (to increase and improve the capacity and actions of CSOs and to improve the democratic role of CSOs).

As indicated in the Terms of Reference (ToR) of the project, the main purpose of this assignment is to develop and conduct the branding survey for TACSO in Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia.

Scope of the assignment.

The organization(s) will develop and conduct the branding survey for TACSO in Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia.

Activities to be carried out.

- Plan the branding survey in one or in two countries (depending on the offer);
- Develop the methodology, questionnaire and timelines;
- Determine the key audiences (minimum 30 major national wide CSOs (to include appropriate ratio of urban vs. rural CSOs, large vs. small, etc), up to 10 national media, government offices, and other relevant players with regards to main project purposes);
- Conduct the survey;
- Prepare the final report.

Deliverables/results.

Branding survey on TACSO in Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia

Brief Overview

The research team was tasked with conducting a brand research survey using a combination of traditional qualitative and quantitative techniques designed to give a broad rather than in depth understanding of the perceptions of TACSO as a brand amongst a fairly wide catchment of stakeholder groups with differing levels of brand interaction. The resulting outputs give an accurate and unquestionably useful snapshot prevailing perceptions and attitudes. A more comprehensive picture would be gathered through a follow up research piece using penetrative techniques.

What follows is a graphical presentation of the results of the quantitative panel and a complimentary qualitative report that attempts to drill down some of the quantitative results and to check the completeness and appropriateness of the questions.

Together they give a picture of a brand that is young and developing but yet has managed to deliver a swathe of broadly positive consumer experiences in an environment that typically demonstrates strong levels of polarization of opinions across stakeholder groups. Of particularly note were the overwhelmingly positive brand perceptions amongst those Civil Society and NGO communities outside of Skopje. There remain challenges in the process of strengthening and entrenching TACSO's target values especially amongst the larger CSO's that regard TACSO with residual levels of suspicion and who sometimes view the TACSO mission as competitive or at least encroaching on the established order. That notwithstanding it appears that TACSO has effectively communicated its goals and garnered broad and strong support for them which augers well for the success of its mission in the medium term.

It is the agencies recommendation that TASCO creates a segmented communications strategy that will see it;
1. Engage the media on a more sustained basis to reinforce not only its mission but also its activities and achievements

2. Better communicate to the CSO community the open and transparent way in which its work is carried out

3. Leverage the strong support it has outside of Skopje to engage with the CSO's in those areas

1. Methodology

1.1 Quantitative survey

The questions will be largely derived from the initial documents about the initiative – the goals and objectives in the original policy documents will be translated into questions.

The use of a quantitative panel had several goals:

1. Provide a snapshot of the experienced based perceptions of the CSO's that had some level of engagement with the TACSO project, which meant that the panel consisted only of the organizations that TACSO had recorded contact with
2. Provide an insight into the perception based on demographic differentiators
3. Provide an initial broad picture of associative values of the TACSO brand
4. Provide a baseline of prompted responses to benchmark against unprompted responses from the qualitative panel

The resulting Questionnaire consisted of 14 closed/open response questions including some level of subject completed stratification. The question structure was designed to give a broad picture of the level of panel understanding of the TACSO mission, what does TACSO stand for, what does it do, how does it connect to their organization, is it perceived as helpful and can it be used as a link to government and the donor community.

A panel group of 260 individuals was selected in conjunction with the client office in Skopje. The survey was distributed to the panel members electronically (e-mail) using addresses confirmed by the client. A national sample was used with a marginal bias towards Skopje given the high concentration of CSOs operating from there. The panel was sampled against;

- Length of CSO activity
- CSO segment
- Non CSO stakeholder groups
- Location where CSO is based

The main data analyses for this survey are standard descriptive statistics, including cross-checking for response bias within questions Data processing and analysis was done using SPSS 15. The following results are presented in correlation with the order of the questions in the questionnaire. Cross – tabulations is used to illicit clear conclusions. A range of variables were analyzed and where no clear or useable conclusions were drawn the results have been excluded from the final report.

1.2. First cluster

The first cluster of questions is designed to stratify the organizations against a number of criteria, the place/location of operation, main operational activity (relevant CSO sector), the year in which they were formed and where relevant the socio demographic profile of their core constituents.

City in which the organization is based

		Frequency	Percent
City	Kumanovo	4	2,1
	Tetovo	12	6,2
	Negotino	1	0,5
	Ohrid	6	3,1
	Bitola	6	3,1
	Prilep	7	3,6
	Shtip	9	4,6
	Valandovo	3	1,5
	Gevgelija	7	3,6
	Kochani	2	1,0
	Struga	13	6,7
	Gostivar	3	1,5
	Probishtip	1	0,5
	Strumica	4	2,1
	Skopje	90	46,4
	Kichevo	3	1,5
	Bogdanci	1	0,5
	Resen	4	2,1
	Kavadarci	1	0,5
	Sveti Nikole	1	0,5
	Kratovo	3	1,5
	Veles	5	2,6
	Debar	3	1,5
	Berovo	2	1,0
	Makedonski Brod	1	0,5
	Delchevo	2	1,0
TOTAL		194	100,0

The geographic footprint of the panel was broad enough to cover all relevant criteria. The bias towards Skopje reflects that the fact that almost 50% of the active CSO organizations are based there (SIDA, the Macedonian Civil Society study, published in May 2009). The rural organizations

are also included but as they are formally registered in the main city of the municipality they appear as a city in the report.

Year in which the organization was formed

The majority of the organizations were formed in the period between 2001-2005 (32, 99%), which means that most of the organizations surveyed are "new". Only a small percentage (5, 7%) of those was created prior to Macedonian independence. With the remaining being created post independence reflecting the arrival and growth of donor organizations/sources.

Year in which the organization was formed

Year	Percent
1966-1990	5,67%
1991-1995	16,49%
1996-2000	25,77%
2001-2005	32,99%
2006-2010	19,07%
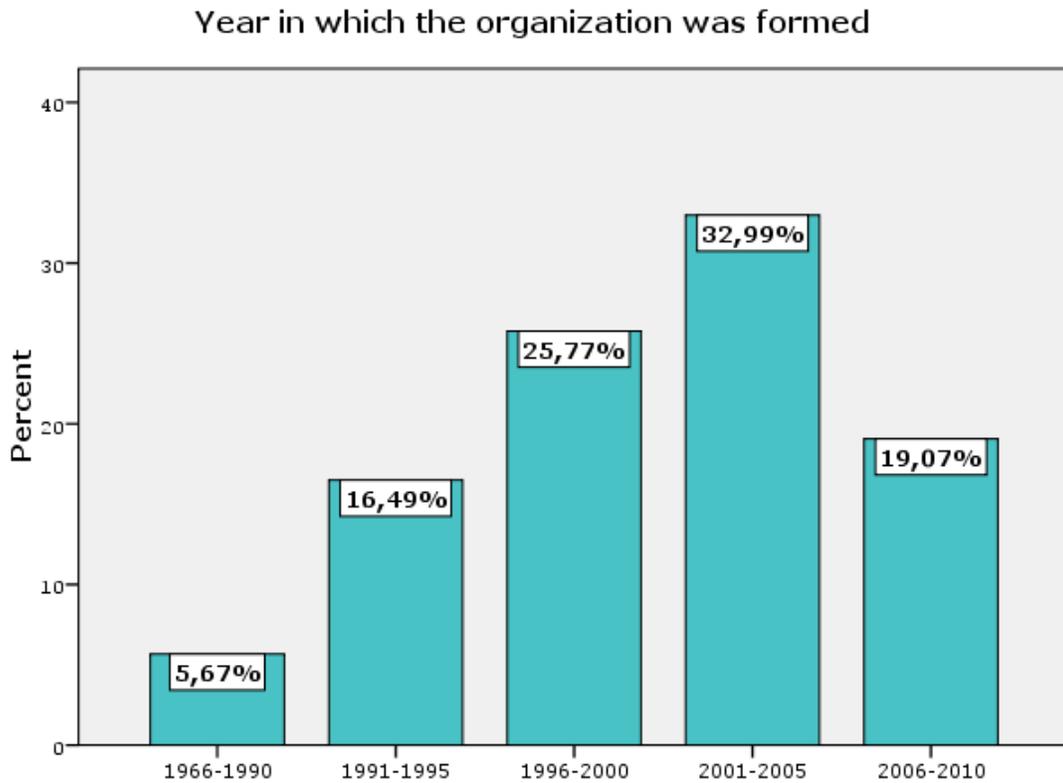
City	1966-1990	1991-1995	1996-2000	2001-2005	2006-2010
			Year		
Kumanovo	0,0%	3,1%	4,0%	0,0%	2,7%
Tetovo	9,1%	3,1%	4,0%	6,3%	10,8%
Negotino	0,0%	0,0%	0,0%	1,6%	0,0%
Ohrid	9,1%	6,3%	2,0%	3,1%	0,0%
Bitola	9,1%	3,1%	2,0%	1,6%	5,4%
Prilep	0,0%	0,0%	10,0%	3,1%	0,0%
Shtip	0,0%	3,1%	6,0%	6,3%	2,7%
Valandovo	0,0%	0,0%	2,0%	3,1%	0,0%
Gevgelija	0,0%	3,1%	2,0%	4,7%	5,4%
Kochani	0,0%	0,0%	2,0%	0,0%	2,7%
Struga	18,2%	6,3%	6,0%	6,3%	5,4%
Gostivar	0,0%	0,0%	0,0%	3,1%	2,7%
Probishtip	0,0%	0,0%	0,0%	1,6%	0,0%
Strumica	9,1%	3,1%	2,0%	1,6%	0,0%
Skopje	9,1%	50,0%	48,0%	48,4%	48,6%
Kichevo	9,1%	3,1%	2,0%	0,0%	0,0%
Bogdanci	0,0%	3,1%	0,0%	0,0%	0,0%
Resen	0,0%	0,0%	2,0%	0,0%	2,7%
Kavadarci	0,0%	3,1%	0,0%	0,0%	0,0%
Sveti Nikole	0,0%	0,0%	2,0%	0,0%	0,0%
Kratovo	0,0%	0,0%	2,0%	3,1%	0,0%
Veles	9,1%	3,1%	2,0%	3,1%	0,0%
Debar	0,0%	6,3%	0,0%	0,0%	2,7%
Berovo	18,2%	0,0%	0,0%	0,0%	0,0%
Makedonski Brod	0,0%	0,0%	0,0%	0,0%	2,7%
Delchevo	0,0%	0,0%	0,0%	0,0%	5,4%
TOTAL	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%

The cross-tabulation between the location in which the organization is formed and the year in which it was formed shows that between those that are formed before 1990 the local organizations dominate (from Struga and Berovo), while that changes in the next 5 years and organizations from Skopje start to dominate taking approximately 50% of the surveyed and that trend continues in the years after.

Main topics of operation

|	Responses		Percent of Cases
	N	Percent	N
Democracy, law and Think Tanks	45	11,7%	23,2%
Children, youth and students	31	8,1%	16,0%
Ethnical communities	22	5,7%	11,3%
Woman and gender issues	25	6,5%	12,9%
Ecology	47	12,2%	24,2%
Health	28	7,3%	14,4%
Education	45	11,7%	23,2%
People with special needs	18	4,7%	9,3%
Antiviolence and toleration	13	3,4%	6,7%
Social care	26	6,8%	13,4%
Civil society development	46	11,9%	23,7%
Rural development	23	6,0%	11,9%
Other	16	4,2%	8,2%
TOTAL	385	100,0%	198,5%

Main topics of operation

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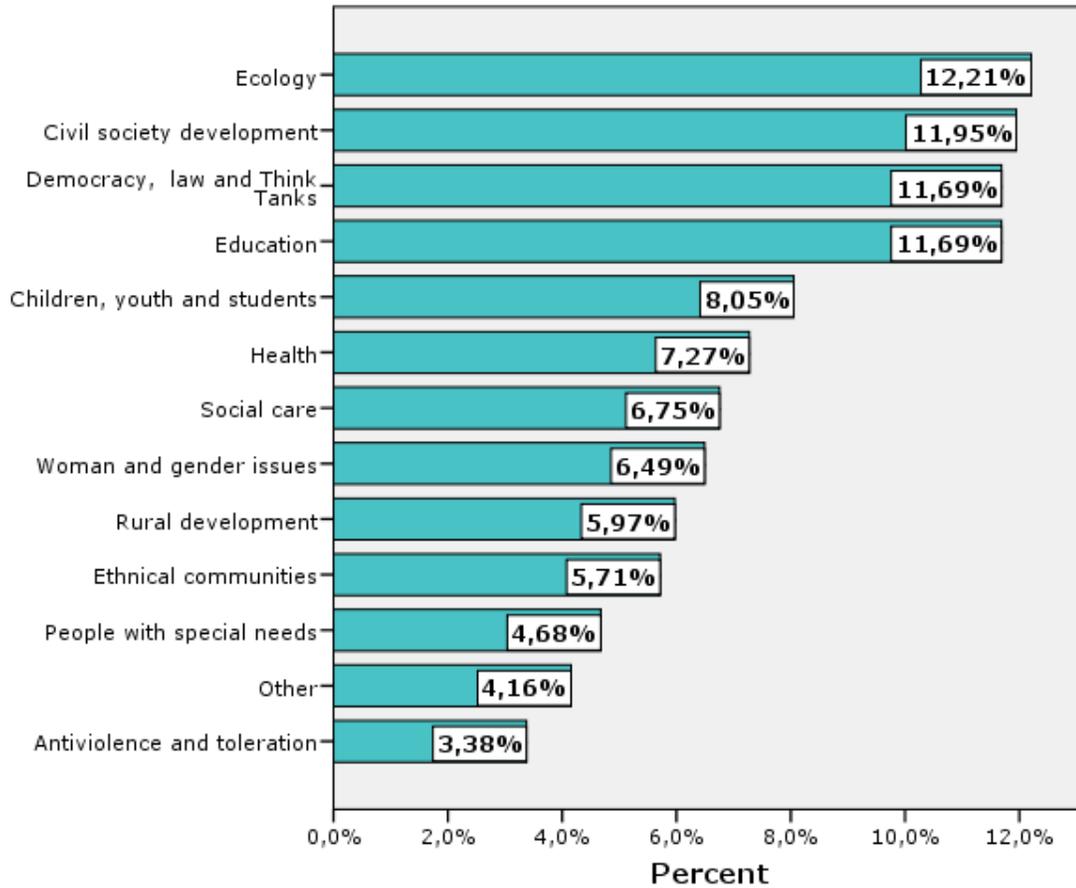
It is noteworthy that many of the surveyed organization have circled more than one of the topics, and have even added to the list some additional subjects that they deal with. This may be in part driven the influence of availability of donor funds as opposed to CSO focus.

Main ethnicity target

	Frequency	Percent
Macedonian	12	6,2
Albanian	3	1,5
Roma	10	5,2
Turkish	1	,5
All citizens in Macedonia	152	78,4
Other	16	8,2
TOTAL	**194**	**100,0**

Main ethnicity target
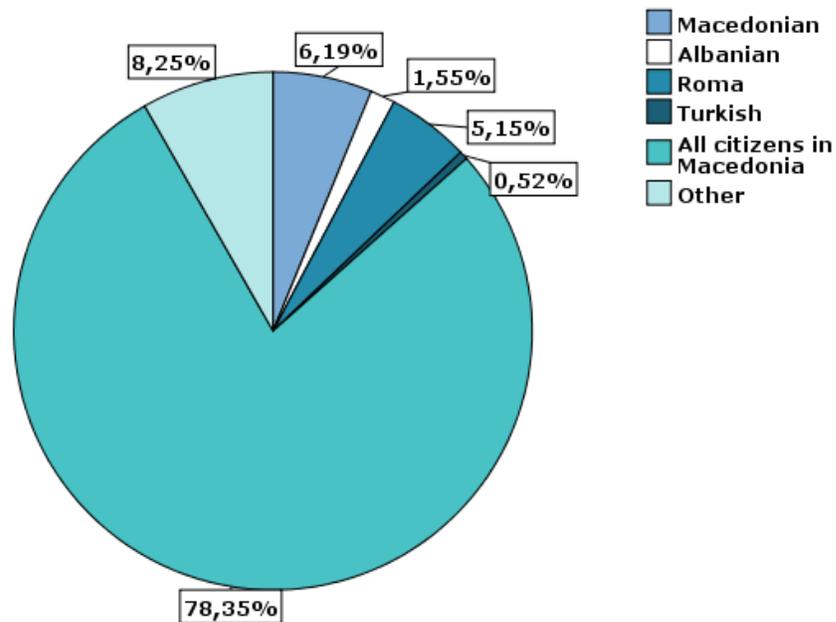
The majority of the organizations indicated that their activities are targeted to all citizens of Macedonia (78%); with only 22% targeting according to ethnicity.

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1.3 Second cluster

The second cluster consists of the questions that reflect the perception about the TACSO project / brand.

Question no. 1:

Have you heard of the TACSO project?

	Frequency	Percent
Yes	194	100,0

Have you heard of the TACSO project?

☐ Yes

100,00%
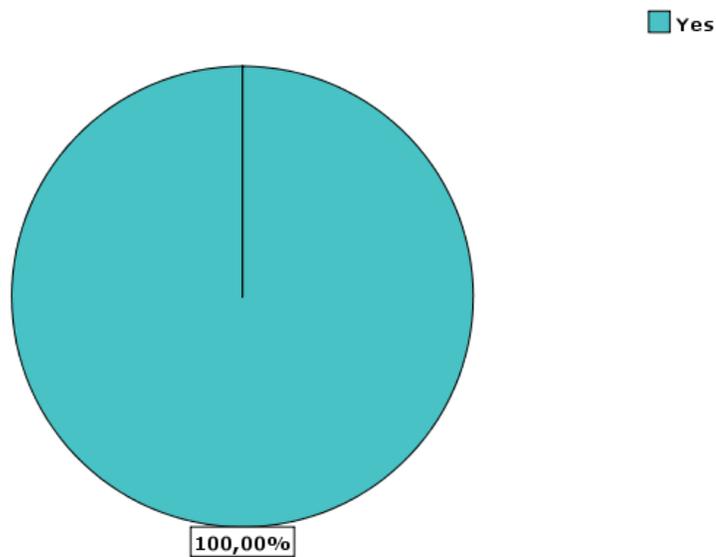
Question No. 2

What is the full name of the TACSO project?

	Frequency	Percent
Technical Assistance of Civil Society Organisations	194	100,0
True Application of Civil Society Objectives	**0**	**0**
Other	**0**	**0**

What is the full name of the TACSO project?

Technical Assistance of Civil Society Organisations

100,00%
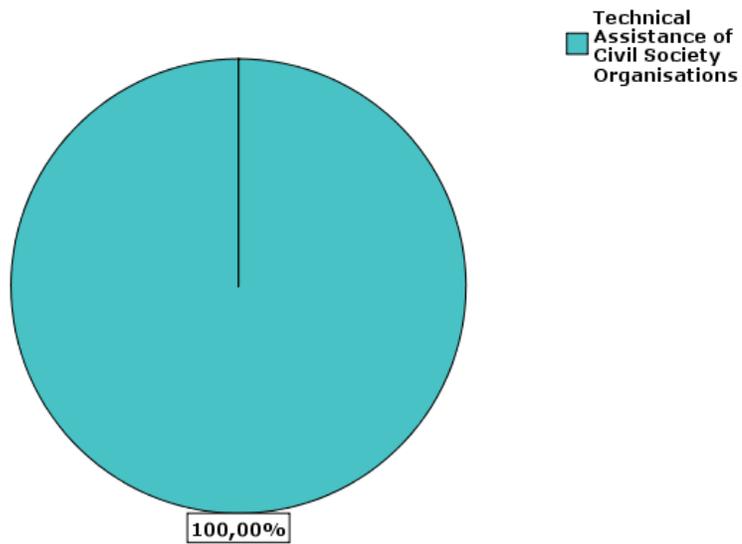
The panel was universally able to indicate the meaning of the TACSO acronym.

Question No. 3

What does TACSO do? (Please rank 1 to 5, 1 being least important, 5 being most important)

Provide technical help to CSO's in their work

		Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Rank	1	51	26,3	26,3
	2	34	17,5	43,8
	3	13	6,7	50,5
	4	12	6,2	56,7
	5	84	43,3	100,0
	TOTAL	194	100,0	

Over half of the panel (56%) have ranked this function of TACSO between <4. Nevertheless a 43% 5> score indicates a significant attribute.

Help CSO's networking

		Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Rank	1	27	13,9	13,9
	2	66	34,0	47,9
	3	62	32,0	79,9
	4	29	14,9	94,8
	5	10	5,2	100,0
	TOTAL	194	100,0	

Approximately 80% of the panel have ranked <3 indicating that this attribute is of lesser perceived value

Improve the influence of the CSO's in the society

		Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Rank	1	18	9,3	9,3
	2	41	21,1	30,4
	3	48	24,7	55,2
	4	56	28,9	84,0
	5	31	16,0	100,0
	TOTAL	194	100,0	

This is one of the significant results to come out of the panel, the even spread of responses suggest ambivalence on what is actually a fundamental issue for the TACSO project and for the CSO community in general. The team suggests that this is researched further using one or more elicitation techniques.

Provide trainings for the CSO's

|		Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Rank	1	16	8,2	8,2
	2	28	14,4	22,7
	3	49	25,3	47,9
	4	79	40,7	88,7
	5	22	11,3	100,0
	TOTAL	194	100,0	

The trainings are very important for almost half of the sample organizations, greater focus on this area will significantly impact brand credibility and reinforce value perceptions.

Improve the image of the CSO's within the society in which they operate

		Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Rank	1	82	42,3	42,3
	2	25	12,9	55,2
	3	22	11,3	66,5
	4	18	9,3	75,8
	5	47	24,2	100,0
	TOTAL	194	100,0	

40% of the panel regards 'Improving of the image of the CSO's in the society' as being of least importance.

Which TACSO function is least important?
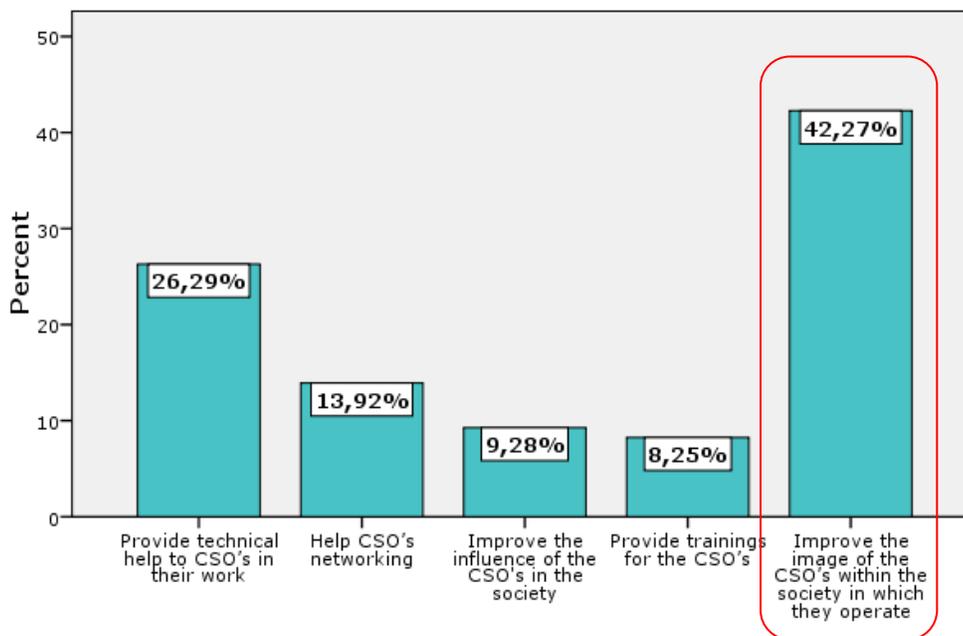
Which TACSO function is of low importance?
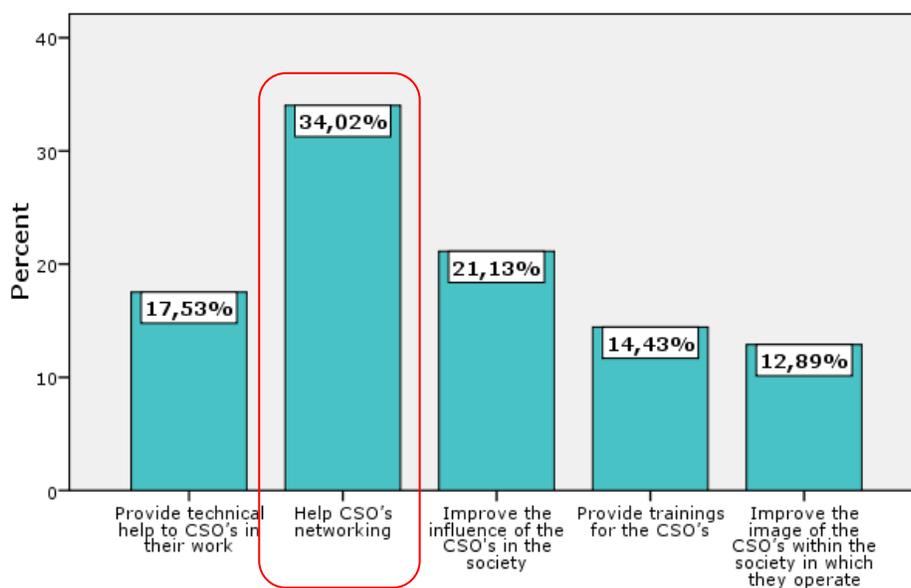
The panel indicated that they think that its participation in improving the image of the CSO's is least important. Most of the organization has ranked the role that TACSO plays in help CSO's networking with <2, indicating low importance.

Which TACSO function is of relative importance?
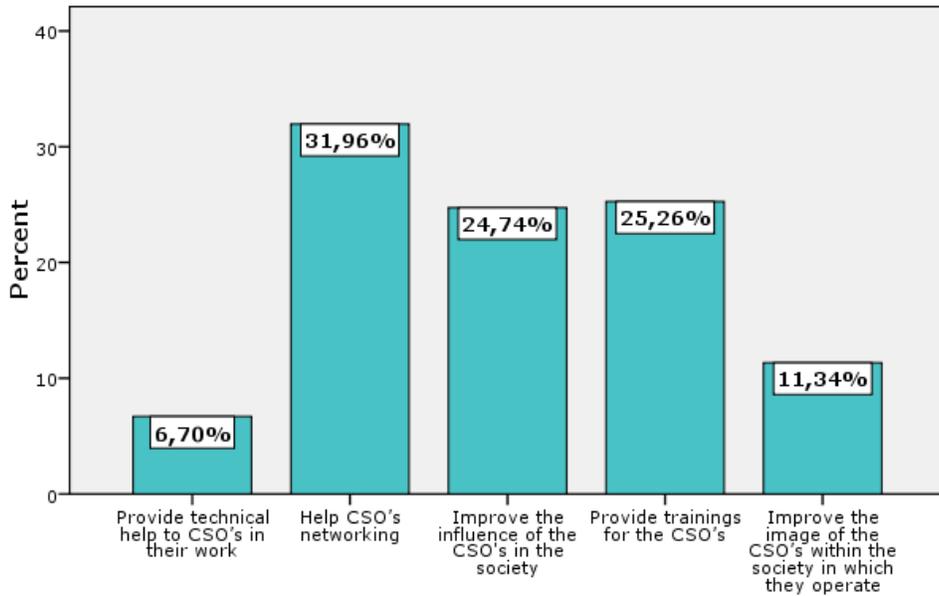
Which TACSO function is of high importance?

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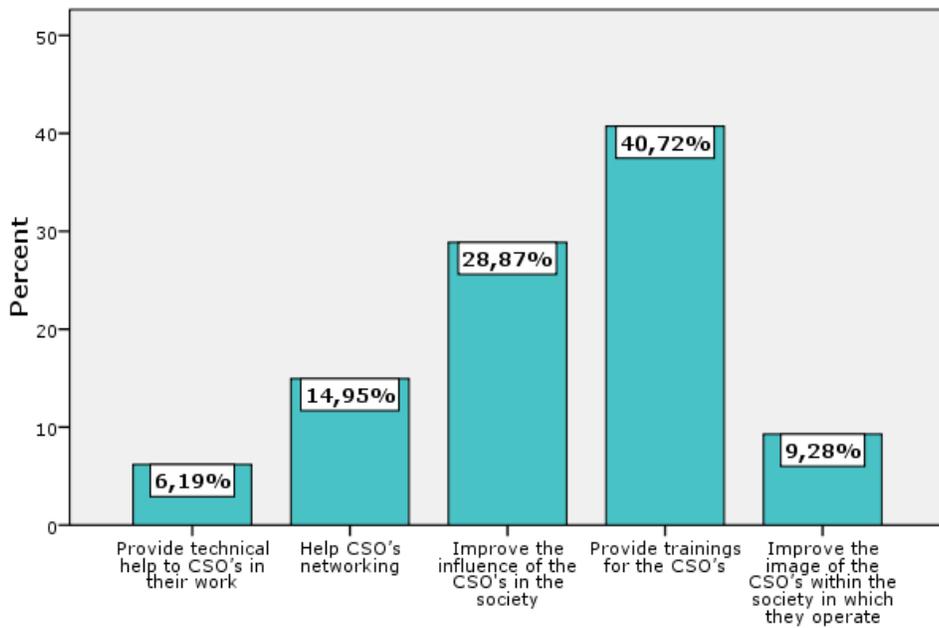
Which TACSO function is most important?
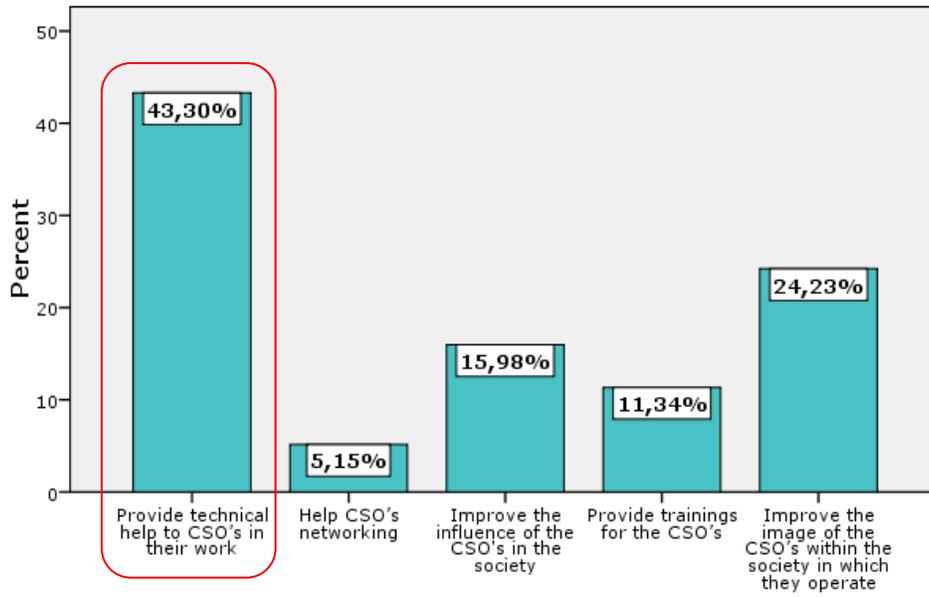
Providing technical assistance to the CSO's has been ranked as the most important role of TACSO. With providing trainings for CSOs as being a significant second.

Question No. 4

How did you hear about TACSO?

|	Frequency	Percent
They contacted our organization	100	51,5
I heard from another CSO / network	26	13,4
Web site	4	2,1
Media (Newspapers, TV etc.)	2	1,0
Participated at TACSO event	59	30,4
Other	3	1,5
TOTAL	**194**	**100,0**

How did you hear about TACSO?
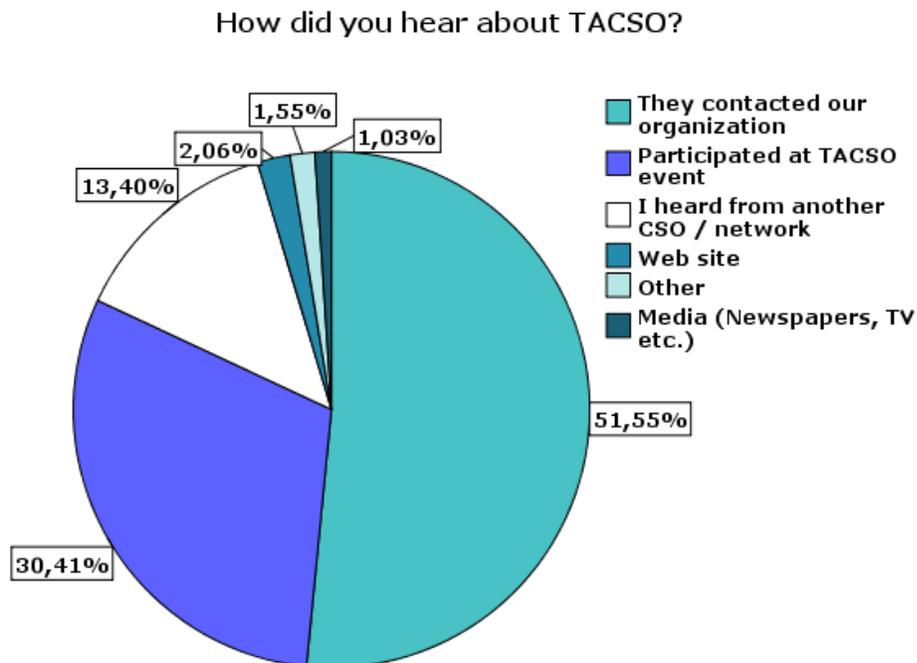
More than half of the organizations found out about TACSO by being directly contacted. Approximately 30% got the information as participants in some TACSO event. Over 82% of the panel had an experiential contact with TACSO, which would be an extremely high result if the panel has been selected through random sampling. Therefore this should been seen as indicative of

the panel selection coming from the TACSO database rather than reflective of TACSO brand awareness amongst the wider CSO community.

Question No.5

How would you describe the work of TACSO?

	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Successful, they have been very helpful	113	58,2	58,2
Neither good or bad	68	35,1	93,3
I regard their work as poor	5	2,6	95,9
Don't know	8	4,1	100,0
TOTAL	194	100,0	

We can see from the cumulative percentage that the biggest part (above 90%) of the surveyed have neutral or good opinion about the TACSO project.
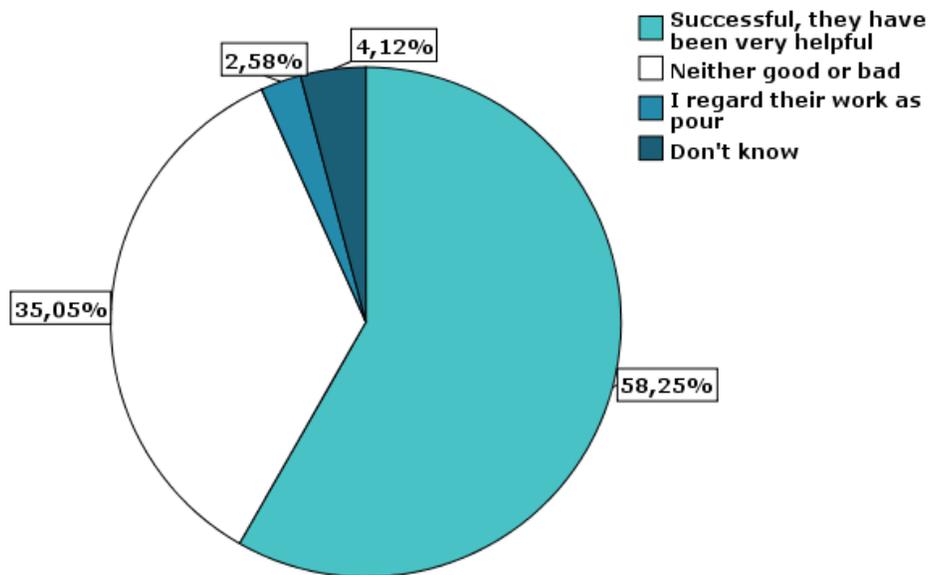
TACSO has a high satisfaction rating with 58% regarding the work as successful and helpful for their line of work. The 35% that are undecided or ambivalent is not a surprising figure giving the relatively young nature of TACSO. The 2,58% dissatisfaction rating should be regarded as extremely encouraging.

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		How would you describe the work of TACSO?				
		Successful, they have been very helpful	Neither good or bad	I regard their work as pour	Don't know	TOTAL
	Kumanovo	0,5%	1,5%	0,0%	0,0%	2,1%
	Tetovo	3,1%	3,1%	0,0%	0,0%	6,2%
	Negotino	0,0%	0,5%	0,0%	0,0%	0,5%
	Ohrid	1,5%	1,0%	0,5%	0,0%	3,1%
	Bitola	2,6%	0,5%	0,0%	0,0%	3,1%
	Prilep	2,6%	0,5%	0,5%	0,0%	3,6%
	Shtip	2,6%	1,5%	0,0%	0,5%	4,6%
	Valandovo	0,5%	1,0%	0,0%	0,0%	1,5%
	Gevgelija	2,6%	1,0%	0,0%	0,0%	3,6%
	Kochani	0,0%	1,0%	0,0%	0,0%	1,0%
	Struga	4,1%	2,1%	0,0%	0,5%	6,7%
	Gostivar	1,0%	0,5%	0,0%	0,0%	1,5%
City	Probishtip	0,5%	0,0%	0,0%	0,0%	0,5%
	Strumica	0,0%	1,5%	0,0%	0,5%	2,1%
	Skopje	26,8%	16,0%	1,5%	2,1%	46,4%
	Kichevo	1,5%	0,0%	0,0%	0,0%	1,5%
	Bogdanci	0,5%	0,0%	0,0%	0,0%	0,5%
	Resen	2,1%	0,0%	0,0%	0,0%	2,1%
	Kavadarci	0,0%	0,5%	0,0%	0,0%	0,5%
	Sveti Nikole	0,5%	0,0%	0,0%	0,0%	0,5%
	Kratovo	1,0%	0,5%	0,0%	0,0%	1,5%
	Veles	1,0%	1,0%	0,0%	0,5%	2,6%
	Debar	1,5%	0,0%	0,0%	0,0%	1,5%
	Berovo	0,5%	0,5%	0,0%	0,0%	1,0%
	Makedonski Brod	0,5%	0,0%	0,0%	0,0%	0,5%
	Delchevo	0,5%	0,5%	0,0%	0,0%	1,0%
TOTAL		58,2%	35,1%	2,6%	4,1%	100,0%

Most of the organizations in Macedonia believe that TACSO's work is successful.

The smaller number of organizations that have some comments on TACSO's work – (neither good nor bad) or regard it as poor is predominantly from Skopje.

Question No.6

Please tell us how many times you have had contact with TACSO project

(through oral or written communication, event, electronic communication, meeting...)

	Frequency	Percent
1-4 times	102	52,6
4-10 times	31	16,0
Over 10	61	31,4
TOTAL	194	100,0

Please tell us how many times you have had contact with TACSO

Legend: 1-4 times, 4-10 times, Over 10

31,44%

52,58%

15,98%
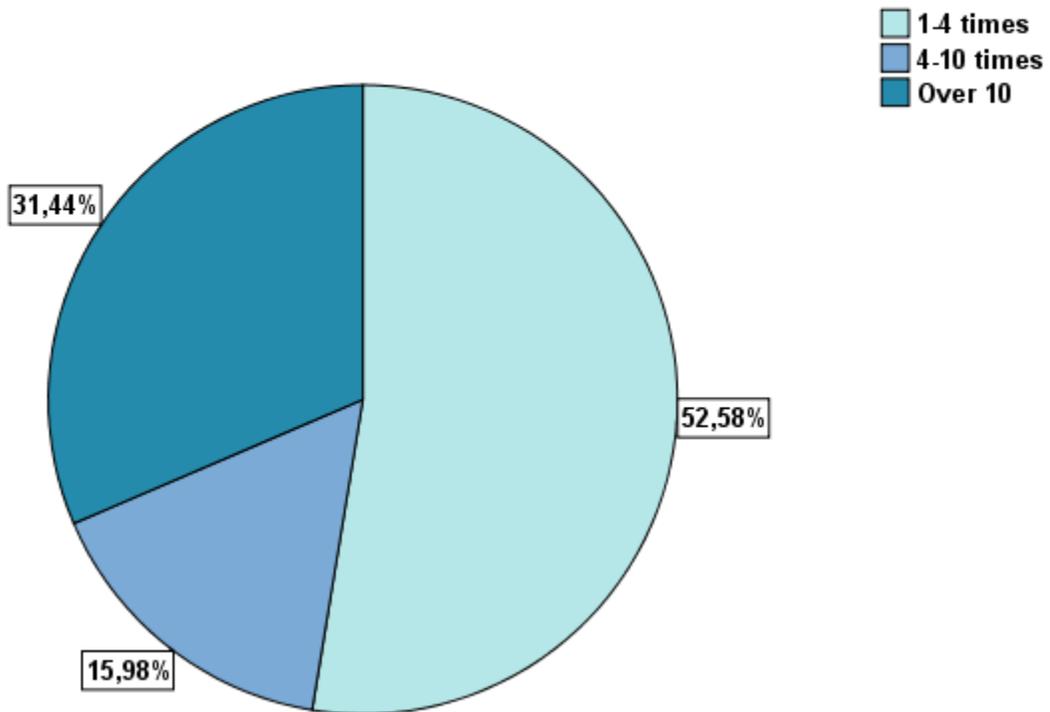
Only 4% of the panel had heard of but never contacted TACSO and of those contacted only 31.44% have had frequent/regular contact.

Question No.7

TACSO information is:

	Frequency	Percent
Easy to reach	156	80,4
Sometimes I have not been able to get	33	17,0
Don't know	5	2,6
TOTAL	194	100,0

TACSO information is:
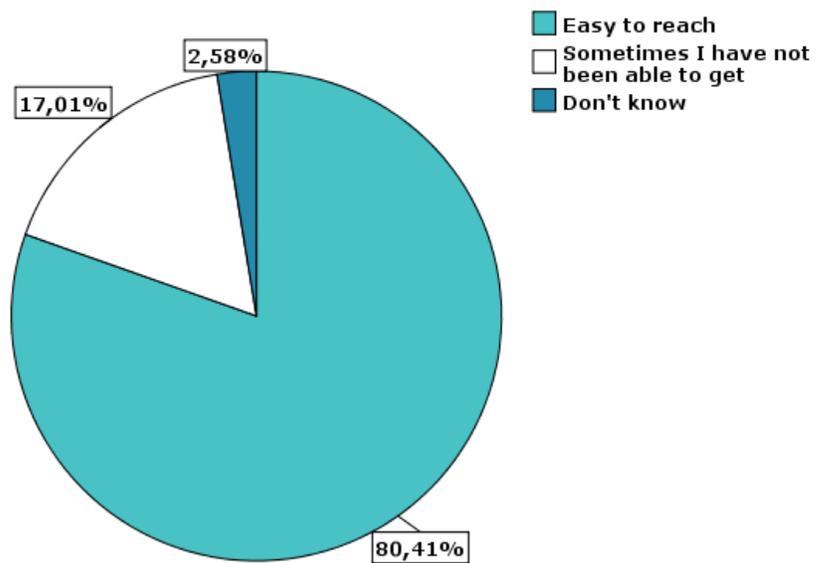
Above 80% of the organizations don't have problem accessing information regarding the TACSO project.

		TACSO information is:			
		Easy to reach	Sometimes I have not been able to get	Don't know	TOTAL
City	Kumanovo	1,0%	1,0%	0,0%	2,1%
	Tetovo	5,7%	0,5%	0,0%	6,2%
	Negotino	0,5%	0,0%	0,0%	0,5%
	Ohrid	2,6%	0,5%	0,0%	3,1%
	Bitola	2,1%	1,0%	0,0%	3,1%
	Prilep	3,1%	0,5%	0,0%	3,6%
	Shtip	3,6%	0,5%	0,5%	4,6%
	Valandovo	1,5%	0,0%	0,0%	1,5%
	Gevgelija	3,1%	0,5%	0,0%	3,6%
	Kochani	0,5%	0,5%	0,0%	1,0%
	Struga	4,6%	1,5%	0,5%	6,7%
	Gostivar	1,0%	0,5%	0,0%	1,5%
	Probishtip	0,5%	0,0%	0,0%	0,5%
	Strumica	1,0%	0,5%	0,5%	2,1%
	Skopje	37,1%	8,8%	0,5%	46,4%
	Kichevo	1,5%	0,0%	0,0%	1,5%
	Bogdanci	0,5%	0,0%	0,0%	0,5%
	Resen	2,1%	0,0%	0,0%	2,1%
	Kavadarci	0,5%	0,0%	0,0%	0,5%
	Sveti Nikole	0,5%	0,0%	0,0%	0,5%
	Kratovo	1,5%	0,0%	0,0%	1,5%
	Veles	2,1%	0,0%	0,5%	2,6%
	Debar	1,5%	0,0%	0,0%	1,5%
	Berovo	1,0%	0,0%	0,0%	1,0%
	Makedonski Brod	0,5%	0,0%	0,0%	0,5%
	Delchevo	0,5%	0,5%	0,0%	1,0%
TOTAL		80,4%	17,0%	2,6%	100,0%

Again we can see that most of the cities regarding the availability of the information from TACSO are satisfied. The only critics come from the organizations from the capital city, with half of those who noted a difficulty in getting information coming from Skopje. Having said that 37% of the panel believes that that information is easy to reach.

		TACSO information is:			
		Easy to reach	Sometimes I have not been able to get	Don't know	TOTAL
Year	1966-1990	5,2%	0,5%	0,0%	5,7%
	1991-1995	13,9%	2,6%	0,0%	16,5%
	1996-2000	23,2%	2,1%	0,5%	25,8%
	2001-2005	27,8%	3,1%	2,1%	33,0%
	2006-2010	10,3%	8,8%	0,0%	19,1%
TOTAL		80,4%	17,0%	2,6%	100,0%

Half of those who think that the information is not easy to get are organizations formed in the last 5 years.

|		TACSO information is:			
		Easy to reach	Sometimes I have not been able to get	Don't know	TOTAL
How would you describe the work of TACSO?	Successful, they have been very helpful	50,5%	7,7%	0,0%	58,2%
	Neither good or bad	28,4%	6,7%	0,0%	35,1%
	I regard their work as poor	0,0%	2,6%	0,0%	2,6%
	Don't know	1,5%	0,0%	2,6%	4,1%
TOTAL		80,4%	17,0%	2,6%	100,0%

The only interesting fact in this cross – tabulations is that 7, 7% have said that they regard the work of TACSO successful although sometimes they have difficulties getting information.

Question No. 8

Based on the experience you had is the TACSO project (including its employees) easy to reach?

	Frequency	Percent
Yes	176	90,7
No	14	7,2
Don't know	4	2,1
TOTAL	194	100,0

On the issue of availability I would say that TACSO project is easy to reach

7,22% 2,06%

- Yes
- No
- Don't know

90,72%
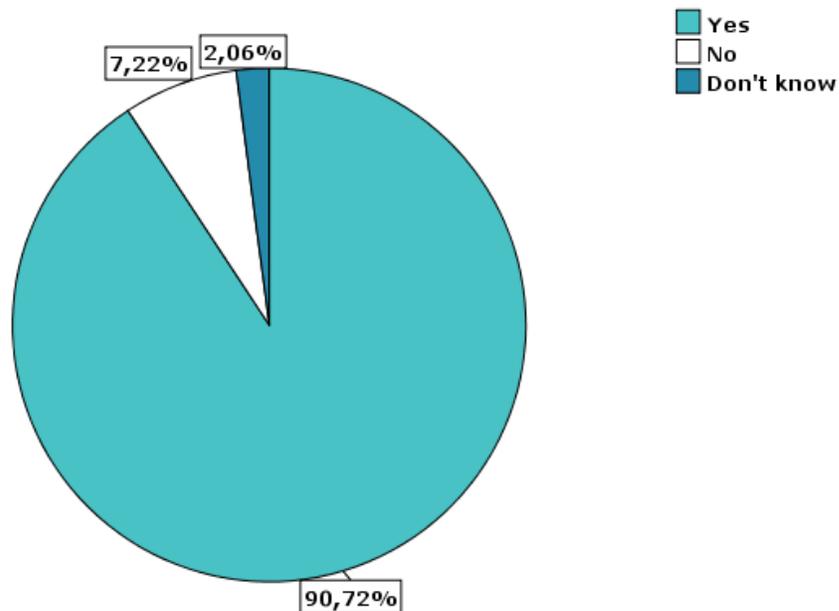
Over 90% have positive experience in relation to availability of the information from all aspects, including the employees.

|		On the issue of availability I would say that TACSO project is easy to reach			
		Yes	No	Don't know	TOTAL
	Easy to reach	76,3%	2,6%	1,5%	80,4%
TACSO information is:	Sometimes I have not been able to get	11,9%	4,6%	0,5%	17,0%
	Don't know	2,6%	0,0%	0,0%	2,6%
TOTAL		90,7%	7,2%	2,1%	100,0%

There are rare occasions where the availability of the information and whether TACSO is easy to reach is seen as two separate things, which is why they have different marks.

Question No. 9

If you said yes, please tell us how you get in contact most often

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
The employees are always easy to reach	83	42,8	46,9	46,9
I found the TACSO internet site very helpful	49	25,3	27,7	74,6
Other (mainly e-mail)	45	23,2	25,4	100,0
TOTAL	**177**	**91,2**	**100,0**	
We have difficulties getting in contact	17	8,8		
TOTAL	194	100,0		

If yes, in which way do you prefer reaching TACSO?

- The employees are always easy to reach
- I found the TACSO internet site very helpful
- Other (mainly e-mail)

25,42%

27,68%

46,89%
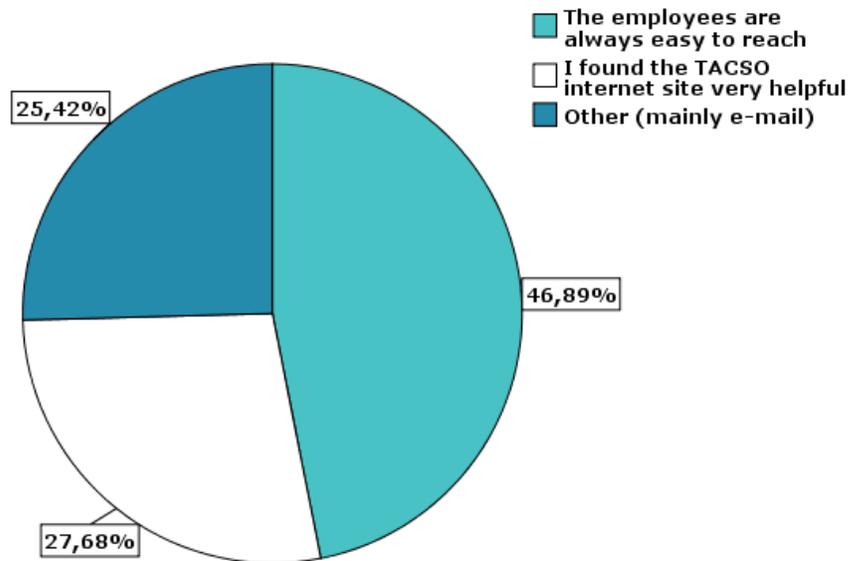
From those who think that TACSO is easy to reach (8, 8% don't agree), almost 47% are in contact through the employees, 27% get their information through the web site, while 25% access it in other ways (e-mail).

|		If yes, in which way do you prefer reaching TACSO?			
		The employees are always easy to reach	I found the TACSO internet site very helpful	Other (mainly e-mail)	TOTAL
How would you describe the work of TACSO?	Successful, they have been very helpful	24,9%	19,2%	17,5%	61,6%
	Neither good or bad	22,0%	8,5%	5,1%	35,6%
	Don't know	0,0%	0,0%	2,8%	2,8%
TOTAL		46,9%	27,7%	25,4%	100,0%

The organizations that think of the work of TACSO successful almost equally use all ways of communication with the project.

Question No.10

Regarding the bridge between TACSO and the government institutions

	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
It has been a helpful link	88	45,4	45,4
We had some benefit	50	25,8	71,1
We had no benefit at all	53	27,3	98,5
Don't know	3	1,5	100,0
TOTAL	194	100,0	

Regarding the bridge between TACSO and the government institutions
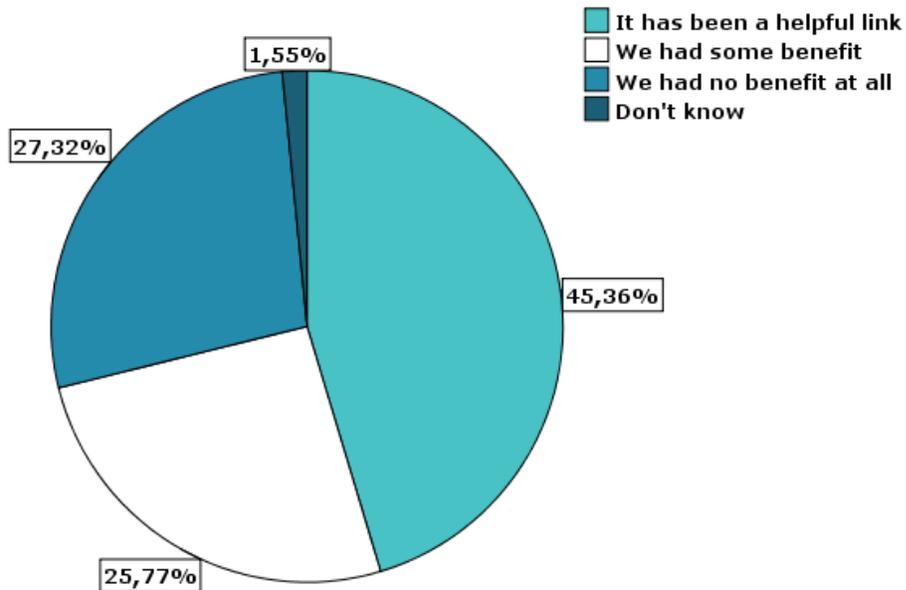
The cumulative percent shows that above 70% of the organizations stated that the project is helpful or have at least some benefit from it. Still, a notably high portion - 27% think that there is no benefit from the project in relation to the government institutions.

		Regarding the bridge between TACSO and the government institutions				
		It has been a helpful link	We had some benefit	We had no benefit at all	Don't know	TOTAL
How would you describe the work of TACSO?	**Successful, they have been very helpful**	34,5%	13,9%	9,8%	0,0%	58,2%
	Neither good or bad	10,8%	11,9%	12,4%	0,0%	35,1%
	I regard their work as pour	0,0%	0,0%	2,6%	0,0%	2,6%
	Don't know	0,0%	0,0%	2,6%	1,5%	4,1%
TOTAL		45,4%	25,8%	27,3%	1,5%	100,0%

There is a positive correlation between these two variables, as the ones that believe the work of TACSO to be helpful believe also that TACSO is helpful link with the government and vice versa.

Question No.11

Please answer if you have been on any TACSO events

I find the TACSO events

	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Helpful, I gained lots of knowledge	91	46,9	46,9
I found it helpful up to some level	72	37,1	84,0
It wasn't helpful at all for our organization	8	4,1	88,1
I have not participated one, yet	23	11,9	100,0
TOTAL	194	100,0	

88.1% from the organizations in the survey have participated in some TACSO event. Only 4% are not satisfied from them.

I find the TACSO trainings
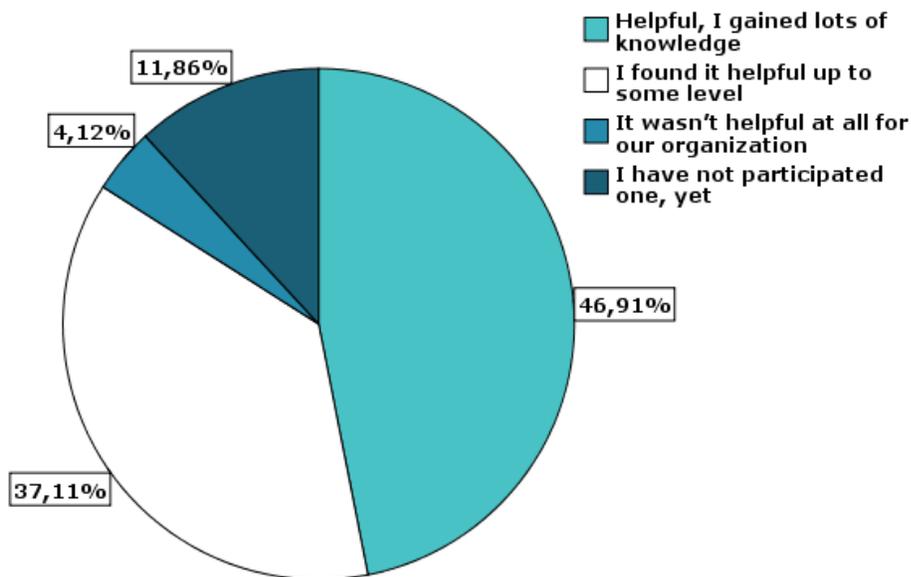
The cumulative percent shows that 84% from the organizations found the events helpful, at least to some level for their work.

		I find the TACSO events				
		Helpful, I gained lots of knowledge	**I found it helpful up to some level**	**It wasn't helpful at all for our organization**	**I have not participated one, yet**	**TOTAL**
	Kumanovo	0,5%	1,5%	0,0%	0,0%	2,1%
	Tetovo	3,6%	1,0%	0,0%	1,5%	6,2%
	Negotino	0,5%	0,0%	0,0%	0,0%	0,5%
	Ohrid	1,0%	1,5%	0,5%	0,0%	3,1%
	Bitola	2,6%	0,5%	0,0%	0,0%	3,1%
	Prilep	0,0%	3,1%	0,5%	0,0%	3,6%
	Shtip	2,6%	1,5%	0,0%	0,5%	4,6%
	Valandovo	0,5%	1,0%	0,0%	0,0%	1,5%
	Gevgelija	2,1%	1,0%	0,0%	0,5%	3,6%
	Kochani	0,0%	0,5%	0,0%	0,5%	1,0%
	Struga	4,1%	1,5%	0,0%	1,0%	6,7%
	Gostivar	0,5%	1,0%	0,0%	0,0%	1,5%
City	**Probishtip**	0,5%	0,0%	0,0%	0,0%	0,5%
	Strumica	0,0%	2,1%	0,0%	0,0%	2,1%
	Skopje	20,6%	16,0%	3,1%	6,7%	46,4%
	Kichevo	1,5%	0,0%	0,0%	0,0%	1,5%
	Bogdanci	0,0%	0,5%	0,0%	0,0%	0,5%
	Resen	1,5%	0,5%	0,0%	0,0%	2,1%
	Kavadarci	0,0%	0,5%	0,0%	0,0%	0,5%
	Sveti Nikole	0,5%	0,0%	0,0%	0,0%	0,5%
	Kratovo	0,5%	1,0%	0,0%	0,0%	1,5%
	Veles	0,5%	1,5%	0,0%	0,5%	2,6%
	Debar	1,5%	0,0%	0,0%	0,0%	1,5%
	Berovo	0,5%	0,0%	0,0%	0,5%	1,0%
	Makedonski Brod	0,5%	0,0%	0,0%	0,0%	0,5%
	Delchevo	0,5%	0,5%	0,0%	0,0%	1,0%
TOTAL		46,9%	37,1%	4,1%	11,9%	100,0%

It's a very small percentage to analyze but ¾ from those who said that the events weren't helpful at all are from Skopje while only 1/3 comes from any other city.

		I find the TACSO events				
		Helpful, I gained lots of knowledge	I found it helpful up to some level	It wasn't helpful at all for our organization	I have not participated one, yet	TOTAL
How would you describe the work of TACSO?	Successful, they have been very helpful	43,8%	13,9%	0,5%	0,0%	58,2%
	Neither good or bad	3,1%	20,6%	1,0%	10,3%	35,1%
	I regard their work as pour	0,0%	0,0%	2,6%	0,0%	2,6%
	Don't know	0,0%	2,6%	0,0%	1,5%	4,1%
TOTAL		46,9%	37,1%	4,1%	11,9%	100,0%

There is a positive correlation between these two variables: those that believe that the work of TACSO is helpful also answered that they gained lots of knowledge from the TACSO events.

		I find the TACSO events				
		Helpful, I gained lots of knowledge	I found it helpful up to some level	It wasn't helpful at all for our organization	I have not participated one, yet	TOTAL
On the issue of availability I would say that TACSO project is easy to reach	Yes	44,8%	36,6%	1,0%	8,2%	90,7%
	No	2,1%	0,5%	2,6%	2,1%	7,2%
	Don't know	0,0%	0,0%	0,5%	1,5%	2,1%
TOTAL		46,9%	37,1%	4,1%	11,9%	100,0%

There is a positive correlation between those two variables.

		I find the TACSO events				
		Helpful, I gained lots of knowledge	I found it helpful up to some level	It wasn't helpful at all for our organization	I have not participated one, yet	TOTAL
Regarding the bridge between TACSO and the government institutions	**It has been a helpful link**	33,0%	8,2%	1,0%	3,1%	45,4%
	We had some benefit	7,7%	13,4%	0,5%	4,1%	25,8%
	We had no benefit at all	6,2%	15,5%	2,6%	3,1%	27,3%
	Don't know	0,0%	0,0%	0,0%	1,5%	1,5%
TOTAL		46,9%	37,1%	4,1%	11,9%	100,0%

There is a positive correlation between those two variables.

**Question No.12**

Which of the following statements best reflects your view of TACSO work?

	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Relevant to my work	68	35,1	35,1
Essential for my work	54	27,8	62,9
Useful but not necessarily crucial	57	29,4	92,3
Not particularly relevant	6	3,1	95,4
Don't know	9	4,6	100,0
TOTAL	194	100,0	

The cumulative percent shows that more than half (63%) think that the work that TACSO does is either relevant or essential to their work.

The biggest percentage, of 35% thinks that the work of TACSO is relevant to what they do. However 30% don't think it crucial.

		Which of the following statements best reflects your view of TACSO work?					
		Relevant to my work	Essential for my work	Useful but not necessarily crucial	Not particularly relevant	Don't know	TOTAL
How would you describe the work of TACSO?	Successful, they have been very helpful	23,7%	19,6%	14,9%	0,0%	0,0%	58,2%
	Neither good or bad	9,8%	8,2%	13,9%	0,5%	2,6%	35,1%
	I regard their work as pour	0,0%	0,0%	0,0%	2,6%	0,0%	2,6%
	Don't know	1,5%	0,0%	0,5%	0,0%	2,1%	4,1%
TOTAL		35,1%	27,8%	29,4%	3,1%	4,6%	100,0%

We can notice positive relation between those two variables – those that consider the work of TACSO successful believe that TACSO is essential or relevant to their work.

		Which of the following statements best reflects your view of TACSO work?					
		Relevant to my work	Essential for my work	Useful but not necessarily crucial	Not particularly relevant	Don't know	TOTAL
TACSO information is:	Easy to reach	34,5%	25,3%	19,6%	0,5%	0,5%	80,4%
	Sometimes I have not been able to get	0,5%	2,6%	9,3%	2,6%	2,1%	17,0%
	Don't know	0,0%	0,0%	0,5%	0,0%	2,1%	2,6%
TOTAL		35,1%	27,8%	29,4%	3,1%	4,6%	100,0%

In general the organizations that think that TACSO is relevant to their work find the information easy to reach.

		Which of the following statements best reflects your view of TACSO work?					
		Relevant to my work	Essential for my work	Useful but not necessarily crucial	Not particularly relevant	Don't know	TOTAL
If yes, in which way do you prefer reaching TACSO?	The employees are always easy to reach	21,5%	13,6%	11,3%	0,6%	0,0%	6,9%
	I found the TACSO internet site very helpful	12,4%	5,1%	10,2%	0,0%	0,0%	27,7%
	Other (mainly e-mail)	2,8%	9,0%	10,7%	0,0%	2,8%	25,4%
TOTAL		36,7%	27,7%	32,2%	0,6%	2,8%	100,0%

Those that said that TACSO is relevant to their work are mostly in contact with the employees as most common way of communication.

		Which of the following statements best reflects your view of TACSO work?					
		Relevant to my work	Essential for my work	Useful but not necessarily crucial	Not particularly relevant	Don't know	TOTAL
I find the TACSO events	Helpful, I gained lots of knowledge	19,6%	16,5%	10,8%	0,0%	0,0%	46,9%
	I found it helpful up to some level	7,2%	9,8%	17,5%	0,5%	2,1%	37,1%
	It wasn't helpful at all for our organization	0,0%	1,5%	0,0%	2,6%	0,0%	4,1%
	I have not participated one, yet	8,2%	0,0%	1,0%	0,0%	2,6%	11,9%
TOTAL			27,8%	29,4%	3,1%	4,6%	100,0%

There is a positive correlation between the two variables.

|		Which of the following statements best reflects your view of TACSO work?					
		Relevant to my work	Essential for my work	Useful but not necessarily crucial	Not particularly relevant	Don't know	TOTAL
On the issue of availability I would say that TACSO project is easy to reach	Yes	33,5%	24,7%	29,4%	0,5%	2,6%	90,7%
	No	0,0%	2,6%	0,0%	2,6%	2,1%	7,2%
	Don't know	1,5%	0,5%	0,0%	0,0%	0,0%	2,1%
TOTAL		35,1%	27,8%	29,4%	3,1%	4,6%	100,0%

There is a positive correlation between these two variables.

Question No.13

Would you recommend TASCO to another CSO/NGO?

	Frequency	Percent
Yes with pleasure	175	90,2
No I would be reluctant to	11	5,7
Don't know	8	4,1
TOTAL	194	100,0

Would you recommend TASCO to another CSO/NGO?
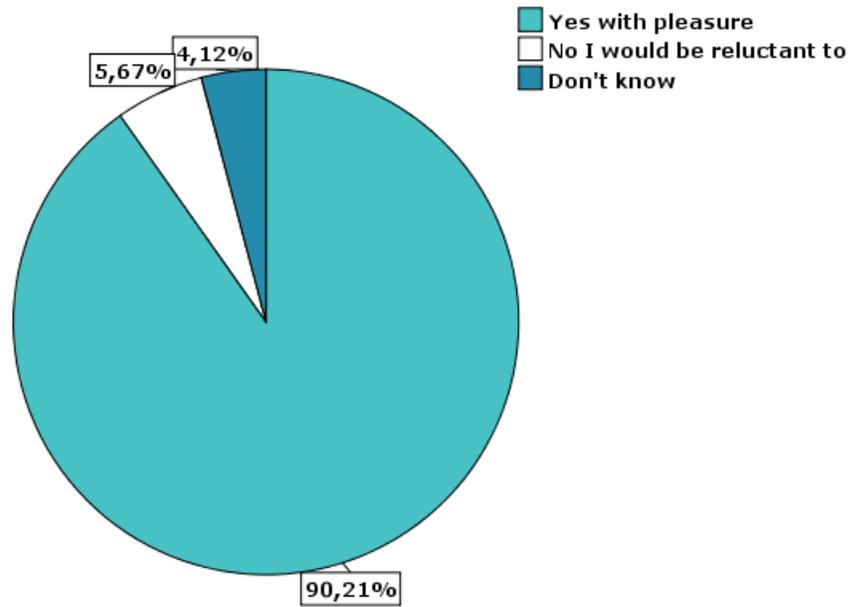
More then 90% of the organizations would recommend TACSO to another organization.

		Would you recommend TASCO to another CSO/NGO?			
		Yes with pleasure	No I would be reluctant to	Don't know	TOTAL
	1966-1990	5,7%	0,0%	0,0%	5,7%
	1991-1995	15,5%	1,0%	0,0%	16,5%
Year	1996-2000	23,7%	0,5%	1,5%	25,8%
	2001-2005	28,4%	2,6%	2,1%	33,0%
	2006-2010	17,0%	1,5%	0,5%	19,1%
TOTAL		90,2%	5,7%	4,1%	100,0%

From the small number of organizations that wouldn't or don't know if they would recommend TACSO to another CSO, most of them are formed in the last 10 years.

		Would you recommend TASCO to another CSO/NGO?			
		Yes with pleasure	No I would be reluctant to	Don't know	TOTAL
	Easy to reach	79,4%	0,5%	0,5%	80,4%
TACSO information is:	Sometimes I have not been able to get	10,8%	5,2%	1,0%	17,0%
	Don't know	0,0%	0,0%	2,6%	2,6%
TOTAL		90,2%	5,7%	4,1%	100,0%

There is a positive correlation between these two variables but there is such a small percentage of those who wouldn't recommend it that no detailed conclusions can be taken out.

		Would you recommend TASCO to another CSO/NGO?			
		Yes with pleasure	No I would be reluctant to	Don't know	TOTAL
On the issue of availability I would say that TACSO project is easy to reach	Yes	84,0%	3,1%	3,6%	90,7%
	No	4,6%	2,6%	0,0%	7,2%
	Don't know	1,5%	0,0%	0,5%	2,1%
TOTAL		90,2%	5,7%	4,1%	100,0%

It's a very small number of those that wouldn't recommend the project to another CSO. But in general it can be claimed that most of the organizations that think that the project is easy to reach would recommend it.

		Would you recommend TASCO to another CSO/NGO?			
		Yes with pleasure	**No I would be reluctant to**	**Don't know**	**TOTAL**
Regarding the bridge between TACSO and the government institutions	**It has been a helpful link**	44,3%	0,5%	0,5%	45,4%
	We had some benefit	25,3%	0,0%	0,5%	25,8%
	We had no benefit at all	19,1%	5,2%	3,1%	27,3%
	Don't know	1,5%	0,0%	0,0%	1,5%
TOTAL		90,2%	5,7%	4,1%	100,0%

What is interesting here is that almost 20% of the organizations would recommend TACSO to another organization although they claim that they don't have any benefit from it. This can be explained by the fact that some of them are thinking that other type of organizations can benefit (like the smaller or newer ones) or that they are satisfied with the availability of information etc. so they try to be objective.

Question No.14

Now that Macedonia is approaching the EU, do you think that the role of TACSO is becoming more important in understanding the rules of how to apply on projects etc.?

	Frequency	Percent
Yes	143	73,7
No	18	9,3
Don't know	33	17,0
TOTAL	194	100,0

Now that Macedonia is approaching the EU, do you think that the role of TACSO is becoming more important in understanding the rules of how to apply on projects etc.?
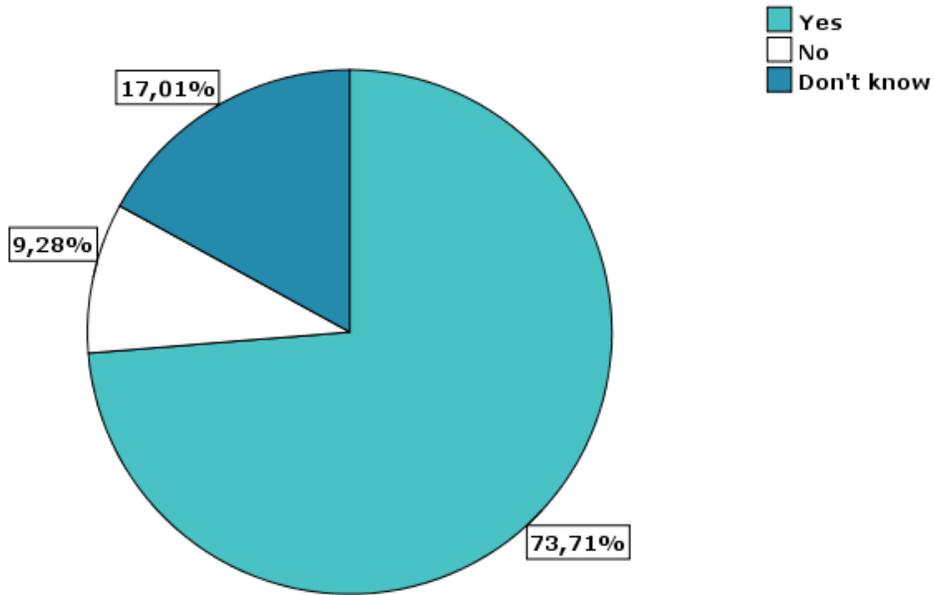
App. 73% thinks that what TACSO does is important in relation to the fond from the European Union.

		Now that Macedonia is approaching the EU, do you think that the role of TACSO is becoming more important in understanding the rules of how to apply on projects etc.?			
		Yes	No	Don't know	TOTAL
How would you describe the work of TACSO?	**Successful, they have been very helpful**	51,0%	0,0%	7,2%	58,2%
	Neither good or bad	21,1%	6,7%	7,2%	35,1%
	I regard their work as pour	0,0%	2,6%	0,0%	2,6%
	Don't know	1,5%	0,0%	2,6%	4,1%
TOTAL		73,7%	9,3%	17,0%	100,0%

There is a positive correlation between those two variables; those that think TACSO is successful believe it is also important in relation to the EU fond.

		Now that Macedonia is approaching the EU, do you think that the role of TACSO is becoming more important in understanding the rules of how to apply on projects etc.?			
		Yes	No	Don't know	TOTAL
Regarding the bridge between TACSO and the government institution	**It has been a helpful link**	44,3%	0,5%	0,5%	45,4%
	We had some benefit	19,1%	0,0%	6,7%	25,8%
	We had no benefit at all	8,8%	8,8%	9,8%	27,3%
	Don't know	1,5%	0,0%	0,0%	1,5%
TOTAL		73,7%	9,3%	17,0%	100,0%

Those that believe that TACSO can help with the EU fond also believe that it's a helpful link with the government.

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1.4 Conclusions from the quantitative survey

- **TACSO has strong brand recognition**

- It is clear to all of the panel what the TACSO acronym stands for

- Based on the ranking of the functions/services of TACSO, the following two are most important

    o Technical assistance of the CSO's

    o Training organizations

  From this we can conclude that the current TACSO project priorities closely reflect the priorities of the sample group. The fact that the functions: Help CSO's networking, Improve the influence of the CSO's in the society and Improve the image of the CSO's within the society in which they operate were ranked with lower importance is logical due to the fact that those are activities that take more time, and the project is still new. But they may also reflect a perceived need amongst the CSO's for material rather than intrinsic impact, in essence the panel appear to be seeking tangible rather than image benefits

- For the majority of the panel their opinion of TACSO is experiential (based on direct contact or attending trainings). To date <u>the media has had little or no role in communicating information about the TACSO project or projecting its brand values.</u>

- Over half of the respondents believe what TACSO does what it does successfully, with an additional 35% undecided. With the phase of national trainings scheduled for the coming period <u>a large portion of the undecided can be migrated into advocates.</u>

- Half of the panel have been in contact with TACSO on four occasions or less, but a noteworthy amount have interacted on 10> occasions, which is a reasonably high level of engagement for a young project.

- **80% believe that TACSO information is easy to access**

- In a corroborative question, when asked if the TACSO project (including its employees) is easy to reach, 90% responded positively.

- Encouragingly almost half the panel have had one to one contact with TACSO employees, which has significant impact on the personalization of the brand, given that non personal relationships based on electronic communications (web/e-mail) rarely have tangible impact on brand personalization unless the response rates are extremely prompt and positive..

- Those panel members with a positive view of the work of TACSO use multiple communication channels/tools with TACSO, the combination of personal and non-personal communication helping to complete a brand at service level perception.

- **The events that TACSO organizes are seen as helpful/to some level by 84%**

- 71% see the link with the government to be helpful at least to some level while 27 don't believe that to be the case

- **63% of the panel think that the work that TACSO does is either relevant or essential to their work**
- **More then 90% of the organizations would recommend TACSO to another organization**

- 73% think that what TACSO does is important in relation to accessing funds from the European Union

- The negative opinions/attributes noted were predominantly from the panel members from Skopje

Note

Some completed questionnaires contained additional comments;

Some indicated that the respective local CSO is still not fully introduced to the TACSO project or didn't have direct communication but had internal information from their main/central organization office.

49

A notably high number of questionnaires were sent with letters stating that the sender is happy that TACSO appeared in Macedonia but still that they still hadn't had the opportunity to cooperate, but hope to do so. Most of them were from municipalities outside of Skopje.

2. Qualitative survey

2.1. Methodology

The qualitative part of the survey consists from 24 interviews done with representatives from:

- all the LAG members
  - o CSO network representatives
    - ▪ Ahmet Jasarovski - DROM, network of Roma organizations
    - ▪ Lulzim Haziri – Association for democratic initiative
    - ▪ Metodija Sazdov - MK green centre, Network active in the area of environment
    - ▪ Zoran Ilieski – SEGA, Coalition of Youth Organisations
    - ▪ Petre Mrkev – All for fair trials
    - ▪ Guner Nebiu – Antiko, Women Civic Initiative of Albanian Women
    - ▪ Vladimir Misev - Institute for democracy, Think-tank organisation – Institute for Democracy Civils
    - ▪ Fani Karanfilova – Panoska – FOSIM – Foundation Open Society Institute Macedonia
  - o Government – from the general secretariat and the ministry of local self-government
    - ▪ Representative of the General Secretariat of the Government (Zoran Milkov, Senior Programme Officer for IPA)
    - ▪ Representative from the Ministry of Local self-government (Eli Cakar, Counselor for public relations (also responsible for communication with CSOs)
      - - European Union delegation
        - o Representative from the EC Delegation (Irena Ivanova, Civil Society)

- media
  - o Valentina Novkovska Trajkovska – MTV, National TV station
  - o Zoran Zarinski – TV Iris, local TV station
  - o Abdula Erin – Koha, Albanian daily newspaper

- o Marija Ilic, Makfaks, news agency
- donor community
    - o Ferati Mustafa – US embassy, responsible for small grants
    - o Mentor Kadriu, Swedish embassy
    - o Ibrahim Mehmeti, Swiss embassy

- municipalities
    - o Norik Selimi, municipality of Cair – Skopje
    - o Vladislav Zupan, municipality of Struga
    - o Biljana Manaskova – municipality of Veles

Different municipalities from aspect of location, ethnic mix and potential demand for access to EU fund were included in the survey. Notably, all three municipality participants have participated in TACSO organised events.

- largest and most influential CSO's
    - o Adrijana Trendova – FOSIM (Foundation Open Society Institute Macedonia)
    - o Zoran Stojkoski – CIRA (Centre for institutional development)
    - o Emina Nuredinovska – MCIC (Macedonian Centre for International Cooperation)

It is important to mention that these panel members also have representation in the LAG, through the civil society platform (represented by Lulzim from ADI) and FOSIM has a representative, therefore their opinion closely reflected those coming from the other LAG representatives.

The ancillary qualitative study was designed to validate and clarify responses from the main survey. Using face-to-face interviews (telephone interviews were carried out at the request of 3 of the panel due to their other responsibilities).

The subsequent summary report is presented in the form brand attributes (existing, potential and or targeted) in each segment the comments/opinion of the panel members from the LAG group are presented first as they are in the main most familiar with the project, these are then followed by

other panel members. It should be noted that there is some level of overlap with the same or similar conclusions being presented, however there are some notably polarised views.

2.2 Background

Civil society

"The civil society sector is dying due to lack of money and politics."

In general the perception is that the CSO's are in a phase of significant decline, even those panel members with more moderate views believe that the CSO sector is undergoing a period of stagnation.

The donors are gone and the new fund raising possibilities that appear are much more difficult to reach, which has caused many people to leave the sector. The EU funded project opportunities are currently the sectors main focus, except for those CSOs that currently have access to other sustainable funding sources. The EU funds are regarded as inaccessible to many, qualification criteria are overly stringent, with a particular concern/frustration at the requirement for some level of own funding on the part of the CSO, or other criteria which seem to designed to disadvantage the smaller CSO's and can only be applied for by the larger for established CSOs. Some panel members have remarked that the CSO's are in a similar position as in 1995, when the sector had little money and even less guidance.

Another aspect is that the CSO's sector is regarded internally as fragmented and prone to internal conflict, leaving them vulnerable to pressure from the Government (divide and rule) especially those civil society organizations that active criticize its decisions/actions. Within the perception of the Government some level of negativness can be felt.

"On the level of the EU the role of the CSO is regarded as very important, but here the country is very far from it."

Part of the panel believe that CSO sector is much divided and notable antagonism exists between it leading organizations often resulting in little or no communication. This however is not believed by everyone: *"CSO's don't have to be unified, the problems that they face are not major and when*

there is a need they are able and willing to unite on certain issues. The CSO's should have differing opinion."

Another perception is that the CSO organizations are unwilling or unable to put together the quality of applications necessary to successfully access funds, it was also mentioned that the even bigger problem is that when the CSOs are awarded projects they do not have the internal capacity to actually realize them as contracted. There is a broad acknowledgement of the need for the sector to be properly supported in the designing and realization of projects.

The advent of TACSO has come at a point where the CSO sector is going through a period of stagnation and retrenchment, and as such it (and or organisations like it) is regarded as having a key role to play in the future of the CSO sector

The perception from the side of the non CSO LAG members is that in general the NGO's have new rules in the society and now they need more support and more institutional trainings outside of the country.

In general the other interviewed that are not part of the CSO's see the situation more positively: "In general the segment is very strong, they have managed to stay alive. What is important is that the middle size CSO's are getting stronger, and they, like the middle class in the society itself are most important…They have learnt how to deal with applications etc."

The media had an interesting viewpoint on the CSO situation – "The problem with the CSO's is that they think they can change the world and they actually cant, so they should focus on making smaller activities instead of big ones."

Background – other target groups

In general the people responsible for dealing with the CSO sector from within the municipalities feel that they have too many other responsibilities to have much or sufficient time to focus on the sector. Additionally there is the perception that the CSO's are not yet fully developed in terms of

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their capacity to deal with the organization of their own organisations, in relation to applying for the new EU funds and even in relation to what is the role of the local self-government structure. Still, it is perceived that some CSO's are more prepared than the central government when it comes to EU funds. The gradual departure of the donors is further complicating the sector, creating the need to find alternative funding source and initiate fund raising activities.

This is the same regarding the media, when it comes to time to focus. People responsible for the civil society are also responsible for many other things; therefore don't have a lot of time to dedicate.

2.3 TACSO, through brand attributes

2.3.1 TACSO = baby

The project is still in a very early stage which means that brand perceptions are not entrenched and the values are transitory, even in the case of those that have strong negative views. It's a baby with a very dominant parent – the European Union and that has significantly increased the level of expectation. For the majority of the panel isn't a brand YET, it will become once it has done enough for people to have clearly defined perception of it, which is still not the case.

However, there are clear attributes, intangible values that the panel are 'connecting/associating' with TACSO and as such it meets most of the criteria for a 'brand'.

For the municipal representatives TACSO is perceived as being just at the beginning and all 3 of the panel haven't had the chance to cooperate with the organization aside from going to the initial event, and or other activity, and these were perceived as just 'presentation' while the real work yet to come.

2.3.2 TACSO = expensive

The perception of TACSO begins with the budget in almost all cases. It is seen that the overall budget is high and that when divided by the number of countries covered by its remit there is a lot of money to be spent. This given the prevailing financial climate within the CSO community creates the first level of frustration, to as much as half of this group. Subsequently the expectation/demand level has risen and subjective values have come into play

"TACSO offers a range of services that are not necessary and are too expensive."

"Money would be better spent on grants rather than on such projects".

One panel member even concluded that once this (TACSO) budget is spent, the EU will not want to spend any more money on capacity building in Macedonia. The majority of the panel do not feel there is sufficient transparency on the budget and they have simply taken the overall budget and

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divided it by the number of countries, whilst those that have seen the terms of reference (ToR) take the view that the budget isn't so significant at the end of the day and that perhaps even the EU is under investing.

However, the project budget is overcome by most in order to constructively continue, rather than focus on something that can't be changed: "I would never choose such project, that costs a lot of money but at the end they are mostly spent on salaries instead of activities, but that is not important now. "

TACSO is expensive but it remains to be seen if its money well spent.

The donor representatives are also aware of the financial aspect **"…with that budget more can be done especially in the period ahead – money should be spent more on technical assistance, specific stuff, and also to bring experts from places where the EU transition has already passed."**

2.3.3 TACSO = something new

The respondent group were divided on this issue with one group thinking that this is something completely new - *"The appearance of TACSO in Macedonia meant new spirit, new ideas and feeling that something is being organized."* Another being somewhere in-between – projects of this sort (mainly that deal with capacity building) has existed before *"Our institute deals with capacity building and I don't find the project to be offering something new."* Or *"There were similar projects such as the one from European agency for reconstruction which were methodologically better."* The final group sees TACSO as something already seen and this perception was so dominant that they even started the interview by emphasizing it: *"There are a lot of donors and lot of projects that deal with such work."* With some of this group even suggesting that TACSO has effectively taken the work from the existing organizations: *"TACSO has taken what the other capacity building organizations have been doing, for me that's disloyal competition"*.

It was mentioned that FOSIM had a similar project – support centres throughout the country. Perhaps critically it was noted by a number of the interview panel that it is contradictory for TACSO to become CSO and it should stay a support organization.

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"It is crucial that TACSO continues to exist so that the CSO's keep on getting help and not to become a CSO itself"

"As program to me TACSO is a new thing, but what its project content is something we have seen before it even exists at the moment in terms of services provided by other CSO's."

"If it appeared in the year 2000 it might have been useful, but not now"

"It is very common that such projects appear that are meant to help but actually don't."

It is clear that the more experienced panel members believe that TACSO is perceived as nothing new/something seen at least in part because elements of the project brief have been mandated by previous projects. However, from the broader panel (supported by the results of the quantitative survey) it is clear that the general belief is that TACSO is viewed as something new to the Macedonian market.

The municipal panel representatives also mentioned that they already had some support centres (in Veles) that had a similar role but that doesn't make the appearance of TACSO any less important, on the contrary, there are always new CSO's and new people within them to support.

2.3.4 TACSO = a good thing

"The appearance of TACSO is a good thing for the Macedonian civil society"

"What is important is that it is here, Macedonia is better with it than without it, and it should continue (be extended) as the period is not enough to achieve what it is there for."

"At the end of the day TACSO can move things but it should be more tailor-made, and make smaller organizations come alive."

There was a small minority who are insistent that there is little chance that Macedonia will benefit from TACSO. However as stated in other parts of this report even this section of the panel are reserving judgment and a series of small project wins can migrate this group into advocates in the relatively short term.

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To illustrate this, when some of the group were asked to comment on specific TACSO project activities/objectives; "Do you think that TACSO can help organizations that haven't had partners until now find them?" or "Do you think that TACSO can help organizations that don't have experience to applying for funds, especially the new ones from the European Union?" the overwhelming response was yes, suggesting that ***the panel believe in the potential of the TACSO project it terms of specific elements of the project brief but remain to be convinced about achievement of the overall/broad project goals/ambitions.***

The non CSO representatives from LAG are even more supportive of the idea behind the TACSO project, being involved in coordination with the civil sector they believe that the segment needs stronger support. In general their view appears to differ from other members of the LAG group perhaps because they are not "so directly involved." It seems that being part of the civil society rather than being an element of the support infrastructure affords differing views, with those outside of the of the CSO sector being generally more positive. Also, the EU delegation LAG member was familiar with similar projects for cross border cooperation and hopes the success of those will be replicated by the TACSO project.

2.3.5 TACSO = important

 "The appearance of TACSO is crucial for Macedonia." One respondent reflected on the situation pre the appearance of TACSO: *"For example in the period before, even the representatives from the offices in European integration didn't know how to give advice on certain issues, for example on which expert to ask to give trainings, on how to apply for funds etc…. It's a shame it wasn't opened before, but I hope it will continue after the first two years."*

It is the perception of the whole group that TACSO is more useful to the smaller, newer CSO's and the ones that are not in an organized network. "The small CSO's have bigger benefit as they still lack knowledge; while the bigger ones like us, have no benefit." The only time that respondent could recollect that their organisation asked for help was when enquiring about clarification about the return of VAT. This may support the findings from the quantitative panel in which some respondents indicated that they have no benefit to their organisation from the advent of TACSO but

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yet also indicated that they would recommend it to others. Still, with the project being in the early stage this is also something that can be changed, depending on the focus of TACSO.

Some of the organizations are also offering technical help to the CSO's they cooperate with, as is the case with the Civica mobilitas Swiss embassy project whose sub grants go through CIRA. In such cases it is believed TACSO might not be necessary.

The perception of all three interviewed from the municipalities was that the appearance of TACSO in Macedonia was necessary, that it's a good, serious project from which the CSO' will have benefit. More over TACSO is perceived as crucial project when it comes to the civil sector. In general they are very well aware of what TACSO represent and unprompted were able to list the activities on their own - *"TACSO will influence the networking, the institutional cooperation and can increase the capacities of the CSO's."*

The municipalities don't regard themselves as beneficiaries of the project but rather the CSO's which operate in their area. This however, for them is not a small issue, as any kind of education or support of the CSO's will reflect on their cooperation. Additionally it is seen that the municipalities has many unsolved issues that in a way they are waiting for the CSO's to solve, and this is where it is believed that TACSO will play a role.

The media representatives also believe that it is very good that TACSO appeared as the small CSO's need a lot of support, this is what they believe TACSO does – logistical support. There are many CSO organizations that don't even know how to write an application and neither does the government. The EU funds are crucial. The perception of this group is that the bigger CSO's know a lot so they don't need TACSO as much.

The donor representatives also believe that the work of TACSO is crucial. They also see the small organizations to have greater benefit *"Small one need TACSO when it comes to donors, big ones has access to donors"*. On the other side donors are looking for greater competition amongst the CSO's, they can't give grants to the same organizations all the time.

One of the donor representatives gave a completely new meaning to the possible importance of TACSO when one gave a suggestion *"It would be perfect that the end result is that the brand TACSO equals the readiness of the users. CSO's could have a certificate that they are TACSO educated and with that the donors would know that those organizations are serious and it can be worked with. It would mean that this organization is fulfilling its financial and programme obligations."*

2.3.6 TACSO = international (for good or bad)

Some of the interviewed that had knowledge about the project even before it was won by SIPU thought that the ToR wasn't well designed, while the others just think that the realization isn't as it should be. The main issue seems to be that it is perceived that the European Union approves projects that don't necessarily offer best solutions. Some CSO's representatives think that the only way a regional project like this would work is if it is localized, if it is tailor made to fit the specific situation in Macedonia, which they feel is dramatically different than in other countries.

For some internationalism comes from feeling that someone from above is putting the pieces together, for others it means reassurance *"it is project that comes from more developed country which should be able to support us in what we do"*. One of the other aspects for the project to be perceived as more domestically relevant and friendly is the usage of the name of the country. *"In order for TACSO to be perceived as Macedonian it should use Macedonia, not FYROM in its communication!"*. Although this is not used in every day communication from the side of the employees, the fact that it is present on the TACSO web page was mentioned as a strong negative by some of the interviewed.

2.3.7 TACSO = regional

"TACSO is most important when it comes to regional information!" said one of the representatives. *The regional aspect is seen as one of the biggest positives in terms that it opens possibilities for regional cooperation, finding partners etc.*

"...it is most important that cooperation is strengthening regionally and partnerships are created. Bigger focus should be placed on regional cooperation."

2.3.8 TACSO = not localized enough

This remark appears on two levels. One is that the programme isn't made according to the local needs, isn't enough tailor made.

"The idea (of TACSO) isn't bad but they just follow their own agenda without actually thinking locally."

"TACSO should have the same basis for all countries but different actions for each of them",
"...aside from the overall objective of the TACSO project there should be specific objectives for each country and those should be different for Macedonia compared to the other countries..."

"...the project is difficult to implement as it wasn't primarily constructed for Macedonia."

These remarks reflect general opinions, the panel also seem to share the view that the way to make the project more appropriate to the local needs would be to understand more the specific needs of the sector which would lead to better focus. The fact that they (TACSO) are trying to work with as many CSO's as possible is defocusing them. Instead the panel believes that TACSO should have a narrower focus and work with a smaller number of people, but those that could really benefit in the longer term, and then review the results.

In essence this means that at the moment it is perceived that the project has too broad a target group and can not/should not have one mutual solution for all users. This is mostly directed at the trainings, which "might end being boring for one participant, and not understandable to others". The group believe that it would be better to have a smaller target group (number of clients) and to follow their development rather than "have lots of numbers to, but no real quality".
On a different point some believe that there must be something that the local office can do to adapt the project to Macedonian needs, whilst the others believe that those who make such comments haven't actually worked with the European commission, and therefore don't understand that changes can't be made.
The non-LAG representatives believe some efforts are being made "TACSO has divided the CSO's dependent on their capacity, but it is not easy to deal with such different target groups, that have totally different needs."

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The other aspect of the localization is that some of the representatives from the CSO's expect it (TACSO) to be present more in the local parts of Macedonia, which they believe need TACSO more.

"For example Kumanovo, is the biggest city in Macedonia, (when including the villages around it) and it has still not been visited by TACSO, which means that not all of the CSO's from that area are familiar with its work. Something is organized for September but it's still unconfirmed…" There was also a suggestion that if for example a LAG meeting is organized in a city (e.g. Kavadarci) it would give the opportunity for the local organizations to be introduced to the work of TACSO. More over the LAG representative which is from that city can use this to promote the activities that their organization does. This would, according to the panel member, also lead to possible media coverage and therefore to better visibility.

The fact that TACSO is located in Skopje is perceived by two of the interviewed as a possible negative as although approximately 50% of the organizations are in Skopje that group are the ones that are most developed and need the help of TACSO as much. Everybody else, however, thought that it is a benefit that it is located in the capital city, as of course it is the centre of things and "if you don't have capacity to be located in more places in the country, it is best to be located in Skopje". In the view of one member the only important thing is that the information reaches everybody.

The non CSO LAG representatives appear to have broader understanding of how such projects work, therefore one would say: *"I would say that it's not localized enough, but it is hard to find a balance from several aspects – financial, program side etc.".* Also, *from the moment it was published to the moment it was realized, one year passed by, which isn't a short period of time."* Knowing where the problems with the CSO's are the donor representatives also believe that the focus in general should be in rural areas, *"for example all the time we talk about Roma (ethnic group) and no one does anything about them."*

2.3.9 TACSO = supportive

"TACSO offers complete support", was the first sentence of one of the panel. From brand point of view, support is one of the most important attributes that TACSO aims to represent, based on its scope of work. Some believe that this is not relevant to their organizations (all of which have huge experience, years in which they operate, number of networking organizations etc.) but rather for the small and new ones. Others believe that the TACSO is still not at the stage to offer support but is more informational. This corroborates the findings of the quantitative panel where 'informative' was the value most often circled. Taking into consideration that the project is actually operational since February 2010, it isn't surprising that it still hasn't fully earned the attribute supportive. *Support can be seen as a targeted brand value, something that should be further developed/evolved before it can become an associative brand value.*

The media representatives believe that after less than a year since the appearance of TACSO it is obvious that it delivered what it promised – support of the CSO's.

2.3.10 TACSO = informative

Although from one side it is seen as something which is more superficial than some "real help" from another, distributing information is very helpful to the CSO's in the current situation (lack of organizational cooperation, no understanding of the government, developments with the EU funds etc.) and even seen as development direction - *"TACSO should have more employees and be more active into information distribution."* Some panel members believe that TACSO should give more information to the CSO's about possible projects and what type of CSO's can apply, as well as inform about possible partnerships.

Still, it was the belief of the LAG representatives from CSO networks that they can't learn anything from TACSO, as they are the experts, with some seeing themselves as promoting TACSO rather than other way around.

The representatives from the municipalities see TACSO more as an educator of the CSO's, someone that will teach them how to become more prepared organizations. This differs from those that have specific projects, like the municipality of Struga that as a result of the cross border opportunities for cooperation see more concrete ways to cooperate with the project.

Some of them don't think that they will, as municipalities, be involved in a TACSO project due to the fact that they are not eligible for cross border cooperation projects (which are regarded as most important at this stage) they are just interested into being informed about the activities that TACSO has, so they would like to be included in the mailing lists of TACSO. They believe that TACSO should send information about new projects and indicate what kind of CSO's is eligible to apply, simultaneously making the municipalities aware of the project initiative. Also, **the idea of having some kind of data base for possible partners or help line was brought up as suggestion on how to make TACSO even more supportive.** The media representatives had no complaint about the information that TACSO distributes. They get press releases but don't always have time to cover the issues.

2.3.11 TACSO = transparent

This seems to be one of the most important attributes to the CSO community. Given the general background in Macedonia, the fact that CSO's are sometimes politicized, accuse each other of taking sides etc. it is of critical importance for them that TACSO is transparent. From the quantitative piece (amongst the CSO group) transparency was marked with equal importance as 'clear and useful mission', which was also marked with high importance.

In general it is: "**TACSO is open to everybody and transparent**. People know about it, there are many organizations that get info about TACSO, for example I receive e-mails from 7 different places, from people resending (forwarding) the TACSO email to each other." said one of the panel. It is important to emphasise that for many of the CSO members of the panel, transparency relates more to the flow of information rather than anything else. This is not the case for the LAG representatives whose role is different, as a group they believe themselves to be entitled to know more details about the project, to be involved in more of the TACSO activities. From their point of view the main aspect in which TACSO does not appear transparent is in relation to the trainings. The LAG Group believes that they should not only have the opportunity to attend the trainings but also be involved in the selection process, and be able to see the results. This together with some levels of assumed, which they believe took place in the selection of the regional trainings, has raised questions and doubts in their perception of TACSO transparency. But perhaps mitigating this, it appears to be something that they as a group, believe that their concerns and comments have

been heard, and consequently most of them expect improvements. So this is not their final conclusion about the project.

Clearly there is still work to be done if TACSO is to build this into a brand attribute, in part because it is an attribute that has to be earned not given freely and in part because of the questions raised by the LAG group. The non CSO LAG members believe that transparency is very important to the CSO community, and as such TACSO should pay more attention to it.

2.3.12 TACSO = innovative

The issue of whether TACSO is an old or a new concept generates polarized opinions. 5 of the 25 member panel expressed the view that TACSO is innovative; whilst a further 5 stressed that they would like it to become innovative, while it's still not at this stage. Innovative is clearly a potentially attributable brand value, but one that needs to be earned and reinforced.

"They try here (Macedonia) to be more innovative but I am still not sure whether TACSO will turn out to be successful in general."

Whilst some attribute innovative as a description for the project itself, other view the project activities as being the point of innovation. *"TACSO is innovative. For example the way that they did the conference through the net was very innovative. In the future it would be good to have some kind of trainings through the net, that way it will be for bigger audience."*

The donor representatives firmly believe that the project is innovative – "…no such project existed until now, not in Macedonia."

2.3.13 TACSO = flexible
From innovation to flexibility is a thin line for most of the panel. It appears that most of them would like to see TACSO better prepared and willing to adapt to new situations and therefore be more flexible which in turn would also mean that they are more innovative. An example given frequently was in reference to the law for foundations and associations that was recently put to vote

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in the parliament, where it was expected that TACSO can play more important role into consolidating the CSO's in order to propose changes to the law and also to organize tribunes etc. Another suggestion was made that TACSO pay more attention to the local CSO's, for example to organise open days in cities around Macedonia to discuss local issues.

It should be noted that there may have been some level of self interest in the responses, with some perhaps wanting their voice to be heard (as in their proposal to be implemented) rather than expressing objective views about TACSO. Never the less we can a conclude that flexibility is seen as a vital attribute for TACSO and it should see the organisation acting upon local needs, which as we have seen before is crucial for the success of the project.

Flexibility at this stage is seen as a "target" rather than "attributable" brand value.

"TACSO should think of new ways to deal with things (like for example to make the data base for the CSO's as registration in Pador.)"

Perhaps flexibility should also refer to as proactivity. The donors have a different point of view; they believe that TACSO is very flexible. More over one member of the donor group mentioned attending a work-shop which they were very satisfied with, they noted that people working in TACSO are very open to cooperation, transparent etc. The training ended very well, the participants were very satisfied, and the results are good (he shared them with the interviewer). As a result in the future they plan to organise a bigger donor work shop that they are going to do with TACSO. The fact that they have managed to do something that wasn't in the initial plan suggests to the panel member that TACSO is willing to adjust to local needs. The other donors did not have a specific experience to share, as the cooperation is still just on the basis on the first donor presentation, but they are very willing to cooperate as they believe in the project.

The same appears to be true for the Government that has also had several activities with TACSO that weren't in the initial plan; therefore they also believe that TACSO is very flexible.

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2.3.14 TACSO = consolidator

"The only way changes can be made are if the organizations are more united instead of everybody pulling in their own direction. This is something that TACSO should be dealing with as well."

"The CSO's needed consolidation..."

It appears that TACSO is seen as a possible consolidator but it is too early for the group to see if this is a tangible outcome.

There were also some interesting comments on how TACSO can influence the topics that are the focus of the day: *"The subject should also be mutually agreed (meaning that the CSO's agree on what to pay more attention for, what to push the government for etc.), for example they should stick to one subject and all of the organizations to pull into that direction instead of for example too much time to be lost on discrimination law etc. TACSO should act as a de-politiciser and someone that brings CSO's together."*

"Yes, TACSO should influence the subjects, like for example now the issue of ethnical organizations is not covered enough."

On the topic of Co-operation – whether it has been covered more since the appearance of TACSO, the panel is undecided. The general view is that CSO's are pushing for their own interest, but they leave the door open for TACSO to step in this rather complicated process.

The CSO LAG members believe that at the moment there isn't another organization that unifies the CSO's, given that the internal relations are not good, the role of TACSO is potentially significant. On the other side, the non-CSO LAG group see TACSO clearly as an integrator.

The donor representatives also believe that TACSO should connect CSO's, make them network and work together.

2.3.15 TACSO = trainings

"The trainings are most important; they have the biggest role in what TACSO does."

Most of the panel connects TACSO primarily to the trainings it does. It seems that this is seen as its most important role which isn't strange given that this has been the focus of TACSO activities to date. The LAG group believes it should be more actively involved in selection of people for the

trainings and in addition one respondent said that for the regional trainings they should be able to recognize the people that are chosen, as due to their long years of experience they know who is who in the civil sector society. There were comments to the effect that TACSO should focus more on other activities, like day to day help to the organizations *"they should spend half the time on trainings and the other half to be different activities.", "TACSO should be more aggressive, not just to focus on doing trainings."*

Regarding the fact that other organizations have also been carrying out capacity building activities, a comment was made from panel members that the important difference is that those trainings were not free *"…yes, they were those like the ones provided by USAID that were free, in the main however they were not, unlike the ones from TACSO.* Whilst this is perceived as positive by many, there are those (mainly the ones providing paid for training themselves) that believe that this is unfair competition. *"TACSO in future should not make programs parallel/competitive to their CSO clients, it would be better if they use the existing training and/or charge for them, like this they are just taking away the work of the CSO."*

The perception is that the smaller CSO's have bigger benefit, as they know less.

Only one member of the panel had actually participated in the trainings, but other were encouraged to provide the feedback that they may have received from members of their organisations that may have attended the regional trainings. The subsequent opinions vary significantly from very good to very bad. At an organizational they were regarded as successful, the perceived development level of the participant determines the opinion of the panel member. The general opinion is that the training program is successful, although final opinions are reserved pending the experiences of the national trainings. Again there is the view that whilst useful and commendable the trainings are perceived as too broad *"when you talk to all you don't talk to anyone, it might have been better that they choose some organizations and work with them.",* or as one of the participants said: *"The only problem was that the criteria that was necessary to get chosen was very high while the training was on a lower level. It was for people that know less."* In the end most of the interviewed think that it is very important that more attention is paid to the participant's perceptions of the training, instead of just giving them paper to write what they think, to actually speak to them about what they think, and their progress should be followed up.

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It was noted that the trainings should last longer so that more knowledge is gained.

The success of the trainings is dependent on the people that attend them as they then become trainer themselves, and this relates to the issue of transparency.

For the non CSO LAG members it is important that TACSO isn't just seen as a training organizer but for people to see the broader picture of the project.

The donor representatives appreciate the trainings that TACSO does, they believe them to be very good, and the only negative observation being the view that the courses are too short, *"No one can learn about IPA in such a short period of time". Or in another example "no one can learn to make logical frame plan in one day, no one."*

2.3.16 TACSO = not visible enough

TACSO and recognisability

The LAG group believes that TACSO is recognizable to those that have been introduced to the project on some level, and this has been born out by the quantitative survey where TACSO achieved high 'brand recognition' and 'knowledge about what it represents' scores, amongst those that have been in contact with the project. *"The kick-off event had a lot of people which should mean that they are informed."*

Although TACSO can influence the changes in the civil society community, it is still very early and for the moment they are perceived on operational level. To achieve greater visibility and relevance will require more time. Some of the panel even suggested a time line: "From September it will be even more strong and visible." This it was explained is due to the fact that the national training activities start from September. The same was confirmed by the municipality representatives - none of the interviewed believes that TACSO is exposed enough. "They should be more aggressive and more visible."

TACSO and the media

"The media are like mushrooms, they only grow up when it's dark and humid. When you have scandal this is when they are present." It is widely acknowledged that the CSO sector has a

problematic relationship with the media: *"The media is a grey zone; they don't publish things in relation to the CSO's."* Some in part because of lack of their own involvement and not having people that deal with PR issues and others because the media isn't interested into covering issues that are not scandalous. It was suggested by a panel member that the solution might be in having some dedicated shows at least on the local media that would deal with issues. An example was given of something similar in Kavadarci some time ago and that was very successful in dealing with the civil society issues. Still, some of the organizations that are more present in the media themselves commented that if you have something to say the media will listen, implying that TACSO hasn't been pushing enough the issues. *"It is necessary that TACSO appears more in the media, or it will have a bad image of someone that is just spending money and not doing much."* The non CSO LAG representatives are insistent that TACSO isn't visible enough and that it should be more in the media. *"For example it would be good to have a contact show that would talk about the subject of the civil society and for example to have the LAG members discuss on certain issues. I believe that 90% of the CSO's still don't know about TACSO and that should be overcome."*

TACSO and the media have been in contact since the very beginning. Although information is made available it is clear that not all of the media covers it. They are mostly interested if something is more scandalous/controversial, or if Fuere (head of EU delegation) is there. They for example have been talking about the law for foundations, and the discrimination issues etc., only what is interesting.

For the media representatives, the influence of the media is even more important*: "Being present in the public is what makes one exist or not."; "The name should be heard!"* They (the media) acknowledge that most of the media doesn't know how to deal with the civil society sector. Also, they believe that it is important for the CSO's and organizations like TACSO to recognize their place is not in the news, it's in the informational and political shows, which are made for a different kind of information. Considering that the CSO sector is large *"maybe not as much as 9000, probably just 2000 are active. Still, if TACSO wants to reach them, they would be difficult to reach unless you have media."* It was also implied that when it comes to media relations the personal contact is what matters the most, which meant that TACSO should have a person dedicated more to those issues.

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The donor representatives believe that TACSO is not visible enough; they should be present more especially to their target group – the CSO's. They shouldn't be only informed through the project website but additional/new ways of communication should be found

The media is very difficult to deal with when it comes to publishing positive news. For example they have done some donation for municipality of Aerodrom but the presence of the Minister of education led to reports dealing exclusively with what he has said on some totally different issue.

The panel believe that it is crucial that TACSO has more media presence, even paid for coverage, to ensure that more CSO's can learn about them. The project website should be further developed and promoted possibly by adding greater levels of interactivity.

2.3.17 TACSO = available

"The interactive web site is very helpful, and the personal is always available. The Macedonian web site is better than the others."

None of the panel had any remarks about the availability of employees and or information.

The municipal representatives contact with the project primarily through e-mails and by reading bulletins. Still there is a space for even more communication, as it seems in that the many obligations that those representatives have, it is necessary to be more persistent to get visibility. It appears that those supposed to be more focused on the civil society issues are the ones most difficult to reach.

2.3.18 TACSO = link

"The link with the government was missing, now it is easier to reach the government representatives through TACSO."

It seems that for most it is not yet clear whether it is a role of TACSO to act as a bridge with the government and the donors, a view supported by the results of the quantitative analysis. The perception that the government isn't fully ready to deal with the new EU rules and also that it

doesn't support the CSO's, leaves open the opportunity for TACSO to become the door. *"In a way TACSO is substitute for what the government is supposed to do but isn't, like for example trainings or information regarding EU funds."* Therefore, even when it's not seen as a formal link it is clearly has a role to play. *"It is not the role of TACSO to be link with the government. But on the other hand the government is crucial when it comes to sustainability of TACSO which is most important for the future."*

The more experienced organizations that already have established relationships with the government institutions and the donors don't think that they will benefit from TACSO intervention at all; however they don't say that the smaller ones can't.

They would like to see TACSO doing more on the more general issues, instead of logistically be the link, like for example convincing the government to spend more on helping CSO's.

Also there are specific issues that don't allow the processes to flow, due to the perception that the government itself is not being democratic enough which seems to be thought to be a prerequisite within the panel group *"It can be link with the government but there should be democracy in order that the government can have a proper role, not like it is at the moment – there are labelled organizations that belong to the government.", "You have to be a democratic government to have democratic relationships."* In addition it was mentioned that due to the processes being long and complicated TACSO can't be expected to do a lot: "They can't lobby, some processes take too long. For example the law for associations has taken 9 years, far too long. Or for example Polio plus had a great initiative, with signatures to get to formation of a law but didn't succeed." Or another comment *"Sometimes even Fuere* (EU delegation head) *has to make a pressure as things can't even be changed with pressure from the EU delegation."*

It is perceived that even if TACSO wants to it can't deal with all the issues in relation to the government or the European commission as they don't have capacity for that.

Also, the local self-government was mentioned and the fact that there is a need for greater cooperation.

The budget also seems to be an issue: *"The secretariat has great people working there but no budget for activities. And not to forget those are people that were previously employed by the government, they were never part of the CSO's."*

Unlike the CSO representatives, those that come from different organizations definitely see TACSO as a link, even up to a point filling in the gaps that there are*: "The department at the government that is supposed to deal with IPA is not planned as it should be, so the benefit from TACSO is crucial."* or *"I am very satisfied with the people working in the government, the only problem being is that they are with difficult procedures."* This leads some to the perception that TACSO is a possible saviour from the situation the civil society sector finds itself in.

It is perceived that what the government does is on primarily symbolical level, so that's why TACSO is important in relation to the EU funds. All involved sides need to find way for the new situation with the EU funds but it appears that none of them are. The municipalities for which the direct access to European funds is relatively new, such as the ones with the cross border projects, are more concerned with TACSO as a project as they expect stronger and faster support in the CSO's *"being so close to the Albanian border, there are many possibilities for cross border activities, but the CSO's still haven't found each other, they haven't found partners yet. They have also problems with the language, they can't fully understand each other, so they need intermediate like TACSO that will help them connect…"* said the representative of the municipality of Struga. The donors believe that 15 years ago perhaps TACSO could have been a link with the government but not now.

2.3.19 TACSO = leads towards democratic role of the CSO's

This part was not originally part of the interview plan, as it is too soon for such issues to be discussed. Still, the comments made during the conversation lead to some interesting conclusions, so they have been included them in the report.

"About increasing the democratic role it is a slow process but it is moving forward. With the fact that there are government representatives in LAG it can be said that the opinion of the CSO's representatives is heard. As this (democratic role) is stretching the role of TACSO maybe it can be

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done in a way that they work with organizations that deal with democracy and it that way, by increasing their capacity to increase the democratic role."

In general it is seen that increasing capacity leads to stronger NGO's that would lead to better democracy. This is felt by some*" Yes, more and more politics are created and decisions are being made"*

Some believe that, from aspect of power TACSO can increase the pressure through the EU ambassador and have direct influence on the democratic role of the CSO's. *This can potentially lead to another brand attribute – power.*

In addition the media representatives believe that TACSO is important for the democratic platform in Macedonia. Taken into consideration that the media is not direct beneficiary of the trainings, it is to be expected that they would focus on this issue of the TACSO operation. One of the panel continues that only everybody together can increase the democratic role of the CSO's and this is very dependent on the government as the leading player.

2.3.20 TACSO and LAG

"Lag is very constructive. Lots of different opinions and discussions but at the end very constructive."

This appears to be the opinion of most of the group. Bringing into consideration that the group consists from very experienced members and also representatives not only from the CSO's but also the European delegation and the Government it is to be expected that there would be different opinions. But *what is important is that at the end of the day they see it as something constructive and democratic "The decision making process is democratic. "*

Still there are some negatives, like the fact that LAG wasn't present at the beginning of the project, so it can't influence the decisions coming from that time. But still, now most of them feel like they are being listened to and that they have overcome the difficult period. Although there was one that felt it's too late *"I feel like alibi for someone's work. I had some suggestions but was told that the Sarajevo offices have approved of the project and it is too late. So, in the key parts we were not*

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involved – when it was decided on the expected results and the goals". Another also concluded that it is sad that things are approved from above, and that is a poor excuse.

It is interesting that by some panel members that LAG is perceived as the best from all the regional LAGs and that it is something that will out-live the project in a sense that it will continue to exist even after the project is finished *"LAG can develop into something more and that would be perfect so that sustainability is achieved. It can be a partner with the government and help into decision making process.* That is the second most important issue that TACSO deals with, the first one being offering trainings to big and small organizations.*" This idea also comes from the regional experience"*, as it was noticed by one of the non CSO LAG representative: *"Something like what they have in Croatia, where 12 NGOs and 12 governmental representatives decide on important issues for the country."*

There were some suggestions that LAG is included in the regional gatherings so that they are exchanging experience more with the other LAG's.

2.3.21 TACSO and the EU funds

This seems to be very important topic, as it is one of the basic things that TACSO should do "It is in the ToR of the project", said one of the panel. The story of the funds begins with the perception of what the government does. The interviewed believe that the government acts slowly in coordination with the funds, for example now deciding on what to do with the funds for 2007. It appears that TACSO is seen like the possible game changing link but *"...the problem is with the government which isn't very active. For example the CSO's spend a lot of time lobbying in the government instead of spending time on education about the EU funds. So the CSO's loose."*

It is acknowledged that TACSO is working on educating CSO's on how to deal with the EU funds. However, this issue is seen to be much more complex therefore the question is whether the capacity of the local office is enough to do this: *"It is not enough that someone sends you to trainings; TACSO should offer better, every day support." "TACSO should tell CSO's what kind of tenders there are. This should be their main role!"*

While most think that TACSO is here primarily to deal with the EU funds, there are some participants in the survey that believe that the role of TACSO is different "It's not the job of TACSO to deal with funds, their job is to teach organizations on how to function." This implies that the organization should first learn some things about the way they should be organized, accordingly to some on the rules of the European Union so that they can be prepared to learn about the actual funds applications. *"The CSO's don't actually know a lot of things they need to know before they apply. It's like a basis you need to have so that you can move from there, but most CSO's don't have it. They need to learn first the EU* politics *so they can move to EU grants."*

The donor community has commented on the EU funds from the aspect of the way that CSO's have been dealing with the support they have been giving. The donor dependency appears to be big issue *"CSO's should be independent from the donors and more prepared to apply on different project instead of getting comfortable with the same donors. They should focus on one subject not on many as they usually do, which makes them lose themselves. They should adjust to new things…"* This together with some other comments leads to the conclusion that in general the donors are not satisfied with the work of the CSO's so much so that one respondent even emphasized that he is not sure if the CSO's are ready for such a project. But in general it is seen *that "TACSO is here to help the machinery of IPA"*, which is perceived as a good thing as they believe that the CSO's need as much help as they can get. *"Through the government there are lots of money but no capacities to use it from the side of the government as well as the CSO's."*

Another continues *"In general it is believed that the CSO's are very developed and that they don't need a lot of support, but that is not true, new organizations appear and new issues, but also even the more experienced are not as ready as we expected. When CSO's have projects on their own, and even when they just do the realization it seems that they were not so ready, not so good"*

The donors believe that The European commission should fill in the gap that the government has created when it comes to EU funds. It is not the role TACSO; a lot depends on the government itself. There are lots of money from the EU but also lots of speculations on where it goes. There is no transparency and there should be.

"UNDP also have lots of grants and they are not easy to get, they are complicated."

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The relationship of the government with the CSO community is unclear and apparently unhealthy, with lack of no transparency.

3. Summary Conclusion

TACSO is a young brand both in terms of market presence and brand perception and as such there is sufficient opportunity to manage the growth in brand equity. That being said it is the results of this research piece suggests that there are a number of clearly established initial perceived brand values that can be leveraged.

The prevailing climate in which TACSO was launched coincided with a period in which the civil society movement has not enjoyed its best moments, the panel indicated that the sector has a number of problems and there appears to on-going and at times radical change. This transition has clear implications for TACSO not least because it finds the CSO sector at a vulnerable even insecure phase, where many may look for it for substantive support. In essence TACSO is well placed to entrench itself and its values into the CSO community.

Among the sampled group indications are that TACSO has been successful in communicating the more tangible aspects of its basic mission (providing technical assistance and training) but faces some challenges in the credibility of its core values (transparency). The experiential perception of the work carried out by TACSO is well regarded and amongst the panel there are already signs of brand advocation. Which given the relatively media neutral nature of the CSO sector will be key in recruiting users for TACSO services. For most panel members their first and often only experience of TACSO has been through direct contact with the TACSO offices or through its staff and the access to information, and there is a generally high level of satisfaction with those contact experiences. This perhaps explains the strength of opinion amongst the panel however this has some inherent risks. If the first and only experience that CSO's get of TACSO is based on contact alone, this raises the possibility of a bad or indifferent experience defining the long term perception of TACSO by that individual CSO, risking that they become Brand Critics. In such circumstances the relative media neutrality then becomes a barrier, as it will mean that the brand perception will be defined by the battle between advocates and critics. TACSO is strongly recommended to develop and implement a media engagement strategy which will allow it to project its core values and use the user experience to reinforce them.

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A key areas where the respondents seem uncertain of TACSO role and general position relates to its ability to bridge the gap between the CSO community and the Government at large, whether it be institutions, organisations, Ministries or individuals. The same uncertainty exists related to contacts with the EU and advice and/or support for accessing EU funding.

The generally positive picture has to be somewhat moderated by a small number of negative indicators especially when analysing the responses of organisations based in and around Skopje. Indications are that the larger and or more 'experienced' the organisation is (and these are mostly located in Skopje) the more often negative or marginally positive responses were noted.

Overall there are clear and expected difference between the results for the two research pieces, with many of the panel from the qualitative piece having had more experiential contact with TACSO and subsequently having more polarised opinions.

The highlights are as follows:
- The advent of TACSO is regarded as a significant and potentially crucial development across the overall panel.
- TACSO is perceived as young/baby not only as a brand but also as an organisation, and the panel remain uncertain how it will grow up. The biggest concerns were raised by panel members from the Local Advisory Groups (LAG) that believe that they are sufficiently familiar with the objectives of TACSO and question both its long term credibility and its overall viability. It is perhaps not coincidental that a number of these LAGs had tendered for or considered tendering for the TACSO project management contract.
- The scope of services provided by TACSO concentrated into one organisational touch point is a major innovation for most of the panel. Although a number believe that the services on an individual level have been provided by other organisation in the past with varying degrees of success. So while the service portfolio is regarded as a strong brand attribute, there are residual doubts about TACSO's ability to actually deliver on them.
- TACSO is seen as expensive project which has brought about high expectations. This is another perception with high risks, many brands fail because their advent came with high

expectations that were not fulfilled and it is perhaps advisable to take corrective action to 'manage' the level of expectation

- TACSO is perceived as being 'international' which for many is a strong brand attribute, but this is then mitigated by those of the panel that think its international character make insensitive to local issues. There is a wide spread belief amongst the panel that the TACSO project team should take great care in tailoring it actions and service portfolio to 'real' Macedonian needs.

- It is perceived as innovative relative to the current environment in the CSO sector, but it is expected to maintain that innovative drive as the market evolves from its transitionary phase. In short TACSO is expected to lead by example, by flexibility (solution finding) and innovation.

- Interestingly there are signs of latent levels of expectation that TACSO will be a consolidator amongst the CSO community and therefore take passive leadership. This possess a risk for TACSO's relationship with the LAG group, and other stakeholders who expect TACSO to have a position of neutrality

- The role of 'link to the government' exposes TACSO to the effects of the on-going relationship between the government and the CSO sector and consequently TACSO runs the risk of being painted by the strength of its perceived relationship with the government. The TACSO team have a clearly delicate balancing act to retain credibility with all stakeholders. The CSO are eager for concrete and visible steps in support of their interests with government institutions as well as the EU. Therefore by most of the panel TACSO is seen as having a thankless perhaps impossible task

- TACSO visibility is widely seen as being weak, its limited media presence mean that many CSO's may not have heard of it and not be aware of its role. Although this was clearly not the case with the Panel, it is an issue of note and as suggested in earlier parts TACSO needs to undertake a period of media engagement to increase its profile beyond the panel group.

- At this moment TACSO is seen more appropriate/relevant for the smaller and newer CSO's then for the bigger and more experienced ones

- The transparency of the brand is an issue only for the LAG representatives, as it was put under question mark at one point. The other groups have no such issue

- TACSO has been a strong positive attribute of 'informative' with positive tendencies towards supportive as a brand attribute. The causality in this case is perhaps experiential; the bulk of the panel's experience of TACSO has been through the delivery of information rather than through the delivery of a service. The bias towards supportive will become more marked as TACSO more actively engages the CSO sector and delivers the technical assistance.
- A core positive trending attribute is the ability of TACSO to support/advise CSO's in the sourcing and application for new/available EU funds as well as offering a better insight into the functioning of the EU in general in areas related to the CSO sector.
- TACSO's regional footprint is seen by many CSO's (especially the smaller ones) as a key advantage and therefore brand attribute. The panel believe that this will enable TACSO to network CSO's working in the same sector across the region, therefore help them better access EU cross border funding.
- The LAG group panel members believe that TACSO will eventually become polarised and effectively become a focal point for the smaller CSO's whilst the LAG group given its mix of governmental and non-governmental participants/experts will have an increasingly influential role to the point of not only leading the debate but have direct influence on decisions that affect the society as a whole. To mitigate this, the TACSO team are advised to undertake a process of positive engagement of the LAG group and neutralise any residual miss-trust/suspicion.
- In the long run there is an expectancy, still latent, that TACSO can have a material role in influencing the role of the CSO sector within an increasingly (expectedly) democratic society.

3.1. Possibilities for future studies

It is the general conclusion that the project is still in early phase and that the brand perceptions are in flux, they are in the main assumed rather than experiential which has created a window of opportunity for TACSO to utilize. This is especially true for the ones that haven't had direct cooperation with the project except for being attending presentations, seminars, kick-off event etc.

It is crucial that the future quantitative research is done with on bigger sample of CSO's which are not necessarily familiar with the project so it can better reflect the level of familiarity with the project and what it does. Considering that the national training program will take place it would be important to see how that will influence the opinions on the brand and the project itself.

In addition, impact of the functions that TACSO has but requires more time for realisation and that will play a key role in defining the brand (like increasing the democratic role of the CSO's), should researched at length in order to see what if any impact they have had on key stakeholder perceptions.

The usage of a larger sample size would allow greater exploration of the polarisation of views dependent on geographic location, not least the differences of opinion between Skopje based CSO's and those in rural areas especially those without direct TACSO presence.

Close attentions should be placed by the TACSO project teams on those areas where the brand values do not currently match project expectations and additional emphasis should be made to entrench and reinforce those attributes already positively assessed. The relative youth of the TACSO brand versus its brand performance to date should be commended, there are clear and material values already associated with the brand that provides a solid platform for further development.