

EU TACSO 3 Meeting Notes

People-to-People Programme Event/Regional Event

EU TACSO 3 and 2023 EU Year of Skills: „Skills for Non-Profit Organisations in the Western Balkans and Türkiye “on the 21st and 22nd of November 2023, Live and online, at the Tirana International Hotel and Conference Centre, Tirana, AL

1. Introduction

Purpose

In this European Year of Skills, the EU TACSO 3 project organised a People to People meeting to promote the development of sustainable formal and non-formal training and skills development for the non-profit sector in the Western Balkans and Türkiye.

The P2P event on November 21-22, 2023, served as a platform for meeting stakeholders from the non-profit sector, education, and government, both from the Western Balkans and Türkiye (WBT) region and the European Union. This event was designed to foster cooperation and collaboration among diverse actors, countries, and regions. The primary objectives were to identify opportunities and advocate for initiatives aimed at integrating and expanding the formal recognition of non-profit skills within the National Qualifications Frameworks in WBT.

Furthermore, the event sought to optimize the utilisation of Erasmus+ funding for fostering innovation in education within the nonprofit sector. It also aimed to cultivate partnerships between academic institutions and non-profit organisations, recognizing the potential for mutually beneficial collaboration in the pursuit of shared goals.

Ultimately, the gathering was conceived as a catalyst to stimulate increased efforts by public authorities in promoting and supporting the non-profit sector, recognizing its vital role in societal development.

The event gathered sixty-seven in-person participants, forty-six women and twenty-one men, and eleven online participants, two men, and nine women.

Background

Within the European Union, the non-profit and social enterprise sector constitutes over thirteen percent of the European workforce¹, establishing itself as a significant contributor to regional employment. While comparable statistics for the WBT region are not as readily available, it is presumed that the figures are proportionally lower than those within the EU. Nevertheless, the aspirations of the Western Balkans and Türkiye to integrate into the European Union underline the expectation of sectoral growth in the coming years.

A primary challenge impeding the sector's expansion is the limited number of opportunities for acquiring the essential skills necessary for effective management of non-profit organisations and

¹ Salamon, L et al, 2018, The Third Sector as A Renewable Resource for Europe

social enterprises. Distinctive skills such as fundraising, volunteer management, advocacy, campaigning, board governance, ethical conduct, and financial management are crucial in the sector, with well-established training and education frameworks existing within the EU. The expected change is that recognition of the essential value of the sector in the WBT region, and promotion of investment in skills development, will unlock opportunities for heightened professional recognition. The civil sector will be promoted as an appealing career choice for young people. This shift is poised to drive the sector's development, strengthening its economic and social impact in the region.

Relations to the EU TACSO 3 Project's Result Areas

The “Digital Agenda Consultative Meetings are in relation to the Project’s Result Area 6: “The People to People (P2P) programme and other events are effectively designed and implemented in a participatory manner.”

Agenda

Arrival, 20 November 2023, Monday	
All day	Arrival of participants
19:00 – 21:00	Dinner for participants arriving
Day 1, 21 November 2023, Tuesday	
08:30 – 08:50	Registration of participants
08:50-09:00	Opening and introduction – Mr. Dino Mujanović, EU TACSO 3
09:00 – 09:20	Welcome address Ms. Elira Demiraj , Director of the Economic Development Department, The Ministry of Finance, The Government of Albania Ms. Lenka Vitkova , The Head of Rule of Law and Good Governance of the European Union Delegation to Albania EU Delegation to Albania Ms. Juliana Hoxha , Director, Partners Albania for Change and Development
09:20 - 09:45	Keynote address Ms. Federica Mogherini, Rector, College of Europe: The EU, Education, and the Western Balkans
09:45 – 10:00	Event rationale and overview of the agenda, Mr. Richard Allen, EU TACSO 3
10:00 – 11:15	Skills and the non-profit sector Ms. Arjola Agolli, Partners Albania for Change and Development. Providing skills for the non-profit sector in Albania – what skills, what challenges, what impact? Ms. Marianne Mann, NGO Academy, Erste Foundation and Vienna University of Economics and Business The rationale for investing in skills for NGO workers and managers. The contribution of academic research to skills for managing in the sector. Ms. Mairead O’Connor, The Wheel, Ireland. Skills needs of the non-profit sector, and how collaboration with academic institutions within a National Qualifications Framework can contribute to skills development – an example from practice. Mr. Zoran Bogdanovski , lessons learned from the Master’s Degree Programme in Managing Non-profit Organisations and Future Directions, Southeast Europe University, North Macedonia Q&A, Moderator – Ms. Aleksandra Gligorović EU TACSO 3
11:15 – 12:00	Refreshment and Networking Break



12:00 – 13:30	<p>Certification, Recognition and National Qualifications Frameworks</p> <p>Mr. Richard Allen, EU TACSO 3 Team, Status of NQFs in the region and links to the non-profit sector (EU TACSO 3 research)</p> <p>Ms. Vesna Fabian, Office for Dual Education and National Qualifications Frameworks, Government of Serbia: Benefits of the NQF, and the links between NQF and the non-profit sector; how do public authorities see the role of the non-profit sector in skills development?</p> <p>Ms. Gordana Bošković, Department for Adult Education and Life-Long Learning at Centre for Vocational Education and Training, Life-long learning framework in Montenegro, accreditation of programs and CSOs as implementers of adult education.</p> <p>Ms. Siria Taurelli, European Training Foundation. Micro-credentials, lifelong learning, and flexible learning options; how to assure the quality of short-term courses.</p> <p>Q&A Moderator – Mr. Richard Allen, EU TACSO 3</p>
13:30 – 15:00	Lunch and networking
15:00 – 15:10	Mr. Zoltan Illes, College of Europe - Introduction to the College of Europe – and the new campus and Master’s Degree programme in Tirana
15:10 – 16:30	<p>Partnerships, Erasmus+ and other opportunities</p> <p>Ms. Ana Dervishi, Contact Point Erasmus+ & ESC in Albania; how CSOs and academic institutions can partner together, with Erasmus+ funding to support skills in the non-profit sector.</p> <p>Mr. Milorad Bjeletić, Belgrade Open School – European partnerships for supporting internships in the non-profit sector for career advancement.</p> <p>Mr. Savino Ruá, Policy Officer – Western Balkans, DG EAC: Overview from Brussels – Erasmus+ team – what is Erasmus+ for, how can it be used, what are the opportunities in the WBT region?</p> <p>Ms. Dženana Husremović University of Sarajevo Vice-Rector for Teaching and Student Affairs; the opportunities of short courses and micro-credentials for higher education and the benefits of collaboration.</p> <p>Mr. Mert Altıntaş, Association of Civil Society Development Center, Ankara; partnerships and skills development in Türkiye</p> <p>Q&A Moderator – Ms. Kanita Kulić, EU TACSO 3</p>
16:30 – 17:00	Close of day and networking – group work to identify possible ideas and interests to explore for the World Café on day 2. Opportunities to talk informally to contributors, CSOs, governments, and academic institutions [refreshments available]
Day 2, 22 November 2023, Wednesday	
08:30 – 09:00	Registration of participants
09:00 – 09:15	Recap of Day 1 and introduction to Day 2
09:15 – 11:00	<p>World Cafe:</p> <p>Small group working tables – planning and building partnerships. Topics to be identified on day 1 and may include, indicatively:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What are the priority skills for the non-profit sector?



	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How to generate demand for training and certification opportunities? • Good practice – examples of training and skills development • Cooperation – what opportunities are there for regional and inter-sectoral cooperation? • What do CSOs need to be able to have their training accredited and certified? What are the pros and cons? • How to ensure quality assurance of skills development, and encourage greater formal recognition of skills? • What ideas are there that we can develop partnerships to take the ideas forward? • Engaging with governments on non-profit skills – developing advocacy strategies
11:00 – 11:30	Coffee break and networking
11:30 – 12:30	Reporting back
12:30 – 13:00	Evaluation of the event, close, and departure

2. Meeting Notes

Welcome Speeches

Welcome speeches came after the introduction to the event agenda and the European Union’s Anthem: [Ode to Joy](#)

Ms. Elira Demiraj, Director of the Economic Development Department (The Ministry of Finance, The Government of Albania), Ms. Lenka Vitkova, The Head of Rule of Law and Good Governance of the European Union Delegation to Albania, and Ms. Juliana Hoxha, Director, Partners Albania for Change and Development welcomed the participants providing their key messages.

Ms. Elira Demiraj emphasised the importance of the non-profit sector as a significant contributor to the national economy (i.e. five percent), constituting one of the essential third sectors. She highlighted the sector's crucial role in addressing societal issues, fostering stability, and providing equal opportunities in diverse areas such as advocacy, education, housing, healthcare, and human rights.

Ms. Demiraj underscored the integration process and collaboration with non-profit organisations as pivotal for the Government of Albania, aligning the country with EU directives and regulations. She emphasised the need to continue dialogue, cooperation, and support for non-governmental organisations (NGOs), both through funding and training, to enhance their impact on society.

Key initiatives discussed included the National Qualification Framework for skills, established in 2010, ensuring the inclusion and quality assurance of qualifications in the labour market. The growing significance of non-formal skills gained outside the traditional education system, termed micro-credentials, was acknowledged, with an emphasis on the evolving landscape of skills delivery involving public institutions, private entities, and NGOs.

Ms. Demiraj touched upon the European Council's recommendations and regulations regarding micro-credentials and Lifelong Learning for enhanced employability. The government's commitment to speed up actions and measures in response to the evolving labour market and skills revolution was highlighted. Additionally, she mentioned that the government has employment promotion

programmes targeting vulnerable groups, such as the youth guarantee scheme and the employment social fund for people with disabilities (PWDs). The crucial role of NGOs in filling information gaps, supporting activities, and fostering social equality was underscored, especially in the context of collaboration with the National Labor Council and participation in social dialogue and dispute settlements.

She expressed her optimism about the success of future projects and acknowledged the potential contributions of the EU Commission, particularly through programmes such as the employment and social fund, in empowering NGOs in Albania.

Ms. Lenka Vitkova emphasised the event's alignment with two crucial EU agendas - the European Year of Skills and the support for civil society within the enlargement and accession negotiations with Western Balkan countries. She underscored the importance of investing in skills as a driver of the economy. With the Green and Digital Transitions at the forefront, there is a pressing need to upgrade the skills of workers across all sectors, ages, and groups. The European Year of Skills, designated for 2023, aims to encourage reskilling and upskilling for sustained economic growth.

Acknowledging the ambitious EU target of 60% adult participation in Lifelong Learning annually, Ms. Vitkova stressed the need to incorporate non-formal and informal education into the formal framework for skill development. Ongoing initiatives in Albania, in collaboration with the European Training Foundation, aim to boost skill development by integrating non-formal skills.

Civil society was identified as fundamental, playing a crucial role in oversight, monitoring, dialogue with the government, and addressing societal gaps. The EU sees civil society as a cornerstone in the accession negotiations process, particularly in ensuring the rule of law and economic contributions. The non-profit sector, estimated to represent 13% of the EU economy, was highlighted as a significant economic actor often overlooked.

Ms. Vitkova found the importance of skills development in the non-profit sector crucial for effective communication in all directions, compelling donor cases, efficient organisational management, and ensuring the responsible use of donor funds. Additionally, skills are needed to participate actively in decision-making processes, understand local structures, and adapt to digital transformations. She also expressed gratitude for the organisation of the event by EU TACSO 3, describing it as a significant initiative to stimulate interest and investment in skills within the non-profit sector. The most desired takeaways from the event would be the contribution to:

- a. Greater momentum and support for skills development in the non-profit sector, aligning it with broader objectives of enhancing lifelong learning and skills development,
- b. Advancing the dual agendas of the European Year of Skills, and
- c. The support for civil society in the context of enlargement and accession negotiations.

Ms. Juliana Hoxha emphasised the pivotal role of civil society in skills development, aligning with the broader EU strategy. She noted that the Civil Society's (CS) role is not merely a participant but a vital catalyst in skills development. CSOs shape policies and societal progress, with the potential to revolutionize skills development in the Balkans. The Skills agenda focuses on sustainable growth, competitive economies, and societal cohesion. CS's involvement is not just beneficial but crucial for the region's future within the EU, as CSOs amplify community voices, shaping policies with a deep understanding of local needs. Examples like the Youth Guarantee Fund in Albania showcase the pivotal role of civil society, especially youth organisations, in implementation and oversight.

Ms. Hoxha emphasised that state institutions must provide access to information and data to enhance the capacity of CSOs to make evidence-based recommendations. She also mentioned a continuous need for advocacy to enhance the legal and regulatory framework to recognize and empower CSOs in national qualification framework processes formally. Beyond advocacy, CSOs act as educators,

mentors, and facilitators of skills development through various programmes, ensuring inclusivity for marginalized groups.

She also noted that CSOs need to strengthen their capacity in policy analysis and stakeholder engagement for meaningful participation in national qualification framework processes.

Civil society plays a crucial role in addressing challenges outlined in the Albanian skills strategy, especially in integrating specific demographic groups into the labour market. CSOs, with their grassroots approach and community ties, deliver effective services that consider the community's needs, showcasing effective partnership models with the private sector.

CSOs foster collaboration and knowledge exchange, connecting private sector entities, educational institutions, and government bodies, creating a lively ecosystem for common progress.

Including CSOs in task forces and working groups, as part of the National Qualification Framework's implementation, is crucial for growth potential. EU technical assistance, funding opportunities, and capacity-building programmes empower CSOs to scale their impact on skills development.

Ms. Hoxha recognized challenges faced by civil society, including limited funding, bureaucratic obstacles, and lack of recognition. She appealed that governments and the EU must provide the needed support, fostering an enabling environment for civil society to thrive.

She concluded that leveraging EU support frameworks, such as Erasmus+ and the European Social Fund, can amplify the reach and effectiveness of civil society efforts. Ms. Hoxha called for a commitment to empowering civil society, fostering an environment where their potential can be fully realized for the progress of societies of the WBT.

Keynote Address

Ms. Federica Mogherini, Rector of the College of Europe, in her address online, highlighted the dual role of civil society, the importance of academic institutions, and the strategic significance of the enlargement process, framing it as a mutual benefit for both the Western Balkans and the European Union. She pointed out the significance of the P2P event which is addressing the nexus between academic institutions within civil society and the enlargement process. Ms. Mogherini emphasised both the independent role of civil society and its integral part in policy shaping. Emphasising the dual nature of civil society as independent and an active policy contributor, she highlighted the importance of maintaining this dual perspective. She underscored that Civil Society remains vital for shaping a critical environment for policymaking and advocated for the preservation of civil society's independence while recognizing its role in policy shaping. Ms. Mogherini sees Civil Society as a channel for citizens to actively contribute to policymaking at various levels.

As the Rector of the College of Europe, she presented this institution as a dynamic force assisting the shaping of European integrations. Drawing from its seventy-plus years of experience, this College aims to contribute to the societal aspect of Western Balkans' accession to the EU. She stressed the role of academic institutions in fostering skills, knowledge, and networks crucial for a successful accession process. The College of Europe's plan to open a campus (the office is already inaugurated) in Tirana, focusing on the European Transformation and Integration Agenda, was highlighted. The program aims to bring together students, officials, and future officials from the region and the EU, creating a shared knowledge and skills base. The establishment of this campus was positioned as a strategic investment in human capital to facilitate a smooth and successful accession process. The College of Europe sees its role as crucial in building human capital for a successful accession process.

Ms. Mogherini expressed satisfaction that the European Union is recognizing the strategic importance of the enlargement process, not just for the Western Balkans but for the EU itself. The narrative has

shifted towards perceiving accession as a means of completing the integration of the continent. She concluded with gratitude for the opportunity, optimism about the current trajectory, and a commitment to contributing to the civil society environment in Albania and the wider Western Balkans.

Panel Discussion I - Skills and the non-profit sector

The panel started with Ms. Arjola Agolli's presentation (representing Partners Albania for Change and Development) focused on providing skills for the non-profit sector in Albania, addressing the specific skills needed, the challenges faced, and the potential impact. Following this, Ms. Marianne Mann, representing NGO Academy, Erste Foundation, and Vienna University of Economics and Business, discussed the rationale behind investing in skills for NGO workers and managers. She emphasised the contribution of academic research to the development of managerial skills within the sector.

Ms. Mairead O'Connor from The Wheel in Ireland delved into the skills needs of the non-profit sector and explored how collaboration with academic institutions within a National Qualifications Framework can contribute to skills development. She provided a practical example to illustrate this collaboration. Lastly, Mr. Zoran Bogdanovski shared insights from the Master's Degree programme in Managing Non-profit Organisations at Southeast Europe University in North Macedonia. The panel concluded with a Q&A session moderated by Ms. Aleksandra Gligorović EU TACSO 3 Country Coordinator for Montenegro, where participants and panellists had the opportunity to further explore and discuss the intersection of skills development and the non-profit sector.

Ms. Arjola Agolli introduced the organisation's 20-year history in supporting civil society development. Partners Albania is an independent Albanian CSO with global affiliations, contributing to the enhancement of civil society capacities. The organisation's work spans various programmatic areas, emphasising training, and mentoring as a key service across sectors.

The figures she provided showcased Partners Albania's significant contributions to the civil society sector, with over 30 topics covered in its rich curricula, more than 750 training programmes delivered, and over 16,000 individuals trained. Since 2019, as the National Resource Centre, Partners Albania focused on strengthening civil society organisations' capacities and fostering collaboration, reaching various groups across Albania.

The findings from their 2023 Needs Assessment Report, highlight key skills required in the sector:

- a. fundraising,
- b. organisational development,
- c. legal and fiscal frameworks,
- d. advocacy, and
- e. participatory processes.

The importance of enhancing communication skills and utilising digital tools for promoting the sector is also emphasised. Ms. Agolli also touched on civil society organisations' knowledge of EU integration processes and the need for improved communication to obtain public appreciation.

Three flagship initiatives of Partners Albania are briefly mentioned: the NPO Academy, the Resiliency Programme, and funding source diversification for CSOs. The NPO Academy, in existence for nine years, has trained 170 representatives, mainly executives, covering various skills related to organisational development, fundraising, advocacy, and communication. The programme is comprehensive, incorporating lectures, resource materials, coaching, mentoring, networking, and study visits.

Ms. Agolli concluded by discussing the impact of such programmes at individual and organisational levels. These initiatives help individuals acquire and enhance skills, improve staff performance, facilitate networking, and equip organisations to secure funding, thereby enhancing overall effectiveness and sustainability.

Ms. Marianne Mann, representing NGO Academy, Erste Foundation, and Vienna University of Economics and Business, joined the audience online from Vienna and introduced NGO Academy, a significant capacity-building programme for civil society organisations and social businesses in Central and Eastern Europe. The academy operates as an international network with over 600 member organisations in 14 countries, fostering peer-to-peer knowledge exchange.

Her presentation highlights NGO Academy's ten-year journey, conducting over 6,000 participations in various formats, including multi-week training and workshops, with no tuition fees for member organisations. The programme is a collaboration between the Vienna University of Economics and Business and ERSTE Foundation, emphasising both academic expertise and financial support for a democratic Europe.

The origins of NGO Academy trace back to hosting an award for social integration, leading to the development of curricula based on in-depth research into the specific skills needed by civil society organisations. Ms. Mann outlined some challenges and opportunities faced by NGOs in the target countries, such as:

- a. restrictions on financing options,
- b. limited access to grants,
- c. low private involvement, and
- d. the impact of events like the COVID-19 pandemic and the war in Ukraine.

NGO Academy offers various programmes, including a regional programme open to staff members of member organisations, a social innovation management programme, a Master of Science in Social Innovation and Management, and community-led events designed and implemented by member organisations.

Ms. Mann also discussed quality assurance, stating that each programme includes tailored evaluation services and feedback from participants. This is actively sought and considered in programme development. NGO Academy follows a needs-based approach, adapting programmes based on registration numbers and participant requirements.

She concluded by mentioning the impact of NGO Academy, encouraging interested individuals to download the Impact Brochure on their website. She provided an example of a participant conducting a workshop for 35 adolescents on how to be financially savvy after attending the training of NGO Academy. She developed tools and materials she learned how to with the NGO Academy and then conducted the workshop.

Ms. Gligorović asked Ms. Mann about the procedures for organisations and individuals to benefit from the NGO Academy programmes, if there is a process for organisations present to apply, and if individuals, not affiliated with any civil society organisation, can also apply.

Ms. Mann responded by explaining that initially, NGO Academy members were identified through ERSTE Foundation and ERSTE Group. However, in the last two years, they have conducted official intakes or application phases, allowing all interested organisations to apply once or twice a year. Regarding individual participation, Ms. Mann noted that while an organisation with only one employee can join, the membership is primarily linked to an organisation.

Ms. Mairead O'Connor who also joined online from Dublin, representing The Wheel², a prominent civil society umbrella body in Ireland, emphasised the organisation's role as a representative body with over 2,300 members across various sectors. The focus is on skills development within the civil society sector, catering to the needs of the workforce, including both paid and unpaid individuals. Ms. O'Connor provided insights into the significant impact of civil society, constituting almost 30% of the sector's turnover and employing over 35% of its workforce.

The organisation's multifaceted role includes advocating for Lifelong Learning, acting as a partner in social change, and concentrating on the workforce's specific needs. Ms. O'Connor highlighted the complexity and unique context of the civil society workforce, aligning with the public sector in terms of skills profile but differing from the private sector. She stressed out the importance of recognizing and addressing the distinctive characteristics of the civil society sector in skills development initiatives.

The Wheel's initiatives over the past 20 years included delivering training programmes, establishing peer-to-peer networks, providing advice, engaging in policy and research, and launching the Leadership Academy. One independent economic study shows a €3 return for every €1 invested in upskilling the non-profit sector. Ms. O'Connor also highlighted collaboration and partnerships with various organisations, institutions, and European projects aimed at mapping skill needs in the social economy across the EU.

Additionally, Ms. O'Connor mentioned The Wheel's involvement in a review of Ireland's national skills strategy by the OECD³, underscoring the successful recognition of civil society within the strategy following dedicated efforts. The objectives of this strategy are:

- a. influence policy development,
- b. broaden access to mainstream training opportunities, and
- c. secure state investment in training and development for the civil society workforce.

Ms. Aleksandra Gligorović asked about the level of interest and demand for programmes, training, and opportunities offered by The Wheel. There is a significant interest in participating in these programmes or if there is a struggle to attract enough participants? The specific focus is on whether organisations recognize the value of engaging in such programmes.

Ms. O'Connor expressed that there is indeed great interest in their programmes. She stated that The Wheel has around 9,000 participants annually in their National Training Fund-funded programmes. In some instances, specific programmes are oversubscribed by approximately 60%. She highlighted a significant interest in training within the sector and noted that the study revealed a strong awareness of skills gaps and the need for more training within the civil society sector. The representative acknowledges that while there is recognition and enthusiasm for training, a major barrier is the constraint of time, particularly due to economic limitations within organisations.

Ms. Gligorović agreed with the previous statement about time being a significant challenge, particularly for organisations in the Western Balkans and Türkiye. She highlighted the struggles organisations face in terms of sustainability and the difficulties individuals encounter in allocating time due to the demanding nature of their work, which includes providing services and organising advocacy campaigns. She emphasised the importance of having and creating flexible programmes and noted the difficulty in creating a one-size-fits-all curriculum, especially for higher-management employees managing organisations.

² [Supporting & Representing Charities | The Wheel](#)

³ [Home page - OECD](#)

Mr. Zoran Bogdanovski presented a Master's Degree programme in civil society development that he initiated at Southeast Europe University in North Macedonia. He drew inspiration from Ireland's nonprofit sector, highlighting its annual revenue of 14.2 billion euros. Mr. Bogdanovski emphasised the importance of civil society when it represents around 5% of the economy. He shared the journey of establishing the Master's Degree programme in 2013, aiming to cultivate a culture of civic activism and address gaps in formal education for civil society. The programme covers core modules like strategic management, human resources, legal and ethical issues, and public policy advocacy. Mr. Bogdanovski also outlined elective modules and underscored the need for promotion, marketing, and financial support for such educational initiatives, stressing the potential and importance of these studies in supporting IPA Beneficiaries in the EU integration process.

The panel followed the discussion with questions and answers. Natasha Mazari raised a question that came in the chat via Zoom regarding the funding of courses in Ireland. Specifically, the inquiry was whether the courses were paid for by participants or funded through donations. In response, Ms. O'Connor explained that there is a variety of funding sources. Some courses are paid, while others, including training and events, are free. Ms. O'Connor mentions the National Training Fund in Ireland, funded by all employers, including those in civil society or the non-profit sector. This fund supports their programmes and allows them to offer subsidised programmes.

Miloš Janković from Catalyst Balkans raised a critical concern about the skills gap in non-profit management. He emphasised the need to both upskill existing professionals in the sector and attract new talents. Mr. Janković pointed out the challenge of retaining skilled individuals in the non-profit sector as many tend to leave for better-paid and more sustainable opportunities in other sectors and fields. Mr. Zoran Bogdanovski acknowledged the significant challenge and highlighted the dilemma of investing in capacity building only to see individuals leave for more favourable conditions. Ms. Aleksandra Gligorovic offered a potential solution by suggesting that attracting and retaining talent in the non-profit sector requires providing opportunities for career development, financial benefits, and, most importantly, personal growth and a sense of the impact of one's work.

Ms. Gordana Bošković (Department for Adult Education and Life-Long Learning at Centre for Vocational Education and Training – Montenegro) directed her question to Mr. Zoran Bogdanovski, inquiring about the annual enrolment and job prospects for the Master's Degree programme he presented. He responded, indicating that the programme was designed for small groups of 10 to 15 students per year, adhering to an agreement with the university rector. He mentioned leading a group of twelve students in the first instance. The focus on small numbers is attributed to the interdisciplinary nature of the studies, emphasising the value of offering a high-quality educational experience. However, Zoran could not provide total enrolment figures due to the program's premature conclusion. He underscores that the programme aims to cultivate future leaders and managers for associations, prioritizing quality over quantity.

One online participant from the Institute for Albanian Municipalities posed a question about the role and collaboration with local government units in preparation for integration concerning capacity development. Ms. Ariola Agolli responded, emphasising the importance of partnerships and cooperation with institutions. She noted that the benefit of programmes of such kind extends beyond the sector involved, highlighting the role of institutions, especially in policymaking. She stressed the significance of viewing these institutions as both partners and targets for capacity-building efforts. She mentioned organising capacity-building programmes for public officials in areas like policy development, emphasising collaboration with CSOs and citizens. The goal is to enhance skills and capacities in managing working groups and addressing various topics in partnership with municipalities and local governments.

Another question addressed civil society development organisations, inquiring about specific skills considered self-development issues for these organisations. Ms. Arjola Agolli responded emphasising

the importance of keeping organisations up-to-date and enhancing their capacities across relevant topics, particularly those linked to the EU integration process. She highlighted the significance of skills related to digitalization, access to networking, and other platforms in addition to topics aligned with the integration process for improving services to other CSOs.

Panel Discussion II - Certification, Recognition, and National Qualifications Frameworks

The panel covered several key aspects related to the non-profit sector and skill development. The speakers included Mr. Richard Allen, who informed on the status of National Qualifications Frameworks (NQFs) in the region and their connections to the non-profit sector based on EU TACSO 3 research prior the P2P event. Ms. Vesna Fabian discussed the benefits of NQFs and explored the links between NQFs and the non-profit sector from the perspective of public authorities, examining the role of the sector in skills development.

Ms. Gordana Bošković talked about Montenegro's life-long learning framework, focusing on the accreditation of programmes and the involvement of CSOs in adult education. Additionally, Ms. Siria Taurelli from the European Training Foundation addressed the topics of micro-credentials, lifelong learning, and flexible learning options, emphasising the quality assurance of short-term courses. The panel concluded with a Q&A session moderated by Mr. Richard Allen.

Mr. Allen emphasised the importance to gain sufficient acknowledgment for the skills and status of individuals working within the sector and described the panel session as integral to addressing this concern by delving into the policy responses and frameworks established by the governments in WB region.

The European Training Foundation has actively engaged in the region for nearly two decades, contributing to the development of national qualifications frameworks. As the EU TACSO 3 Team prepared for this event, its focus centred on recognizing national qualifications frameworks as crucial instruments for identifying, comprehending, and enhancing training and skills within the non-profit sector. The research revealed a limited connection between the non-profit sector and national qualifications frameworks across the region. While every country in the WBT region has its own national qualifications framework, the predominant investment tends to be directed towards profit-making sectors, with relatively less emphasis on the public sector.

Ms. Vesna Fabian shared insights into the National Qualifications Framework System (NQFS) and the involvement of the NGO sector within it. Key points from her presentation included:

- **Introduction of NQFS in Serbia (2018):** The NQFS system in Serbia was introduced to address issues such as the relevance of the qualification system, mismatches between skills and labour market demands, and the need for improved social partnership and quality assurance.
- **Institutional Framework:** Key institutions in the NQFS system in Serbia include the Ministry of Education, Office for Dual Education, National Qualification Framework, Sector Skills Councils, Agency for Qualification, and Council for Qualification System.
- **Role of Standards:** Qualification standards are crucial in the NQFS system, serving as a national agreement on the elements of a qualification. These elements include the title of the qualification, sector, level, prerequisites, future perspectives, and learning outcomes, competencies, and occupations associated with the qualification.
- **Development of Qualification Standards:** The development of qualification standards involves a process with milestones and phases, engaging social partners. Anyone can submit an initiative for a new qualification or the modernization of an existing one.



- **Levels of Qualifications:** Serbia's NQFS consists of eight levels. Most qualifications are acquired through the formal education system, with limited development in non-formal education and recognition of prior learning (RPL).
- **Accreditation for Adult Education:** Adult education, including non-formal education, RPL, personal development, and career guidance, can be accredited. However, non-formal education and RPL are underdeveloped, with a need for more providers and relevant programmes.
- **NGO Sector Involvement:** The NGO sector is represented in NQFS bodies, including the National Council for NQFS, providing input in decision-making processes. NGOs can initiate the introduction or modernization of qualifications relevant to their sector.
- **Accreditation for NGOs:** NGOs can accredit themselves and their programmes, gaining recognition through certificates. Accredited programmes become part of the NQFS register and are visible on the European Qualification Portal.
- **Future Development Plans:** Serbia aims to introduce partial qualifications and micro-credentials in the NQFS system, responding to the needs of social partners. The focus will be on recognizing key competencies and addressing the interests of private providers and the NGO sector.

Ms. Fabian welcomed input from the NGO sector to identify needs and challenges. She concluded by expressing eagerness to learn more about the NGO sector, its challenges, and how the NQFS system can better accommodate its needs. She emphasised the importance of quality assurance and building trust in the education and qualification system.

Ms. Gordana Bošković addressed the audience on behalf of the Ministry of Education, Science, and Innovation and the Centre for Vocational Education and Training in Montenegro. She highlighted the importance of advancing the adult education system across countries.

Key points from her speech included:

- **Education System in Montenegro:** The Ministry of Education oversees education, innovation, and science, with adult education primarily managed by the Centre for Vocational Education and Training and the Employment Office.
- **Lifelong Learning Framework:** Montenegro focuses on lifelong learning, and institutions like the Centre for Vocational Education and Training play a crucial role in informing citizens about adult education opportunities.
- **Adult Education Providers:** Adult education in Montenegro is provided by various institutions, including schools, specialized organisations, and private entities. The Ministry has issued licenses for around 128 institutions involved in adult education.
- **EPALE⁴ Project:** Gordana highlighted the EPALÉ project, an electronic platform for adult learning in Europe, aimed at teachers, researchers, and policymakers. The platform fosters collaboration between governmental and NGO sectors in adult education.
- **CSO's Role:** The Adult Education Strategy for Montenegro 2015-2025 emphasises the role of civil society organisations in non-formal education. CSOs actively contribute to areas like civil democracy, sustainable development, gender equality, and media literacy.

⁴ [EPALÉ | Electronic Platform for Adult Learning in Europe \(europa.eu\)](http://europa.eu)



- **Funding and Support:** The Ministry allocates funds to support CSOs' projects and programmes in education and learning. While specific data on NGOs in this field is lacking, many NGOs implement educational programmes to enhance skills in various domains.
- **Licensing and Accreditation:** Institutions seeking a license for adult education must comply with laws related to programmes, premises, and staff. The licensing process includes proof of payment and a bank guarantee, posing potential barriers for NGOs.
- **Accreditation of Programmes:** CSOs must accredit their non-formal education programmes to implement them. However, many educational programmes proceed without formal accreditation, a challenge that requires collaboration between CSOs and the government to address.

Ms. Bošković emphasised the need for collaboration between the CSO Sector and the government to overcome challenges and improve the adult education system in Montenegro.

Ms. Siria Taurelli's speech revolved around the significance of micro-credentials within the European Euro Skills framework. She emphasised the Euro Skills manifesto's goals, particularly the target of 60% of citizens engaging in learning opportunities annually. Ms. Taurelli stressed the need for flexibility and accessibility in learning, acknowledging the challenges faced by those who need learning opportunities the most.

Her speech highlighted the dual role of civil society organisations (CSOs) as both learners and providers of education. Ms. Taurelli discussed the diverse needs of learners and providers outside the formal education system. The central question addressed was how to ensure the portability and recognition of results from short training courses, especially those provided outside formal education. Micro-credentials were presented as a solution, offering a framework that integrates short-term courses into formal education systems.

She outlined the key features of micro-credentials, emphasising their reflection of individual learning experiences and the importance of assessment for recognition. The speech acknowledged obstacles such as the lack of existing qualifications and potential delays in accreditation processes. Ms. Taurelli proposed solutions, including quality criteria for accreditation and transitional measures until a comprehensive micro-credential system is in place.

She also introduced resources developed by the European Training Foundation (ETF), including guidelines on micro-credentials and a tool called Scaffold for teaching key competencies. The Scaffold tool, based on European competence frameworks, aims to make these frameworks accessible to educators through a deck of 102 cards, which was created by the ETF together with the Joint Research Centre of the European Commission with and for the DG EMPL⁵. The tool⁶ is available online and free of charge. Ms. Taurelli concluded by highlighting the ongoing collaboration and creativity required for the successful development of micro-credentials, acknowledging the collective efforts of ministries, national agencies, experts, and various institutions.

In the Q&A session, Ms. Biljana Lazova from the Adult Education Centre in North Macedonia asked about the duration of the license for providers offering adult education services in Montenegro. She

⁵ [DG EMPL - DG for Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion | Knowledge for policy \(europa.eu\)](#)

⁶ [Scaffold: a card game to revolutionise teaching | ETF \(europa.eu\)](#)

[Guide to Scaffold | ETF \(europa.eu\)](#)

[\(983\) Scaffold: table game for educators - YouTube](#)

inquired whether there was a reaccreditation process. Ms. Gordana Bošković from Montenegro responded, stating that they don't have a specific time or duration for the license, and currently, there is no reaccreditation process, because the license does not have an expiration date.

Ms. Vesna Fabian from Serbia then shared that in Serbia, they have a different system. While they provide permanent accreditation, it is for programmes rather than organisations like NGOs or enterprises. The accreditation for programmes in Serbia lasts for five years, and at present, there is no reaccreditation process. However, Fabian mentioned that they have introduced standards for self-evaluation and external evaluation. In the future, they plan to integrate these standards, potentially making the accreditation process easier for those with favourable evaluations (on both self-evaluation external evaluation).

Ms. Andjelija Lučić from Forum MNE in Montenegro said that the accreditation process for the youth activist programmes in Montenegro was challenging, despite having support from the Centre for Vocational Education and the Ministry of Youth and Sports. Ms. Lučić highlighted that the process is demanding for CSOs and often requires substantial funds and resources that are not easily accessible. While not posing a direct question, she encouraged further discussion and exploration of solutions to overcome these challenges. In response, Ms. Gordana Bošković mentioned that, consequently, only two NGOs in Montenegro, including Forum MNE for Youth Action, have obtained a license for adult education. She acknowledged the existence of various barriers in Montenegro that hinder more NGOs from acquiring a license.

In further discussion, comments from Mr. Milorad Bjeletić, Belgrade's Open School, Mr. Mert Altıntaş, Association of Civil Society Development Centre, and Ms. Dženana Husremović University of Sarajevo Vice-Rector for Teaching and Student Affairs focused on the demand for certification programmes in civil society, the comprehensive nature of these programmes, and the relevance of NQFS.

Mr. Milorad Bjeletić raised concerns about the demand for civil society skills and knowledge in the market, questioning whether the investment in accreditation and recognition is worthwhile if the market does not recognize these qualifications.

Ms. Siria Taurelli emphasised the importance of maintaining quality in certification programmes while recognizing the need for flexibility and access.

Mert Altıntaş inquired about the comprehensiveness of certification programmes, asking whether there are specific programmes for various civil society sectors, such as gender equality or disability rights.

Ms. Vesna Fabian highlighted the challenge of covering all topics and suggested focusing on key competencies applicable across sectors.

Ms. Dženana Husremović provided insights into the importance of NQFS for recognition and mobility, emphasising the need for certainty in education despite the current uncertainties. Ms. Gordana Bošković explained the role of the National Qualification Framework in recognizing knowledge, skills, and competencies acquired through non-accredited programmes, and the primary goal of benefiting individuals.

In conclusion, Ms. Siria Taurelli emphasised the importance of acquiring knowledge and skills to become active citizens in the 21st century and discussed the need for transitional or alternative measures to recognize situations that are still in progress or evolving.

Mr. Zoltan Illes, College of Europe - Introduction to the College of Europe – and the new campus and Master’s Degree programme in Tirana, Albania

Mr. Zoltan Illes presented the College of Europe, the oldest postgraduate university institution in European affairs, established in 1949. The College aims to train leaders for future European institutions and governments. Currently existing on two campuses in Bruges (Belgium) and Natolin (Warsaw, Poland), the College is expanding to create a third campus in Tirana, Albania.

The College offers six Master’s Degree programmes, each specializing in European affairs. The new Master’s Degree planned for Tirana focuses on European transformation and integration. The programme covers EU accession processes, policy implications, post-accession challenges, and the EU’s responses to various contingencies, including climate change.

Mr. Illes emphasised that the College is not only an academic institution but also a residential one, fostering a diverse and transformative experience for students who live and study together. The new Master’s Degree programme in Tirana aims to attract students with social science backgrounds, particularly those interested in the Western Balkans region.

The programme targets individuals with strong academic backgrounds, regardless of their geographic origin. While the main language of instruction is English, students are encouraged to learn French by the end of the programme. Mr. Illes acknowledged the high fees for studying at the College but highlighted the availability of scholarships, intending to provide financial aid to most students.

The Tirana campus is under construction, and the admissions process has officially launched, with plans to enrol the first cohort of 31 students in 2024. The College’s expansion to Tirana reflects its commitment to educating future leaders in European affairs and facilitating engagement with the Western Balkans region.

Panel Discussion III - Partnerships, Erasmus+, and other opportunities

This panel discussion brought together experts in the non-profit sector, each offering valuable insights into collaboration, skills development, and opportunities. Ms. Ana Dervishi, Contact Point Erasmus+ & ESC in Albania, delved into the strategic utilisation of Erasmus+ funding to foster collaboration between CSOs and academic institutions, with a specific focus on enhancing skills in the non-profit sector. Mr. Milorad Bjeletić from Belgrade Open School emphasised European partnerships and their pivotal role in supporting internships within the non-profit sector for career advancement. Mr. Savino Ruá, Policy Officer – Western Balkans, DG for Education and Culture (DG EAC), provided a comprehensive overview from Brussels on Erasmus+, explaining its purpose, applications, and diverse opportunities in the Western Balkans region. Ms. Dženana Husremović, University of Sarajevo Vice-Rector for Teaching and Student Affairs, explored in her presentation the transformative benefits of short courses and micro-credentials in higher education through collaboration. Mr. Mert Altıntaş, representing the Association of Civil Society Development Center in Ankara, shared insights into partnerships and skills development in Türkiye.

The session, moderated by Ms. Kanita Kulić from EU TACSO 3, concluded with a Q&A session, fostering a dynamic exchange of ideas and further exploration of the discussed topics.

Ms. Ana Dervishi, the contact point for Erasmus+ youth in Albania, shared her personal experience with Erasmus+ programmes and highlighted the transformative impact they had on her career. She discussed the evolution of Erasmus programmes, emphasizing the shift towards cooperation between CSOs and academic institutions.

Ms. Dervishi provided insights into the challenges faced during her tenure as a contact point and outlined support structures such as SALTO⁷ and Erasmus+ offices in the Western Balkans. She shared statistics on the positive impact of Erasmus programmes, including improved career understanding for participants, and offered opportunities for collaboration between CSOs and academic institutions.

“Three or four Erasmus students said that they have a better understanding of what they want to do in their future careers when they return from abroad. One of three Erasmus Plus trainees is offered the position by the company they are trained in.

One of three youth mobility participants comes from a disadvantaged background. Over the last three decades, more than 10 million people have participated in Erasmus+ or appointed programmes. One of two universities has introduced new digital tools in teaching and learning activities as a direct result of their Erasmus+ project.” Ana Dervishi

Ms. Dervishi addressed challenges such as sporadic cooperation, sustainability of partnerships, and the need for a proactive approach. She suggested building bridges of cooperation, recognising and appreciating the expertise of both sectors, and leveraging technology for research and innovation. She also highlighted the importance of a unified platform to better understand and coordinate the various European Commission-supported programmes. Overall, in her speech, Ms. Dervishi emphasised the need for enhanced collaboration and communication among stakeholders in the region.

Mr. Milorad Bjeletić, from the Belgrade Open School, reflected on the organisation's 30 years of experience in education, training, and societal development. He highlighted the significant impact with 65,000 beneficiaries, 8,000 training days, 850 public events, and 133 policy papers.

Regarding the topic, he addressed the role of civil society in enhancing employability, career advancement, and career guidance. Mr. Bjeletić emphasized the importance of skills and the balance between knowledge, skills, and values in civil society. He acknowledged the European Year of Skills, highlighting the historical perspective where skills were sometimes undervalued compared to knowledge.

Mr. Bjeletić underlined the concept of employability as the ability to get and retain employment, linking it to the work done by CSOs in improving employability. Internships, seen as professional learning experiences, were highlighted as valuable opportunities for individuals, particularly youth, to gain practical work experience and develop key competencies.

Key competencies, defined by the EU, include multilingual literacy, digital skills, personal and social skills, learning to learn, citizenship, entrepreneurship, cultural awareness, and expression. He noted that CSOs contribute meaningfully to these competencies, making individuals more employable in the labour market.

However, Mr. Bjeletić raised a concern about the diminishing attractiveness of a career in civil society, urging a discussion on how to make civil society a compelling career choice once again.

Mr. Savino Ruá, discussed the opportunities within the Erasmus+ programme, focusing on capacity-building actions that are particularly relevant for civil society organisations. The main points of his presentation included:

- Introduction to Erasmus+: He briefly introduced Erasmus+ as the flagship programme supporting education, training, youth, and sport, highlighting its historical evolution over more than 30 years.
- Opportunities for Western Balkans: 370 million allocated to the Western Balkans (Albania, Kosovo, Montenegro, Bosnia and Herzegovina for the period 2021-2027), Mr. Ruá pointed out

⁷ [SALTO-YOUTH](#)

that these countries have substantial opportunities under Erasmus+, even if not fully associated with the programme (only North Macedonia and Serbia are fully associated).

- **Core Focus on Capacity Building:** His presentation mainly focused on capacity-building actions within Erasmus+, which Mr. Ruá considered to be the most interesting for CSOs. These actions aim to enhance skills and knowledge, particularly for future managers of CSOs.
- **Capacity Building in Higher Education:** He highlighted the capacity-building opportunities for higher education institutions, emphasising their potential to develop and adapt curricula, support university-enterprise cooperation, and enhance the skills of academic and administrative staff.
- **Capacity Building in Vocational Education and Training:** His presentation touched upon the capacity-building opportunities for vocational education and training, emphasising the improvement of quality and responsiveness to economic and social development, with a focus on enhancing the labour market relevance of skills provision.
- **Capacity Building in Youth and Sport:** Mr. Ruá briefly mentioned capacity-building opportunities in the fields of youth and sport, offering potential benefits for CSOs engaged in youth work and promoting positive agendas in sports.

Mr. Ruá provided examples of past capacity-building projects involving NGOs from the Western Balkans as leading partners. These projects were considered best practices and showcased the potential impact of Erasmus+ funding. He encouraged the audience to consult the Erasmus+ programme guide and online information sources for details on upcoming funding calls, underlining the importance of staying informed to seize these opportunities.

Overall, Mr. Ruá presentation aimed to inform and inspire CSOs, particularly those in the Western Balkans, about the diverse opportunities within the Erasmus+ programme, with a focus on capacity building.

Ms. Dženana Husremović discussed the evolving role of higher education institutions and their cooperation with CSOs. The key points of her presentation include:

- **Introduction and Engagement:** She began by engaging the audience with questions about their experiences during the event, making the session interactive. Attendees were asked about their feelings during the European Union anthem, whether they had met new people, and if they could name the most interesting presentation, creating a participatory atmosphere.
- **Trends in Higher Education:** Ms. Husremović highlighted four global trends influencing higher education: globalisation, technological development, changes in the youth population, and the ongoing process of defining competencies for future work. The shift from traditional teacher-centred learning to student-centred learning, digital transformation, and she emphasised a move from knowledge-based to competence-based education.
- **Challenges and Paradigm Shifts:** She acknowledged higher education as a work in progress, emphasizing its role as an industry under construction. Challenges included the need to rethink the purpose of higher education in an ever-changing world. The paradigm shift focused on preparing citizens for environmental, technological, and social changes, emphasising access to quality education for social mobility.
- **Cooperation with Civil Society:** Ms. Husremović stressed the importance of collaboration between higher education institutions and CSOs. The ongoing changes in higher education require cooperation with CSOs, which possess institutional knowledge and contribute to achieving social justice and social change.



- Initiatives and Legislation: Initiatives at both the legislative and policy levels were discussed, including the internationalisation of higher education, mobility programmes, and efforts to attract the non-traditional type of students (i.e. people of different age and educational and business/working backgrounds). Legislative developments such as flexible study programs, micro-credentials, and the Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) were emphasized.
- Examples of Capacity Building Programmes: She provided examples of capacity-building programs in the region, particularly in Serbia and Bosnia and Herzegovina. One of them is the Development of part-time and short cycle studies in higher education in Bosnia and Herzegovina (PARTISH⁸). These programmes aimed to develop and implement flexible study programmes, including dual studies with industry partnerships and part-time and short-cycle studies emphasizing micro-credentials.
- Scholarships and Organisational Support: The importance of scholarships for non-traditional students and the need for organisational support to effectively utilise newly acquired skills were highlighted. She emphasized that organisational readiness to accept and use skills gained through education is crucial for the success of both individuals and organisations.

Ms. Husremović concluded by emphasizing that collaboration between academia, especially public universities, and CSOs should be organic, driven by shared values. Recognition of each other's contributions and the creation of synergies were highlighted as essential for CSOs to develop future skills and for academia to incorporate real-life institutional knowledge into high-quality study programmes that benefit society. Overall, her presentation emphasized the dynamic nature of higher education, the importance of adapting to global trends, and the collaborative role of academia and CSOs in shaping a socially just and resilient education system.

Mr. Mert Altıntaş provided insights into the challenges and opportunities in building skills within CSOs. Acknowledging the broad and challenging nature of the topic, he highlighted the importance of addressing the systemic or systematic aspects of ongoing programmes in Türkiye.

Here are the other key points:

- Capacity Building Programmes: The Association of Civil Society Development Center⁹ in Türkiye focuses on implementing capacity-building programmes for CSOs, involving various activities such as training and mentorships. The central challenge lies in the effectiveness of these programmes in developing skills in individuals and subsequently transferring these skills to the CSOs they represent.
- Challenges in Skill Transfer: Mr. Altıntaş identified several challenges, with a significant emphasis on the transfer of skills from individuals to CSOs. The effectiveness of training programs, the transferability of skills, and the retention of skilled individuals within their respective organisations were outlined as critical challenges.
- Homogeneous Target Groups: He noted that CSOs have homogeneous target groups, both in terms of their field of work and educational backgrounds. The challenge is to find an average channel for transferring information and skill development that caters to the diverse educational levels and backgrounds within the CSO community.
- CSO-CSO Partnerships: Effective partnerships between CSOs were highlighted as valuable in addressing challenges. Mr. Altıntaş provided examples of collaborations with gender equality and child rights organisations to tailor training programmes for specific fields of work. CSO-CSO

⁸ [PARTISH – Privredna/Gospodarska komora FBiH \(kfbih.com\)](http://PARTISH-Privredna/Gospodarska-komora-FBiH-(kfbih.com))

⁹ [STGM | Sivil Toplum Geliştirme Merkezi Derneği](http://STGM-Sivil-Toplum-Gelistirme-Merkezi-Derneği)

partnerships were emphasized as beneficial for shaping and delivering effective training programmes.

- **International Collaboration:** He shared an example of a long-term capacity-building programme, implemented over two years in collaboration with an international organisation from Ireland. The programme focuses on working one-on-one with CSOs, identifying organisational needs, and building knowledge, skills, and competencies to achieve self-sufficiency.
- **Partnerships with Universities:** Collaboration with academics was discussed, emphasizing that partnerships with universities involve learning experiences for both CSOs and academics. He stressed the importance of universities learning from CSOs, not just the other way around.
- **Private Sector Collaboration:** While partnerships with civil society organisations and universities are relatively rich, collaborations with the private sector were noted to be less extensive. He highlighted the potential for private sector engagement in areas such as business human rights and corporate social responsibility.
- **Challenges in Accreditation:** Mr. Altıntaş pointed out challenges related to government accreditation and certification for CSO capacity-building programmes in Türkiye. The restrictive legislation could pose a significant obstacle, requiring careful consideration and potential advocacy efforts to address.
- **Volunteers as Valuable Resources:** Volunteers were acknowledged as a valuable resource, sometimes more impactful than university interns. He emphasized the need for CSOs to develop their skills in effectively collaborating with volunteers and making their organisations attractive for volunteer contributions.
- **Legislation Challenges in Türkiye:** Mr. Altıntaş discussed the challenges posed by restrictive legislation, where accreditation or certification by government institutions for capacity-building programmes is a significant issue. Despite interpreting the legislation broadly, there remains a constant concern over potential legal restrictions.

In conclusion, Mr. Altıntaş provided valuable insights into the complexities of skills development within CSOs in Türkiye, emphasising the importance of partnerships, addressing challenges, and adapting to the diverse nature of the civil society landscape.

During Q&A after presentations, Mr. Miloš Janković (Catalyst Balkans) emphasised the potential for collaboration between academia, the business sector, and CSOs in digital transformation. He highlighted the importance of developing critical thinking, emotional intelligence, and adaptability, which are crucial skills for navigating digital environments. Janković stressed the significance of non-formal education, where trainers and educators can experiment with methods and share lessons learned from grassroots organisations to contribute to curriculum improvements.

Ms. Kanita Kulić mentioned that civil society organisations in the region have played a significant role in emphasising and improving Soft Skills. She acknowledged that while governments might not always recognise Soft Skills, the labour market and individuals benefit from them.

Mr. Altıntaş highlighted the law's restrictions in Türkiye regarding accreditation for delivering trainings, and agreed with Ms. Kulić, who stated that CSOs should continue their work with or without government support, relying on recognition from the labour market and individuals.

Mr. Dren Puka from the Kosovan Civil Society Foundation (KCSF) acknowledged the shifting nature of civil society globally, with the emergence of more non-formal groups and cause-based citizens organising around specific topics. He highlighted the ongoing challenges of capacity building within CSOs emphasising the need for continuous support and addressing the absence of dedicated

institutions for supporting CSOs compared to public institutions that support public servants. Mr. Dren Puka's question, directed primarily to Mr. Altıntaş, focused on making CSOs more appealing for internships or employment and the potential goals and directions for achieving this appeal.

In response, Mr. Altıntaş, acknowledged the changing profile of CSOs and the diverse needs of different organisations, necessitating tailored capacity-building efforts. He mentioned ongoing mentoring programmes specifically designed for smaller and larger-scale CSOs. Regarding the appeal of CSOs, Mr. Altıntaş, discussed the challenges of attracting individuals with diverse backgrounds, especially those with technical skills needed for areas like digitalization. He highlighted the importance of offering reasonable salaries and creating conditions that make CSOs an attractive workplace while emphasising the unique contribution to society that working for a CSO represents.

Ms. Snežana Nikčević from the NGO 35 MM from Montenegro emphasised the responsibility of CSOs to provide meaningful learning opportunities for interns. She pointed out that CSOs often overburden interns with tasks without dedicating enough time and mentoring to help them learn and grow. Ms. Nikčević stressed the importance of planning and establishing mechanisms for transferring skills and knowledge to interns. She reminded the audience of the crucial role CSOs may play in educating and shaping the future generation by sharing, for instance, organisation's careful planning when working with students from universities. Ms. Nikčević also highlighted a state-funded professional training programme in Montenegro for young graduates and discussed the challenges of providing adequate feedback to interns with diverse educational backgrounds, for example, in art.

Ms. Rudina Duraku from Albania inquired about the gaps and challenges related to the Lifelong Learning Programme in universities, particularly in the context of CSOs. She noted the difficulties in providing training without credits and mentioned the need for a platform for students or adults who receive scholarships to work in CSOs. Ms. Ana Dervishi responded by emphasising the importance of building cooperation between civil society and academia in Albania. She suggested that investing in nurturing partnerships and utilising the potential for collaboration would be essential.

Ms. Dženana Husremović added that mentoring is a challenging and exhausting process, especially if an organisation lacks mentoring skills. She discussed the motives behind individuals working in CSOs, highlighting the importance of recognising common goals and personal responsibility for shared goods. The emphasis was on fostering collaboration, addressing gaps in the Lifelong Learning Programme, and promoting common goals in both universities and CSOs.

World Cafe: Major Findings, Recommendations, and Ideas for Additional P2P Events and Capacity Building Events in 2024

Key findings, recommendations, and future event ideas based on the World Café group work discussions and outcomes on November 22, 2023, are summarized below. There are also some additional activities for consideration. Adjustments to the proposed activities related to the capacity building and P2P events can be made based on specific goals and audience preferences for the events in 2024.

Major Findings

Priority Skills for Non-Profit Sector:

- Project management, fundraising, and digital transformation skills are crucial.
- Advocacy, policy creation, and outreach are fundamental for community engagement.
- Sustainable strategies, social entrepreneurship, and adaptability are highly valued.
- Financial management, leadership, and critical thinking are essential skills.

- Intercultural skills, teamwork, and agile development are also significant.

Cooperation Opportunities:

- Regional and inter-sectoral cooperation is feasible through partnerships.
- Connecting communities, strategic alliances, and joint advocacy efforts are vital.
- Utilising technology ("Tech for good") to solve social issues.
- Strategic networking and sharing experiences strengthen cooperation.

Good Practices in Training and Skills Development:

- Diverse training methods, online resources, and mentorship programmes are effective.
- Competency-based training, sub-granting, and knowledge transfer channels work well.
- Youth-focused programmes and skills development initiatives are beneficial.

Advocating Government Investment:

- Aligning with EU/OECD¹⁰ strategies, improving service quality, and involvement capacities are persuasive.
- Collaborating, involving CSOs in decision-making, and showcasing values drive investment.
- Introducing new curricula, advocating for state funds, and MOOCs enhance investment.

Ensuring Quality Assurance and Recognition:

- Collaborative efforts, evaluation mechanisms, and legal frameworks ensure quality.
- Recognizing non-formal learning, validation, and autonomy in the sector are crucial.
- Threats of state control, bureaucratic challenges, and costs hinder recognition.

Accreditation and Certification for CSOs:

Pros: Quality assurance, participant certification, and national recognition.

Cons: Bureaucracy, costs, and concerns over competence and necessity.

Improving Inclusivity and Accessibility:

- Skills programmes must consider gender, environmental, and socioeconomic sustainability.
- Clear competencies, inclusive instructional design, and diverse expertise enhance inclusivity.
- Accessibility for diverse backgrounds, monitoring, and evaluation are crucial.

Recommendations

1. Programme Development:

- Develop programmes aligned with priority skills and inclusive practices.
- Offer seminars to encourage NGOs to seek accreditation while simplifying the process.
- Foster collaboration between CSOs, governments, academia, and private sectors.

2. Government Engagement:

- Advocate for government involvement in skills strategies and investment in CSOs.

¹⁰ The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development [Home page - OECD](#)



- Ensure inclusion of CSOs in decision-making and policy development processes.
3. **Collaboration and Networking:**
- Encourage strategic alliances, cross-border cooperation, and thematic networking.
 - Create opportunities for joint advocacy efforts among CSOs regionally.

Ideas for 2024 Events

1. **Strategic Alliance Establishments:** Organise cross-border events focusing on regional interests.
2. **Seminars on Accreditation:** Conduct seminars simplifying accreditation processes.
3. **Skill-Building Workshops:** Offer workshops focusing on priority skills for CSOs.
4. **Collaborative Conferences:** Host joint conferences for collaboration between sectors.
5. **Inclusive Programme Reviews:** Organise events to review inclusivity in skills programmes.

Additional Considerations:

- A. Develop mechanisms for ongoing evaluation and improvement.
- B. Focus on building sustainable partnerships and collaboration models.
- C. Explore funding opportunities to support inclusive skill development.

3. Conclusion

The EU TACSO 3 and 2023 EU Year of Skills: „Skills for Non-Profit Organisations in the Western Balkans and Türkiye event generated crucial insights into the needs and priorities of the non-profit sector, emphasizing the importance of challenges to be worked on: **skills development, cooperation, government engagement, and inclusivity.**

Key findings underscored the necessity for skills such as project management, fundraising, and digital transformation, alongside advocating for government investment aligned with EU/OECD strategies. Additionally, the significance of collaboration, inclusive practices, and accreditation for CSOs emerged as essential themes.

The recommendations and event ideas listed in the earlier section aim to address the identified challenges and capitalise on opportunities to strengthen the capacity and impact of the non-profit sector in 2024 and beyond. It is also recommended to develop tailored programmes that prioritise essential skills and inclusive practices, while also simplifying accreditation processes through seminars. There was a request from participants that the EU should advocate for increased government involvement in skills strategies and investment in CSOs, ensuring their inclusion in decision-making processes. The EU TACSO 3 will encourage strategic alliances, cross-border cooperation, and thematic networking to foster joint advocacy efforts regionally.