



Regional analysis on Green and Blue Infrastructure in South Muntenia Region, Romania



Stakeholder Engagement Plan

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Description The Stakeholders Engagement Plan presents the principles and methods used for information disclosure and the engagement with stakeholders

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CONTENTS

BACKGROUND AND PROJECT DETAILS	6
1.1. Background	6
1.2. Project Details	6
1.3. Project Location	7
1.4. Project rationale and strategic vision of the South Muntenia Development Region	7
1.5. Human centred approach and Social Impact of Green and Blue Infrastructure	8
PURPOSE AND PRINCIPLES OF STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT	9
2.1. Purpose and tools	9
2.2. Principles of Information Disclosure and Engagement of Stakeholders	9
LEGAL AND REGULATORY REQUIREMENTS	11
3.1. National Requirements	11
3.2. EBRD Requirements	11
3.3. EU Requirements	12
STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT PLAN	13
4.1. Existing Engagement Practices of the South Muntenia RDA	13
4.2. Stakeholder Mapping and Analysis	13
4.3. Gender and Inclusiveness in Stakeholder Engagement	14
4.4. Information Disclosure, Communication, and the Intended Format for the Consultations	14
4.5. Communication of Comments	15
4.6. Monitoring and Reporting	15
4.7. Implementation of the SEP	16
4.8. Review of SEP	16
THE GRIEVANCE MECHANISM	17
5.1. What could be considered a Grievance?	17
5.2. What is the Grievance Mechanism?	17
5.3. How to lodge a Grievance	17

BACKGROUND AND PROJECT DETAILS

1.1. Background

The South-Muntenia Regional Development Agency (“the RDA SM” or “the Client”) has expressed the desire to undertake a systematic approach to addressing environmental challenges, in the form of a Regional analysis, with a focus on functional urban areas. Given that the Region is bordered by the Danube, the analysis will integrate both green and blue infrastructure, as defined in the EC’s “Guidance on a strategic framework for further supporting the deployment of EU-level green and blue infrastructure” published at:

https://ec.europa.eu/environment/nature/ecosystems/pdf/SWD_2019_193_F1_STAFF_WORKING_PAPER_EN_V4_P1_1024680.PDF

The RDA SM would like to tackle the regional environmental challenges to be addressed through drafting and implementing of a **Regional analysis focused on Green and Blue Infrastructure**. The analysis would include urban environmental challenges. It is designed to guide the RDA SM and the cities / counties in SM region through two main steps:

- High level environmental challenge identification – with focus on the current general situation and needs;
- Elaboration of the Regional analysis on Green and Blue Infrastructure – with focus on the main green and blue investments, rather than the details of each city and project.

The RDA SM acknowledges the *EBRD’s Green Cities Framework*¹. Potential further engagement on EBRD Green Cities can help support the pipeline of projects identified in this assignment. Moreover, further engagement with EBRD Green Cities is also possible where a more comprehensive analysis and a Green City Action Plan can be developed for interested cities or the region.

1.2. Project Details

EBRD engaged Ramboll as a consulting team (the “Consultant”) to support the development of a Regional Analysis on Blue and Green Infrastructure in SM Region, consisting of the following tasks:

- Tasks 1 & 2: Inception & Challenge Identification
- Task 3: Elaboration of the Regional analysis

The Regional Strategy will take into consideration the EC’s “Guidance on a strategic framework for further supporting the deployment of EU-level green and blue infrastructure” and any other relevant EC documents and guidelines.

The Strategy will identify the main green and blue infrastructure projects, which could be co-financed from EU funds, especially under the SM Regional Operational Programme 2021-2027, specific objective 2.7 - enhancing biodiversity, green infrastructure in the urban environment, and reducing pollution.

¹ EBRD Green Cities Framework has supported nearly 50 cities in more than 20 countries to develop their own Green City Action Plan (GCAP). The methodology for the GCAP was developed by EBRD together with the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (“OECD”) and the International Council for Local Environmental Initiatives (“ICLEI”). The latest version of this is available on www.EBRDGreenCities.com.

1.3. Project Location

The Project will cover the South-Muntenia region, which is formed by seven counties: Argeş, Calarasi, Dambovita, Giurgiu, Ialomita, Prahova and Teleorman, with a population of over 3 million people. The counties of Teleorman, Giurgiu, Ialomita and Calarasi are bordered by the Danube to the south.



Figure 1. South-Muntenia region geographical location.

A detailed description of the project location and characteristics of South-Muntenia Development Region is also available in the 2021-2027 Development Plan of the Region South-Muntenia².

1.4. Project rationale and strategic vision of the South Muntenia Development Region

South-Muntenia Regional Operational Programme is currently in the process of negotiation, in terms that the SM RDA sent a second draft to the EC, a draft based on which several types of indicative activities were agreed. One of the points of this negotiation is precisely the issues related to Green Infrastructure, as its purpose is to use the funds for projects, which would address current challenges and green-blue development objectives of the region.

The project is also in line with development needs outlined in the 2021-2027 Development Plan of the South-Muntenia Region. The key main conclusions and rationale rely on the following:

- From a territorial point of view, the South Muntenia region ranks 3rd in size nationally

² <https://www.adrmuntenia.ro/planul-de-dezvoltare-al-regiunii-sud--muntenia-20212027/static/1315>

- From a geographical point of view, the South Muntenia region has a strategic position, enhanced by the presence of the most important waterway in Europe (Danube River), which ensures the connection with the Black Sea through the port of Constanta and from here with the Suez Canal
- Although the Danube river represents a huge development stimulus for the economy of the riparian counties within the region (Teleorman, Giurgiu, Călărași), the water transport potential offered by the Danube is insufficiently exploited at present. The opportunities for solving this problem are given by the adoption of the European Union Strategy for the Danube Region and the stimulation of cooperation with Bulgaria through transnational and cross-border cooperation programs, in which the region has experience
- The geographical position of the South Muntenia region determined certain peculiarities of its urban dimension: urban development inhibited due to the placement of Bucharest in the center of the region, the presence of an important development axis (Brașov - Ploiești - Bucharest - Giurgiu), the presence of Prahova Valley conurbation with tourist specialization, the opportunity to form the conurbation Bucharest - Ploiești - Târgoviște - Pitești and the existence of the 5 paired cities on the Danube.

1.5. Human centred approach and Social Impact of Green and Blue Infrastructure

One of the great drivers to urban growth is that cities have proven to provide great socio-economic opportunities, yet there are also constraints to healthy living in a city. In addition to economic development and growing affluence, urbanization seems to be accompanied by a widespread rise in mental and behavioural disorders, increasing social isolation, breakdown of the traditional family unit, social fragmentation and exclusion, and diminished social trust. Low social integration is a particularly important issue in urban areas. People living in neighbourhoods with low level of trust, and who lack strong social networks and bonds, are increasingly likely to suffer from poor mental health.

Ramboll previous work and research³ has shown that that BGI benefitted Social Capital with particular impact on: (1) Social interaction and integration, and (2) Civic identity and relatedness.

Therefore, it is anticipated that the present project and future investments in green and blue infrastructure will have an important positive effect in the area and thus generate a positive social impact. The main potential social benefits that blue infrastructure and green space can provide are related to improvements in levels of physical activity and health, promotion of psychological health and mental well-being, facilitation of social interaction, inclusion, and community cohesion. Access to safe, local, good quality green space has been shown to encourage higher levels of physical activity, which is beneficial to population health in many respects.

Ultimately, these will benefit various groups of citizens, including youth, the elderly, and families with children or persons with disabilities.

3 STRENGTHENING BLUE-GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE IN OUR CITIES, page 138 <https://ramboll.com/-/media/38fc23d12a5d47dcb7b3821716d69270.pdf>

PURPOSE AND PRINCIPLES OF STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT

2.1. Purpose and tools

The overall aim of this Stakeholder Engagement Plan is to ensure that a timely, consistent, comprehensive, coordinated and culturally appropriate approach is taken to consultation and Project disclosure. It is also aimed to present the principles and methods used for information disclosure and the engagement with stakeholders through all stages of the project development and implementation.

For Stakeholder Consultation, meetings and workshop will be organized using virtual platforms and in-person meetings, where the COVID-19 epidemiological requirements allow.

Also, a survey will be conducted through virtual platforms, seeking inputs from stakeholders. Three important meetings have already occurred under the project with participation of representatives of the RDA South-Muntenia (the Client), EBRD and the Consultants from Ramboll. These were aimed at identifying the strategic vision of the Client and to kick off the project.

A Stakeholder meeting was held on August 25, 2021 with participation of representatives of county councils, county capitals, other cities, and communes from the South Muntenia region. The aim of this workshop was to present the project and collect views from relevant internal and external stakeholders on the current situation of the environmental quality, urban planning, and infrastructure development in the Region.

A stakeholder workshop was held on September 9, 2021. The workshop focused on obtaining a common understanding as to what BGI is (and what it is not), as well as identify and discuss the key environmental challenges affecting the region.

Another Stakeholder Engagement workshop will be organized to confirm the regional approach to be implemented in the project, and to consult stakeholders on the potential projects that could be realised based on the analysis conducted by Ramboll. This last workshop will take place in October 2021.

2.2. Principles of Information Disclosure and Engagement of Stakeholders

Throughout the project implementation process, the following principles will be respected:

- Open and proactive communication with the stakeholders, engaging in an open process and providing meaningful information on relevant aspects;
- Openness toward dialogue and best efforts to clarify all aspects, uncertainties, worries the stakeholders might have in connection with the implementation of the project;
- Open cooperation and dialogue with academia, vendors, NGOs, public organizations, and the regulatory authorities in view of facilitating future successful relations and producing results that represent interests and needs of all citizens;
- Engaging with stakeholders such that they feel they are treated fairly, and their issues and concerns are afforded fair consideration; ensure an inclusive approach for vulnerable and minority groups, women and youth to feel able to participate and provide feedback;

- Document stakeholder issues, concerns, and comments to allow the rationale for Project decisions to be tracked and understood;
- Manage stakeholders expectations, ensuring that expectations are kept at realistic levels to avoid disappointments and frustrations;
- Updating the SEP to entail new developments under the project, which should be communicated to interested stakeholders.

In addition, the following EBRD requirements⁴ will be followed to ensure that the information disclosed is:

1. Accessible: in a format, language(s) and provided in a location (or via a channel) which is accessible for the identified stakeholders;
2. For each identified stakeholder: ensure that the format of the information is readable, understandable (e.g. in a non-technical language, in the language(s) spoken and read); it is at an appropriate level of detail; it is in a location where it can be easily obtained by women and men, as well as vulnerable or hard-to-reach groups (e.g. in some cities not all stakeholders will commonly access websites, so additional information channels may need to be sought).
3. Stakeholders with specific needs or vulnerabilities (large ethnic minority community within the city, immigrants of all genders, internally displaced people of all genders etc.) may need information to be tailored to their needs to ensure it is accessible.
4. The location, venue, and timing of the events to which stakeholders are invited to attend should allow for a full range of participation e.g. evening exhibitions/meetings can be more suitable for members of the public working standard hours, whilst day time meetings can be more suitable for parents with school age children and those who work non-standard hours.

These EBRD requirements and principles will guide our work under the project.

⁴ EBRD Stakeholder Engagement Guidance for GCAPs available https://ebrdgreencities.com/assets/Uploads/PDF/e6eca25e90/Stakeholder-Engagement-Guidance-for-GCAPs_Oct2020.pdf

LEGAL AND REGULATORY REQUIREMENTS

3.1. National Requirements

Relevant provisions related on public consultation and information refers to: the information and consultation of the stakeholders in general and of the communities in the project implementation area in particular, by means of notifications, display, and publication of relevant information.

Romania's Constitution⁵ – expressly stipulates the right of the persons to have access to any information of public interest and the obligation of the public authorities to ensure the correct information of the citizens on public matters and of problems of personal interest.

Law 544/2001 on free access to information of public interest⁶ defines and details the stages of free and unfettered access of the persons to any information of public interest as they are defined by law.

Another national instrument related to access to information and stakeholder engagement is Law No. 86/2000⁷, for the ratification of the Convention for the Access to Information, the Public's Participation in the decision making process and access to Justice in aspects related to the Environment, signed in Aarhus on 25 June 1998 (the Convention in Aarhus).

Governmental Decision no. 445/2009⁸ on the evaluation of the environmental impact of public and private projects sets the general framework and information and public consultation requirements in the procedures for the environmental impact assessment and obtaining the approval to develop such projects. It is in line with the provisions of EIA Directive it transposes.

Minister's Order 135/2010 on the approval of the methodology used for the assessment of environmental impacts of some public and private projects sets the procedural provisions including the allocated deadlines in the stages for the public information and consultation during the environmental impact assessment. This is in line with the general framework set by GD 445/2009 regarding the assessment of environmental impacts of some public and private projects.

3.2. EBRD Requirements

All Projects funded by the EBRD are required to meet best international practice and specifically the requirements for stakeholder engagement and public consultations. These requirements are described in the 2019 version, Performance Requirement 10: Information Disclosure and Stakeholder Engagement, which requires:

1. the client's public disclosure of appropriate information to enable meaningful consultation with stakeholders
2. meaningful consultation with potentially affected parties, and
3. a procedure or policy by which people can make comments or complaints.

Also, the EBRD Stakeholder Engagement Guidance for GCAPs is relevant for the present project and the required Principles of Information Disclosure and Engagement of Stakeholders were outlined in section 2.2 above.

⁵ <http://www.cdep.ro/pls/dic/site.page?id=339>

⁶ <http://legislatie.just.ro/Public/DetaliiDocument/31413>

⁷ <http://legislatie.just.ro/Public/DetaliiDocumentAfis/22438>

⁸ <http://legislatie.just.ro/Public/DetaliiDocument/109452>

3.3. EU Requirements

As specified in the EU Guidance for Stakeholder Consultation⁹, relations with stakeholders at the level of the European Commission are governed by four general principles:

1. **Participation:** Adopt an inclusive approach by consulting as widely as possible;
2. **Openness and Accountability:** Make the consultation process transparent to those involved and to the general public;
3. **Effectiveness:** Consult at a time where stakeholder views can still make a difference, respect proportionality and specific restraints;
4. **Coherence:** Ensure consistency of consultation processes across all services as well as evaluation, review, and quality control.

The European Union has long recognised the importance of consulting with stakeholders. Stakeholder engagement helps governments and agencies to collect more and better information, increase compliance, and reduce uninformed opposition.

⁹ <https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/default/files/better-regulation-guidelines-stakeholder-consultation.pdf>

STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT PLAN

4.1. Existing Engagement Practices of the South Muntenia RDA

The South-Muntenia RDA has a continuous practice of stakeholder engagement¹⁰ for similar or related activities including key stakeholders, mechanisms of disclosing information, consulting and receiving feedback. Under this project, the existing mechanisms of the RDA will be used or enhanced if such need is identified in course of project implementation.

Under the present project, South-Muntenia RDA had already asked engagement of such key stakeholders as County Local Councils, County Capitals, representatives of cities and communes from of stakeholders from all seven councils of the South-Muntenia region.

The identification of stakeholders under this specific project on Regional analysis on Green and Blue Infrastructure in South Muntenia Region, will allow the South-Muntenia RDA to move part of the funds allocated on urban mobility projects to the GI, being on the same priority axis under the EU collaboration.

During the kick-off meeting, RDA SM had specified that the proposed approach and engagement with stakeholders is aimed at identifying large regional projects or types of projects for the existing budget allocation.

4.2. Stakeholder Mapping and Analysis

Based on our preliminary assessment, the stakeholders of the Green & Blue Infrastructure Development Project can be grouped in the following categories:

I) Primary: those who will be directly affected by the project, or that can also directly affect the project. These are county councils and the cities, but also others, such as representatives of cities and communes in the project area.

These stakeholders were proposed by the South-Muntenia RDA and they will act as members of the working group for the Project.

ii) Secondary: those who cannot directly affect or be affected by the project, but nevertheless are important to have on board given their influence and/or interest in the project's study area. These are state regulators and relevant state agencies.

iii) Others interested stakeholders: these are organizations, civic groups and relevant NGOs representing environmental protection, or stakeholders such as youth, women, or other categories of populations, which may be affected by the project. These stakeholders can provide inputs and contribute to dissemination of information and communication, raising awareness, etc. They will be invited to provide comments to the regional analysis of green-blue infrastructure, which will be published on the ADRSM website according to national provisions on conducting public consultation.

As identified through preliminary discussions with the RDA South-Muntenia, the key stakeholders on whose engagement will be significantly relied on are County Local Councils, County Capitals, representatives of cities and communes; thus, these fall in the category of primary stakeholders.

¹⁰ <https://www.adrmuntenia.ro/evenimente>

The list of stakeholders with contact details is provided in Annex 1, as separate excel file attached to this SEP. A preliminary analysis of the list of delegated persons on behalf of County Local Councils, County Capitals had identified that the gender composition is representative.

4.3. Gender and Inclusiveness in Stakeholder Engagement

The stakeholder engagement approach aims for a gender diverse team in the planning and implementation of engagement activities to ensure women's needs are given sufficient attention, as well as the needs and interests of other under-represented groups of citizens who may be affected by the project.

We aim to create an environment during stakeholder engagement where diversity, gender equality, inclusion, and the views of various groups of citizens are given adequate consideration.

4.4. Information Disclosure, Communication, and the Intended Format for the Consultations

Two workshops are planned for the process of developing of the present assignment on Regional analysis focused on Green and Blue Infrastructure:

Stakeholder online meeting# 1: 25 August 2021.

Stakeholder workshop #1 on identification of challenges: 9 September 2021.

For this first workshop, a survey is conducted with participation of all stakeholders attending this specific meeting. The survey contains multiple choice and open questions and seeks to get an understanding (an initial mapping) of the key environmental challenges seen from the perspectives of each stakeholder. The survey is helpful for stakeholders to come to the workshop more prepared and with a better overview. This should help identify synergies across stakeholders (or sectors) so that a more meaningful discussion can be held at the workshop facilitated by Ramboll.

Stakeholder workshop #2 - discussion on potential projects and confirm approach.

Stakeholder workshops are to be confirmed with City Governments and other participants.

For each workshop, a concept note will be prepared outlining the workshop's purpose, format, attendees, agenda, outputs and expected outcomes. After each workshop, a short note will be prepared summarizing key outputs.

Also, bi-lateral conversations with primary stakeholders throughout the project will be held, to be planned in coordination with EBRD and RDA.

South-Muntenia RDA managers and staff will cooperate with relevant local municipal authorities and departments throughout the implementation of the project. Also, South-Muntenia RDA with the assistance of local municipal authorities and local community councils will ensure that the local population, which may be affected is adequately informed about the project.

A stakeholder activity and stakeholder engagement matrix is presented below, specifying the level of engagement, timelines, tools to be used and frequency of engagement.

Table 1. Stakeholder Engagement Activities and Matrix

Stakeholder*	Category	Area of interest	Engagement approach	Tools
County councils and the cities, representatives of cities and communes in the project command area	Primary	Act as members of the working group; Provide inputs to identifying Environmental challenges Beneficiaries of future investments	Inform and consult; Ask inputs	Workshops, face-to-face meeting during site visits, Survey among stakeholders
Relevant governmental agencies, such as the Agency for Environmental Protection	Secondary	Provide inputs to identifying Environmental challenges; Contribute with other types of support	Inform and consult	Meetings and consultations as may be identified in the process
Relevant NGOs representing environmental protection, or stakeholders such as youth, women, or other categories of populations	Other	Provide inputs to identifying Environmental challenges; Users/beneficiaries of the future investments and BGI infrastructure	Inform and consult	Consultation on the BGI Analysis

*Detailed list of stakeholders and contact details are available in Annex 1 (separate Excel file).

These stakeholder inputs will contribute to summarising the outcomes into a High-level environmental challenge identification document, which will inform further decisions and Pipeline for regional projects, including the types of investments, policy, and strategic actions the Region and main cities could undertake in the next 5-7-year period to address environmental challenges.

The Stakeholders Engagement Plan will be published on the South-Muntenia Regional Development Agency official website, <https://www.adrmuntenia.ro> in Romanian and in English.

4.5. Communication of Comments

All comments, suggestions and inputs should be sent to the following email address: amsudmuntenia@adrmuntenia.ro

4.6. Monitoring and Reporting

Stakeholder engagement activities will be documented and filed to ensure that inputs and suggestions received from stakeholders are adequately documented and are used to inform the Environmental challenge identification Report, and respectively, the Regional analysis focused on Green and Blue Infrastructure.

4.7. Implementation of the SEP

The current Stakeholder Engagement Plan is a preliminary document that should help in planning of stakeholder engagement approaches and activities. It will guide the process of stakeholder engagement during preparation of the afore-mentioned Environmental challenge identification Report, and Regional analysis focused on Green and Blue Infrastructure.

Therefore, its implementation will serve the stakeholders themselves, the South-Muntenia RDA, EBRD and Ramboll.

Once the work on Environmental challenge identification, and Regional analysis is completed, the responsibility for managing stakeholder consultation activities, including the grievance mechanism, will be managed by South-Muntenia RDA throughout future infrastructure works and project monitoring activities.

4.8. Review of SEP

Any change in the approach, changes in activities, or changes in the context will be used to review and update to the present SEP. The updated SEP will be communicated to all interested stakeholders through the website of the South-Muntenia RDA.

THE GRIEVANCE MECHANISM

5.1. What could be considered a Grievance?

The following is defined as “grievance”: a complaint, concern, question, suggestion, or other comment about the Project and how it is implemented.

5.2. What is the Grievance Mechanism?

The EBRD Guidance Note on Grievance Management (EBRD, 2012)¹¹ presents EBRD’s requirements with regard to the grievance mechanism, key principles to be implemented in defining the process and provides examples of grievance forms, databases, and management flow chart.

The grievance mechanism is a practical mechanism dedicated to receiving, recording, investigating requests, complaints, and questions about the project and submitting answers to them. A grievance may take the form of specific complaint about impacts, damages or harm caused by the Project.

A grievance may refer to concerns about access to the stakeholder engagement process or about how comments have been addressed.

Under the present project, grievances will be collected through existing channels of the South-Muntenia RDA. The contact details are:

Str. General Constantin Pantazi, nr. 7A,
cod poștal 910164 Călărași, România
+40 242 331 769; 0728 026 708
+40 242 313 167
office@adrmuntenia.ro

5.3. How to lodge a Grievance

Grievances, inputs, and suggestions will be collected using the existing contact details of South-Muntenia RDA. The Agency has a tool, which allows responding to request for information in an online format.

The tool can be accessed at:

https://www.adrmuntenia.ro/formular_contact

Alternatively, the template provided in this SEP can be used. The Form can be filled-in and sent to the above indicated contact details, whichever is more convenient for the person lodging a grievance.

¹¹ <https://www.ebrd.com/downloads/about/sustainability/grievance-mechanism.pdf>

Table 2. Grievance Sample Form

Complaints Sample Form Reference No:

Full Name

Contact information and preferred method of communication

Please mark how you wish to be contacted (mail, telephone, e-mail).

By Post: Please provide postal address:

By Telephone:

By E-mail

Description of incident or grievance:

What happened? Where did it happen? Who did it happen to? What is the result of the problem? Source and duration of the problem?

Date of incident/grievance

- One time incident/grievance (date _____)
- Happened more than once (how many times? _____)
- On-going (currently experiencing problem)

What would you like to see happen to resolve the problem?