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Western Balkans Investment Framework

Infrastructure Project Facility Technical Assistance 9 (IPF9)

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**MEDITERRANEAN CORRIDOR: SERBIA – CROATIA CX
RAIL INTERCONNECTION
BELGRADE – ŠID – BORDER BETWEEN THE TWO STATES
STARA PAZOVA – GOLUBINCI – ŠID SECTION AND
INĐIJA – GOLUBINCI RAILWAY LINE
FEASIBILITY STUDY, ESIA, PRELIMINARY DESIGN,
TENDER DOCUMENTS
STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT PLAN**

10 June 2024





Document information

The Infrastructure Project Facility (IPF) is a technical assistance instrument of the Western Balkans Investment Framework (WBIF) which is a joint initiative of the European Union, International Financial institutions, bilateral donors and the governments of the Western Balkans which supports socio-economic development and EU accession across the Western Balkans through the provision of finance and technical assistance for strategic infrastructure investments. This technical assistance operation is financed with EU funds.

Disclaimer: *The authors take full responsibility for the contents of this report. The opinions expressed do not necessarily reflect the view of the European Union or the European Investment Bank.*

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Country:	Serbia
Lead IFI:	European Investment Bank (EIB)
Responsible IPF 9:	Natalia Tselenti
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HISTORY OF CHANGES

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS / GLOSSARY

AADT	Annual Average Daily Traffic	JASPERS	Joint Assistance to Support Projects in European Regions
AI	Artificial Intelligence	JSC	Joint-Stock Company
ANFIS	Adaptive Neuro-Fuzzy Inference System	KE	Key Expert
ATP	Automatic Train Protection	KoM	Kick-off Meeting
BAU	Business as Usual	K.P.	Kilometre Point
BiH	Bosnia and Herzegovina	LARPF	Land Acquisition and Resettlement Policy Framework
CA	Contracting Authority	LC	Level Crossing
CAPEX	Capital Expenditures	LM71	Load Model 71
CBA	Cost Benefit Analysis	MGSI	Ministarstvo Građevinarstva, Saobraćaja i Infrastrukture
CIP	"Centar za Istraživanje i Projektovanje" Center for Research and Design	MIS	Management Information System
COVID-19	Coronavirus Disease 2019	MoM	Minutes of Meeting
CTC	Centralized Traffic Control	NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
DB	Design-Build	NIPAC	National Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance Coordinator
DMT	Deployment Management Team	NKE	Non-Key Expert
DTL	Deputy Team Leader	NPV	Net Present Value
E&S	Environmental and Social	O/D	Origin:Destination
EC	European Commission	OG	Official Gazette
EIA	Environmental Impact Assessment	OHCL	Other Head Contact Line
EIB	European Investment Bank	OPEX	Operation Expenditures
EIRR	Economic Internal Rate of Return	PCU	Passenger Car Unit
ENPV	Economic Net Present Value	PE	Polyethylene
ERR	Economic Rate of Return	PFS	Pre-Feasibility Study
ERTMS	European Rail Traffic Management System	PM	Project Manager
ESIA	Environmental and Social Impact Assessment	PS	Power Station
ESMP	Environment and Social Management Plan	QA	Quality Assurance
ETCS	European Train Control System	RAP	Resettlement Action Plan
EU	European Union	RC	Reinforced Concrete
EUD	European Union Delegation	RFA	Request for Approval
EVP	"elektrovučnu podstanicu" Electric traction substation	RID	Regulation on International transportation of Dangerous Goods by rail
FIDIC	"Fédération Internationale De l'Ingénierie et du Conseil" International Federation of Consulting Engineers	RS	Republic of Serbia
FNPV	Financial Net Present Value	SC	Steering Committee
FO	Fiber Optic	SEP	Stakeholder Engagement Plan
FRR	Financial rate of Return	SNKE	Senior Non-Key Expert
GDP	Growth Domestic Product	SPM	Sectoral Project Manager
HŽ	Croatian Railways	TA	Technical Assistance
IFI	International Financial Institution	TC	Traffic Control
IFICO	IFI Coordination Office, a project managed by EC DG NEAR	TL	Team Leader
IM	Infrastructure Manager	ToR	Terms of Reference
IPF	Infrastructure Projects Facility	TSI	Technical Specifications for Interoperability
IŽS	"Infrastruktura Železnice Srbije" Serbian railway Infrastructure	UIC	"Union Internationale des Chemins de fer" International Railway Union
		WBIF	West Balkans Investment Framework



GLOSSARY	
Area of Influence	Areas, individuals and communities impacted beyond the footprint of the project or activity by cumulative impacts from further planned development of the project or other sources of similar impacts in the geographical area, any existing project or condition, and other project-related developments that can realistically be expected at the time analyse is undertaken.
Consultation	The process of sharing information, getting feedback and/or advice from stakeholders and taking these views into account when making project decisions and/or setting targets and defining strategies.
EIB Environmental and Social Standards (ESS)¹	The EIB Environmental and Social Standards provide an operational translation of the policies and principles contained in the EIB Statement of Environmental and Social Principles and Standards and are grouped across 11 thematic areas covering the full scope of environmental, climate and social impacts and issues.
Environmental and Social Impact Assessment (ESIA)	The process of identifying, predicting, evaluating a project’s positive and negative environmental and social impacts on the biophysical and human environment as well as identifying ways of avoiding, minimizing, mitigating and compensating, including offsetting in the case of the environment and remedying in the case of social impacts, by applying the mitigation hierarchy. This process includes consultation with direct and indirect stakeholders and the elaboration of an environmental and social management plan detailing the implementation of the mitigation measures.
Environment and Social Management Plan (ESMP)	The plan which forms part of the ESIA and sets out the measures required to maximise the benefits of the Project, avoid, minimise, mitigate and offset (in case of environment) or remedy (in case of social impacts) any adverse environmental and social impacts, together with budget and cost estimates, sources of funding, and adequate institutional, monitoring, reporting and accountability arrangements capable of ensuring proper implementation of and regular feedback on compliance with the environmental and social management plan.
Expert Team	A team of various experts is engaged to conduct research, assist project’s promoter in developing documents, and in implementing some of the stakeholder engagement activities during certain project’s phases.
Local Community Office	The smallest administrative unit in the Republic of Serbia, represented by President, Vice President or Secretary of the Office.
Other interested parties (OIPs)	Refers to individuals, groups, or organizations with an interest in the project, stemming from project location, its characteristics, its impacts, or matters related to public interest (for example: regulators, government officials, the private sector, the scientific community, academics, unions, women’s organizations, other civil society organizations, cultural groups etc.)
Project Implementation Unit (PIU)	PIU refers to the working unit, formed by the promoter, which is responsible for coordination the execution of the project. In this project, promoter is organized through the SRI Department for the Implementation of EU-funded Projects.
Project	Reconstruction and modernization of the railway line Belgrade – Šid – State Border, Stara Pazova – Golubinci – Šid Section and Inđija – Golubinci Railway Line.
Project Affected parties (PAPs)	Includes those individuals, groups or local communities affected or likely to be affected by the Project because of actual impacts or potential risks to their physical environment, health, security, cultural practices, well-being or livelihoods.
Project Promoter (Beneficiary)	Refers to the responsible state agency for project implementation, in this case Republic of Serbia a Ministry of Construction, Transport and Infrastructure (MCTI) and Serbian Railways Infrastructure (SRI).
Resettlement Action Plan (RAP)	The document consistent with the principles and objectives of IFI’s resettlement policies in which responsible entity specifies the procedures that it will follow and the actions that it will take to mitigate adverse effects, compensate losses, and provide development benefits to persons and communities affected by the Project in certain area.

¹ Source: <https://www.eib.org/en/publications/eib-environmental-and-social-standards>.



Social Impacts	<p>According to the International Association for Impact Assessment, social impacts, for the purpose of social impact assessment, can be defined as changes to one or more of the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - People’s way of life – how they live, work, play, and interact on a day-to-day basis; - Their culture – that is, their shared beliefs, customs, values, and language or dialect; - Their community – its cohesion, stability, character, services, and facilities; - Their political systems – the extent to which people participate in decisions that affect their lives, the level of democratization that is taking place and the resources provided for this; - Their environment – the quality of the air and water people use; the availability and quality of the food they eat; the level of hazard or risk, dust, and noise they are exposed to; the adequacy of sanitation, their physical safety, and their access to and control over resources; - Their health and wellbeing – health is a state of complete physical, mental, social, and spiritual well-being, and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity; - Their personal and property rights – particularly whether people are economically affected, or experience personal disadvantage which may include a violation of their civil liberties; - Their fears and aspirations – their perceptions about their safety, their fears about the future of their community, and their aspirations for their future and the future of their children.
Stakeholders	<p>Stakeholders are those who will be or are likely to be directly or indirectly affected, positively or negatively, by a project (commonly referred to as project-affected people or project-affected communities), as well as those who might have an interest in, or may influence, the project.</p>
Stakeholder engagement	<p>Is the continuing and iterative process identifying, communicating and facilitating a two-way dialogue with the stakeholders. It considers the different access and communication needs of various groups and individuals, especially those more disadvantaged or vulnerable, including consideration of both communication and physical accessibility challenges.</p>
Vulnerable groups	<p>Refers to people below the poverty line, the landless, the elderly, women and children, and those who by virtue of gender, ethnicity, age, physical or mental disability, economic disadvantage, or social status may be more adversely affected by resettlement and other Project activities than others or who may be limited in their ability to claim or take advantage of resettlement assistance and related development benefits.</p>

1 - INTRODUCTION

This project focuses on the preparation of the Feasibility Study with Preliminary Design for the reconstruction and modernization of the two-track railway line Belgrade – Šid – State Border, Stara Pazova – Golubinci – Šid Section and Indjija – Golubinci railway line (hereinafter: Project). The reconstruction and modernization of the line are defined as a priority for the future development of the Serbian railway network due to the high importance of this railway line, as well as its low technical characteristics which affect regular passenger and freight transport.

The Belgrade - Šid - Croatian border railway is part of the former Pan-European Corridor H Branch C (Salzburg - Ljubljana - Zagreb - Belgrade - Niš - Sofia - Dimitrovgrad - Istanbul), which connects Europe with Asia Minor. According to the European Agreement on important international lines for combined transport and associated facilities (AC, AGTC) it belongs to the international railway network "C-E", designated as E-70/85. By the agreement on the Cooperation Process in Southeast Europe (SEEC), it was included in the high-performance railway network in this part of the Europe, the goal of which is to increase the speed to 160-200 km/h.

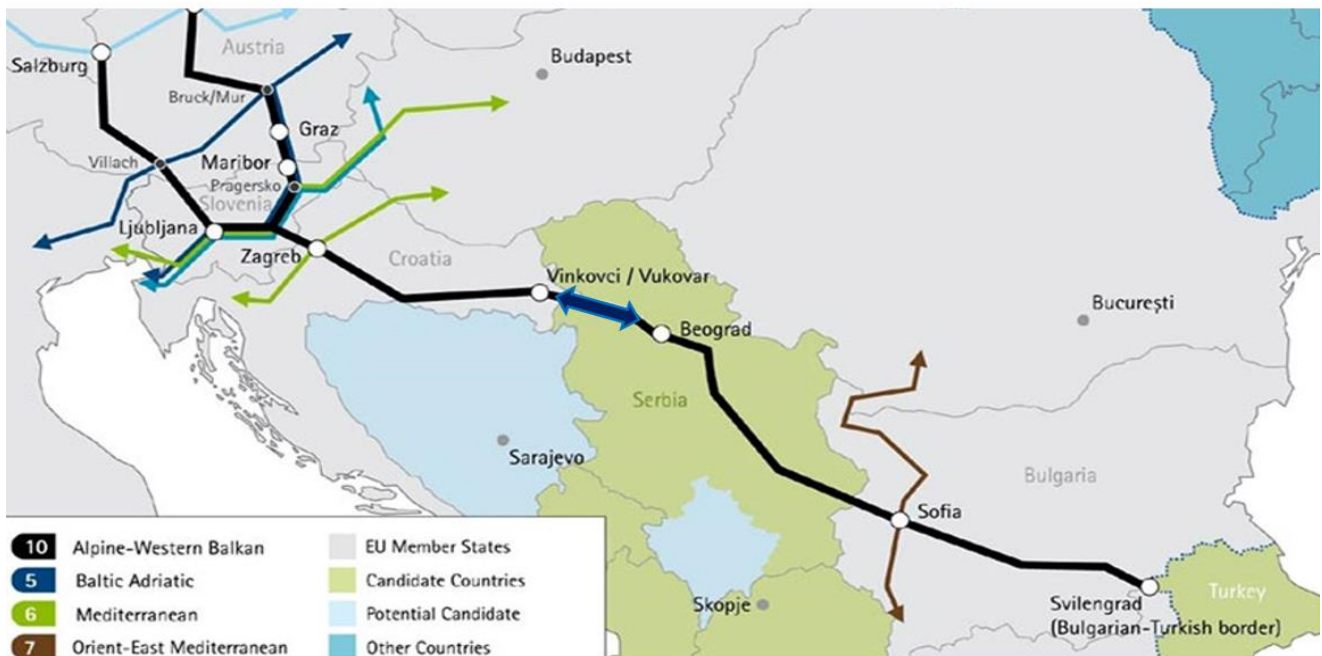


FIGURE 1 – THE POSITION OF THE LINE (BLUE ARROW) IN THE EU RAILWAY NETWORK

The result of the Project should be modernisation the existing railway line in compliance with the Trans-European Transport Network (TEN-T) standards, making it a reliable and competitive mode of transport, and increasing passenger and freight traffic demand. This goal will be achieved in a cost effective and sustainable way in compliance with strategic plans at national, regional and local levels, as well as with the internationally agreed Technical Specifications for Interoperability and with the technical requirements for the core TEN-T.

The basic concept of the railway line Belgrade - Šid - State border modernization and reconstruction implies the formation of a two-track main line for mixed (passenger and freight) traffic for a design speed of trains up to 200 km/h, while the Indjija - Golubinci railway line was designed as a two-track line (by adding a new track) for a design speed of 120 km/h as the most rational solution.

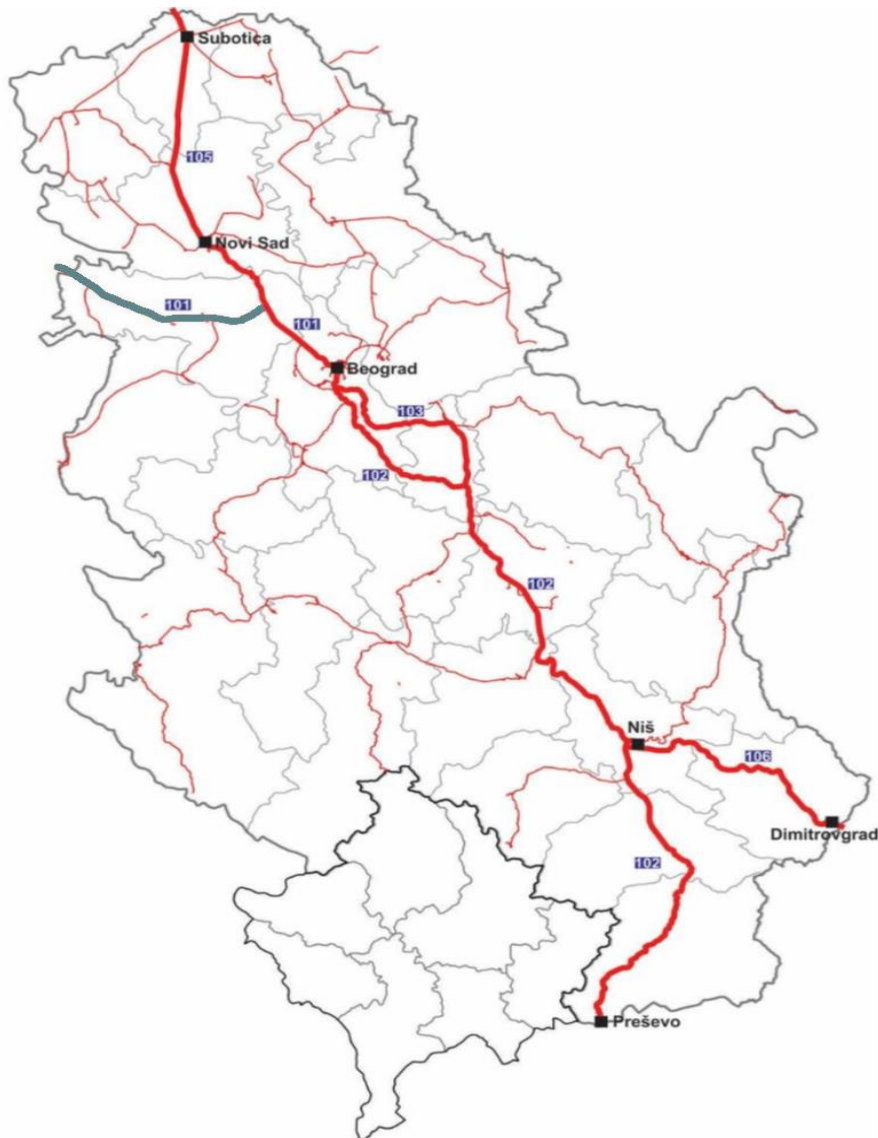


FIGURE 2 – MAIN ARTERIAL ROUTES OF THE RAILWAY NETWORK IN THE REPUBLIC OF SERBIA WITH THE PROJECT RAILWAY LINE MARKED IN BLUE

The route of the Stara Pazova – Golubinci – Šid Section railway is 84.2 km long, while the length of the Indija-Golubinci railway line is 4.2 km long. The route will pass through 5 municipalities directly affecting 19 settlements in total.

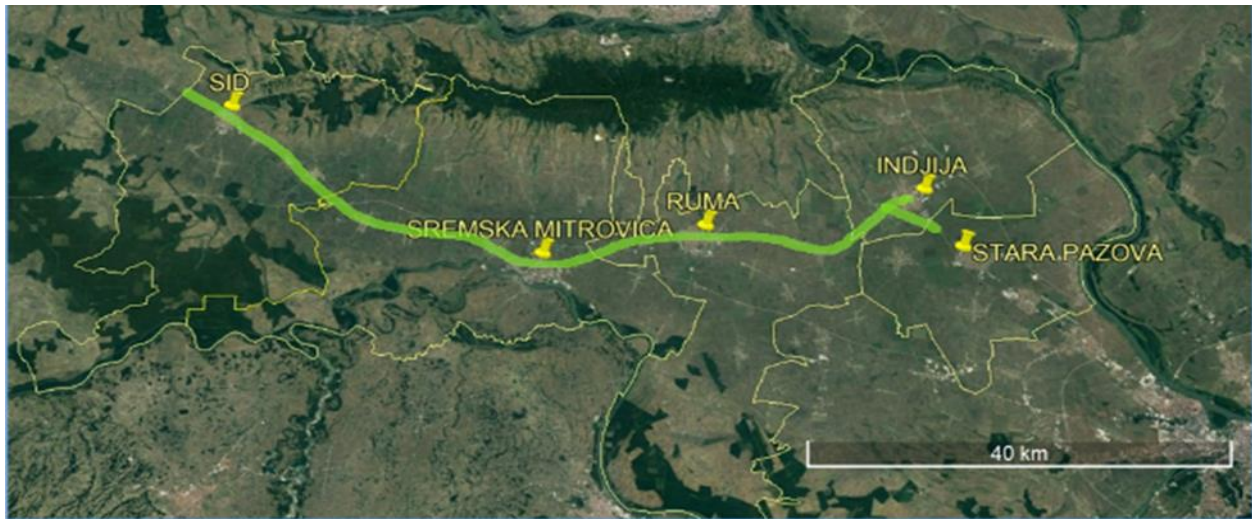


FIGURE 3 – SATELLITE IMAGE OF THE RAILWAY ROUTE, AFFECTED TERRITORY AND MUNICIPALITIES

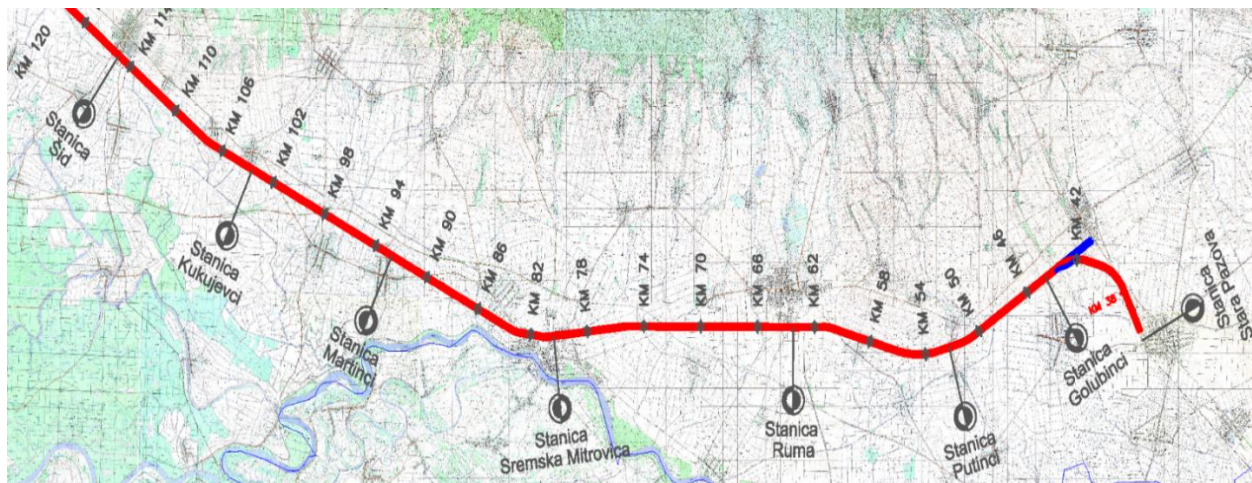


FIGURE 4 – MAP OF THE RAILWAY ROUTE AND STATIONS

In order to rationalize construction costs and the level of service, due to spatial and other limitations, it was not possible to achieve a speed of 200 km/h on the entire line. In the area of the Ruma and Šid stations, a speed of up to 160 km/h has been adopted, while in the area of the Sremska Mitrovića station, a planned speed would be up to 120 km/h. On the part of the route Stara Pazova - Golubinci and Indija - Golubinci, speeds of up to 160 km/h and 120 km/h have been adopted respectively.

According to IFI's Environmental and Social Policy, the Project is classified as Category A project, that is likely to have adverse environmental or social impacts.

1.1 - SEP justification, purpose and goals

The Project is expected to be financed via a loan from the European Investment Bank (EIB) and supported by a substantial grant from the European Union (EU). The Project will be operationally administered and implemented by the Serbian Railway Infrastructure (SRI/Promoter), a state-owned enterprise with a positive track record in implementation of various projects supported by international financial Institutions.



Operations and activities for which potential financing from the EIB is sought fall under the application of their respective applicable Environmental and Social Standards. The EIB Environmental and Social Standards of 2nd February 2022, (ESS) are grouped across 11 thematic areas covering the full range of impacts and issues related to environment, climate and society.

This SEP, in accordance with the Standard 2 of the ESS, outlines the Project's promoter responsibilities for the implementation of transparent and continuous engagement with Project stakeholders, with the key objectives of:

- Adopting an inclusive and systematic approach to engaging constructively with stakeholders, namely persons and/or communities who are directly or indirectly affected by the Project, or those who may have interests in the Project and/or the ability to influence its outcome, either positively or negatively;
- Ensuring that stakeholders have timely access to information on the Project's environmental, climate and/or social risks and impacts in a manner that is culturally appropriate and understandable to all stakeholders, including those needing special measures or assistance;
- Promoting and enabling the meaningful and free participation and input of stakeholders in project-related decision-making processes that may affect them, thereby seeking to build mutual trust and improving project outcomes;
- Providing rights-holders with effective means to raise grievances and access remedies and promoting organizational accountability and continuous learning and improvement.

The role of this SEP is to develop and guide the SRI's plan of communication with all relevant stakeholders, to ensure effective stakeholder engagement during the Project life cycle and to enable collecting and exchanging of information necessary to prepare and conduct active measures which will annulate and mitigate the Project's adverse impacts.

Information will be provided to and widely distributed among all available stakeholders in an appropriate format. The SEP will provide opportunities for communicating stakeholders' feedback, for their analysing and exchange of comments and concerns. Inclusive and meaningful public consultations for the Project will be arranged during the whole life cycle, carried out in an open manner, free of external manipulation, interference, coercion or intimidation.

To allow the uptake of stakeholders concerns but also positive feedback during the Project lifecycle, the SEP foresees establishing an appropriate grievance mechanism for grievance resolution and redress. The scope of such a mechanism observes the entire operation, yet it will not serve as a workers grievance mechanism. A separate grievance structure relevant to workplace grievances will be set up dedicated to this purpose.

Special attention is given to vulnerable groups, households and individuals.

1.2 - Summary of potential environmental and social impacts

Potential environmental and social impacts at the Project level, which are identified during the scoping phase² and beyond, will be the main topics during the stakeholder engagement activities. Those impacts include, but are not limited to:

² The Project Scoping Report is available at: https://infrazs.rs/wp-content/uploads/2023/12/Belgrade-Sid%20railway%20ESIA%20Scoping_Report_engl.pdf



TABLE 1 – POTENTIAL ENVIRONMENTAL AND SOCIAL PROJECT IMPACTS

Potential environmental impacts	Potential social impacts
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Temporary visual awareness of construction activities associated with construction, bridges, underpasses, overpasses etc.; 2. The construction activities may affect the climate through increase of CO2 concentration by degradation of vegetation from earthworks for construction purposes (work camps, any eventual access road, vegetation clearing alongside the working strip both sides of the railway line); 3. Impacts from generated dust and particulate matter from the construction works; 4. Impacts from noise and vibration from earthworks or pilling; 5. Disturbance impacts to fauna and flora species of nature conservation interest from the project's activities (e.g. noise, more significant human pressure to previously inaccessible areas) during construction and pre-commissioning works with particular reference to sensitive fragile habitats. Spread of allochthonous, especially invasive plant species; 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 6. Physical displacement, permanent and temporary loss of structures and land, severance of land and communities, compensation rights; 7. Economic displacement, loss of livelihood and compensation rights; 8. Permanent closure of the existing local level crossings due to the planned speed of trains and installation of a fence along the railway line; 9. Permanent halt closure; 10. Community health and safety during construction; 11. Temporary closure of local roads and limitation of utilities (gas, electricity, water etc.) during construction works; 12. Labour influx; 13. Adverse impacts to vulnerable groups, including migrants who use the rail line to reach EU countries; 14. Rail sector and passenger impacts; 15. Impacts to cultural heritage; 16. Transboundary Socio-Economic Impacts; 17. The Project's added value, community benefits and support.

The three key adverse social impacts of the Project, as identified at this time, are:

a. The resettlement of people from their homes and expropriation of land requires special attention to:

- Farmers who earn income by cultivating the land;
- Railway workers who use (as tenants) public buildings along the railway for housing;
- Women who are traditionally recognized as individuals who relinquish ownership of immovable property in favour of male relatives or husbands;
- Any vulnerable person affected by the resettlement.

b. The permanent closure of traffic infrastructure important for the local population includes:

- Permanent closure of railway halts - due to an insufficient number of passengers and the planned train speeds;
- Permanent closure of road crossings over the railway - due to installation of a fence along the railway line.

c. Considering the planned train speed and noise reduction, there is a risk of an increased number of accidents for migrants who use the railway corridor in question as their route to EU countries.

1.3 - SEP relations to other Project documents and phases

Consultation and engagement with stakeholders are integral part of the Environmental and Social Impact Assessment (ESIA) process. The purpose of the ESIA is to assess the potential impacts of the Project and Project-related activities on the environment (including biophysical and socio-economic resources) and, where



applicable, to design mitigation or enhancement measures to avoid, remove or reduce negative impacts and to enhance positive environmental and socio-economic impacts.

Given the above, this SEP should prescribe methods of document and information disclosure, meaningful consultations and information exchange in order to enable appropriate stakeholder engagement during the following ESIA steps:

- Additional research and surveys to complete a comprehensive description of the environmental, social and cultural heritage conditions;
- Identifying and assessing environmental, socio-economic and cultural heritage impacts;
- Development of the mitigation and enhancement measures and monitoring procedure;
- Development of a Resettlement Action Plan (RAP) and
- Preparation of an Environmental and Management Plan (ESMP).

At the time of preparation of this SEP, the ESIA phase is ongoing on this Project. SRI, with adequate support from the Expert Team, should implement the planned engagement activities prescribed by this document by the end of 2024. After the formal adoption of the Elaborate on Expropriation and the ESIA Report, SRI will develop the RAP with the support of the Expert Team.

2 - LEGAL FRAMEWORK

From the Constitution of the Republic of Serbia down to an ample normative framework comprising the Serbian legal system, strong commitment and openness to stakeholder engagement is evident.

2.1 - National legislation

The list of key laws of the Republic of Serbia that prescribe the stakeholder and citizen engagement activities includes, but is not limited to:

The Constitution of the Republic of Serbia (2006) which proclaims the rule of law and social justice, principles of civil democracy, human and minority rights and freedoms, and commitment to European principles and values. Article 74 proclaims the right to healthy environment and grants the right to timely and comprehensive information on the state of the environment. At the same time, Article 46 guarantees the freedom of thought and expression, as well as the freedom to seek, receive and spread information and ideas through speech, writing, images or in any other way.

The Law on Free Access to Information of Public Interest (2004) states that governmental agencies and officials are required to provide each person with the possibility of receiving and becoming acquainted with documents of public interest, except in cases anticipated by law. The Law shall govern the rights of access to information of public importance held by public authorities, with a view to exercising and protecting the public interest to know and attaining a free democratic order and an open society. By virtue of this Law, access to information shall be granted to all stakeholders, including every natural person or legal entity upon written request unless otherwise regulated by the Law.

The Law on Public Information and Media (2014) stipulates that public information is free and is not subject to censorship, that the public has the right and the interest to be informed on issues of public interest, that monopoly in the media is not allowed, that information on the media is public.



The Law on Environmental Impact Assessment (2004) provides categorization of industries and projects and identifies types of environmental assessment required against respective categories of industries or projects and provides procedures for disclosure, presentation and consultation requirements, and sets these as mandatory with a disclosure of a minimum of 20 days.

The Law on Expropriation (1995) enables state institutions to acquire property for projects deemed to be of public interest, while simultaneously protecting the interests of all persons with property rights whose property is slated for expropriation. The procedure involves the engagement of interested parties during the entire process, which begins with the declaration of public interest, until the payment of compensation. The Law on Expropriation prescribes the rights of affected owners to appeal at various stages of the expropriation procedure, beginning with administrative and judicial appeals (i.e. against the decision on determining public interest, the expropriation resolution and regarding type or value of compensation).

The Planning and Building Act (2009) proclaims two types of engagement and disclosure instruments for all spatial and urban plans. Early public insight and Public insight are mechanisms through which interested stakeholders may acquire information on the basic concept and the proposition of the planning document. Documents are made available to the public during a disclosure window of 15-30 days followed by consultations.

The ratified Aarhus Convention on Access to Information, Public Participation in Decision-making and Access to Justice in Environmental Matters links environmental and human rights prescribing as a basic right of present and future generations to live in an environment adequate to health and wellbeing. The convention is focused on achieving this through the implementation of three pillars: rights of access to information, access to decision-making process and access to justice.

2.2 - EIB stakeholder engagement standards

EIB recognizes the importance of stakeholder engagement as a means to ensure respect for the rights to:

- Access to information;
- Public participation in decision-making processes and
- Access to justice.

EIB's Public Access to Information (Information Policy Statement – EIB IPS) and related documents aim to support one of the EIB's key corporate objectives - achieving a high level of transparency and effective communication with all stakeholders.³

In this regard, preparation of this SEP has taken into account the provision of EIB IPS, EIB ESS, as well as the Guidance note for EIB Standard on Stakeholder Engagement in the EIB Operations of October 2020⁴, as an operational translation and good practice of their policies and principles, especially the ones which are not prescribed by the Republic of Serbia laws.

The main elements of the Stakeholder engagement process are the following:

- a. **Stakeholder identification and analysis** - The first step in successful stakeholder engagement is the identification of various individuals and groups who (i) are affected or likely to be affected (directly or indirectly) by the Project (affected parties), or (ii) may have an interest or influence in the

³ Source: https://www.eib.org/attachments/strategies/pai_ips_en.pdf.

⁴ Source: https://www.eib.org/attachments/guidance_note_on_stakeholder_engagement_in_eib_operations_en.pdf.



- Project (other interested parties), with a specific attention to individuals and groups disadvantaged or with vulnerable status.
- b. **Stakeholder Engagement Plan** - EIB's clients are required to develop a Stakeholder Engagement Plan that will outline how communication with identified stakeholders will be handled throughout project preparation and implementation, including the grievance procedure envisaged.
 - c. **Information disclosure** - Disclosure of relevant project information helps stakeholders better understand the risks, impacts and opportunities associated with the project.
 - d. **Meaningful consultation** - The consultation process with affected parties should be undertaken in a manner that is inclusive and culturally appropriate, and which represents the views and specific needs of various groups. Meaningful consultation will be carried out on an ongoing basis as the nature of issues, impacts and opportunities evolves.
 - e. **Ongoing reporting to relevant stakeholders** - Providing information to identified stakeholders, on an ongoing basis, appropriate to the nature of the Project and its adverse environmental and social impacts and issues, and the level of public interest throughout the life of the Project.
 - f. **Grievance mechanism (GM)** - Establishment of an effective grievance mechanism to receive and facilitate resolution of stakeholders concerns and grievances.

2.3 - Gap between the Serbian legal framework and EIB ESS

The legal framework of the Republic of Serbia is mostly compatible with the requirements of the EIB relevant documents. However, in order to achieve compliance with international standards related to stakeholder engagement, SRI will additionally implement the following activities during the Project's life cycle:

- Development of the Stakeholder Engagement Plan;
- Recognition and engagement of affected, interested and participating stakeholders and especially vulnerable groups and individuals;
- Meaningful consultations with persons affected by land acquisition and other interested parties during the life cycle of the Project and
- Establishment and implementation of the grievance mechanism intended under the Project.

3 - STAKEHOLDER IDENTIFICATION AND ANALYSIS

The ESS recognize two main categories of stakeholders: Project Affected Parties and Other Interested Parties, which both could be divided in appropriate sub-categories:

I Project Affected Parties (PAPs) includes those likely to be affected by the project directly or indirectly because of actual impacts or potential risks to their physical environment, health, security, cultural practices, wellbeing or livelihoods. These stakeholders may be individuals, legal entities or groups, including direct project beneficiaries and local communities who will observe/feel changes from environmental and social impacts of the project.

- **Directly affected persons** are exposed to the impacts of the project which are manifested at once in the immediate project area. Those are people affected by the land or structures acquisition, businessman and employees affected by economic displacement etc.
- **Indirectly affected persons** are people who will suffer consequences other than direct effects, over time, due to disruption or changes in economy, critical infrastructure, basic services, such as transport, utilities, social and health. These are, for example, the owners of local cafes, shops, etc. which will be affected by the presence of workers engaged in the project.



- **This category also includes communities' representatives** who are able to provide information and express some of the general views for the project-affected communities, even if they are not directly affected themselves (for example: President of the local community).

II Other Interested parties (OIPs) are individuals, groups and organizations with relevant interest, influence or participation in the project:

- **Stakeholders having an interest in or influence over the project:** These are people or institutions who are not necessarily impacted by the project themselves, but have a strong interest in it, such as academic institutions, NGOs, business associations, trade unions or human rights defenders.
- **Stakeholders participating in the project:** This category includes (i) institutions, groups and individuals who have various roles in the project, such as authorities who are involved in approving, inspecting or implementing aspects of the project and (ii) engaged project contractors and workforce.

III Disadvantaged/vulnerable individuals, households or groups include those who may be more likely to be adversely affected by the project impacts and/or more limited than others in their ability to take advantage of a project's benefits. Vulnerable people are more likely to be excluded from/unable to participate fully in the mainstream consultation process and as such may require specific measures and/or assistance to do so. Those could be retired, elderly and people with disabilities and chronic diseases, single parent headed households, women and children, people with low literacy and ICT knowledge, economically marginalized and disadvantaged groups, persons living below the poverty line, etc.

3.1 - Methodology applied to identify stakeholders, affected communities and the Area of Influence

The objective of stakeholder identification is to determine which stakeholders belonging to previously defined categories and sub-categories. To assist with the initial identification of affected communities, a set of 'distance' criteria has been applied in determination of the Area of Influence (Aol). The identification of the Aol is based on the locations of the Project design, associated infrastructure, public services and utilities, existing rail activities, the type and location of anticipated impacts. The analysis of these factors indicates that the Aol can be located by combining a number of criteria:

- The linear corridor between the affected municipalities and communities within the corridor;
- Area of direct physical footprint;
- 8m width left and right from the axes in rural areas and 6m in urban of the centreline of the outer rail (with an additional 4 m buffer zone) for land acquisition;
- 2km around the boundary of the designated physical footprint;
- The impacts to cultural heritage features observed encompasses a corridor of 6 km left and right of existing railway;
- The migrant route for their movement towards the border with Croatia (the railway was often used as a corridor) and the locations of reception centers for migrants in the territory of the municipality of Šid;
- Rail level crossing;
- Stations and halts;
- Access and transport routes;
- Any associated facility;
- The temporary construction and permanent operation phase facilities;
- Any transmission lines.

Stakeholder identification is an ongoing process that will require regular review and updating.



3.2 - Project Affected Parties (directly and indirectly)

The PAPs of the Project are likely to extend over the following groups of stakeholders:

- a. **Persons affected by resettlement and land acquisition** including employees of SRI as tenants;
- b. **Businesses and employees** affected by economic displacement, including farmers;
- c. **Local communities and persons** residing in areas where the Project specific works will be executed and which are affected by loss of infrastructure access, limitation of utilities, public services, halt closure, noise, dust, damage, emissions, vibrations etc.;
- d. **Vulnerable groups, households and individuals** including migrants;
- e. **Municipalities affected by the Project;**
- f. **Railway sector** including the Directorate for Railways, public and private railway transport operators and other legal entities that are users of specific railways infrastructure and
- g. **Passengers** including daily commuters (students, high school students, persons employed in nearby cities) and tourists.

3.3 - Other Interested Parties and cross border effects

OIPs constitute mostly legal entities who consider that their interests are affected by the project and/or that could in some way influence the planning and implementation of the project.

The Project relevant OIPs, so far detected, are presented in the following table:

TABLE 2 – OTHER INTERESTED PARTIES IN THE PROJECT

OTHER INTERESTED PARTIES IN THE PROJECT	
Stakeholders participating in the Project	Stakeholders having potential interest in or influence over the Project
1. Ministry of Construction, Transport and Infrastructure	25. National Council of the Roma National Minority of the Republic of Serbia
2. Ministry of Finance	26. Office for Roma Inclusion of the Autonomous Province of Vojvodina
3. Ministry of European Integration	27. Hunting Association of Serbia
4. Ministry of Internal Affairs	28. Hunting Association of Vojvodina
5. Ministry of Environmental Protection	29. Museum of Natural History
6. Provincial Secretariat for Energy, Construction and Transport	30. Faculty of Biology, University of Belgrade
7. Provincial Secretariat for Urban Planning and Environmental Protection	31. Faculty of Mining and Geology, University of Belgrade
8. Provincial Secretariat for Agriculture, Water - Management and Forestry	32. Faculty of Transport and Traffic Engineering, University of Belgrade
9. Provincial Secretariat for Education, Regulations, Administration and National Minorities – National Communities	33. Institute of Archaeology, Belgrade
10. Provincial Secretariat for Social Policy, Demography and Gender Equality	34. Other civil society organisations identified during the ESIA development phase.
11. Institute for the Protection of Cultural Monuments of Serbia	
12. Provincial Institute for the Protection of Cultural Monuments	
13. Institute for Nature Conservation of Vojvodina	
14. PE Urban and Spatial Planning Institute of Vojvodina	



<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 15. Public Enterprise (PE) Roads of Serbia 16. Public Water Company (PWC) Srbijavode 17. Public Water Company (PWC) Vode Vojvodine 18. Commissariat for Refugees and Migration 19. HŽ Infrastruktura 20. Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs of the Republic of Croatia 21. Engaged contractors and sub-contractors 22. EIB 23. JASPERS 24. EU Delegation to the RoS 	
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As the Project is likely to have some environmental and social transboundary effects, further identification and basic analysis will consider potential stakeholders from neighbouring Croatia which likely to be affected, to an appropriate extent.

3.4 - Disadvantaged or vulnerable groups

It is of highest importance to understand whether adverse project impacts may disproportionately fall on disadvantaged or vulnerable individuals or groups, or whether they are likely to be excluded/unable to access project benefits. Engagement with the vulnerable groups and individuals often requires the application of specific measures and assistance aimed at the facilitation of their participation in the project-related decision making.

The specific details of groups and individuals vulnerable to impacts from the Project are not yet determined since information about the land and structure acquisition (cadastral plots) are still to be identified and deeper surveys and consultations to be done. However, based on the initial screening, those may be:

- Retired, elderly and people with disabilities and chronic disease;
- Women (particularly concerning property issues), children without parental care and single parent headed households (both male and female);
- Households and persons living below the poverty line, economically marginalized and disadvantaged groups;
- People with low literacy and ICT knowledge;
- Migrants located in Reception centres Adaševci and „Šid-Stanica“⁵ or any other migrants who use the Project railway route on their way to EU countries.

Migrants: The Western Balkan route has been one of the main migratory paths into Europe, reflected the influx on the Eastern Mediterranean route. After the record number of arrivals in the European Union in 2015, the number of irregular migrants choosing this route fell steadily for a few years and has started to pick up again from 2019 onwards. In 2022, there were 145 600 irregular border crossings reported on the Western Balkans route, 136% more than in 2021. Citizens of Syria, Afghanistan and Türkiye accounted for the largest number of detections.

⁵ Source: <https://www.frontex.europa.eu/what-we-do/monitoring-and-risk-analysis/migratory-routes/western-balkan-route/>



FIGURE 5 – MIGRANT FLOWS ON THE BALKAN ROUTE (PROJECT ROUTE MARKED IN RED)

The Reception Centre Adaševci was opened on November 3rd 2015, in the building of the former motel "Adaševci" which is located next to the highway Belgrade - Zagreb in the municipality of Šid. It consists of accommodation, office space, special purpose room, kitchen and parking. The Centre currently (21st May, 2024) does not house any migrants. This centre is placed 5km southern of the line, while it is the biggest and one of the two reception centres before the border.

The Reception Centre „Šid-Stanica“ centre was opened on November 24th, 2015, during the passage of a large number of migrants through Serbia, who crossed by bus from Northern Macedonia and Bulgaria and then boarded the train to Croatia. This facility is located directly opposite the Railway Station and right next to the Bus Station. It houses families with children with a capacity of 140 beds. The Centre currently (21st May, 2024) houses 15 migrants from Middle Eastern countries.⁶

It is important to add that part of the migrant population is not registered in reception centres, avoiding any contact with the authorities of the Republic of Serbia.

As there have been fatal accidents on the part of the railway from Šid to the border with Croatia in previous years, it is necessary to take adequate measures to inform all migrants in the Project area about the planned speed of the trains and the risks of movement along the railway.

⁶ Reception centres no. 3 and 5 on the following link: <https://kirs.gov.rs/eng/asylum/asylum-and-reception-centers>.



FIGURE 6 – RECEPTION CENTRES IN SERBIA (PROJECT RELEVANT MARKED IN RED)

Gender issues: The Stakeholder engagement activities will promote gender awareness. Considering the results of the Scoping Report, at the beginning of the ESIA stage an initial gender gap assessment has been carried out to identify key barriers to gender-inclusive stakeholder engagement. However, during the meetings and consultations conducted so far, there were no negative observations relevant to gender equality regarding men's and women's engagement in the Project.

The initial results of the Agricultural Census from 2023 show that in Serbia 77.2% of household heads are men, while 22.8% are women, with the average age of household heads being 60 years old. According to available data from the Agricultural Census of 2012, in the Srem region, women represent between 15 and 18% of ownership of family farms, meaning that women are minority owners in all municipalities affected by the Project.

Therefore, in May 2024, the Expert Team members organized focus groups with randomly selected female participants (of various ages, educational backgrounds, and from both urban and rural areas) based on the criterion of household ownership in two relevant municipalities – Indija and Sremska Mitrovica. Organizing focus groups was significantly important to provide women with the opportunity to freely express their views and share their experiences in a supportive environment.

The findings of the gender analysis will be incorporated into further activities and measures of the Project, such as preparation of RAP. The Project will identify gender-specific project risks associated with traditional roles and provide a platform for women to also participate in decision-making and protect their rights.

Roma population: The share of Roma population in the Project affected municipalities (0.68-2.83%) is not recognized as a high social impact. However, due to the specificity of Roma settlements and the organization of

life, there is a need for continuous awareness of their presence in Project area and readiness to help them protect and improve their rights.



FIGURE 7 – THE SHARE OF ROMA IN MUNICIPALITIES AND SETTLEMENTS CROSSED BY THE ALIGNMENT (MARKED IN RED)⁷

Vulnerable groups, households and individuals affected by the Project will be confirmed and updated during the ESIA and subsequent stages. However, no indigenous people are found or expected in Project area, neither ethnic nor religious tensions are recognized.

3.5 - Stakeholder list

Stakeholder groups and their level of influence relative to their interest and participation in the Project determine the type and frequency of engagement activities necessary for each group.

The indicative list of stakeholders with their topics of interest, level of influence, methods of engagement and the entity responsible for engagement is given in Annex 1 of this SEP.

This list will be periodically reviewed and updated as necessary during the ESIA process.

4 - SUMMARY OF IMPLEMENTED STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT ACTIVITIES

The specific stakeholder engagement activities that have been undertaken so far include, but are not limited to:

- Multiple meetings and communication exchange between SRI, Expert Team, MTCI and other engaged Governmental and Province public bodies to discuss the Project design and priority needs;
- Various e-mail correspondence, telephone communication, meetings, public consultations with adequate PPT presentations with the representatives of the affected municipalities and communities' representatives;

⁷ Source: Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia, Ethnicity, 2022 Census of Population, Households and Dwellings



- Field surveys and focus groups with migrants and women in the affected area;
- Meetings concerning the relation between the Project and the migrant population in the Aol;
- Communication and meetings with the rail sector representatives;
- Consultations and reporting to EIB;
- Media reporting.

The most important engagement activities undertaken to date and their influence on the development and implementation of the Project are summarized in the following lines:

4.1 - Meetings in affected municipalities

During July 2023, the Expert Team visited all five local self-governments in the territory of which it is planned to realize the Project, familiarized them with the Project, its characteristics and objectives, as well as with potential impacts on local communities. At these meetings, key information and contacts were exchanged. Moreover, joint steps were agreed regarding the inclusion of citizens and their representatives, and with the further implementation of the Project activities.

During these initial meetings, the representatives of the municipalities were positive towards the Project. On the other hand, they pointed out that local people are likely to raise issues regarding the closure of some road crossings that have been used for decades for farming and other daily activities. The representatives of the Expert Team explained that the planned speed of train movement and the consequent installation of a fence along the railway line require the closure of certain road crossings, while some new denivelation infrastructure will be built. It was also said that the conducted calculations of the traffic frequency and the number of inhabitants justified the closure of certain road crossings, while the new underpasses and overpass will enable optimal use of local roads and the movement of the population near the railway.

4.2 - Communication with the stakeholders – Publishing of the Non-Technical Summary

In October 2023, the SRI website published the Scoping Report in English, together with its Non-Technical Summary in Serbian, which contains basic information about the Project, its characteristics, objective and potential impacts, with further data about specific ecological, climate and social features of the Project area.

The publication of the Non-Technical Summary on the SRI website was communicated to all interested ministries, agencies, public enterprises, academic institutions and local self-governments affected by the Project, with an invitation to submit their comments and suggestions regarding the Summary text.

In addition, the above-listed subjects (more than 30 public entities) were invited in writing to submit a list of non-governmental organizations which they cooperate with and which they consider potentially interested in the Project and its expected impacts, in order to inform them about the development of the Project activities and to invite them to be involved in future consultations.

Responses were received from the Commissariat for Refugees and Migration, the Institute for Nature Conservation of Vojvodina Province, the Provincial Secretariat for Urban Planning and Environmental Protection, the PE Urban and Spatial Planning Institute of Vojvodina, who pointed out the potential adverse impacts of the Project in the most direct way.

- In the letter received from the Commissariat for Refugees and Migration, it is stated the following:



“The fact is that the danger is already present, and that past practice has shown that a number of migrants have already lost their lives while moving along the tracks in the Republic of Serbia. They choose this way of movement because of easier orientation. In order to prevent the negative consequences of the construction of a high-speed railway, efforts should be intensified to inform migrants about all the risks that threaten them, both during the construction and during the exploitation of the new railway. We suggest making notices in the form of posters in the reception centres that will be prominently displayed, in order to draw the attention of the people housed in them, about the dangers that will only increase with this project.”

Further steps concerning this issue are described in chapters 4.5. and 5.5.

- The Institute for Nature Conservation of Vojvodina Province provided comments on environmental issues mentioned in the Scoping Report, such as fence standards and wildlife corridors. After discussions between the Institute and the Expert Team members responsible for ecological matters, the Institute's suggestions were acknowledged. Specifically, it was agreed to construct a certain number of wildlife corridors for smaller animals and a smaller number for larger wildlife. The corridors for larger wildlife are designed as overpasses specifically for animal crossings, while those for smaller animals involve modifications of existing culverts (vertical barriers, smooth surfaces, terraces, etc.).
- In the letter received from the Provincial Secretariat for Urban Planning and Environmental Protection, some technical legal requirements were highlighted. Additionally, in the zone of protected natural monument, alongside the previously mentioned “Drvo red platana u Sremskoj Mitrovici”, there are two more protected natural areas of significance to the project: natural monuments “Dva stalba hrasta lužnjaka u Gibarcu” and “Bela Topola u Kukujevcima”. All of this information will be considered by the Expert Team members responsible for ecological matters and implemented in the ESIA Report.
- The letter received from the PE Urban and Spatial Planning Institute of Vojvodina referred to the already implemented activities during the drafting of the Spatial Plan, further activities within that procedure and willingness to support the Project.

4.3 - Public presentation of the Draft Spatial Plan for the special purpose area

The public presentation of the Draft Spatial Plan for the specific-purpose area was held on 3rd November 2023 in the building of the Public Administration of the Town of Sremska Mitrovica for all cadastral municipalities affected by the Project.

At this meeting, the representatives of the affected municipalities and interested citizens asked questions and made comments about the Project design. Their comments were considered and each of them was separately answered by the relevant decision-making bodies for the Draft Spatial Plan for the specific-purpose area that will be adopted for the purpose of this Project.

As a direct result of this process, the Project design was changed in such a way that the planned overpass in Sremska Mitrovica was replaced by an underpass at the request of representatives of the local community and the Serbian Orthodox Church.



4.4 - Public consultations in the affected municipalities

On 22nd December 2023, the first public consultations were held in the seats of the local self-governments affected by the Project. These consultations were attended by the representatives of all five self-governments and the elected representatives of the settlements from the Project area, as well as the representatives of government and province bodies in charge of the key matters regarding the Project (please see the photos in Annex 7 of this SEP).

The representatives of the municipalities were invited to consultations directly by letter and email as they have constant communication with the SRI, while elected representatives of local communities were invited through the offices of the presidents of the affected municipalities to which they belong.

The consultation was attended by the representatives of all five municipalities affected by the Project, as well as representatives of 11 local communities. The consultations were also attended by representatives of the Ministry of Internal Affairs, local police, representatives of the railway sector and other representatives of the state bodies, who were also invited to the consultations by letter and email.

The representatives of the Expert Team used a PPPT to inform the attendees with the following:

- Project goals, stages, design and other characteristics;
- Scoping Report results;
- The key activities, deadlines and principles of the Project implementation;
- Initial analysis of the expected environmental and social impacts;
- Announcement of the grievance mechanism and other methods of communication with citizens;
- Focal points (exchange of contacts).

Community representatives were interested in the closure of local road crossings over the railroad due to the installation of a fence. The representatives of the Ministry of Internal Affairs particularly emphasized the issues of the security of the railway infrastructure against theft and the movement of migrants along the railway infrastructure.

As legitimate representatives of stakeholders often play a significant role in the engagement process, during the said consultation activities the Expert Team engaged strongly with them so they can facilitate the communication and convey the comments of affected communities. Their role is important due to the fact that consultations with the people directly affected by the land and structure acquisition are not recommended before the adoption of the Expropriation Plan in order to avoid the spread of potentially inaccurate information.

During the conducted consultations, no negative comments on the Project itself were noticed, nor is it expected that the public will oppose the planned works.

The municipalities and local communities were represented during consultations and previous meetings in accordance with the principle of gender equality.

4.5 - Meeting concerning the Project impact on migrants in reception centres

During December 2023, a meeting was scheduled for January 2024 about the appraisal of potential impacts of the Project implementation on the work of the reception centres Adaševci and Šid-Station and the migrants accommodated in them. On 19th January 2024, the meeting was held with the Expert Team members and the



representatives of the Commissariat for Refugees and Migration, as well as with the representatives of the Ministry of Internal Affairs – the Border Police Administration Šid.

The attending representatives of the Commissariat for Refugees and Migration emphasized that the private centres offered accommodation, food, healthcare and legal aid to migrants, and also that information sessions were organized once a week, thus giving an opportunity during these sessions for the integration of the information about the Project planned activities.

At the same time, the representatives of the Border Police Šid specially stressed the importance of video surveillance and illumination, particularly from Šid railway station to the Croatian border, as well as the safety and security aspects regarding the movement of migrants along the railway infrastructure. It was emphasized that the railroad would be fenced along its entire length, which will favourably affect security aspects.

In order to prevent potentially negative consequences during the railway modernization, the need for posters is stated containing all the relevant information for the purpose of raising awareness about safety throughout the construction process and the operational use of the railroad. The posters will be placed along all railway stations, in the reception centres and local communities included in this Project. They will be pictogram-based, with the text translated to the languages of the countries from which migrants most often come.

The modality of further communication and cooperation of the participants was agreed in the event of organizing focus groups of the SRI and Expert Team representatives with the migrants accommodated in the reception centres, with the presence of interpreters.

4.6 - Meeting with the railway sector

During the PFS, the meetings were organized of the Expert team and the SRI with the representatives of the railway sector. At these meetings, there were detailed discussions of the Project characteristics, expected impacts on the railway traffic, alternative options for the railroad design and planned works. At the request of the railway operators, the number of railway tracks in Šid, Sremska Mitrovica and Ruma stations was increased. Also, the useful length of tracks was increased to over 650 m and more tracks in Ruma, Sid and Sremska Mitrovica stations, which resulted in the increase of the stations themselves. After meetings with railway users, it was concluded that it is necessary to design a loading ramp on the south side of the Ruma station. As a result, an access road to that ramp was also designed.

On 24th January 2023, a joint meeting was held of the representatives of the SRI and the Expert Team with the representatives of the government bodies and public and private operators from the railway sector. At the meeting the expected Project impacts on the railway traffic were presented and analysed in detail, as well as on the planned business operations of the railway operators in the Project area.

A total of 20 traffic operators were invited via official email addresses, 14 of which operates on the route that is the subject of Project activities (fully or in part). The goal of the meeting was to establish a permanent dialogue and efficient cooperation between all the listed operators for the purpose of implementing further stages of the Project in compliance with the highest European standards and the laws of the Republic of Serbia.

The representatives of the Expert Team used a PPPT to inform the attendees with the following:

- Project goals, design, stages and implementation deadlines;
- Information about technical and traffic characteristics of the Project;



- Announcement of key activities, deadlines and principles of the Project implementation;
- Focal points (exchange of contacts).

At this meeting, the railway sector representatives expressed a special interest in the planned purpose of the official places (particularly in Šid Station), the stipulated condition of the stations and halts, the de-levelling of railroad crossings and timetable optimization.

4.7 - Focus groups with migrants and women in the affected area

In May 2024, representatives of the Expert Team conducted qualitative research to assess whether the Project's impacts might disproportionately affect vulnerable individuals or groups.

The research was conducted in the form of focus groups with:

- 10 migrants at the the Reception Centre „Šid-Stanica“, discussing their safety during movement through Serbia to EU countries, with a focus on their use of railways and trains. The aim of this activity was to better understand the perspective of migrants and support the development of measures to improve their safety during the construction and operational phase of the Project.
- 38 women from Inđija and Sremska Mitrovica - This activity aimed to identify specific barriers and challenges that women face in exercising their property rights and their roles within the community. Additionally, these focus groups supported women's participation in the decision-making process of the Project, particularly concerning expropriation procedures.

The results of these focus groups and the analysis of the received feedback will be presented in detail in the ESIA Report.

4.8 - Coordination activities of SRI and Expert Team

All the above-listed activities were discussed between the Project promoter and the Expert Team members on their regular two-week meetings where the plans are harmonized, and the undertaken Project activities are analysed.

According to the available planning documents and drawings of the existing railway, field visits were organized for the purpose of photographing and listing all the facilities supposed to be the subject of expropriation.

The preliminary list of 36 facilities confirms the need for the preparation of the RAP, but primarily for the preparation and realization of the stakeholder engagement activities with the persons directly affected by displacement from their homes.

4.9 - Informing the EIB

The EIB was also informed regularly about all the above-mentioned activities and planned further steps of the Project implementation.

Given the importance of the Project as recognized by the Government, a media campaign is conducted to inform the general public about the Project. Up to date there were no protests from the stakeholders or any third party regarding the Project.



An active stakeholder engagement will continue following approaches provided in this SEP.

5 - STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT PROGRAM

The main goals of the stakeholder engagement activities are to inform, disclose and consult on various project documents and activities early on in order to establish a dialogue with relevant stakeholders from project planning through implementation and operation phases.

5.1 - Disclosure strategy

The timely disclosure of relevant project information enables stakeholders to understand the project's risks, impacts and opportunities. Document disclosure also allows stakeholders to be informed about project plans, actions, phases and processes, giving them the opportunity to provide comments and feedback.

As usual, on this Project the SEP draft will be prepared and disclosed first, followed by the ESIA Report and finally the RAP.

The draft of SEP will be disclosed electronically (in English and Serbian) and it will remain open for comments of interested parties 30 days at the websites of:

- SRI: <https://infrazs.rs>
- All affected municipalities (where applicable).

The drafts of ESIA Report and RAP will be disclosed (in English and Serbian) 30 days before the planned public consultations through the said websites also to seek feedback from stakeholders on its content.

The disclosure for each of these documents will include:

- Brief description of the Project;
- The respective draft of the document;
- Description of public consultation arrangements (if applicable);
- Ways of submitting comments and feedback;
- Key deadlines.

Printed ESIA Report and RAP (in Serbian language) will be made available in SRI and in every municipality premises 15 days before public consultation meetings.

Relevant OIPs (identified in Table 2 of this document) will be informed by e-mail that the said documents have been disclosed, how they can be accessed, and how their comments, questions and queries can be submitted to SRI.

Once adopted, this SEP, ESIA Report and RAP will be posted on the SRI website and websites of all affected municipalities until the official end of the Project.

Contractors' documents related to management of environmental and social risks (such as Traffic Management Plan, Grievance Management Plan, Construction Workers Code of Conduct, etc.) will be publicly



disclosed on the websites of the SRI, contractor and all affected municipality at least 15 days before the start of the construction works and will remain there until the end of this phase.

The comments on all disclosed documents will be reviewed immediately upon arrival by the SRI social and environmental specialists. Major comments will be incorporated in the final version of the documents and disclosed on the SRI's and the affected municipalities' websites after EIB approval.

5.2 - Consultation activities and methods

The Engagement activities during the ongoing ESIA phase will occur at two distinct stages:

- **Development of the ESIA Report and RAP** - For purposes of E&S impact identification and significance assessment, the Expert Team, in addition to the already conducted activities, will coordinate and engage with Governmental, Province and Local public bodies, PAPs and their local representatives, CSO, NGOs etc. about the technical, environmental and social risks, impacts and potential mitigation measures. To the extent feasible, this will be coupled with EIA ongoing process guided by the national requirements; and
- **ESIA Report and RAP disclosure** (following approval by EIB).

During the first stage (Development of the ESIA Report and RAP), engagement will take the form of public and closed meetings, focus group discussions and individual meetings with the most important stakeholder categories focusing on their concerns and suggestions regarding the likely impacts of the Project.⁸ To the extent that it is feasible, stakeholders will be encouraged to consider measures that should be taken to avoid or reduce the severity of expected adverse impacts and to enhance positive impacts. The consultation results will be incorporated into the preparation of the ESIA Report.

At this stage, local governments play an important role in organizing and communicating public comments, obtained separate from the public hearings. Initial consultations have already been held with the elected representatives in the affected municipalities and local communities. However, liaising with these representatives is a supplement to, not a substitute for, direct engagement with the affected communities.

The priorities of further consultation activities on the Project will be:

- a. **People directly affected by the Project** through (i) interviews with all people affected by the resettlement from their homes and (ii) socioeconomic surveys with a relevant percentage of people affected by land acquisition;
- b. **People residing in the Project area** through planned public consultations for the adoption of the ESIA Report and RAP they will be invited to provide their feedback, comments and concerns (beside constantly open channel for grievance submission);
- c. **Vulnerable groups:** During interviews, special attention will be given to the potential vulnerability of individuals affected by resettlement from their homes or loss of livelihood due to economic displacement.

The consultation results will be an important input for the development of ESIA Report to the extent that they are available at that time because it is expected that the draft of the ESIA Report will be submitted for approval

⁸ After the Expropriation Plan is disclosed, public consultations, interviews, and socioeconomic surveys will be organized with the individuals directly affected by the land and structure acquisition. This will help prevent the spread of potentially inaccurate information, which is of great importance and influence.



before the adoption of the Expropriation Elaborate. The ESIA Report should provide an overview of potential resettlement impacts and their scale, as well as indicate that these will be managed through the development and implementation of a distinct management plan, i.e. the RAP.

The second stage of engagement (ESIA Report and RAP disclosure) will involve public hearings about the draft of ESIA Report and RAP. It will be led by the SRI with support of the Expert Team. The number and location of these public hearings is to be determined.

The format of each engagement activity will meet general requirements on accessibility; that is, the engagement events will be held at venues that can be easily accessed by community members, do not incur financial costs, and are culturally appropriate. If necessary, assistance may be provided to enable vulnerable people to attend meetings.

Consultation meetings will be announced at least 15 days in advance on the websites of the SRI and local municipalities. The documents will be posted on the websites of the SRI and local municipalities in the Serbian language. The posters in Serbian regarding the consultations will be displayed on local bulletin boards and at all railway stations currently designated as official stops, at least 5 days before the meeting.

Consultations with the affected people and communities at the local level will be followed with appropriate involvement of Governmental and Province bodies in order to keep all relevant stakeholders informed about the Project development and other parties' positions.

An overview of the planned stakeholder engagement activities with breakdown by stakeholder group is given in Annex 2 of this SEP. This table will be updated during the ESIA process, as necessary. In addition to any consultations planned by this document, the SRI and Expert Team will be open to meeting with stakeholders at their request and enable them to raise issues in other ways than those prescribed in this SEP.

5.3 - Exchange of information and communication

Various stakeholder engagement activities are proposed to ensure awareness and meaningful consultations about the Project activities. Communications alerting stakeholders to future stakeholder events/meetings and, also, concerning organization/logistical aspects of stakeholder events/meetings will be provided by a range of means, but primarily by:

Public announcements - The SRI with support of affected municipalities will place announcements in key public locations, such as bulletin boards at local municipalities/communities at frequently visited places;

E-mails – When necessary and applicable, the SRI will inform (mainly public) stakeholders of the Project milestones and other current news;

Media announcements/notices (primarily local websites, radio and newspapers): These will mostly concern provision of key information about the Project milestones and certain engagement events/meetings, especially public hearings;

Oral communications: SRI Community liaison officers engaged to cover territories of affected municipalities will be requested to inform PAP's representatives and other community members about stakeholder events to be organized in their municipality/community.



The outreach and stakeholder engagement will be gender appropriate. The Expert team will carry out consultations with vulnerable groups to understand concerns/needs in terms of accessing information and services and other challenges they face at home, at workplaces and in their communities.

When necessary and applicable, additional approaches to be practiced for stakeholder engagement will include:

- Small group consultations if smaller meetings are permitted, or making reasonable efforts to conduct meetings through online channels (Teams, Zoom, Skype etc.);
- Diversifying means of communication and relying more on chat groups and mobile apps such as WhatsApp, Viber App etc;
- Where direct engagement with Project Affected People or beneficiaries is necessary channels for direct communication with each affected household will be chosen concerning a context and will be conducted by specific combination of e-mail messages, mail, online platforms and phone lines.

Each of the proposed channels of engagement should clearly specify how feedback and suggestions can be provided by stakeholders.

Stakeholders will be kept informed as the Project develops, which includes reporting on the Project environmental and social performance and implementation of the stakeholder engagement plan and grievance mechanism. The annual Project report will be disclosed on SRI's and the affected municipalities' websites (where applicable).

5.4 - SRI's existing communication capacities and tasks

On behalf of the SRI, the main stakeholder engagement activities will be led by the SRI PIU. This SRI unit consists of its manager, social and environmental experts, administrative staff and will have support of Legal Department and other existing SRI units. This support will be especially needed during involuntary land acquisition and people resettlement from their homes. The SRI PIU will serve as both - Project level information centre and grievance mechanism unit, applicable to all the Project activities and relevant to all stakeholder interested/affected by the Project.

The SRI PR Manager manages the Media Centre, as an organizational part of the SRI which is in charge of public communications. The Media Centre performs, among other things, the following tasks: public relations, media activities and external information affairs.

SRI will update its website regularly with key updates and reports on the Project's environmental and social performance. The website will also provide information about the grievance mechanism (see next sub-section).

Grievance mechanism: A specific grievance mechanism will be set-up for the Project.⁹ Dedicated communication materials will be created to help local residents familiarize themselves with the grievance redress channels and procedures. The precise information about the GM will also be available on the websites of SRI, engaged constructor and affected local municipalities.

Trainings, workshops: If necessary and applicable, trainings on a variety of social and environmental issues will be provided to each contractor and local municipalities' staff.

⁹ Details on the GM are presented in Chapter 7.



5.5 - Proposed Strategy of vulnerable groups engagement

The Project will implement special measures to ensure that disadvantaged and vulnerable groups, households, and individuals have equal opportunities to access information, provide feedback, or submit grievances. Focus groups specifically dedicated to potentially vulnerable groups (migrants and women) were conducted to directly gather their views and concerns.

In this regard, it is important that people with disabilities receive information related to the Project in accessible formats and that they are provided with multiple forms/places of communication.

The drivers of vulnerability will be assessed in more details and identified during the forthcoming environmental and social impacts assessment, building upon the groups identified above.

5.6 - Update of the SEP

This SEP serves as a roadmap for stakeholder engagement. Any major changes to the Project-related activities and to its schedule will also constitute a change calling for a reflection in the SEP. Updates should be clear and should demonstrate a means of engagement that is stakeholder specific.

The SRI will revisit the list of identified stakeholders, from time to time, to ensure that those (i) are affected or likely to be affected by the Project and (ii) may have an interest in the Project are adequately identified.

6 - RESPONSIBILITIES FOR IMPLEMENTING STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT PROGRAMME

The SRI will be overall responsible for:

- Further planning and implementation of stakeholder engagement activities prescribed by this SEP, as well as other needed information exchange, disclosure and consultation activities;
- Grievance mechanism functioning;
- That sufficient human and budgetary resources have been allocated to the planned activities.

The following table prescribes the main management functions during stakeholder engagement process.

TABLE 3 – STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT MANAGEMENT FUNCTIONS AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Actor	Stakeholder engagement responsibilities
SRI PIU	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Grievance mechanism implementing, including maintaining of the Grievance Registry Log 2. Appointing SRI Community Liaison Officers 3. Documents disclosure and preparation of content for SRI webpage 4. Preparing reports for EIB and stakeholders 5. Secure through communication with the SRI General Director that sufficient resources have been allocated to the planned activities 6. Build relationship with the affected municipalities and other public entities relevant to the Project
SRI Community Liaison Officers (SRI CLOs)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Responsible for communication with local population and affected municipalities' representatives 2. Support GM functioning in accordance with SRI PIU instructions



Actor	Stakeholder engagement responsibilities
SRI Media Centre	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Project promotion activities 2. Engaging with medias and other relevant public stakeholders concerning their communication activities relevant to the Project
Affected Municipalities	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Support SRI activities related to organisation of public consultations, GM functioning and disclosure of the ESIA documents 2. Receive any issue that may result in heightened concern and provide an early warning to the SRI PIU
Expert Team	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Implementing the planned consultation and information exchange activities prescribed by this SEP during the Main ESIA phase (until the adoption of RAP) 2. Maintain the Stakeholder Engagement Log until the adoption of RAP 3. Preparation of posters for GM, public consultations and migrants' safety information

The material resources mobilized by the SRI will be:

- A Project specific area of the SRI website;
- A Grievance Registry Log and a Stakeholder Engagement Log (preferably both electronic);
- Other material resources such as printed documents that will be used (documents, posters etc.), based on the Project needs.

To ensure successful SEP implementation, the Project will rely on the SRI's existing departments, information sharing avenues and procedures. If needed, the SRI will mobilize additional human and material resources to implement the SEP and manage the Grievance Mechanism. An annual budget for implementing the stakeholder engagement activities will be provisioned in the Environmental and Social Management Plan.

Having in mind that this Project is expected to involve various (sub)contractors, the SRI will ensure the following through procurement documentation and agreements with (sub)contractors:

- Good relations between engaged (sub)contractors and stakeholders, especially affected municipalities and local population;
- Compliance of engaged (sub)contractors with the standards and obligations prescribed by this SEP;
- That the staff of the (sub)contractor are organized, trained and experienced in carrying out the required stakeholder engagement standards and obligations;
- Monitoring of (sub)contractors activities related to stakeholder engagement.

After engaging (sub)contractors, part of the SRI PIU responsibilities can be transferred to the (sub)contractors. SRI will secure monitoring the compliance of the engaged (sub)contractors' activities with the provisions of this SEP.

Given the stage of the Project, the SEP will be updated as the Project evolves, and more management functions and responsibilities added.

7 - GRIEVANCE MECHANISM

This part of the SEP contains basic information about the organization of the grievance mechanism (GM) on the Project, as well as instructions for the actions of SRI officials in charge of GM implementation. At the same time, it contains addresses for submitting grievances and information on decision making procedures, including the grievance form (Annex 6). The citizens and other interested parties will be informed in a timely manner through



promoter’s and affected municipalities’ websites and local bulletin boards about GM functioning and channels for submitting grievances in all phases of the Project.

7.1 - GM Overview

The SRI PIU will deal with the grievances arising from the on-going projects. The main role in the SRI PIU is assumed by its Manager, the SRI Social Expert and SRI Environmental Expert (together: SRI E&S Experts) supported by the administrative staff. The SRI will be responsible for overall grievance administration.

The GM should be a direct channel for handling stakeholder concerns, questions, proposals or grievances at all stages of the Project cycle. Matters referred to it may relate to:

- Actual damage, injuries or losses (or perceived damage);
- Unwelcome incidents including inappropriate behaviour of Project-related personnel;
- Project implementation that deviates from official plan;
- General concerns or even comments relating to the Project.

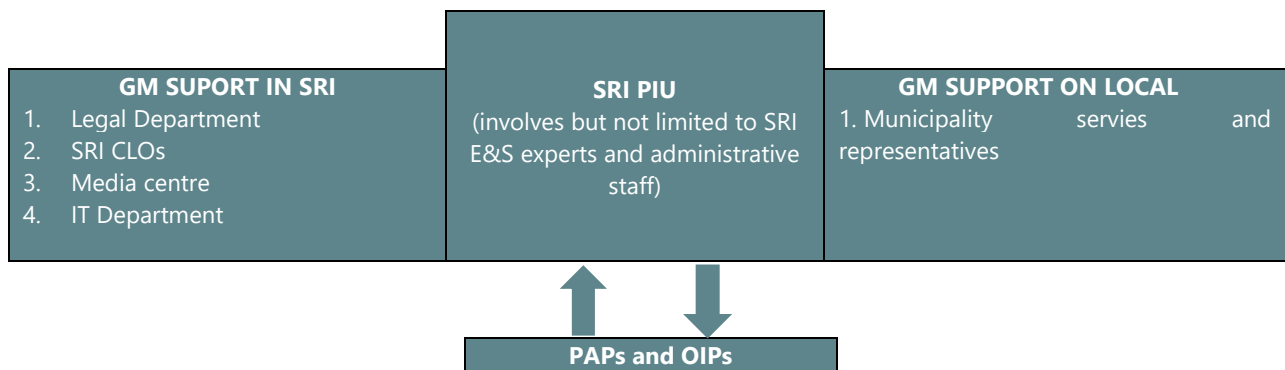


FIGURE 8 – INDICATIVE GM ORGANIZATION

Information about the GM accession will be available before the draft RAP disclosure at:

- SRI’s and all affected local communities’ websites;
- Bulletin boards (at frequently visited places) of all affected local municipalities;
- At all railway stations/halts currently serving as official stops - as listed in Annex 4.

The SRI will cooperate with local governments in joint efforts to establishing functioning GM and informing stakeholders about the GM role and function, contact persons, admission channels and the procedures to submit a grievance. The SRI will organize its Community Liaison Officers (CLOs) to cover wider areas of several settlements and/or municipalities and support the SRI PIU in two-way communication with the local officials and population.

7.2 - Grievances procedure and administration

Any grievance can be brought to the attention of the GM via a grievance box, telephone, mail, e-mail, SRI CLOs, or affected municipality. SRI will establish a channel of communication with the affected municipalities that will forward directly or through SRI CLOs to the SRI PIU all relevant grievances received from the local residents or organizations. Logging a grievance with the GM does not preclude or prevent seeking resolution from an official



authority, judicial or other at any time provided by the Serbian legal framework (courts, inspections, Ombudsmen etc.).

Received grievances will be registered in a Grievance Registry Log and acknowledged within 7 days of logging. The grievance classifying will be based on the characteristics of the grievant (e.g., vulnerable groups, persons with disabilities, etc) and the nature of the grievance.

Once logged, the GM will conduct a rapid assessment to verify the nature of grievances and determine on the severity. Within 7 days from logging, the grievances will be assigned to competent expert or department, while the grievant will be acknowledged that the case is registered and shortly informed on planned actions and responsible unit (expert). It will then investigate by trying to understand the issue from the perspective of the grievant and understand what action he/she requires. The GM will investigate the facts and circumstances and articulate an answer to the grievant. The grievant should be informed about the final decision no later than 30 days after the logging of the grievance. Closing the grievance occurs after the implementation of the resolution has been verified. In case of emergency situations, all phases of this process will be shortened as much as possible.

The decision will give a clear assessment on the grievance, clear ruling and recommendations for fair remedy and propose measures to modify future conduct that caused the grievance as well as proposed measures to compensate if mitigation measures cannot remedy the harm or injury. The decision will be in writing and will be delivered to the person who filed the grievance as well as to any other person or entity to which the recommendation and measures will apply or is under obligation by Law. If decision is accepted by grievant (or if it is found necessary to be urgently solved by GM) and if there is a possibility for raised issue to be solve, the GM should react promptly and effectively.

All grievances can be filed anonymously. In case of anonymous grievance, the GM will investigate the grievance and issue the final decision that will be disclosed on the bulletin bord when the grievance was submitted.

The SRI PIU will keep a Grievance Registry Log, which will include grievances received through all admission channels, containing all necessary elements to disaggregate the grievance by gender of the person logging it as well as by type of grievance. The personal data of each grievant will be protected under the Data Protection Law. The content of the Grievance Registry Log is presented as Annex 5.

The engaged (sub)contractor shall adopt its own GM procedure in accordance with this SEP at least 15 days before starting construction works. Engaged (sub)contractors will designate a person responsible for communicating with the SRI PIU.

Stakeholders are encouraged to send all grievances, concerns and queries to the contact points below:

TABLE 4 – SRI PIU CONTACT DETAILS

Description	Contact details
Implementing agency:	SRI
Main contact:	Ana Kopren, SRI Social Expert
Address:	Nemanjina 6, 11 000 Belgrade
E-mail:	ana.kopren@srbrail.rs



7.3 - SRI PIU responsibilities, monitoring and reporting on grievances

The SRI PIU will be responsible for:

- Performing the GM procedure;
- Maintaining the Grievance Registry Log on the complaints received;
- Exchange information with affected municipalities and (sub)contractors about raised grievances;
- Summarizing and analysing the qualitative data and disclosing semi-annual GM reports to PIU/EIB;
- Monitoring outstanding issues and proposing measures to resolve them.

The semi-annual Project reports to EIB will include a section related to GM which provides updated information on the status of GM implementation as prescribed in Table 5.

8 - MONITORING AND REPORTING

8.1 - Reporting to EIB and internal reporting in SRI

Promoters are required to monitor the implementation of this SEP and the functioning of the grievance mechanism, as well as to report on both to EIB. After signing the loan agreement, the SRI will be responsible for preparing monitoring reports, documenting the environmental and social performance of the Project and submitting them to the EIB on semi-annual basis. These will be part of the overall progress reporting requirements as set forth in the respective finance contract.

The reports will include sections dedicated to the stakeholder engagement and grievance mechanism. The table 5 proposes a comprehensive set of indicators related to stakeholder engagement performance. The achievement of these indicators will rely on information from the Stakeholder Engagement Log and the Grievance Registry Log.

Periodic summaries and internal reports on public grievances, enquiries or incidents, together with the status of implementation of associated corrective/preventative actions will be collated by the PIU. The PIU should use this information to identify areas in which stakeholder engagement should be strengthened, and where additional financial or human resources and training are needed. PIU will properly inform the SRI management, as internally agreed within the SRI.

8.2 - Reporting back to stakeholders

In terms of reporting, the SRI will establish a reporting channel back to the communities and individuals impacted and concerned.

Information on public engagement activities undertaken by the Project during the year should be conveyed to the stakeholders by publication of a standalone annual report on Project's interaction with the stakeholders - disclosed on the SRI's website and affected municipalities' websites (if applicable).

This report should include the number and type of consultations and meetings, the number of grievances received within a reporting period and the number of those resolved within the prescribed timeline, the number of press materials published/broadcasted in media.



Within the said way of reporting, the SRI will make available relevant information to the stakeholders on how their views have been incorporated or otherwise addressed during the Project design and construction works planning along with any mitigation and/or compensatory/remedial measures, or the reasons against.

The Expert Team will support SRI in preparation of report until the end of the Main ESIA stage (i.e. until RAP adoption).

TABLE 5 – MONITORING INDICATORS (STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT PERFORMANCE INDICATORS)

Indicator	How will it be monitored	In charge	Frequency
Engagement with affected parties			
Number, date and location of meetings/consultations with PAPs and numbers of participants on the meetings	Minutes of Meetings	SRI PIU	Semi-annual
Vulnerable groups/individuals reached with Project information; number, date, location and type of meetings/communication with vulnerable groups/individuals	Minutes of meetings and surveys	SRI PIU	Semi-annual
Number of men and women that attended each of the meetings above	List of Attendees	SRI PIU	Semi-annual
For each meeting, number and nature of comments received, actions agreed, status of those actions and how the comments were included in the Project E&S management system or Project design	Minutes of Meetings	SRI PIU	Semi-annual
Engagement with other stakeholders			
Number and nature of engagement activities with other stakeholders, disaggregated by category of stakeholder (Governmental and Vojvodina Province departments, NGOs etc.)	Minutes of Meetings	SRI PIU	Semi-annual
Grievance Mechanism			
Number of grievances received disaggregated by complainant's gender and means of receipt (telephone, e-mail, discussion)	Grievance Log	SRI PIU	Semi-annual
Number of grievances received from affected people and external stakeholders	Grievance Log	SRI PIU	Semi-annual
Number of grievances which have been (i) opened, (ii) opened for more than 30 days, (iii) those which have been resolved and closed (iv) number of responses which didn't satisfy the complainants (v) number of grievances sent to the court/other state bodies.	Grievance Log	SRI PIU	Semi-annual
Average time of complaint's resolution process, disaggregated by gender of complainants and categories of complaints	Grievance Log	SRI PIU	Semi-annual
Trends in time and comparison of number, categories, and location of complaints with previous periods	Grievance Log	SRI PIU	Semi-annual