

PUBLIC

**DOCUMENT OF THE EUROPEAN BANK
FOR RECONSTRUCTION AND DEVELOPMENT**

STRATEGY FOR SERBIA

**REPORT ON THE INVITATION
TO THE PUBLIC TO COMMENT**

November 2023

PUBLIC

1. INTRODUCTION

The objective of this report is to summarise the key comments received from stakeholders during the consultation period on the Bank's Strategy for Serbia and provide the EBRD's management response.

In accordance with the EBRD Access to Information Policy (AIP), the draft strategy for Serbia was posted on the EBRD website in for 45 calendar days, starting from 6 October 2023. The public was invited to comment on the draft strategy no later than 20 November 2023. The previous strategy was also made available on the EBRD website at <https://www.ebrd.com/serbia.html>

Information about the public consultation process was posted on the EBRD's dedicated "Have your say" webpage, which highlights the latest opportunities for the public to comment on the Bank's policies and strategies under review. Targeted notifications of the consultation process were sent to local and international civil society organisations (CSOs) that have expressed interest in the Bank's work in the country.

During the consultation period, the Bank did not receive any written comments.

In line with the Bank's increased efforts to involve civil society at an early stage of country strategy development, the EBRD organised a consultative meeting with civil society organisations (in virtual format) on 12 July 2023.

The objective of the meeting was to gather civil society's feedback during the preparatory phase for developing the draft strategy. Four CSO representatives from 4 different civil society organisations participated in the consultation.

The EBRD was represented by the Regional Head for Western Balkans, the Country Economics, Strategy and Policy and the Civil Society Engagement teams.

The summary of the key messages and the list of CSO participants in the consultation process are provided in the Annex 1 to this report.

ANNEX 1

Consultation with Civil Society Organisations on the EBRD country strategy for Serbia

Wednesday 12 July 2023

Key messages from Civil Society to the EBRD

1. CSOs endorsed the proposed priorities, praising EBRD's commitment to supporting Serbia's development trajectory and engaging CSOs in addressing grassroots issues. Nonetheless, they highlighted transparency and accountability issues stemming from the authorities' failure to publicly disclose development project agreements to local communities and CSOs.
2. CSOs encouraged the Bank to continue focusing on economic inclusion, particularly through support and mentoring of women entrepreneurs in MSMEs, whose abilities are often questioned, leading to challenges in running and growing their businesses. Additionally, CSOs called for improved access to finance from commercial banks for youth-led MSMEs.
3. CSOs expressed concerns over growing pollution from the Morava Thermal Power Plant. They acknowledged EBRD's decision to stop investing in coal-related projects and urged the Bank to continue exploring opportunities in green and renewable energy to accelerate decarbonisation.

List of CSOs participating in the consultation meeting

- European Movement in Serbia
- National Alliance for Local Economic Development (NALED)
- Renewables and Environmental Regulatory Institute (RERI)
- Transparency Serbia