The EBRD and Civil Society in 2012/2013

CSOs are both influential audiences and partners of the EBRD in our countries of operations. Throughout the year EBRD engages in open communication with a variety of civil society organisations, both international and those from countries of operations. The local knowledge, technical expertise and innovative ideas provided by civil society have continuously contributed to the development of the Bank’s policies, strategies and the implementation of projects, and thereby enhanced the Bank’s effectiveness and impact across our countries of operations.

Civil Society Programme at the 2012 Annual Meeting

Every May the EBRD hosts a Civil Society Programme during its Annual Meeting of the Board of Governors to provide civil society stakeholders with the opportunity to interact with EBRD staff, senior management, the President and Board Directors, and discuss issues of interest and concern regarding the Bank’s policies and major investment projects. In 2012, the Annual Meeting was held at the EBRD Headquarters in London and brought together around 60 participants from 13 countries of operations, 7 other shareholder countries and 3 countries of the SEMED region.

The two-day programme included a special discussion panel entitled “Good corporate citizenship: managing public and IFI expectations”. Participants debated the role of civil society and international financial institutions in helping companies to develop corporate transparency and enhance their social accountability. Among other issues, the discussion looked into sustainability reporting guidelines and how the EBRD can support its countries of operations in improving corporate governance and transparency in local companies.

Discussion sessions with the outgoing President Thomas Mirow and Board Directors focused on the EBRD’s geographic expansion to the SEMED region, inclusion and gender in the Bank’s projects, environmental and social issues, transparency, accountability and access to information in the EBRD’s investments. The revision of the first EBRD Mining Operations Policy was also discussed during these meetings. Other topics covered at the Civil Society Programme included the Bank’s investments in municipal and environmental infrastructure, energy, natural resources and transport sectors. Additionally, the CSOs met the EBRD Chief Evaluator to discuss the Bank’s projects and the upcoming review of the Evaluation policy. A dedicated session with the EBRD Project Complaint Mechanism and the Chief Compliance Officer provided an opportunity for CSOs to learn about the mechanism and raise concerns in relation to the progress with projects currently under the PCM review.

In parallel, working groups were held on the political situation in selected EBRD countries of operation and on the Bank’s political methodology review.

Meeting CSOs at the highest level

Since taking up his four year term in July 2012, the new EBRD President Sir Suma Chakrabarti reinforced the importance of the Bank’s dialogue with civil society stakeholders throughout the formulation of the Bank’s operational priorities, strategies and policies. The President also encouraged the Bank’s senior management and staff to explore further frameworks for engaging with civil society and set up new opportunities for dialogue that would prompt deeper discussion and leverage on CSOs’ sectoral expertise.

In 2012, Suma Chakrabarti met with representatives of prominent international civil society organisations at the EBRD London Headquarters as well as with several local CSOs during his trip to Serbia in September.

Central to the high-level dialogue between the EBRD and CSOs are also the frequent visits by Board of Directors to countries of operations. In 2012, the EBRD Board Directors visited Albania, Kyrgyz Republic, Montenegro, Poland, Russia and Ukraine. Directors met representatives of key civil society organisations in addition to central and local government, diplomats, local and international businesses to learn more about the key issues important for improving the work of the Bank in a particular country.
Project related dialogue
Throughout 2012 the EBRD also conducted a series of meetings with civil society stakeholders to discuss in-depth issues of interest and concern related to the planning, implementation and monitoring of the Bank’s investment projects in the following sectors and countries:

► Natural resources and heavy industries sector in Mongolia and Armenia
► Power, energy and energy efficiency sector in the Western Balkans, Georgia, Poland, Russia and Ukraine
► Transport and municipal and environmental infrastructure sector in Armenia, Ukraine and the Kyrgyz Republic
► Agribusiness sector in the Western Balkans

The valuable feedback provided by civil society representatives enables the Bank to ensure that its clients adequately respond to the local concerns that have been expressed and thus enhances the Bank’s effectiveness and impact across our countries of operations.

Consulting civil society on country, sectoral and policy reviews
In 2012, the EBRD put a much stronger emphasis on a stakeholder consultation process and early engagement with CSOs on its strategic documents.

Mining Operations Policy
The year 2012 saw the adoption of the first EBRD Mining Operations Policy which sets out the operational role of the Bank in the mining sector and establishes the overall framework for the Bank’s activities. Over the course of the public consultation process, the Bank invited more than 1,500 organisations to comment on the Policy from a wide range of stakeholders, including mining companies, civil society organisations, governments and academia. The Bank put an active effort into outreaching to grass-roots organisations, which have rarely had the opportunity to comment on EBRD’s strategies. 8 public meetings and workshops were organised in London, Sofia, Ulaanbaatar, Moscow and Toronto, and the Policy was discussed with civil society organisations at the Bank’s Annual Meeting in London.

Evaluation Policy
As part of the Evaluation Policy Review, the EBRD organised a first webinar event with the EBRD Chief Evaluator, Joe Eichenberg, to discuss with civil society stakeholders lessons learned and challenges ahead in the evaluation process of the Bank’s financed projects. The Evaluation Policy was approved by the EBRD Board Directors in January 2013.

Sustainable Energy Initiative
In May 2012, the EBRD launch the Phase 3 of the Sustainable Energy Initiative (SEI). This next phase of the SEI aims to maintain the Bank’s status as the leader in sustainable energy financing in its region of operations as well as to share its expertise and help boost climate finance activity. For the next three years the EBRD will continue to focus on climate change mitigation and, recognising the risk of a significant rise in temperatures, will increase activities involving climate change adaptation.

As part of the preparation of Phase 3, the Bank conducted a comprehensive stakeholder consultation process, including a series of meetings with CSOs in order to obtain their perspectives and practical ideas on the way the Bank can expand its activities under the proposed SEI Phase 3 development themes.
International CSO experts attended meetings in London while local CSOs and other relevant stakeholders had an opportunity to participate in the regional workshops in Georgia, Kazakhstan, Russia, Turkey and Ukraine.

**Political methodology review**

During 2012, the EBRD conducted the review of a paper entitled “Procedures to Implement the Political Aspects of the Mandate of the EBRD” which sets out the Bank’s methodology for conducting regular political assessments of countries of operations. The review was conducted with the close involvement of the EBRD Board of Directors and extensive consultation with external stakeholders.

As part of the process, four multi-stakeholder workshops was organised in addition to a series of meetings in selected countries of operations and one potential recipient country (Belgrade, Moscow and Cairo). The multi-stakeholder workshops included three held in London (with representatives of international organisations, international NGOs and European academic institutions) and one at Stanford University in California (with US-based academic specialists). In addition, dedicated workshops with CSOs were organised during the consultation period on country strategies for Albania, Romania and the Russian Federation.

As a result of the outreach activities and consultation meetings, the draft texts of the Strategies were amended to reflect comments where appropriate and substantial reports on public comments were prepared and presented to the EBRD Board of Directors alongside the final country strategies.

**Country strategies review**

In 2012, the EBRD invited public comments on nine draft country strategies in accordance with its Public Information Policy. To further strengthen the Bank’s country strategy consultation practice and reach out to a broad range of civil society stakeholder, the start of a new review period was widely advertised via email notifications and social media platforms. In addition, dedicated workshops with CSOs were organised during the consultation period on country strategies for Albania, Romania and the Russian Federation. The views and recommendations coming out of the workshops were reflected in the Country Assessments (CAs) for the SEMED countries, strategic documents that will guide the EBRD’s operations until these countries become fully fledged countries of operations.

**Dialogue with civil society in the SEMED region**

In 2012, the EBRD organised a series of meetings with civil society representatives to solicit inputs on the operational environment and on the Bank’s potential operational priorities in the southern and eastern Mediterranean (SEMED) region. Over 150 civil society organisations took part in the workshops with the Bank’s senior management on the ground in Jordan, Tunisia, Morocco and Egypt as well as at the EBRD Headquarters in London.

During the meetings CSOs exchanged views and ideas with EBRD representatives about ways to enhance the EBRD’s political assessment of the SEMED countries and consistent application of its Article 1 mandate, which requires countries of operations to be committed to and applying the principles of multi-party democracy, pluralism and market economics. CSOs also addressed the main transitional challenges affecting their countries, in particular access to credit, SME financing, youth entrepreneurship, environmental sustainability, and gender and social inclusion. CSOs called for the Bank’s long-term engagement in the SEMED region in order to foster policy dialogue with the authorities on financial and economic reforms, thus ensuring sustainability of the transition process.

The views and recommendations coming out of the workshops were reflected in the Country Assessments (CAs) for the SEMED countries, strategic documents that will guide the EBRD’s operations until these countries become fully fledged countries of operations.
Outlook for 2013

► CSOs representatives will have a chance to raise issues with the EBRD’s senior management, Board of Directors and the President at the Civil Society Programme, which will take place alongside the EBRD Annual Meeting on 10-11 May 2013 in Istanbul, Turkey. The Civil Society Programme will feature a roundtable discussion on the effective use of social media platforms for the Bank’s engagement with civil society and a special discussion panel “Expanding economic opportunities and promoting inclusive growth”.

► The EBRD has launched the review process for three major governance policies: the 2009 Project Complaint Mechanism Rules of Procedure, the 2008 Environmental and Social Policy, and the 2011 Public Information Policy. A detailed Stakeholder Engagement Plan, which outlines the consultation process for each Policy, is available at http://www.ebrd.com/pages/about/policies/governance.shtml.

► The EBRD will welcome the active participation of the relevant civil society stakeholders on the Bank’s Transport Strategy and the Energy Operations Policy.

► The Bank will invite the public to comment on new country strategies for Azerbaijan, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Moldova, Mongolia, Montenegro, Poland, Slovenia and Turkmenistan. The EBRD will start engaging in CSO capacity building activities which will be closely linked to the Bank’s investment projects.

Project Complaint Mechanism Outreach

As part of a wider outreach programme on the Project Complaint Mechanism (PCM) targeting international and local CSOs as well as EBRD public and private sector clients, the EBRD conducted two workshops with local CSOs in Russia and Ukraine in late 2012. The objective of the outreach programme was to inform relevant stakeholders about the Bank’s operational and communication processes. It was highlighted that these include opportunities to raise project-related issues with the Bank, before resorting to the PCM.

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