

Guidelines

for the inclusion of non-state actors in EIPP

These guidelines are designated to interpret the Prime minister's Order No.113 dated 30.08.2019 "On the forms of participation, functioning and institutional structure of the European Integration Partnership Platform (EIPP)" which aims to make possible the involvement and engagement of civil society actors, private sector, academia, social partners, and other interest groups in informing, consulting and monitoring the accession negotiations process of the country. This platform is organized in two representative levels: The **Governing Board** and **33 consultation roundtables** which correspond to the acquis chapters. Article III.2, point 5 of the Order states that interested parties must submit one Letter of Intent and a CV endorsed by their experience and expertise to the Lead Institution (Ministry or other) of each chapter. The ultimate goal of Albania to join EU requires the involvement of the actors that represent the rich spectrum of sectors and disciplines. This document will serve as a guide for state institutions on forms, procedures and ways to intensify the engagement of stakeholders while they guarantee transparency, equality, non-discrimination and efficiency in the process. The Levels of participation of civil society organizations and other actors in the EIPP in the sense of this document may include:

- ***Provide Information:* a one-way process where state administration bodies inform stakeholders about the platform and the overall integration process.**

It is of relevance that before starting the **Informative Campaign** the Institution to work on establishing and/or updating a relevant **Stakeholders' Database**, with actors to be contacted throughout the process. In this regard a various number of stakeholders should be identified and mapped based on their sector, expertise and fields of their work and relevant contacts (email; telephones). This list should be used as a preliminary tool for starting the information campaign, and throughout the process it can be updated and extended with new stakeholders and actors engaged and identified. Another option is to give access to the interested actors to register and submit their own data for the database.

Common methods of sharing these details include:

- **Info- sessions** – might be organized in premises of the institutions and hybrid format can be used if assessed as relevant for having participation even from the regions. These info-sessions should gather selected members from IWGEI and targeted stakeholders from: private sector, civil society, local associations, workers

associations and academia whose profile and work are linked with the topics included on the concerned chapters. Through this info sessions should be given clear and concise information on EU integration and negotiation process of Albania, what EIPP is, the procedure to be part and member of the Consultation Tables, what are the main benefits of being a member and what is expected during the consultations and discussions. Power Point Presentations are recommended to be used and shared with participants.

- **Various informative materials** (such as presentations presented during info-sessions, flyers or informative documents) prepared under the process of Establishing tables – can be published on the official webpage of the institution, and can be shared online on institution’s social media accounts and through email to a dedicated mailing list that should include those identified stakeholders are relevant for the involvement on the consultation tables. The printed formats maybe shared during the organization of info-sessions and other related activities.
- **Contact points-** Right to Information coordinators in ministries and institutions should be involved in the dissemination of materials and details about the EIPP. Regular communications about the registration process, roundtables, news and progress reports regarding respective acquis chapters should be shared with the stakeholders and other interested actors. This will help them to determine their capacities to monitor, evaluate and participate in the EIPP process.
- **Social media campaigns** – Social media is now an important actor to share important information and to be reached by a diverse audience. In this regard using the social media accounts to share relevant information on open calls of application, on developments of the Consultation tables, posts on activities and other posts on giving information on EIPP and Consultation such as posters, short videos, publications and/or factsheets.
- **Media Campaigns** – traditional media such as TV, newspapers and/or other media should be used in order to reach a wider audience and to inform about the EIPP and the process of establishing the Consultation tables. In this regard the

main target might be more in general to inform the public and interested audience providing relevant information on the process and how they can be involved if that's the case. The tools used can be: articles on newspapers, brief presences of institutions' representatives on TV/radio shows mostly the ones in the morning, producing of explanatory and informative videos etc.

The European Integration Partnership Platform includes all the following formats of cooperation:

- *Consultations*- the goal of this level of participation is to obtain information from CSOs and other non-state actors on issues, possible solutions as well as their advantages and disadvantages in terms of drafts regulations regarding the acquis chapters. Common methods of counselling are: written counselling, surveys, interviews, focus groups, expert and public discussions, round tables, meetings, workshops, etc.

- *Involvement* -the aim of this level of participation is to enable the process of preparation of regulations, the presence and participation of non-state actors in order to see their interests in continuity. Common methods of involvement are: working group meetings, expert and public hearings (roundtables), workshops etc.

- *Partnership*- represents the highest level of cooperation and mutual responsibility of state administration bodies and stakeholders in the process of adopting and implementing regulations. This enables non state actors to actively participate both in the process of drafting regulations, as well as in the process of their implementation. The goal of this level of participation is to enable the constant presence and active participation of civil society organizations societies in making joint decisions. Common methods of level are: meetings of bodies composed of representatives of state administration bodies and representatives of organizations civil society (councils, commissions, negotiating bodies), thematic conferences etc.

Advice for the civil society engagement in the EIPP

The EIPP as a multi-stakeholder platform is an essential mechanism which increases the engagement in a few levels of governance and private sectors. It has the potential for an intensive collaboration on issues that are relevant on a national and regional plan. Long-

term stakeholder engagement is difficult to maintain so the civil society should invest in building networks and making use of their expertise. This sector must undertake better targeted strategies to increase their contributions and follow all the steps that allow them to become part of the Platform. The EIPP will enable these stakeholders to overcome unfavourable political contexts and influence the Albanian government with new approaches and ideas. CSOs and other interest groups need to firstly identify the Acquis chapters that are concordant with their field of expertise. The representatives should be up to date with all information provided in the info-sessions regarding the application procedure. Time and thought should be put into the Letter of Motivation and CV clarifying their capacities and expectations. Regarding that civil society has a deeper understanding of the domestic situation; their contribution should be concentrated and direct. As mentioned in the guidelines, the EIPP gives stakeholders the chance to intervene strategically during these credible and transparent consultations. Technical capacity constraints can be removed by forming partnerships with other organisations that are richer in leadership, training and research resources. The EIPP's structured engagement expands the use of non-grant instruments. Individually each CSO and stakeholder should strive to be seen as a leader in the sector both in terms of expertise and policy development. A successful platform should have the capacity to nurture the development of new partnerships and scale up existing partnerships that have the potential to grow. The civil society sector will play an important role in the dialogue between the citizens and the government. CSOs' range of interests and members can provide an outside voice to roundtables and assess the implementation of action plans. Lastly, The EIPP offers practical options for how targeted civil society engagement efforts can promote improved outcomes.

State institutions should always clarify in a summarized and concise manner:

What is the EIPP?

The main objectives: The ministries/state institutions need to take into account the main objectives of the EIPP regarding the cooperation between state and non-state actors. They should use clear and simple terminology and clarify their expectations regarding the stakeholders.

Why should stakeholders get involved?

The engagement of stakeholders is relevant because:

- The integration process affects the daily lives of the citizens
- To get informed on the negotiations process and cost-benefits effects of this process for various target groups and sectors

- To be able to monitor the process of negotiations and providing recommendations and then to be able to monitor the progress of implementation of such recommendations
- By being involved and informed throughout the negotiations, the decision-making process is made based on the well-informed decisions and actions
- Enables all parties (public) involved to be part of decision-making and policy-making
- Increases social cohesion in the community and the overall inclusion
- Brings innovative ideas to the table
- Transparency, good governance and accountability towards citizens

The stakeholders

NGOs

NGOs and civil society at large seek to contribute to direct democracy and participate in political decision-making. A lack of categorization according to their scope of work generates difficulties in the cooperation between civil society and state actors. The EIPP will assist the process of trust-building across the sectors and help with the alignment of their interests and duties. NGOs will have a chance to participate in an open and inclusive dialogue with the main focus on EU membership. This multi-stakeholder platform helps to build institutional capabilities for partnering, well-planned strategies and catalyses ideas and collective development. The increased number of roundtables will create the opportunity to draft medium and long-term plans with a strong promotion of expertise within the stakeholder group. Over these discussions, both state-actors and NGOs will have the chance to manage their expectations and evaluate results. The NGOs can use EIPP as an effective communication channel ensuring that the deliberations are regular and consistent. Positive results can be obtained through actively facilitating feedback and monitoring of the overall process.

Business and trade unions

Regarding the involvement of enterprising entities engaged in commercial, industrial or professional activities and trade unions, the EIPP aims to help them meet the Acquis communautaire requirements, democratic principles and achieve economic transformation. It will serve as tool for stakeholders to get the information that they lack and get directions to make further improvements related to EU matters. It should contribute to motivate them in carrying out all the necessary steps to promote the free movement of goods, services, capital and persons as well as all other acquis chapters concerning business and trade. Ideas and action plans drafted from these experts will

facilitate the overall progress of the country within agreed benchmarks and targets. The EIPP will serve as a base to discuss the opportunities and implications of economic reforms, foreign direct investment, trade and cooperation among stakeholders and state actors. Consultations can provide a roadmap to deepen cooperation in several sectors such as: environment, transport, energy, telecommunication, import, export etc. The roundtables enable the drafting of business strategies to work towards EU accession, improve distribution channels and build contacts with counterparts in the EU. The groups of interests from this sector will get more insight on the legal requirements of regulations that are related to the technical and administrative aspects of market access and market surveillance within EU.

Academia

The EIPP intends to create guidance and resources for scholars and academic institutions to take a proactive role in the integration process and. It facilitates the cooperation between state actors and academia regarding research and policy-making. It has a tailored strategy to provide directions to overcome the barriers that this sector has when it comes to making their voices heard. Experts and researchers often express that there is a lack of accessibility in the highest levels of decision-making instances which prohibits them to contribute. The EU Acquis contains several Chapters where academia has a substantial role. Moreover, progress can be achieved if academic expertise related to respective chapters can be found in an easier manner online and have a broader representation. Having the opportunity to exchange thoughts with scholars during the EIPP discussion tables, state institutions and other bodies that fund them can become more consistent with their support towards research. The Platform will become a bridge for these stakeholders and non-state actors to establish relationships and utilize opportunities to share ideas and collaborate in drafting strategies that will help the country achieve better results regarding EU related matters. New practices and alternate approaches can guide experts to generate a transformative change in the overall integration process.

Local government

In Albania, most municipalities have established the European integration offices to strengthen their positions and undertake specific tasks. The representatives of these local entities will have the opportunity during the EIPP roundtables to get more insights on EU- Albania relations and status quo through capacity-building mechanisms. Moreover, this group of interest can report their achievements and require instructions to increase cooperation with the central governmental structures. The EIPP will enable local governmental structures to have a more active role in monitoring the implementation of

EU integration action plans. To foster sustainable long-lasting results and concrete steps in the fulfilment of all the EU requirements, the government needs to strengthen the public administration and establish a dialogue with the citizens through participatory policy-making processes. Integration, from a local government perspective needs to include cooperative modes of governance among institutions and actors from multiply levels of government. Local actors which until now have had a modest and limited role in scope in the integration process will strive to get more recognition. During the EIPP roundtables, they will strengthen their position in the harmonization of EU legislation and diminish all the issues that have surfaced by institutional dependencies between different levels. Local governments are the closest ones to the citizens which translate into an increased civil participation in the EU integration process.

The methods to increase involvement:

In terms of identifying stakeholders, they are detected based on the interest and contribution they can make during the roundtables. However, state institutions and lead ministries should have in advance a list or database of NGOs, businesses and other stakeholders who may be involved in the process in question. This does not exclude the right of any entity or legal person who wants to participate. Each lead institution needs to have a particular section on their official webpage dedicated to the Platform where stakeholders can get basic information. The EIPP should be placed in a broader scientific and societal context to help the outside world perceive its relevance. Lead institutions need to include the EIPP in the agendas during their regular meetings with staff and stakeholders to enable brainstorming and faster dissemination of information. Two aspects are particularly important to this effort: expanding the range of stakeholders and promoting a two-way communication between state and non-state actors.

Tips and suggestions:

- The establishment of a web page which can also be used as a resource-sharing platform for stakeholders regarding the EIPP is needed.
- State institutions must set clear criteria for the selection process by providing specific templates for the CV and the letter of interest.
- They can organize online or on the spot info-sessions to develop awareness and advocate for stakeholder engagement in the EIPP.
- State institutions must show organizational transparency, independence, professionalism, social inclusion and quality of work.

- Lead institutions for each acquis chapter need to make announcements regarding the EIPP participation procedures using various tools of information: official webpages, social media, through emails, through public activities and traditional media.
- They must ensure that the role of CSOs and other non-state actors is described in national policies and strategies regarding EU integration.
- Mechanisms to link research findings to policy makers and the scientific community using technical language for each group should be developed.
- Some institutions can organize open conferences regarding acquis chapters and the work that has been done until now by the working groups.
- Open consultations with stakeholders/ Interviews to understand their perspective
- State institutions need to identify and apply indicators to evaluate the outputs and stakeholder engagement in the EIPP
- They should document good examples and lessons learned
- A newsletter to provide information about forthcoming events and summaries of workshops should be sent by lead institutions.
- A stakeholder database should be developed and maintained

Action Plan- Model

Objectives

A step by step (6 steps) action plan for state institutions on forms, procedures and ways to intensify the engagement of stakeholders while they guarantee transparency, equality, non-discrimination and efficiency in the process

Desired Outcomes

- Provide basic information about the platform and the overall integration process to the stakeholders
- Increase the levels of participation of civil society organizations and other actors in the EIPP
- Develop effective consultations between state and non-state actors on issues, possible solutions as well as their advantages and disadvantages in terms of drafts regulations regarding the acquis chapters
- Reach the highest level of cooperation and mutual responsibility of state administration bodies and stakeholders in the process of adopting and implementing regulations
- Increases social cohesion in the community and the overall inclusion
- Bring innovative ideas to the table
- Extract recommendations during the roundtables
- Implementation process and results

Strategic action	Responsible actor	Stakeholders	Resources	Timeframe	Comments
1. Creation of stakeholder database	Contact points in lead institutions	civil society private sector, academia, social partners, other interest groups	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • identification of stakeholders that depend or are related to the leading institution • publication of the registration link on official webpages so interest groups can update their own data 	3 weeks	Possibility to allow stakeholders to access, register and update their own information continuously

			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Open consultations with stakeholders/ Interviews to understand their perspective 		
2. Info sessions	Appointed experts from lead institutions for each chapter	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • general public • specific target group 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • hybrid format • PowerPoint presentations • flyers or informative documents • share information on official webpage of the institution, social media accounts and through email 	2 Info sessions per chapter	<p>clear and concise information;</p> <p>basic info about EIPP;</p> <p>procedures to be part of the Consultation Tables;</p> <p>the main benefits of being a member;</p> <p>expectations</p>
3. Open calls	Coordinator in each lead institution	specific target groups related to acquis chapters	Announcements regarding the EIPP participation procedures using various tools of information: official webpages, social media, through emails, through public activities and traditional media	1 month	provide templates for the CV and the letter of interest

4. Evaluation process	Group of experts; Head of IIWG		indicators and pointing system according to relevance	2 weeks	Grouping according to the field of interest and expertise
5. Publication of results	Coordinator in each lead institution		official webpages, social media, through emails	2 weeks	Results should be up for two weeks in case of pleas and requests from the applicants
6. Roundtables of the platform established	Lead institution, experts	Specific stakeholders	EIPP platform, emails	Organizing roundtables at least once a month	A newsletter to provide information about forthcoming events and summaries of workshops should be sent by lead institutions, State institutions need to identify and apply indicators to evaluate the outputs and stakeholder engagement in the EIPP