

Stakeholder Engagement Report

BIODRINI Project — Drin River Basin, Albania and Kosovo

Environmental and Social Safeguards (ESS) consultation summary | Prepared by the Project Management Unit, Urban Research Institute (URI)

1. Purpose and Scope

This report summarises the stakeholder engagement carried out under the BIODRINI project in the Drin River Basin between July 2022 and May 2024, and records the interest, concerns and level of support expressed by stakeholders in relation to the environmental and social safeguards (ESS) of the project. It is based on the stakeholder engagement and country ownership matrix maintained by the Project Management Unit, which documents 15 distinct engagement streams across Albania, Kosovo and cross-border settings.

The engagement served four purposes: to establish the environmental and social baseline for the watershed; to consult affected communities and institutions on the objectives and measures of the Integrated Watershed Management Plan (IWMP); to agree the siting and maintenance arrangements for the litter-trap interventions; and to screen, monitor and verify ESS risks throughout implementation.

2. Engagement Approach and Coverage

Engagement was led by the Project Manager / ESS Officer at URI, together with the CBC Programme Coordinator at the Municipality of Rahovec (Lead Partner) and municipal focal points in Kukës, Has, Tropojë and Rahovec. Four instruments were used in combination:

- Structured surveys — administration of the BIODRINI socio-economic questionnaire to municipalities and regional councils to map human activity, infrastructure, agriculture, public health and pollution hot-spots.
- Institutional consultation — 7 stakeholder meetings (October 2022 – January 2023) with central and local authorities, water management agencies and river basin bodies in both countries.
- Public consultation — meetings on IWMP objectives and measures (February – April 2023) and a consultative workshop on IWMP findings (May – June 2024), with 15 government institutions and NGOs directly involved.
- Community mobilisation and awareness — informative meetings, clean-up events, summer and winter schools, the Drini Day campaign, newsletters, the project website and social media.

Across these streams the project reached approximately 25,500 people through awareness activities, with 2,811 direct beneficiaries; 52 participants attended the informative meetings in the Kukës Region, around 250 schoolchildren and 20 university students joined two clean-up actions, and 60 students took part in the summer and winter schools.

3. Stakeholders Engaged

The matrix records the following stakeholder groups, their role in the project and the position each expressed on the project's environmental and social safeguards.

Stakeholder group	Who was engaged	Position on ESS
Local & regional government	Kukës Regional Council, Municipalities of Kukës, Has, Tropojë and Rahovec (Lead Partner)	Strong support; confirmed water pollution and solid waste as the main pressures; municipal capacity confirmed for collecting waste from the litter traps
Central government / water authorities	MESPIK (Kosovo); MTEA, AMBU, Water Basin Council and Drin River Basin Office (Albania)	Supportive, with technical input; approvals issued; no extra permitting required; transboundary effects on water quality assessed as positive

Stakeholder group	Who was engaged	Position on ESS
Civil society / NGOs	PAMKOS and Albanian and Kosovar environmental CSOs (3 dedicated meetings)	Active support; flagged weak enforcement of waste legislation, illegal dumping and limited institutional coordination
Local communities, women and youth	Communities and villages in the basin; schools and youth groups in Kukës, Has, Tropojë and Rahovec	Very positive reception and high participation; concerns on illegal dumping and irregular municipal waste collection
Academia and students	University of Prishtina, University of Prizren, Polytechnic University of Tirana (60 students, min. 30% female)	High engagement; open call oversubscribed and participation targets exceeded
Private sector / service providers	OUE (Kukës), Project Plus shpk (Rahovec), municipal cleaning services	Constructive; maintenance and disposal arrangements agreed
Implementing consortium	Municipality of Rahovec, Kukës Regional Council, URI, PAMKOS	Full agreement and strong ownership; MoU signed at the 20 July 2022 kick-off
Donor, media and general public	EU Delegation, GIZ Kosova, local media and citizens (final conference, 29 May 2024, 30+ participants)	Broad public endorsement; call to maintain the traps and replicate the approach

4. Key Issues Raised and How They Were Addressed

No stakeholder raised an objection to the project. The concerns recorded during consultation, and the measures adopted in response, are set out below.

Issue raised	Raised by	Response adopted
Missing sewerage and untreated wastewater discharge in rural villages; reliance on septic pits	Kukës Regional Council, Municipalities of Has and Tropojë	Recorded in the environmental baseline and reflected in IWMP measures and recommendations
Diffuse pollution from pesticides and nitrogen-phosphorus fertilisers	Municipality of Has	Included in the IWMP pressure analysis and environmental monitoring indicators
Illegal dumping along the river banks and weak enforcement of waste legislation	CSOs/NGOs, local communities	Six illegal dumpsites near the river bank cleared; enforcement and coordination gaps reflected in IWMP recommendations
Cost and frequency of waste removal from litter traps; risk of secondary pollution	Waste operators, PAMKOS	One-year maintenance obligation on the installer; agreement between Kukës Regional Council and Kukës Municipality; memorandum of cooperation with the Rahovec public cleaning company (monthly monitoring, annually renewed); waste transferred to authorised municipal systems
Possible obstruction of water flow or damage to sensitive habitats	Waste operators, municipalities	Non-invasive removable trap designs and site screening against terrain, ecosystem and social criteria (7 hotspots screened in Rahovec before selection)
Community health and safety during clean-ups and field work	Project partners, academia	Advance information, safe event organisation, supervision and PPE; no incidents reported
Need for continued monitoring after project closure	Stakeholder review meetings, final conference	Monitoring protocols adjusted on stakeholder feedback; partners committed to follow-up monitoring and continued cross-border cooperation

5. ESS Risk Conclusion

On the basis of the consultations recorded in the matrix, the project was classified as ESS Category B: risks are low, site-specific, reversible and manageable through standard mitigation, and no separate Environmental and Social Management Plan was required. The implementing consortium agreed this classification at the kick-off meeting on 20 July 2022 and reconfirmed it through continuous risk screening during implementation.

No stakeholder identified concerns relating to land acquisition, involuntary resettlement, cultural heritage or indigenous peoples, and no environmental permits were required, as the project involved no large-scale

construction or hazardous operations. Competent authorities in both countries issued the approvals needed for project activities and raised no objection. Transboundary effects on water quality were assessed as positive by authorities on both sides of the basin. Monitoring confirmed that all mitigation measures were completed, that no negative biodiversity impacts occurred, that no secondary pollution arose from collected waste, and that no corrective measures or grievances were recorded.

6. Country Ownership and Sustainability

Country ownership is evidenced by the composition and conduct of the partnership: the Municipality of Rahovec acted as Lead Partner, Kukës Regional Council and Kukës Municipality as institutional partners, and central authorities in both countries — MESPIK in Kosovo and MTEA, AMBU and the Drin River Basin authorities in Albania — participated in data collection, approvals and the IWMP consultations. Fifteen government institutions and non-governmental organisations were directly involved in preparing the IWMP, whose measures are aligned with national river basin management planning and the EU Water Framework Directive.

Sustainability arrangements were negotiated with the stakeholders who will carry them: a one-year maintenance obligation on the installer, an inter-institutional agreement between Kukës Regional Council and Kukës Municipality, and an annually renewed memorandum of cooperation with the Rahovec public cleaning company providing for monthly monitoring. Three of four planned stakeholder review meetings were held and four of six monitoring reports produced during implementation; stakeholders at the closing conference on 29 May 2024 asked that monitoring of litter-trap performance continue and that the approach be replicated elsewhere in the basin. Continued engagement will therefore focus on periodic review meetings with municipalities and waste operators, sustained awareness activity with schools and youth groups, and reporting of monitoring results to the authorities in both countries.