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STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT REPORT KARAVASTA 140 MW SOLAR PV PROJECT, ALBANIA

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REPORT SUMMARY

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ABBREVIATIONS

CLO	Community Liaison Officer
DCM	Decision of the Council of Ministers
EBRD	European Bank for Reconstruction and Development
EIA	Environmental Impact Assessment
ESIA	Environmental and Social Impact Assessment
ESM	Environmental and Social Management
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
Kw	Kilo Watt
HSE	Health, Safety and Environment
HSS&E	Health, Safety, Social and Environment
KI	Key Informant
KII	Key Informant Interview
MTE	Ministry of Tourism and Environment
MIE	Ministry of Infrastructure and Energy
MoM	Minutes of Meeting
NEA	National Environmental Agency
REA	Regional Environmental Agency
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
PA	Project Area
PAA	Project Affected Area
PAC	Project Affected Community
PAP	Project Affected People
PR	Performance Requirement
SEP	Stakeholder Engagement Plan
SER	Stakeholder Engagement Report
SIA	Social Impact Assessment
SSES	Sample Socio-economic Survey
SS	Sub Station
PV	Photovoltaic
OHL	Overhead line
Ha	Hectare
PDA	Project Development Area

1. Introduction

This Stakeholder Engagement Report (SER) presents a summary of the Stakeholder Engagement process as an integral part of the Environmental and Social Impact Assessment (ESIA) for the proposed Project. The SER will be updated periodically according to the engagements planned in the SEP to ensure all communication with stakeholders is logged and tracked. Thus, this SER will continue to summarise engagement and outcomes of the engagement that will be undertaken during construction and operation phases.

In terms of ESIA preparation Voltalia (hereafter called “the Company”) has decided to adhere by and implement the Performance Requirements (PR) of the European Bank of Reconstruction and Development (EBRD) along with the requirements foreseen in the national legislation of Albania. The EBRD - PRs serve as a benchmark to assure those adverse impacts on people and their rights livelihoods, culture and environment are avoided or, where avoidance is not possible, minimized, mitigated, offset and/or compensated. This approach serves to ensure compliance with the best international practices.

The company recognizes that comprehensive identification, planning and management of environmental and socio-economic issues prior to the commencement of construction works are essential to the execution of a successful project. To this end it intends to fully integrate environmental and socio-economic considerations into the lifecycle of the proposed Project. During the preparation of ESIA and its accompanying study, in line with EBRD - PRs and best international practices, special attention was paid to stakeholder engagement, and the consultation and information disclosure process. Thus, the document defines the approach adopted vis-à-vis stakeholders, how stakeholders were engaged during the ESIA process and how the feedback received from them has been taken into consideration.

The report summarises the stakeholder consultation process as defined in the Stakeholder Engagement Plan (SEP) that describes the methodology, communication effort and the tools that were used during the stakeholder consultation and dissemination of project related information and required ESIA document. The purpose of the SEP is to plan and design the stakeholder engagement process while the purpose of the SER is to summarise the outcomes of the engagements planned in the SEP for all phases of the project.

SEP was prepared in order to engage interested and affected parties in an open and transparent process, with the aim of ensuring inclusiveness in a two-way decision-making process. Thus, this SER provides a summary of the participation and consultation with all identified groups and interested parties in the project location area, including both the PDA area and the overhead line section. The report also serves to document the stakeholder engagement undertaken, and it includes minutes of meetings, lists of participants, photos and a record of all other mechanisms through which the stakeholders have been engaged thus far and will continue to be engaged in the future.

1.1. Project Area Description

The proposed Project is located at Remas administrative unit, municipality of Divjake and Libofsha administrative unit, municipality of Fier, Albania and lies approximately 5 km south of the Karavasta Lagoon. The project available land is 198 ha and the project footprint will occupy a total of 185 Ha of land. The Project site is situated between the villages of Ndërmenas and Hasturkas in the East, the villages of Adriatik and Metaj in the Southeast and the Karavasta Lagoon in the North. The associated 220 KW overhead transmission line (OHL) which will run around 20 km in a southeasterly direction from the Project site to the Fier substation connecting the PV Plant to the national grid.

2. Legal Framework

ESIA report and its study will be prepared in line with the national legal framework and its legal Administrative Acts as well as in compliance with EBRD requirements. The following sections include only the relevant legal acts that regulate the stakeholder engagement and public information process. A detailed national Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) is given in the SEP.

2.1. National Legal Framework

The stakeholder engagement and public consultation process in Albania are governed by a number of laws and administrative instructions:

- DCM No. 247, dated 30.04.2014, “On the determination of rules, requirements and procedures for public information and involvement at the environmental decision-making process”;
- DCM No. 16 dated 14.01.2012 “On Public Access to Environmental Information”;
- Law No. 119/2014 of 18.09.2014 “On the Right of Information”;
- Law No. 146/2014 of 30.10.2014 “On Public Informing and Consultation”;
- DCM No. 994, dated 02.07.2008 “On public involvement in environmental decision making”; Ministerial Guideline No.1, dated 03.03.2009”, On responsibilities of the environmental bodies to ensure the participation of the public and environmental NGO to the EIA process”.

A major part of any ESIA process is to solicit views, opinions and concerns, on the proposed activities from various stakeholders, including representatives of local communities, interest groups, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), government agencies and any other stakeholder if relevant to the proposed activities.

2.2. EBRD Requirements

EBRD is committed to promoting environmentally sound and sustainable development in accordance with its Environmental and Social Policy (2019) and its PRs. EBRD sets out its stakeholder engagement requirements in:

- The 2019 Environmental and Social Policy and related Performance Requirements through PR 10: Information Disclosure and Stakeholder Engagement
- The 2019 Access to Information Policy.

EBRD requires clients to engage with affected communities through disclosure of information, consultation, and informed participation, in a manner proportionate with the risks to and impacts on the affected communities. PR10 discusses the main requirements for consultation and disclosure for the assessment and management of environmental and social risks and impacts.

EBRD considers public consultation and stakeholder engagement as an on-going process, to be started at the earliest stage of Project planning, and to be continued throughout the entire life of the EBRD-financed project.

EBRD’s Public Information Policy sets out how EBRD discloses information and consults with its stakeholders so as to promote better awareness and understanding of its strategies, policies and operations. The project documentation will be enclosed for public on the EBRD website in accordance with this Policy.

3. Stakeholder Engagement Approach

3.1. Stakeholder Engagement Approach With COVID-19 Restrictions

Information disclosure and stakeholder engagement are cornerstones of managing the social and environmental impacts of projects. Due to Covid – 19 viruses outbreak some traditional consultation approaches are ruled out. The Ministry of Health and Social Protections instructions¹ have placed mandatory restrictions and social distancing measures to prevent the spread of the virus. According to these instruction public meetings are only allowed in certain cases even though under strict measures for enhancing protection of individuals and communities.

Considering the mandatory restriction and social distancing measures the stakeholder engagement during the scoping phase was conducted as follows;

- The engagement with national, regional and local institutions were organized in their premises.
- The engagement with local communities was conducted through individual meetings (ad hoc).
- The scoping disclosure report was conducted online.

The disclosure of the project information is conducted in line with the EBRD Stakeholder Engagement PR 10 briefing note² that proposed the following alternative methods for disclosing information and engaging with stakeholders without gatherings.

- **Project leaflets** - targeted leaflet drops house-to-house in village with contact details and mechanisms for returning feedback
- **Email campaigns** - constant contact and mechanisms for returning feedback through company email; karavasta@voltage.com
- **Traditional media** - newspaper, radio, television.
- **Engagement through local actors** – administrators, chairman.
- **Signage** - community notice boards, posters.
- **Project Website** – www.karavastasolar.com; to disclose all the relevant project documents and mechanisms for returning feedback.

Even though with the social distancing measures in place, the Public Hearing event is still mandatory. However, the Public Hearing was conducted based on the following Ministry of Health and Social Protection instructions³ for enhancing protection of individuals and communities and preventing spread of the corona virus disease (Covid-19) which includes;

- **Open area** venue of the meeting
- **Cleaning and disinfecting** frequently touched surfaces within the venue as much as possible.
- **Cloth face coverings** is mandatory in Albania. However, face coverings will be provided to attendees ahead of the event.
- **Temperature measurement** of the attendees.
- **Ensuring distance** by placing the seats 2 m from each other
- **Reduced number of attendees**

¹ <https://new.shendetesia.gov.al/masat-e-reja-per-te-parandaluar-perhapjen-e-covid-19/>

² <https://www.ebrd.com/sustainability-covid.html>

³ <https://new.shendetesia.gov.al/masat-e-reja-per-te-parandaluar-perhapjen-e-covid-19/>

3.2. Phases of Engagement

Since the beginning in the preparation of the ESIA, Project screening and the assessment of the various alternatives, the company and the consultant started to engage with stakeholders with the aim of understanding the views of the interested parties so that these can be taken into account in the project design and implementation phases. As part of the overall management approach, it was developed a Stakeholder Engagement Plan (SEP).

The stakeholder engagement for the ESIA was undertaken using a staged approach, in line with the various phases of the ESIA process. All engagement activities have been developed according to the national legislative requirements and in compliance with EBRD performance requirements.

The stakeholder engagement process started at the initial stage of project planning and will continue throughout the lifecycle of the Project.

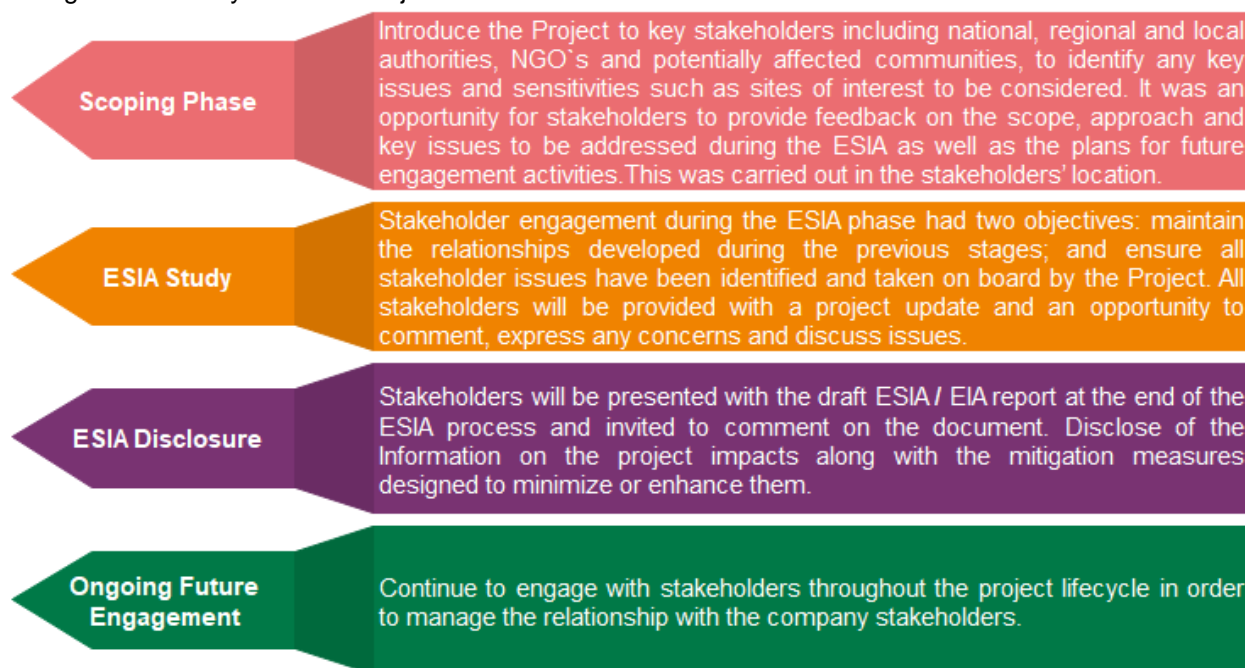


Figure 1– Phases of Engagement

The initial step in the stakeholder engagement process consisted in stakeholder mapping and analysis. The SEP identified the key stakeholders, although the findings will be updated accordingly as the project proceeds. During the development of the ESIA, affected stakeholders were carefully identified as were those interested in the Project. Their concerns, expectations and preferences were recorded and are taken into consideration. Attention was given to the identification of vulnerable stakeholders whose lives and well-being may be affected by the Project. Furthermore, a close interaction with local communities and settlements was developed and maintained in order to identify opportunities for improving the social performance of the Project. To this end consultations and meetings were conducted both at the national and regional level, through open community meetings that had the objective of establishing a two-way communication on any and all issues concerning ESIA and the project implementation.

The approach to stakeholders in this report is structured to provide a summary of:

- Engagement during the preparation of ESIA and accompanying study with focus on the Social impact Assessment;
- Engagement during the baseline phase with main focus on social aspects.

3.3. Stakeholder Consultation Communication Materials

As detailed in the SEP, the Project Study Area is defined based on the project footprint and those instances where the project impacts specifically identified physical elements, aspects or facilities that are likely to generate potential impacts, environmental and social risks.

The project included a diverse range of stakeholders who was identified and involved in the consultation process. The primary objective of the engagement was to identify social receptors in the project study area and “map” stakeholders, including project affected people, other stakeholder as well as social sensitivities in the areas of project development.

During the ESIA phases, the identified stakeholders were approached and consulted using a variety of communication and reporting tools determined in the SEP that vary in accordance with the authority, level of interest, connection and impact caused by the project (Annex 1 – List of stakeholders). They include:

- **Project Website** – www.karavastasolar.com; to disclose all the relevant project documents and mechanisms for returning feedback.
- **Traditional media** - newspaper, radio, television to provide information on the Public Hearing event (Annex 2);
- **Invitation official letter** (including electronic invitations) – sent 10 to 15 days prior of the schedule (Annex 3) through mail; confirmation receipt (Annex 4);
- **Project leaflets** - targeted leaflet drops house-to-house in village with project information, contact details and mechanisms for returning feedback (Annex 5);
- **Posters** - project information, contact details and mechanisms for returning feedback 10 to 15 days prior of the meeting schedules (Annex 6 – Photos and Posters on announcement of meetings);
- **Face to face meetings** - with village leaders (heads of villages) who were provided with information relating to the project phase and planning beforehand, serving as facilitators. The meetings aimed to support the assigned Project team by informing the communities of the scoping process and by building communication channels;
- **List of participants** – to register the participation in the consultation process;
- **Grievance Form** – to raise complaints

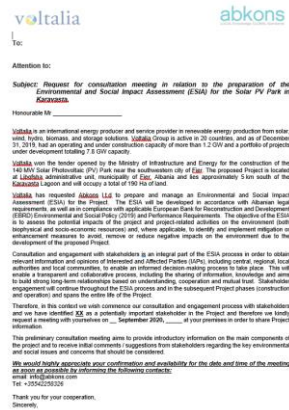
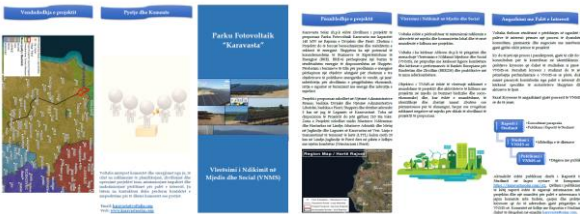
Information regarding communication channels (including tools), which varied depending on the characteristic's different stakeholders' groups and their level of interest and relation to the project, were distributed to all identified stakeholders 10 – 15 days prior of the scheduled meetings took place.



In terms of reaching out to stakeholders at the local and community level, the main channel of communication was through the local authorities. Administrative units and heads of villages were provided with project description and stakeholder consultation objectives, in order to provide them with the means of informing their communities of the process and provide channels of communication back to the Project. They were formally asked to assist the project teams to place posters and leaflets in accessible places in each village (i.e., communal premises, school building and central shops). This relationship will be maintained in order to facilitate the future engagement and contact with the community.

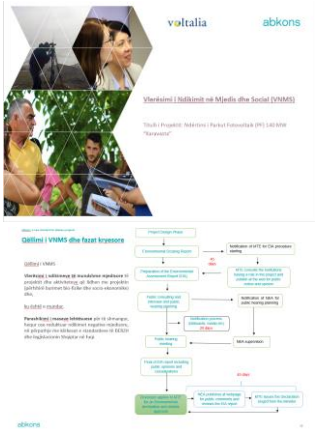
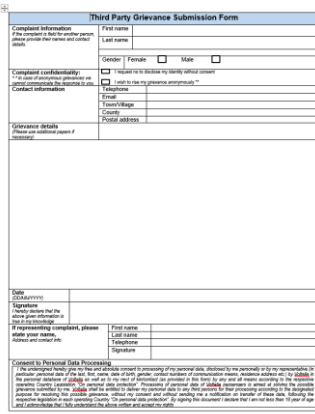
As an extension of the stakeholder engagement activities, specific engagements have been carried out with the aim of developing socio-economic baseline activities, required for the preparation of the ESIA report and in line with the national requirements for EIA. These engagements have included household surveys, focus group discussions and key informant interviews.

The range of appropriate tools used for the purposes of gathering qualitative and quantitative data, as specified in the SEP, included the tools displayed in Table below.

Table 1 – Communication materials used during the stakeholder engagement process

Material	Description	Purpose	Audience	Records & reports	Stakeholder's Connection to the project and topics discussed
 <p>Official Letter (Invitation)</p>	<p>A short and concise description of the project, giving details on the chosen route.</p> <p>Information on the importance of the stakeholder engagement process and inviting authorities to participate in stakeholder engagement process.</p>	<p>To ensure that stakeholders are aware and notified in advance of scheduled meetings.</p>	<p>National Level Including Ministries & national Agencies Regional Level.</p>	<p>Communication tools reported within Stakeholder Report.</p>	<p>Ministries and Agencies that have interest on the project implementation and play an important role with permitting requirements which must be met by the Project.</p>
 <p>Leaflet</p>	<p>Project description and notifications for participation in consultation meetings.</p> <p>Informing on time, date and location of meetings to be held in the settlement.</p>	<p>To provide a brief overview of the project and inform residents of the project meeting.</p>	<p>Regional & Local Community.</p>	<p>Photo recording and being reported as an annex to the Stakeholder Report.</p>	<p>Local community directly impacted by the project implementation as well communities which will not experience any impact but can have their decision-making role with regards to the environmental social impact assessment.</p>

Material	Description	Purpose	Audience	Records & reports	Stakeholder's Connection to the project and topics discussed
 <p>Posters</p>	Project description and notifications for participation in consultation meetings. Informing on time, date and location of meetings to be held in the settlement.	To provide a brief overview of the project and inform residents of the project meeting.	Regional & Local Community.	Photo recording and being reported as an annex to the Stakeholder Report.	Local community directly impacted by the project implementation as well communities which will not experience any impact but can have their decision-making role with regards to the environmental social impact assessment.
 <p>Media announcement</p>	Notifications for participation in consultation meetings. Informing on time, date and location of meeting.	To inform stakeholders of the project meeting.	All stakeholders	Photo recording and being reported as an annex to the Stakeholder Report.	Local community directly impacted by the project implementation as well communities which will not experience any impact but can have their decision-making role with regards to the environmental social impact assessment.

Material	Description	Purpose	Audience	Records & reports	Stakeholder's Connection to the project and topics discussed
 <p>Presentation PPT</p>	<p>Presentation of the ESIA process, project description, project progress to date, future project plans, timeframes, expected impacts and mitigation measures.</p>	<p>Consult on impacts and disclosure of mitigation measures.</p>	<p>Stakeholders of all levels that are invited to participate in consultation meetings.</p>	<p>Understand the project and its timeline in order to have an open communication and discussion on potential project impacts.</p>	<p>Directly affected communities which may experience potential project impacts; stakeholders which have interest on the project implementation and have their important role with permitting requirements which must be met by the Project.</p>
 <p>Grievance Form</p>	<p>Template to raise the grievances through the mechanism developed by the Project.</p>	<p>Address all stakeholder concerns raised through this mechanism in order to maintain a two-way communication channel with interested and affected parties.</p>	<p>All stakeholders.</p>	<p>Grievance Management Mechanism Grievance Register.</p>	<p>Directly and indirectly affected stakeholders.</p>

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Material	Description	Purpose	Audience	Records & reports	Stakeholder's Connection to the project and topics discussed
		experience in relation to overcoming impacts generated by the Project.			
<p>1. INFORMATORI KYÇ - BIRQËSJA DHE BLEGTORIA</p> <p>◊ Detajet e intervistës</p> <p>Data: ____/____/____</p> <p>Emri i tabutë/ bashkisë: _____</p> <p>Emri i personave: _____</p> <p>Emri i ekipit intervistues: _____</p> <p>Niveli i personave: Mëkëmb ____ Emri ____</p> <p>◊ Pyetjet</p> <p>1.1 PËR SA KOMBESITË PËRSHIJE NE KËTE SEKTOR?</p> <p>_____</p> <p>1.2 A KA SHQËNDATA LOKALEJE FERROREVE/ NDIJE "PO" A JENI PËRITAR/ NDOJË PËR TIRË?</p> <p>_____</p> <p>1.3 CILA KËRTE PËRBJEJA E TOKE SË ZONË?</p> <p>_____</p> <p>1.4 SA SUPËRFAQE TOKE ADMINISTRIMINË DËKËTË NGA FIRMATAT/ SA NGA KËTOJANE BUDGJESORË, KAPALCË, UDRAGË?</p> <p>_____</p> <p>1.5 SA TOKE PËR FIRMË KANË MARRË BANOJËTË NË KËTO FIRMAT?</p> <p>_____</p> <p>Key informant</p>	Interview sheet which targets individuals who have knowledge of a specific subject or are informed members of the community.	Provides guidance regarding critical topics (i.e., health, labour and employment, Infrastructure and regional development, agriculture, transportation Source of gathering information from an individual who has in-depth knowledge of a specific subject or topic area.	Government and local employers, local leaders, healthcare professionals.	Provide qualitative information that can be used during the baseline assessment and Environmental studies	Environmental and Agriculture Health Care Workers Infrastructure Employment.

4. Stakeholders Engagement Meetings and Outcomes

4.1. Introduction

This section provides a detailed description of the engagement activities and outcomes carried out in each of the ESIA phases. As described in the SEP the stakeholder engagement process for consultation and disclosure during the ESIA consisted of the following phases;

- ESIA Scoping Phase
- ESIA Study (Baseline studies)
- ESIA Disclosure and Public Hearing.

The number of meetings and outcomes, including photos during the meetings, are provided in the subsections below.

4.2. Stakeholder Engagement During All Phases

The stakeholder engagement process began in September 2020 when the initial consultation phase of the engagement took place. The process started at the national level (Ministries and National Agencies) and was followed by the engagement process in the Regional and Local Level (Regional directories, Municipalities, Counties, LGU) and Community level.

The process started with site visit and walkover to the project area, as a way of gathering primary data and building bridges with stakeholders in order to achieve an effective communication and identify social and health receptors on the key topics and issues that was then consulted with the identified stakeholders. These preliminary site visits on the project location area aimed to visually identify village locations, as well as the areas affected by the project, including the most important infrastructure facilities (schools/health care centers/educational and recreational centers, cultural heritage point of interest, etc.)

During the initial phase 18 meetings took place with all levels of stakeholders, including engagement with 10 national institutions, 3 NGO's, 7 regional and local institutions and 2 villages. The table below shows a display of the stakeholder engagement plan and relevant schedules for all identified stakeholders:

Table 2 – Stakeholder engagement - Scoping meeting schedules

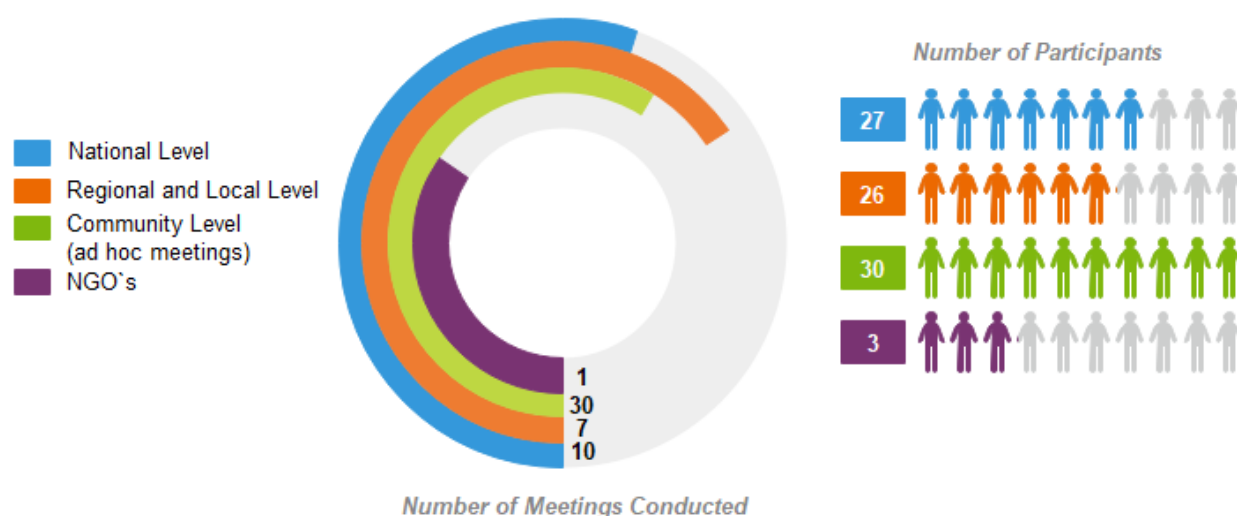
Identified Stakeholders	Meeting Date
Ministry of Tourism and Environment (MTE)	21-Sep-20
Ministry of Infrastructure and Energy (MEI)	23-Sep-20
Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development (MARD)	22-Sep-20
Ministry of Culture	22-Sep-20
National Environment Agency (NEA)	23-Sep-20
National Territorial Planning Agency (NTPA)	21-Sep-20
National Agency for the Protected Areas (NAPA)	21-Sep-20
National Agency of Natural Resources	23-Sep-20
National Institute of Cultural Heritage - Ministry of Culture	22-Sep-20
Transmission System Operator (OST)	23-Sep-20
Regional Directory of Environment, Fier Region	24-Sep-20
Drainage Board	24-Sep-20
Prefecture of Fier Region	24-Sep-20
Regional Council of Fier	24-Sep-20
Fier Municipality (Technical Directories of the Fier Municipality)	24-Sep-20

Identified Stakeholders	Meeting Date
Libofshe Administrative Unit, Municipality of Fier	24-Sep-20
Local community at the project area (Hasturkas, Ndërnenas,)	29-Oct-20
Regional Agency for the Protected Areas (RAPA)	25-Sep-20
Municipality of Divjake (Technical Directories of the Divjake Municipality)	25-Sep-20
NGOs	16-Oct-20
Local community at the project area (Seman, Gjakalli, Seman i Ri, Hoxhare, Dermenas, Havaleas, Radostine, Çlirim, Radostine - Vadhiz, Zhupan)	Feb-21

Meetings schedules and locations were selected in close collaboration with each individual stakeholder or stakeholder group in order to guarantee maximum participation and make them feel comfortable and freely to express their opinions about the Project. The meetings were held in a variety location, such as ministries, municipality and administrative units' offices following the instruction of the Ministry of Health and Social Protection⁴. Due to Covid – 19 restrictions the engagement with local communities was conducted through individual meetings (ad hoc).

The graph below shows the number of meetings conducted during the scoping phase for each level of engagement and participants.

Figure 2 – Number of meetings and participants during Scoping phase



The draft scoping report was published on 14th January 2021 and was available through the project website for comments and suggestions for a period of 30 days until 12th February 2021. After this time period an online consultation meeting was organized on 26th February 2021 to discuss relevant issues related to the scoping report disclosure and preliminary findings. In total 7 participants including; 1 national level, 2 regional and local level and 4 NGO's participated in the meeting.

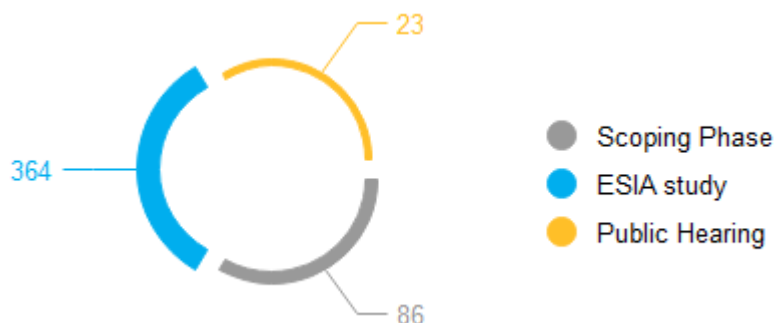
The ESIA study phase (socio-economic survey) also served as an information campaign where the team distributed leaflets to 364 households interviewed.

The Public Hearing event was organized in 30th of March next to the school in the village of Ndërnenas, Fier. Local community and several regional and local institutions attended the consultation meeting.

⁴ <https://new.shendetesia.gov.al/masat-e-reja-per-te-parandaluar-perhapjen-e-covid-19/>

During all phases of engagement, the stakeholders have shown a quiet interest for the process. The graph below indicates the number of participators in each phase, including the social baseline survey⁵.

Figure 3 - Number of participants per each level of engagement at all phases



4.3. Stakeholder Engagement During Scoping Phase (21st – 25th Sept 2020)

Consultation meetings at all levels involved a presentation of the Project, followed by a question-and-answer session. However, as mentioned earlier, this type of meeting also offered an opportunity to provide information regarding the project and the use of project maps as a trigger for participants to further engage in the ESIA process.

During the meetings, in general, most of the stakeholders showed interest and had positive views about the proposed Project and its implementation. However, there were a number of suggestions and comments that concerned the need for detailed studies and special attention. It was strongly emphasized during all the meetings, that the project should be implemented with the greatest possible consideration for the “Karavasta Park”. For this reason, it is suggested constant coordination with the administration of the protected areas especially during the project implementation phase.

As stated in the sections above, the engagement with local community was organized in the form of individual meetings. In general, the community expressed their interest in the project and adopted a positive attitude toward it.

The questions and suggestions of the consultation meetings have been broadly categorized into the following areas:

- **Concerns regarding the loss of livelihood and compensation:** Impacts to land-based livelihood and the compensation that those affected might receive.
- **Environmental issues in terms of flora/fauna studies:** questions were raised with regard to impacts on flora/fauna and especially birds’ due to the vicinity with the national park.
- **OHL route selection:** The route will be defined in such way as to avoid any impact on residential areas wherever possible or, where is not possible, to stay as far as possible far from any individual houses or dwellings.
- **Project benefits:** Stakeholders asked questions regarding the potential benefits that they might receive from the Project. Sometimes, these questions were articulated as community needs, with the hope that the Project may be able to provide support. Key areas of benefit raised were: training and employment opportunities; improvement to community infrastructure such as road infrastructure upgrade, etc.

⁵ Higher number of people have participated in the meetings but have not signed the attendance list (e.g., the ad hoc meetings and the public hearing event).

The engagement process was recorded through Minutes of Meetings (Annex 7), List of participants (Annex 8) and through photos taken during each engagement (Table 7). Below is a summary of the main issues and questions raised during the stakeholder meetings at all levels of engagement.

Table 3 – Summary of the outcomes from engagement meetings during scoping phase

No	Identified Stakeholders	Feedback / comments / concerns
1	Ministry of Tourism and Environment (MTE)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The investment is very important for Albania in terms of economic development and energy sector and has an added value because is friendly with environment. Stakeholder engagement is important especially with the local community. This project is covered by annex 1 and categorized for the in-depth ESIA The developer should organize the public hearing in coordination with the National Agency of Environment and Regional Agency of Environment. All the comments should be included in the ESIA. Considering that the project is nearby a protected area, the implementation should be in harmony with the biodiversity in the area in order to protect as much as can the flora and fauna. The monitoring and survey process should provide detailed information not only for the ESIA process but also to identify potential impacts, take mitigation measures and be considered by the company during the project lifecycle (for example bird movement and any other species of the wild life in the national park). With regard of the local community the company should consider some potential investments in the area. The company will be for a long time present in the area and in this context the local community should be considered as a partner. Regarding the engagement with the national and/or local NGO you can request information to the Ministry of Tourism and Environment and we can provide you a full contact list of the active NGO's.
2	National Agency for the Protected Areas (NAPA)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Even though the PV plant is outside the protected area this project might have impacts since is nearby the National Park. Reflection of the panels might confuse the birds and is one of the main issues that need to be mitigated. Collaboration with the Regional Administration of Protected Areas. Full support for this project since Albania depends on the energy produced by Hydro Power Plants.
3	National Territorial Planning Agency (NTPA)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Approved general urban plan of Fier municipality in 2016 is available on the website of National Territorial Planning Agency Changes of the borders between the Municipality of Fier and Divjaka approved through DCM no 360 dt22/05/2019. Nearby the project area there are some agritourism plans not approved yet (request information from Albanian Investment Development Agency) Detailed Plan of the National Park of "Karavasta" is in process. All the urban plans are available at the NTPA website









No	Identified Stakeholders	Feedback / comments / concerns
4	Ministry of Infrastructure and Energy (MEI)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Which is the Time-line of the ESIA process? Is there any constrains due to the EBRD requirements that might delay the process? Considering that the project is nearby the National Park of "Karavasta" we suggest a close collaboration with the Regional Administration of the Protected Area. Is the layout defined? Why the transmission line will have a capacity of 220 kv? The ministry will need a detailed calculation of the PV plant in order to check and maintain the production figures as per the contract signed. Have you discussed with OST for the Fier substation? Can this substation hold the energy produced by the PV plant? There is a project by the World Bank for a transmission line coming from Greece and Macedonia that will be connected in the same substation. The total land surface where the PV plant will be located is granted to the Ministry of Infrastructure and Energy with DCM and will be provided to Voltalia. We have not identified any specific user at the PV plant area. This area is mostly used for grazing purposes but however there is a need of social baseline survey in order to identify any potential informal users of the land. How will be managed the panels that will be changed?
5	Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development (MARD)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In 2016 there was a project financed by the World Bank for improvement of drainage channels in the project area. Will the project impact the drainage system in the area? From the total land of 190 ha how much will be utilized by the project? Waste management and environment accidents, hazardous discharging Are there any inhabited areas nearby to the project? Ministry of Infrastructure and Energy is the initiator and responsible for the land acquisition.
6	Ministry of Culture and National Institute of Cultural Heritage (IKTK) - Ministry of Culture	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The archeological Permit shall be applied through the online application process. The archeological report shall be developed by a licensed archeologist. There will be an expert appointed by the Ministry that will be on site for monitoring which might happen during the survey of your licensed expert. The transmission line shall be part of the same study and application as the PV Plant. There is no need of engaging the regional directory of cultural heritage. ESIA shall include a general study of the cultural heritage in the area, beside of the in-depth archeological survey that will be carried out by a licensed archeologist.
7	National Environment Agency (NEA)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Apply directly for starting the procedure since the project is subject for an in-depth EIA Refer to the DCM 714 (amended) for the online application and timeline The application for public hearing can be submitted after the National Agency of Environment response for the EIA categorization There is no need for identification of the land plots affected by the transmission line Upload in the online application the ownership documents for

No	Identified Stakeholders	Feedback / comments / concerns
		the PV plant
8	National Agency of Natural Resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Albania is depending from the energy produced by the hydro power plants. In this context the energy produced by the PV plant should enter in the system to compensate the energy produced by the Hydro power plants. This project is welcomed in terms of energy production but might be a bit concern in regard of Environment since is nearby of the National Park of Karavasta. All the area where the PV plant is located should be oriented in the Solar energy production.
9	Transmission System Operator (OST)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> PV plant and transmission line should be part of the same ESIA. Full support for the project implementation Expect that the project will have minor impacts to the environment During the process of consultation for the transmission line with regard to land acquisition and ESIA process OST shall be present.
10	Mayor of Fier Municipality (Technical Directories of the Fier Municipality)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Full support from the municipality No permits needed by the municipality for this project since it is approved directly by the National Council of the Territory. Coordination with the local Administrative Units
11	Libofshe Administrative Unit, Municipality of Fier	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> With regard of the local community the company should consider some potential investments in the area. Employment of the local community Coordination with the Village head Full support for the project
12	Prefecture of Fier Region and Regional Council of Fier	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Considering that the project is nearby the National Park we suggest close collaboration with the Regional Administration of the Protected Areas Full support from the institution to facilitate the project implementation
13	Drainage Board	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Primary channels are managed by the Drainage Board Secondary channels are managed by the municipality Tertiary channels are managed by the farmers. Primary channels have restriction area 8 m by each side that is used to clean the channels. Secondary channels have restriction area 4 m by each side that is used to clean the channels. The pumping station for the drainage of the area need improvement, however there were no flooding events in the last 30 years.
14	Regional Agency of Environment, Fier Region	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Apply directly for starting the procedure since the project is subject for an in-depth EIA Refer to the DCM 714 (amended) for the online application and timeline The application for public hearing can be submitted after the National Agency of Environment response for the EIA categorization

No	Identified Stakeholders	Feedback / comments / concerns
15	Municipality of Divjakë	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Full support for the project • The investment is very important for Albania in terms of economic development and energy sector and has an added value because is friendly with environment. • Considering that the project is nearby a protected area, we suggest a meeting with the Administration of the Protected Areas. • 70 % of the land covered by the PV plant is under the administration of Divjaka Municipality • The secondary drainage and irrigation channels are maintained by the municipality
16	Regional Administration for the Protected Areas (RAPA)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There are some projects planned, but not yet approved, in the area that might cause cumulative impacts • The mirror effect of the panels impacts the birds • The land is considered unproductive but for the park is an asset that is used by different species. • The project area is visited by the “sea barn swallow” that is a protected species. • Transmission line could affect the birds (crash to the lines). • There is a passing road for the migratory birds in the project area. • Movement of different species within the project area during operation • Attention to the cleaning of the panels with hazardous liquid • Engage with International Bird life (NGO) in the consultation process • Proposed to extend the National Park but does not include the project area
17	Local Communities near PDA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Positive attitude towards the Projects, seen as an opportunity for the development of the area; • Land in the area is mostly saline with sporadic areas used as grazing land and nearly 5 Ha used for cultivation of annual crops; • Opportunity for employment of the locals; • Possibility for the project to make social investments in the area or infrastructure development; • Avoid the implementation of the Project during harvesting period in May – June or minimize the impacts related to this topic.
18	Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Source of the water that will be used for the Projects’ needs; • Monitoring of the species is performed usually during the Spring season; • Avoid the cleaning of the panels with hazardous products or mitigation measures to minimize the impact; • Use of signs to avoid the crashing of the birds with the transmission lines which is very efficient and low-cost; • Migratory birds’ route near the project area to be kept under observation; • Possibility to make comments and suggestions to the Scoping report once published and in the future phases.

All the meetings were recorded using photos. In the table below there are some photos taken during the consultation meetings.

Table 4 – Photos from stakeholder engagement during scoping phase

Photos from Stakeholder Engagement	
 <p>Ministry of Tourism and Environment</p>	 <p>Ministry of Tourism and Environment</p>
 <p>National Territory Planning Agency</p>	 <p>Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Development</p>
 <p>Ministry of Culture, National Institute of Cultural Heritage</p>	 <p>Ministry of Infrastructure and Energy</p>
 <p>National Agency of Protected Areas</p>	 <p>Regional Agency of Environment</p>

Photos from Stakeholder Engagement



Administrative unit of Libofshe



Administration of Protected Area "Karavasta"
National Park



Municipality of Divjake



Community engagement



Community engagement



Community engagement



Community engagement



Community engagement

Photos from Stakeholder Engagement



Community engagement



Community engagement



Community engagement



Community engagement

4.4. Stakeholder Engagement During Baseline Data Gathering (Dec 2020 – Feb 2021)

The stakeholder engagement continued at the community level with the aim of gathering baseline data to be utilized for further environmental, socio - economic and cultural analyses. Collecting baseline data prior to the implementation of the project activities is a crucial step when developing a prospective evaluation of the project. The social baseline field survey was carried out on December 2020 – February 2021. The field survey in the project area comprised the performance of a total of 364 SSES interviews.

Engagement objectives during the baseline data gathering included:

- Understanding the existing socio-economic context of the project area, in order to use it as a benchmark of pre-project livelihoods and conditions;
- Identifying stakeholders who are potentially sensitive / vulnerable to the proposed project or able to support in the implementation of the information disclosure and mitigation measures;
- Check veracity of stakeholder feedback in order to differentiate between perceived and factual impact.

All the villages in the project area were considered in the socio-economic survey. The method applied was face to face interviews with a sample of the households located in the villages of the project. The households were asked in detail about their social and economic situation through developed questionnaires (SSES questionnaire). The information was then used to analyse the gathered data and assess the given indicators on quality of life in the area.

For primary data collection, the tools were designed to enable the teams to record information clearly and concisely while in the field. These tools are complementary and intended to collect information with varying levels of detail. The combination of research tools included the following activities undertaken in terms of stakeholder engagement:

- Review of secondary data;
- Reconnaissance survey to identify all communities that will be directly or indirectly affected and to alert community leaders and residents of the Project and the proposed studies;
- Key Informant Interviews;
- Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) with groups of Farmers and Herders;
- Face to face interviews through a Sample Socio Economic Survey.

A detailed social baseline assessment and identification of impacts and its mitigation are given in the ESIA chapter Social Baseline.

4.4.1.1. Focus Groups and Key Informants (Feb 2021)

The stakeholder engagement process included interviewing a number of focus groups and key informant regarding social, infrastructure & agricultural and health care issues. Group discussions and interviews had a higher focus on farming and herders which are considered as more vulnerable than others in similar projects.

These groups were chosen because of the vulnerability that they may represent in this Project. The Table below presents the number of stakeholders by gender that were involved in group discussions and interviews held during the engagement process on these levels.

Table 5 – Engagement of FG & KI

Description		Number <i>M – Male</i> <i>F – Female</i>
Focus Group	Herders	3 (M)
	Farmers	8 (M)
Key informants	Health Workers	5 (F)
	Agriculture and Livestock	9 (M) 1 (F)
	Infrastructure	6 (M) 3 (F)
	Local Employment	5 (M) 4 (F)
	Educational Institutions	2 (M) 1 (F)
Total		33 (M) 14 (F)

Farming and agriculture are the main employment sectors and main source of incomes in the area. The most cultivated plants are the annual crops especially, wheat, maize and vegetables but also alfalfa used as animal feed. In general, agricultural products are both for personal use and for sale. The products are sold to the middleman due to the lack of dedicated markets. Being a rural area, most families in the villages have livestock. The most widespread animals are cows, goats,

chickens and sheep. Residents have reported that the products are used for personal use and very few of them generate income from this activity. Detailed outcomes from the field survey are given in the ESIA **Social Baseline Chapter**.

The PV plant project site itself is mostly saline due to its vicinity to the seashore and the infiltration of sea waters, being located below sea level, and therefore is not used for growing crops. However, during the engagement in the village of Hasturkas it was reported that a small portion of the land is used for grazing but there are no specific users identified. Also, it was reported that some herders travel from other areas of Albania to the project area during the summer season. The **herders** met on site during the survey reported that use the PV plant project site as a road path during spring and summer time to provide access to the agricultural parcels at the other side of the PV plant. However, the interruption of access to this path will not restrict herders from reaching the other side of the PV plant since they have other road alternatives.

The site survey identified that a small portion of land in the east border of the PV plant (nearly 2- 3 Ha) is used for cultivating wheat and crops for animal grazing. The **farmer** met on site stated that the land is planted by informal users, which is state owned and do not have any complain for ownership. Being quite exclusively cultivated with annual crops, the farmers harvest in the period of May-June, so it is preferable for the Project to allow the harvesting of these crops in June into consideration.

During the stakeholder engagement process, it was noticed that **women** were not really involved in community meetings as expected and that they were mostly met in work places such as schools, health

centers and the municipality. However, they were fully aware and informed regarding the project and had similar information as men while being interviewed.

Usually, women state that they feel as equal partners to their husbands. Although during the community discussions, usually men are the ones that still represent the respective family, when it comes to family matters in the house, women have an equally important role in decision-making.

For cultural reasons, the majority of the women do not own the land, which means that all compensation will be received by men, thus creating an inequality gap. Only in very rare occasions do women own a piece of land or house. These are the cases when their husband has passed away or due to inheritance law, and thus they become the first beneficiary and will then pass ownership onto their children, usually male.

It should be noted that female-headed households might be underreported, as it is culturally held that a man is the head of the household even if that man is not a permanent resident or is just a male member of the extended family. Nevertheless, the gender situation in terms of employment and education is reported by the men in the family.

In the vicinity of the project area there were no minority groups, confirmed also by the 2011 Census⁶, who did not report minorities in the area.

Key Informants were also interviewed during stakeholder engagement to achieve quality information regarding the Project Area. They were separated into 5 categories:

- Agriculture and Livestock;
- Health Care Workers;
- Infrastructure;
- Local Employment.
- Educational Institutions

These interviews gave clearer qualitative information on the social overview in this area, indicating unemployment as one of the major issues. This has caused large scale migration from the area.

The villages where the baseline study took place, are sparsely populated. In Albania, the most important reason for this situation is the migration of the young generation. Due to a lack of economic opportunities and means of life quality, many families have moved to bigger cities or migrated to countries such as Greece or Italy. This is quite a common phenomenon in the countryside where villages are being abandoned in search for better life opportunities.

Road Infrastructure in the area is generally in good conditions drinking water coming from the water supply is reported by the local residents to be unsafe and not used for drinking purposes.

In most of the villages there is primary and secondary schools, while the high schools are located in the bigger villages where the Administrative Units are located.

Health centers provide basic first aid services. Most of them lack staff and equipment. The hospital is located in Fier City.

Below are some photo records from the engagement with these groups in the project area.

⁶ INSTAT Census 2011

Table 6 – Photos from the focus groups, key informants and socio-economic survey

FGD/KII/SSES	Photos	
Farmers and Herders		
		
		
		
KI – Local Employment KI – Infrastructure KI – Agriculture & Livestock KI – Health Care KI – Schools		

FGD/KII/SSES	Photos	
		
Field Survey – SSES		
		

FGD/KII/SSES	Photos	
		 
		 
<p>Field Survey – SSES</p>	 	 

4.5. Public Hearing (30th March 2021)

Based on the requirements specified in DCM no. 247⁷, dated 30.04.2014 "On determining the rules, requirements and procedures for informing and involving the public in environmental decision-making" the following methods are used for notification of the stakeholders for the Public Hearing.

- Notification through local and national media (Annex 2):
 - Daily newspaper "Panorama"
 - Apollonia Television
 - Radio Tirana
- Publication of the announcement on the website of the company Karavasta Solar
- Posters providing information for the public hearing and contact details were placed in the villages near the PDA and along the transmission line route (Annex 6).
- Invitation letters with attached 30 copies of non-technical summary to be made available to local community were sent to Municipality of Divjake, Fier and to the REA. The same letter with attached 10 copies of non-technical summary were sent to AU of Karavasta e Re, Libofshe, Topojë, Dërmenas and Qëndër (Annex 3).
- All the stakeholders engaged in the previous phases were notified through email.

As mentioned in the section 3.1 above the Public Hearing was conducted based on the following Ministry of Health and Social Protection instructions⁸ for enhancing protection of individuals and communities and preventing spread of the corona virus disease (Covid-19).

The Public Hearing was held on March 30, 2021 next to the school in the village of Ndërmenas, Libofshë, Fier. The meeting was conducted as per the following agenda:

- Registration of participants;
- Introduction
- Project presentation
- ESIA findings
- Discussions, questions and suggestions;

To fulfil all the requirements specified in the DCM the National Environment Agency (NEA), published the notification of the Public Hearing event in their official website (<http://akm.gov.al/assets/karavasta-solar%2c-park-fotovoltaik%2c-fier%2c-vth.pdf>).

The following images show the notification in the newspaper and the announcement in the "Apollonia" local TV.

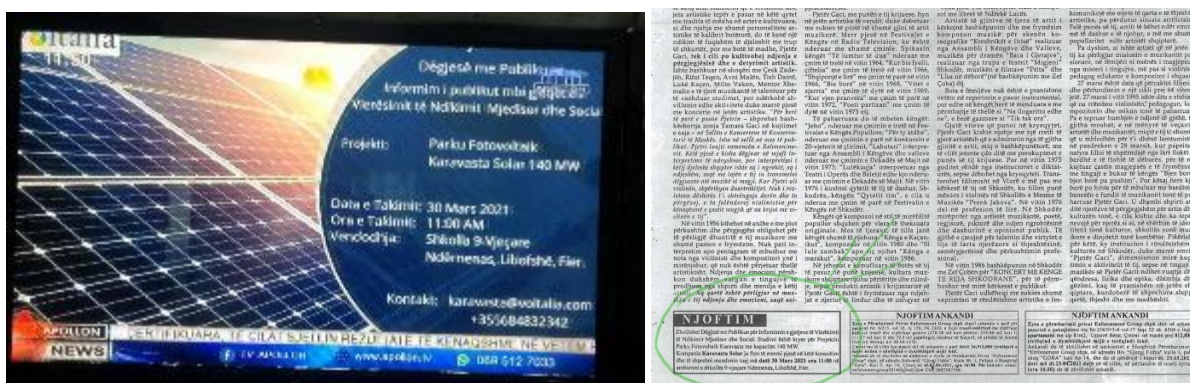


Figure 4 - Images from announcement in newspaper and visual media

⁷ DCM No. 247, dated 30.04.2014, "On the determination of rules, requirements and procedures for public information and involvement at the environmental decision-making process"

⁸ <https://new.shendetesia.gov.al/masat-e-reja-per-te-parandaluar-perhapjen-e-covid-19/>

The table below presents a summary of the main issues addressed (comments received) and respective responses as appropriate.

Table 7 - Summary table on the discussed issues during public hearing

Key Issues / Comments	Responses
Ervin Buzi (Expert from REA Fier) – Has the project planned any social investments such as new buildings or upgrades of kindergartens, schools as part of social responsibility plan?	Redion Biba (Environmental Expert/ Abkons) - There will be social projects and investments as part of the company's Social Responsibility, but the specific investments implemented will be decided after a study period of the needs that will have the communities in the area.
Ervin Buzi (Expert from REA Fier) - We would suggest to build a capture reservoir or tank for collecting rainwater and then reuse it for the cleaning process of the PV panels.	Johan Shyti (Environmental Expert/ Abkons) - Yes, a suggestion that we have presented as an alternative to the company. Nevertheless, since the water quantity for the cleaning process is relatively small (about 1,200 m ³ per year) the company decided that the water supply will be made through local private companies with trucks or from the local fire station. This option offers a safer and more reliable alternative for the project, avoiding any type of groundwater or surface water abstraction during operation phase.
Questions from locals - Where will you send the discharge water draining from batteries?	Enkeleda Sopaj (Environmental Expert/ Abkons) - The company in the project submitted for Environmental evaluation has stated that there will be no batteries for energy storage. The project envisages to produce clean photovoltaic energy which will be transformed into the Substation that the company will build. Then will be transferred through the 220 KW overhead power line to the Fier Substation. So, it is not foreseen any energy storage through batteries, nor any water discharges or other types of discharges from the project. .
Fatmir Bushi (Resident of Ndërnenas) - This is very good for the country and the state, but what does our area benefit. Will the company offer any employment to the local community?	Redion Biba (Environmental Expert/ Abkons) – The project investment will be around 80 million euros. About 1% of the company's total investment for this project will be destined for the social responsibility and investments in the area. in addition, during the construction and operation phase a minimum of 30% of workers from the local community will be employed. During construction will be employed around 200 persons, and during operation the number of employees will be 10-15 direct employees and 20-50 indirect.
Eniol Hila (Construction Engineer, Divjake Municipality) - Has an economic study been done, apart from employment, what will the area benefit from? Has the company considered lowering the energy price for the project area?	Redion Biba (Environmental Expert/ Abkons) - The company has received the right to build this plant through a tendering process and the company has given a very low price of 24.89 euros per megawatt. Ervin Buzi (RED Fier) - Energy will be transmitted to the Fier Substation and will be managed by TSO. TSO and ERE as regulatory entities are seeing fit that there is overproduction in the country will reduce the price of energy for all of Albania. Lowering of the energy price is not a target that can be decided by the company (Votolia/ Karavasta Solar).

Key Issues / Comments	Responses
Agim Doko (Representative of Libofshe administrative unit) - Will there be any investments, e.g., schools or local roads for this community?	<p>Johan Shyti (Environmental Expert/ Abkons) - As we discussed, 1% of the company's investment will go to the company's social responsibility and investments in the area.</p> <p>Redion Biba (Abkons Environmental Expert) - During the design and construction phase until 2022 the company will do research and look at investment opportunities in the area, then will decide in cooperation also with the other key stakeholders (i.e., municipality and administrative units) which will be the social investments as part of the fund of the Social Responsibility.</p>
Fatmir Bushi (Resident of Ndërnenas) – Are there going to be any investments in the touristic sector of the villages? We as local community would require the construction of a road section from this village to the western part up to the beach, in order to develop tourism in the area. The road section is about 7 km.	Redion Biba (Environmental Expert/ Abkons) - We are taking note of your suggestions and discussions and these notes will be passed on to the company as conclusions from the community. At the moment we cannot provide a clear response to this question. As mentioned, any social investments will be elaborated in close cooperation with the municipalities and administrative units during construction phase.
Fatmir Bushi (Resident of Ndërnenas) - We would also definitely need employment in the area. We require that the project gives priority to the employment of local residents from Ndërnenas and Hastukas.	.Redion Biba (Environmental Expert/ Abkons) – As mentioned before, the Company has committed to employ at the least 30% of the workforce needed for the Projects' implementation from the local area of the development. This number might be even higher depending on the skills of workers and type of activities or services that will be needed by the project.
Ardian Koci (Director of RAPA Fier) - When will the construction phase begin?	Redion Biba (Environmental Expert/ Abkons) – The implementation of the Project is expected to start in October 2021 and will last for 19 months.
<p>Loreto Veruari (Resident of Ndërnenas) – Will there be any road blockages during construction phase? Will the agricultural machineries such as tractors be allowed to pass in the nearby area close to the site?</p> <p>Are there going to be investments, e.g., reconstruction of the three bridges from village Agim to Ndërnenas?</p>	<p>Johan Shyti (Environmental Expert/ Abkons) – During construction there will be no blockages of the roads. Agricultural machineries will be allowed to pass in areas close to the project, however they may also use other access roads to the lands. The developer will prepare specific management plans to guarantee the good implementation of the project. One of these plans will be the Traffic Management Plan to control traffic and movement of vehicles in the project area. In case there will be any specific works by the developer they will make appropriate notifications prior to the commencement of works.</p> <p>Regarding the investments, the project will make appropriate identifications of the community needs in close cooperation with local/ regional governments authorities. Potential investments will be defined in the future phases, prior to the completion of construction phase.</p>

Table 8 - Photos from the public hearing meeting



5. Next Steps in the Stakeholder Engagement process

Following the submission of the final ESIA report, the records of engagement, in different project stages shall be recorded, monitored, managed and reported with the aim of showing all stakeholder's concerns and any progress or suggestions raised and addressed accordingly.

The ESIA report will be disclosed in the project website for 60 consecutive days. The stakeholders will be notified through email for the ESIA disclosure including the contacts and mechanism for returning feedback. If necessary, meetings will be organized with interested institutions (e.g., Administration of the Protected Area – “Karavasta” National Park) in the respective institution premises. However, instructions of the Ministry of Health and Social Protection⁹ shall be followed to prevent the spread of the virus.

Due to Covid – 19 restrictions, the engagement with local communities will be conducted through individual meetings (ad hoc). Project leaflets will be dropped house-to-house in the villages with contact details and mechanisms for returning feedback. Moreover, copies of the ESIA report to be made available for the local community will be officially distributed to the respective municipalities and administrative units.

During the Project construction, the company shall inform stakeholders about construction activities through community boards, information on the Project website, and via tools and media announcements or local postings in the settlements. The company shall be in close contact with the local municipalities via the Community Liaison Officers (CLOs) who will also follow up on grievances that may occur.

Also, during Project operation, the company shall keep stakeholders informed on planned activities (e.g., maintenance or project facilities functions) and will proactively provide information on operational safety and emergency response through leaflets, information events and other means of communication.

The future stakeholder engagement that the company shall carry out comprise the following phases

- Disclosure of final documents.
- Information on community health and safety risks and impacts (including any expected road access restrictions and construction works) and proposed mitigation measures
- Engagement during Construction Phase,
- Engagement during Operation Phase.

⁹ <https://new.shendetesia.gov.al/masat-e-reja-per-te-parandaluar-perhapjen-e-covid-19/>

6. Annexes

Annex 1 – Stakeholder list

Annex 2 – Media Announcement

Annex 3 – Invitation letters

Annex 4 – Mail Confirmation Receipts

Annex 5 - Project leaflets

Annex 6 – Posters and Photos

Annex 7 – Minutes of Meetings

Annex 8 – Attendance lists