



Republic of Serbia - Ministry of Science, Technological Development and Innovation

***SERBIA ACCELERATING INNOVATION AND GROWTH  
ENTREPRENEURSHIP PROJECT***

***Second Additional Financing***

***SAIGE AI & BIO4***

**Stakeholder Engagement Plan (SEP)**

( draft version )

**May 2024**

## ABBREVIATIONS

AI	Artificial Intelligence
AF	Additional Financing
BIO4	BIO4 Campus for biomedicine, biotechnology, bioinformatics, and biodiversity
CGD	Central Grievance Desk
CfP	Call for Proposals
E&S	Environmental and Social
ESCP	Environmental and Social Commitment Plan
ESF	Environmental and Social Framework
ESMF	Environmental and Social Management Framework
ESMP	Environmental and Social Management Plan
ESMP CL	Environmental and Social Management Plan Checklist
ESS	Environmental and Social Standards
GRM	Grievance Mechanism
GRS	Grievance Redress Service
GM	Grant Manuel
GIIP	Good International Industry Practice
GoS	Government of Serbia
GRS	Grievance Redress Service
IF	Innovation Fund
NITRA	Ministry of Science, Technological Development and Innovation
MoF	Ministry of Finance
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
OG	Official Gazette
OIP	Other Interested Parties
PIU	Project Implementation Unit
PIE	Project Implementing Entities
RS	Republic of Serbia
RDI	Research and Development Institutions
SF	Science Fund
SDF	Serbian Diaspora Facility
SRITTP	Serbia Research Innovation and Technology Transfer Project
SRO	Scientific Research Organisation
SDF	Serbian Diaspora Facility
TA	Technical Assistance
WB	World Bank

## 1. Introduction

The Serbia Accelerating Innovation and Growth Entrepreneurship (SAIGE) Project financed through the World Bank loan to the Republic of Serbia in the amount of EUR 43 million aims to enhance Serbia's growth and competitiveness by improving (i) relevance and quality of scientific research, and (ii) innovative entrepreneurship and access to finance for enterprise growth. The SAIGE Project is part of a comprehensive set of reforms of the Serbian R&D and Innovation sector, which includes reforms to the model of financing scientific research and the introduction of various business innovation support measures. The project is being initially implemented by the Ministry of Education, Science and Technological Development (MoESTD) in cooperation with the Innovation Fund (IF) and the Science Fund (SF). The Ministry of Education, Science and Technological Development (MoESTD/Ministry) until October 2022 was responsible for the overall Project coordination and implementation and execution of Component 1.2 RDI Reforms. After the April 2022 elections, a new line ministry – Ministry of Science, Technological Development and Innovation (NITRA/Ministry) has been tasked (in October 2022) as the successor, with the overall Project coordination and implementation. The Project is coordinated by the Project Implementation Unit (PIU) at NITRA.

The SAIGE Project currently includes an IBRD loan in the amount of €43 million (US\$48 million), signed on December 13, 2019, approved by the Parliament of the Republic of Serbia in January 2020, and declared effective on May 18, 2020. It also includes an EU IPA 19 funding, recipient-executed grant of €26.88 million (US\$28.52 million) processed as Additional Financing in July 2023. This first AF was not processed at the same time with the original IBRD Loan due to the slightly later approval of EU IPA funds in December 2019, and, at the time prolonged negotiations on the EU-WB Financial Framework Partnership Agreement, finalized on July 8, 2021. The first AF enables the scale-up of activities in the parent Project in line with approved development objectives through the same implementing entities and programs. Additionally, the second Additional Financing (AF) in the amount of €25 million (US\$27 million equivalent) is proposed to the Serbia Accelerating Innovation and Growth Entrepreneurship (P170185) parent project, in order to support AI development in Serbia and BIO4 campus.

### **Description of Second Additional Financing:**

The second Additional Financing (AF) in the amount of €25 million (US\$27 million equivalent) is proposed to the Serbia Accelerating Innovation and Growth Entrepreneurship (P170185) parent project. Changes proposed through the AF entail expanding the scope of the activities financed by the Parent Project, adjusting its overall design, and extending the closing date of the Parent Project by 24 months. The relevant implementation documents, such as POM and the grant manuals will be updated to include provisions related to improved risk impact assessment framework for safe, secure, responsible trustworthy and reliable AI (Trustworthy AI) ethics, environmental and social issues/impacts.

**Proposed activities** include grants and technical assistance to be implemented through existing components and Project Implementing Entities (PIEs). The following table summarizes the proposed activities, which are elaborated below.

Activity	Component	PIE
<b>AI related support</b>		
<i>AI Research Grants</i>	1.1 Science Fund	Science Fund
<i>AI Institute TA</i>	1.2 R&D Institute Reforms	PIU/NITRA
<i>AI Matching Grants for Firms</i>	2. Enterprise Acceleration	Innovation Fund
<b>BIO4</b>		
<i>TA for BIO4 Team and Researchers</i>	1.2 R&D Institute Reforms	PIU/NITRA
<i>TA for BIO4 RDIs</i>	1.2 R&D Institute Reforms	PIU/NITRA
<b>Project Management</b>		
<b>Project Management</b>	3. Project Management	PIU/NITRA

**I.The first component of AF will support development of Artificial Intelligence sector in Serbia (€18.5 million, US\$20 million equivalent)**

Support for AI activities will be to Project implementing entities (PIE) as follows.

- Innovation Fund ( IF) Activities*** : SAIGE AF Project will support the IF to implement an AI-focused Matching Grant Scheme. The scheme will be designed to incentivize startup and scaleup companies to pursue R&D and commercial opportunities based on Trustworthy AI, with the goal of creating new products and services, as well as innovative technologies with significant impact and market potential. The three priority areas including, but not limited to green energy transition, e-mobility and clinical healthcare will be reflected in the scoring guidelines that will also include how well the applicants will ensure Trustworthy AI. Grants will be awarded competitively, through a two-stage process consisting of expert peer reviewers and an independent, professional, selection committee. A draft Grant Manual (GM) has been prepared reflecting this focus and will be updated by the negotiations. The GM will incorporate Trustworthy AI components into the award criteria and Grant implementation plans.
- Science Fund Activities*** - SAIGE AF Project will support the following activities of the Science Fund which will be aligned with the Grant Manual provisions. A funding program for AI research projects, based on priority areas including, but not limited to e-mobility, green energy transition and clinical healthcare. Research projects will also be assessed based on their compliance with key Trustworthy AI principles, (as specified in the POM and the Grant Manual respectively).

A special funding program for AI research capacity building in the broader scientific community, supporting topics directly and indirectly related to AI technologies, researchers working on applied AI research projects, or interested researchers in joining such projects.

- AI Institute Activities*** – The SAIGE AF Project will support capacity building activities related to the AI Institute which will include the following:

  - Capacity building for staff and researchers on AI topics.

- b) Creating strategic partnerships with the AI Institutes around the world to collaborate on projects and share best practices, including a researcher exchange program to increase career mobility.
- c) Capacity building for institutional management and growth (governance, staffing, HR strategy, and related matters), and for managing AI risks in research and project /product development.

**II. The Second Component will support BIO4 Research Management Capacity Building and Funding for Transformation Plan (€3.8 million, US\$4 million equivalent) and will include the following:**

- **Capacity Building for BIO4 LLC Staff and Researchers**

Capacity building on a range of subjects related to facilities management will be provided through the Project. National and international expert consultants will advise and train the BIO4 management team on equipment and technology procurement, international accreditation of labs and facilities, safety and security systems, and assist the BIO4 team in establishing or revising BIO4 facilities rules, procedures, and safeguards standards, based on international good practice.

- ***Technical Assistance for BIO4 company capacity building***

The Second AF will support the strategic and operational development of the BIO4 Campus. This includes infrastructure setup, equipment provision, capacity building, and global collaborations. Extensive training and knowledge exchange will be provided to BIO4 management and staff in areas such as strategy, business development, and partnership management. Once trained, they will mentor new staff. Additionally, BIO4 will need services for branding, communication strategy development, and legal support for commercial activities. The project proposes technical assistance for these needs.

- **Institutional Transformation of BIO4 RDIs, with a Specific Focus on Promoting Science-Business Collaboration**

This sub-component will provide financing of €100,000 to €300,000 per project for R&D transformation plans, incentivizing collaboration and technology transfer between BIO4 campus R&D organizations and the private sector (including development of new products, services, and technologies with future market potential) in various fields related to biomedicine, biotechnology, bioinformatics, and biodiversity. These activities will be managed by the Project Implementation Unit (PIU) as part of ongoing R&D institute reforms

**III. Project Management (€2.7 million, US\$3.2 million equivalent – to be Added to Component 3: Project Management)**

This funding will include project management, focused on providing financing for the PIU operation including costs related to operational, procurement assistance, environmental, ethical and social safeguards, surveys tracking project implementation, and project audits.

**Purpose of the SEP**

The SAIGE is being prepared under the World Bank’s Environment and Social Framework (ESF). Per Environmental and Social Standard ESS10 on Stakeholder Engagement and Information Disclosure, the implementing entities should provide stakeholders with timely, relevant, understandable, and accessible

information, and consult with them in a culturally appropriate manner, which is free of manipulation, interference, coercion, discrimination, or intimidation.

## **2. Objective/Description of SEP**

The overall objective of this SEP is to define a program for stakeholder engagement, including public information disclosure and consultation throughout the entire project cycle. The SEP outlines the ways in which the project team will communicate with stakeholders and includes a mechanism by which people can raise concerns, provide feedback, or make complaints about project activities or any activities related to the project. The present Stakeholder Engagement Plan (SEP) is to outline the target groups and methods of stakeholder engagement and the responsibilities in the implementation of stakeholder engagement activities. The intention of the SEP is to activate the engagement of stakeholders in a timely manner during project preparation and implementation. Specifically, SEP serves the following purposes: (i) stakeholder identification and analysis; (ii) planning engagement modalities and effective communication tools for consultations and disclosure; (iii) defining the role and responsibilities of different actors in implementing the SEP; (iv) defining the Project's Grievance Mechanism (GM) and (v) providing feedback to stakeholders; (vi) ensure that appropriate project information on environmental and social risks and impacts is disclosed in a timely, understandable, accessible format; (vii) ensure that appropriate project information on environmental and social risks and impacts is disclosed in a timely, understandable, accessible format and monitoring and reporting of the SEP.

The SEP for second AF will be disclosed to the public on the Ministry's website:

<https://nitra.gov.rs/cir/inovacije/projekat-saige>

### **Second Additional Financing Project Activities Risk Estimation**

Overall project risk is estimated as Substantial, for both Social and Environmental aspects.

- Environmental risk is rated as Substantial. Environmental risks associated with AI grant calls primarily arise during the research phase, with concerns centered on the research environment, including occupational health and safety and working conditions. To mitigate these risks, based on the screening the relevant E&S instruments will be prepared and adhered to. However, given that Project might support some research commercialization, potential downstream effects should be considered, notably the consumption of computing power and electricity leading to carbon dioxide emissions. In addition to AI, Technical assistance will encompass facilities management, advising and training the BIO4 management team, international lab and facility accreditation, safety and security systems, and establishing or revising facility rules and procedures. While direct adverse environmental risks associated with this support are minimal, potential downstream impacts on community health and safety, particularly regarding activities like animal testing and BSL3 research, and they require careful consideration.
- Social Risk is rated as Substantial. This rating takes into account low public trust in AI, coupled with uncertainty regarding the provision of TA BIO4, and generally limited capacity to address social risks. The Project's activities are not high risk per se, although the sectors on which AF II has focused carry the potential for downstream effects on community health and safety, and labor related issues. The application of AI systems can result in social harms such as compromise of personal data, exacerbating the digital divide, job displacement, system manipulation and

misinformation/disinformation, culturally and socially insensitive decisions resulting in social friction and possible resistance to AI adoption. Accordingly, the mitigation of social impacts of such harms on the local communities, particularly on vulnerable groups will be addressed through stakeholder engagement activities in the SEP, as well as measures in the POM and outlined in GM. The Project will provide grant support to AI research in socially sensitive areas such as clinical healthcare, e-mobility, and green energy, which require a strong regulatory framework to ensure safety. While the activities will be concentrated in Belgrade, (with BIO4 located in urban densely populated area), the Project is expected to have a nationwide impact, especially after financing acceleration and transformation grants for research commercialization. The Project involves research activities with ethical implications concerning humans, tissue, embryos, and animals. Potentially affected parties include communities around BIO4 and individuals contributing to the research, including vulnerable groups such as patients, the elderly, children, Roma and women. The intersection of ethics and social issues in research will continue to be a critical area of focus to ensure that scientific advancements are made in a responsible and socially conscious manner. Special attention will be directed towards vulnerable groups, maintaining the confidentiality of research participants.

The relevance of ESS10 stems from the sensitive nature of scientific research areas, low public trust in AI and thus the potential for activities funded under the Project to generate public misperception, social friction and consequent reputational risk. A proactive approach in providing stakeholders with timely, relevant, and understandable information, and involving them early in sub-project development and implementation, will be applied to all project activities. This is particularly important for activities involving sensitive scientific research in health, transport, and agriculture, as well as any TA financed by the WB in the context of the development of BIO4, located in the Belgrade area.

**Table 2. Key gaps between WB ESF Standard 10 ( Information Disclosure and Stakeholder Engagement) and national requirements and corrective measures**

ESS 10: Stakeholder Engagement and Information Disclosure			
WB ESS10 Objective	National requirements	Gaps	Corrective measures
<p>To establish a systematic approach to stakeholder engagement that will help Borrowers identify stakeholders and build and maintain a constructive relationship with them, in particular project- affected parties.</p> <p>To assess the level of stakeholder interest and support for the project and to enable stakeholders' views to be taken into account in project design</p>	<p>The Republic of Serbia citizen engagement commitments do not reside under a single self-standing law or regulation. However, the recognition of importance of citizen engagement is embedded in the legal system and clearly recognized by the mandatory procedures</p>	<p>While all acts spell out right to information held by public bodies, the ESS recognizes the importance of open and transparent engagement vis- à-vis project stakeholders and community by the borrower</p> <p>RS Law does not recognize project level GRM</p>	<p>SEP Prepared and implemented</p> <p>Citizen Engagement activities are to be implemented as per SEP and subproject level SEPs.</p> <p>GRM effective and operational at early Project stage and adapted to respond to project needs SEA/SH grievances.</p> <p>These types of grievances will be managed separately by a trained expert.</p> <p>The necessary training for the appointed staff member who is to deal with such grievances will be provided.</p>

<p>and environmental and social performance. To promote and provide means for effective and inclusive engagement with project-affected parties throughout the project life cycle on issues that could potentially affect them. To ensure that appropriate project information on environmental and social risks and impacts is disclosed to stakeholders in a timely, understandable, accessible and appropriate manner and format. To provide project-affected parties with accessible and inclusive means to raise issues and grievances and allow Borrowers to respond to and manage such grievances.</p>	<p>provided by individual laws</p>		
<p>The Borrower will disclose project information to allow stakeholders to understand the risks and impacts of the project, and potential opportunities (ESS10 para 19).</p>	<p>The draft EIA/planning documents for project design in general is disclosed in hard copy in relevant municipal buildings and offices, as well as on government websites. An announcement on the availability of the EIA for review as well as the planned public hearing has to be made in a local newspaper in official languages in the project area, as well as through electronic media.</p>	<p>The disclosure requirements are only related to EIAs. E&amp;S risks assessment that do not fall under the Law on EIA are not subject to disclosure requirements</p>	<p>All project E&amp;S assessments, including the ESMF and subsequent ESMPs, will follow the information and document disclosure requirements described in ESMF Chapter 10.1 – Stakeholder Engagement. The ESMF, including LMP, was disclosed by the Ministry on October 24, 2019 prior to parent project appraisal, and consulted on November 1, 2019. The ESMF for the parent project has been updated to reflect the AF and redisclosed on September 4, 2020. <a href="https://nitra.gov.rs/extfile/sr/575/S/AIGE-ESMF-Revision-July-2-2020.pdf">https://nitra.gov.rs/extfile/sr/575/S/AIGE-ESMF-Revision-July-2-2020.pdf</a></p>
<p>The Borrowers will engage with stakeholders throughout the project life cycle, commencing such engagement as early as</p>	<p>An announcement on the availability of the EIA for review as well as the planned public hearing has to be made in a local</p>	<p>All disclosure and public consultation requirements are related to the EIA preparation process only. E&amp;S risks that fall</p>	<p>Objectives and specific methods of engagement with relevant stakeholders have been outlined in the current SEP. This SEP also provides information on all stakeholder engagement activities</p>

<p>possible in the project development process and in a timeframe that enables meaningful consultations with stakeholders on project design (ESS10 para 6).</p>	<p>newspaper in official languages in the project area, as well as through electronic media.</p>	<p>outside of the EIA (i.e., significant environmental impacts) are not consulted upon. There are no requirements to engage stakeholders in project planning, design and implementation. There are no requirements to develop SEPs.</p>	<p>conducted in preparation of the project. The document was initially disclosed by the Ministry on October 24, 2019, consulted on November 1, 2019, and updated on September 2020 and February 2023. The stakeholder engagement activities are carried out and reported throughout project implementation.</p>
<p>The Borrower will respond to concerns and grievances of project-affected parties related to the environmental and social performance of the project in a timely manner. For this purpose, the Borrower will propose and implement a grievance (ESS10, para 26).</p>		<p>There is no specific requirement in national legislation for establishing a project-level GRM as required by ESS10. In the case of specific project impacts (e.g., expropriation), administrative appeals can be submitted as per the Law on Expropriation.</p>	<p>The grievance mechanism for Project has developed and includes all stakeholders affected by the implementation of all components, and for direct workers on the Project. GRM allows for intake of inquiries and complaints about the matching grant mechanism, grant procedures &amp; results as well as potential social and environmental impacts of grant-supported activities. The GRMs are already established and operational in March 2022. The GRM is sensitized to Social and Human Rights (SEA/SH) considerations and is equipped to receive confidential complaints.</p>

#### **a. Consultations held on proposed SAIGE Parent Project**

During October 2018, the World Bank together with the Innovation Fund organized a pilot acceleration program in Belgrade called SPARK week, so as to provide input for preparation of the future full-fledged acceleration program. The emphasis was on mentoring by experienced mentors matched to the participating companies by sector, and on evaluation of the program in order to gauge learning and financing needs. The key objective of the activity was to support participating entrepreneurs by providing them an opportunity to assess and strengthen their business modeling and pitching skills, fundraising know-how, and their ability to work effectively with mentors. Preparation for SPARK week enabled the IF to assess potential local and global pool of mentors, investors, startups and other community stakeholders such as Hubs and STP Belgrade, NGOs, sponsors, media and others. Workshops on themes such as fundraising and investment readiness were held during SPARK week in addition to interaction with potential investors. It was identified that most startups need assistance with growth phase or early stage funding. Workshop sessions received high marks across the board, with particular satisfaction expressed with the module on sales strategies, pitch feedback, and informal peer-to-peer mentoring.

Since its establishment in 2019, the Science Fund (SF) has been carrying out consultations with all major stakeholders pertinent to its programs and objectives, including, but not limited to, the Ministry the Cabinet of the Prime Minister of the Republic of Serbia, representatives of SROs, members of the scientific community in Serbia, research organizations, individual researchers, former and current participants in Horizon 2020/Horizon Europe calls for proposals, representatives of the European Research Council (ERC), Serbian research diaspora, as well as representatives of other funding agencies from European countries. Stakeholder engagement has been conducted through meetings, interviews, and online correspondence.

The SF has completed its first Call for Proposals. During this process, consultations were held with the SF Program Council and Managing Board, carried out as part of the SF's internal procedures. The Call for Proposals under the Science Fund's Program for excellent projects of young researchers (PROMIS) was the first call that was launched by the SF. Lessons learned through PROMIS will be applied to further program planning of the SF supported by the SAIGE Project. Applicants of PROMIS, as well as others who have participated in any of the SF's preparatory activities for PROMIS (presentations across Serbia, open doors, budget workshops, webinars, email enquiries), have been requested to provide feedback on the program and the application and evaluation process. The results thereof will be used to improve SF's communication strategy, future programs and the application process under the SAIGE Project.

#### **b. Ministry ongoing consultations with stakeholders**

The Ministry holds regular meetings both with individual research institutions and researchers, but also with organizations that represent the interests of the research community such as the Association of Institutes, the Union of Scientific Research Employees, the Conference of Universities, the Serbian Academy of Sciences and Arts and other. Representatives of the research and business community take active part in the work of Ministry advisory bodies such as the National Council for Science and Technological Development and the Scientific Boards established for all fields of research. Besides regular communication with associations that represent research interests, the Ministry expanded its engagement with civil society through the EDP process which has been described in greater detail above.

**c. Other documented forms of engagement (interviews, workshops, etc. where feedback from relevant stakeholders has been collected)**

The project is a continuation of long-term engagement with the governmental and private sector, but also civil society organizations and individuals. These have included interviews, focus groups, and roundtable consultations in 2015, 2016, 2017, 2018, and 2019, with individual researchers, representatives of R&D institutes and faculties, Serbian Academy of Sciences and Arts, Chamber of Commerce, Serbian Association of Managers, Serbian Business Angels Network, Serbian Venture Network, Digital Serbian Initiative, representatives of the early stage investor community (South Central Ventures, ICT Hub Ventures, Serbian Business Angels Network) entrepreneurship support organizations such as incubators and hubs (StartIT, ICT Hub, Potkrovlje, Impact Hub, University of Belgrade Faculty of Engineering ICT Inkubator, Vojvodina ICT Cluster) and individual entrepreneurs, investors, and business leaders. Further, extensive analysis of the R&D sector, which included a series of policy notes, involved structured engagement with stakeholders of the R&D system in Serbia, while an entrepreneurship ecosystem assessment gathered stakeholders on a series of general and specific topics.

**d. Consultations on AI-related topics**

Concerning the part of the IT sector or the startup ecosystem dealing with artificial intelligence, there are no studies delivering precise data on the number of companies and their economic indicators. Based on consultations with the private sector dealing with the development and application of products using artificial intelligence, it was concluded that this sector mainly consists of small and medium enterprises (SMEs) primarily focusing on a narrow range of products and on the implementation of the existing technologies in the realm of AI.

**1. Stakeholder Identification and Analysis**

**2.1 Methodology**

In order to meet best practice approaches, the project will apply the following principles for stakeholder engagement:

- *Openness and life-cycle approach:* Public consultations for the project(s) will be arranged during the whole life cycle, carried out in an open manner, free of external manipulation, interference, coercion, or intimidation.
- *Informed participation and feedback:* Information will be provided to and widely distributed among all stakeholders in an appropriate format; opportunities are provided for communicating stakeholder feedback, and for analyzing and addressing comments and concerns.
- *Inclusiveness and sensitivity:* Stakeholder identification is undertaken to support better communications and build effective relationships. The participation process for the projects is inclusive. All stakeholders at all times are encouraged to be involved in the consultation process. Equal access to information is provided to all stakeholders. Sensitivity to stakeholders' needs is the key principle underlying the selection of engagement methods. Special attention is given to vulnerable groups that may be at risk of being left out of project benefits, particularly women, the elderly, persons with disabilities, displaced persons, and migrant workers and communities, and the cultural sensitivities of diverse ethnic groups.
- *Flexibility:* If social distancing, cultural context (for example, particular gender dynamics), or governance factors (for example, high risk of retaliation) inhibits traditional forms of face-to-face engagement, the methodology should adapt to other forms of engagement, including various forms of internet- or phone-based communication.

- *Proactive Communication Strategy* to ensure stakeholders are informed at key project milestones. It is being used on multiple channels such as newsletters, social media, and community meetings to disseminate information effectively.
- *Capacity Building* through workshops or training sessions to empower stakeholders with the necessary skills and knowledge to actively participate in the consultation process. This will foster a more meaningful engagement and promote a sense of ownership among stakeholders.
- *Conflict Resolution Mechanisms* through establishing clear mechanisms for resolving conflicts or disagreements that may arise during the consultation process. Having predefined procedures in place can help mitigate tensions and ensure constructive dialogue among stakeholders.
- *Monitoring and Evaluation* through framework to assess the effectiveness of stakeholder engagement activities. Regularly review feedback mechanisms and adjust strategies accordingly to enhance engagement outcomes.
- *Technology Integration and innovative technologies* such as virtual reality simulations or online collaboration platforms to facilitate stakeholder engagement, especially in situations where traditional face-to-face interactions are challenging.

The project will also develop separate Project communication strategy, which will be an integral part of this SEP. To implement this strategy, an experienced communication expert will be added to the team. The SEP will be revised accordingly throughout the project's duration.

By incorporating these additional elements into the stakeholder engagement methodology, the project can further align with best practices and promote a more inclusive and transparent approach to engaging with stakeholders throughout the project life cycle.

ESS 10 recognizes the following categories of stakeholders:

**1) Project Affected Parties.** These includes those likely to be affected by the project because of actual impacts or potential risks to their physical environment, health, security, cultural practices, wellbeing, or livelihoods. These stakeholders may include individuals or groups, including direct project beneficiaries and local communities. They are the individuals or households most likely to observe/feel changes from environmental and social impacts of the project.

**2) Other Interested parties (OIPs)** refers to: individuals, groups, or organizations with an interest in the project, which may be because of the project location, its characteristics, its impacts, or matters related to public interest. For example, these parties may include regulators, government officials, the private sector, the scientific community, academics, unions, women's organizations, other civil society organizations, and cultural groups. The stakeholder identification has been expanding to a wider area than the project will affect, since the locations have not all been identified, and important details of project activities are still under development.

**3) Disadvantaged/Vulnerable Individual or Groups.** Includes those who may be more likely to be adversely affected by the project impacts and/or more limited than others in their ability to take advantage of a project's benefits. Such an individual/group is also more likely to be excluded from/unable to participate fully in the mainstream consultation process and as such may require specific measures and/ or assistance to do so. This will consider considerations relating to age, including the elderly and minors, and including in circumstances where they may be separated from their family, the community or other individuals upon whom they depend.

The Project has multiple stakeholders from government, private sector, research sector and donor organizations involved in the innovation and entrepreneurship eco-system in Serbia and relevant to the Project. The stakeholder risk is moderate due to the need to coordinate with multiple stakeholders throughout the Project period.

Project affected parties include:

- 1) Public and private R&D Institutions – in the new model of financing research activities, RDIs will receive performance-based institutional financing and will not entirely depend on project-based financing. Further, under SAIGE Project, RDIs will also benefit from support for their external assessments and transformation plans. This will allow them to develop more long-term strategic planning and enhance their excellence and relevance of their R&D outputs.
- 2) Researchers – competitive grants offered by the SF will support the best researchers by providing them with grants that match their project needs. Preparing project proposals for the SF will improve their capacity to bid for EU and other international research grants.
- 3) Private sector enterprises and investors – through Component 1, new opportunities for business-academia collaboration will open and will complement the existing programs of the Innovation Fund. Through Component 2, enterprise acceleration component, entrepreneurs, early stage companies, individual investors, and investment funds, will have increased access to investment, knowledge, and deal flow, respectively.
- 4) AI Institute of Serbia who will receive technical support and grants against their Transformation Plan, part of the ongoing R&D Institutes transformation program.
- 5) BIO 4 Campus Management team and employees who will receive technical support on equipment and technology procurement, international accreditation of labs and facilities, safety and security systems, rules and procedures, et al.

- Interested researchers and scientists for SF and IF calls
- Beneficiaries RDI/company of SF and IF grants
- RDIs participation in the transformation process
- Participating RDIs and companies staff
- Management and staff of companies who receive training under the project
- Potential investors and entrepreneurship support organizations
- Members of the Serbian diaspora benefitting from activities of the Serbian Diaspora Facility
- RDI support applicants and beneficiaries
- Public research organizations
- Researchers

**a. Other Interested Parties:**

- Chamber of Commerce
- Serbian Venture Network
- Serbian Entrepreneurs
- Digital Serbian Initiative
- Center for Promotion of Science
- Ministry of Environmental Protection, Institute for Nature Conservation of Serbia
- Ministry of Health
- Ministry of Agriculture

- Ministry of Transport and infrastructure
- Ministry Economy
- Ministry of Culture
- Business associations
- Business support organizations (such as technology transfer offices)
- The Scientific community in Serbia
- Media and General Public
- Non-Governmental Organizations

Also, 'Other Interested Parties' constitute individuals, consultants, groups and entities that may not experience direct impacts from the project but who consider or perceive their interests as being affected by the project and/or who could affect the project and the process of its implementation in some way. They include project partners, service providers, civil society organizations and project beneficiaries (food manufacturers and processors, the construction industry, various laboratories for the production of drugs, etc.).

A number of local (Serbian and regional) partners have already been identified in two categories (investors and entrepreneurship support organizations), including SC Ventures, ICT Hub Ventures, and Digital Serbia Initiative, (as a source of financing and mentoring), Start IT, ICT Hub, Serbian Association of Managers, and Science Technology Park (as a source of entrepreneurship support services and mentors).

The timing and methods of engagement with identified stakeholders are outlined below.

#### **b. Disadvantaged/ Vulnerable Individuals or Groups:**

Non-discrimination principles will be reflected in the TA provided to selected RDIs, embedded in the design of grant support programs and the proposed stakeholder engagement activities.

Within the Project, vulnerable or disadvantaged groups may include but are not limited to the following: Women, people with disabilities, youth LGBTI+Q persons who are researchers and scientists, ethnic and religious minorities represented in the research community, elderly or ageing researchers nearing retirement, early career researchers and scientists as well as vulnerable members of communities surrounding research locations and BIO4 Campus. Representative organizations and leaders for these groups will be partners in stakeholder engagement and will be identified during project implementation.

Vulnerable groups are also patients : Individuals ( including elderly, children, women and people with disabilities) who have a particular medical condition or illness and are involved in studies. They may participate in clinical trials, observational studies, or other forms of medical research.

Vulnerable groups within the communities affected by the Project will be added, further confirmed, and consulted through dedicated means, as appropriate. Description of the methods of engagement that will be undertaken by the project is provided in the following sections

#### **The method for engaging women**

1. Consider women-specific programming during design stages to encourage participation of female scientists and entrepreneurs in the Science Fund programs and diaspora activities.
2. Collaborate with local partner organizations, such as the Impact Hub, ICT Hub, Digital Srbija Initiative, StartIT, Serbian Association of Managers, Association of Business Women in Serbia, and others, to

leverage their networks of women entrepreneurs and deliver programming specific to them that has been identified as missing from the ecosystem. This will include:

- Mentoring by experienced women founders
- Workshops on topics of specific interest to women founders and managers
- Peer networking
- Introductions to female angel investors

In addition, the project will seek to increase visibility of support programs for women entrepreneurs through customized communications campaigns executed through the press, television and radio, as well as social media. Visibility of initiatives targeting women entrepreneurs in Serbia was identified to be virtually non-existent in popular media, and recognition of existing programs was very low, according to a study by UN Women. Increasing visibility is anticipated to create higher interest and participation in such initiatives by female entrepreneurs. The project will track the number of female-led business that benefit from the enterprise acceleration programs and that upgrade/develop innovative products/services/practices because of business support provided by the project.

On the other hand, there are positive indicators in terms of gender balance based on preliminary data on the first Call for Proposals of the SF.

**c. Overview of stakeholders Interest and Influence**

Identified stakeholder groups and their level of influence cross-referenced with the interest they may have in the project will determine the type and frequency of engagement activities necessary for each group. Using the colour coding of interest and influence matrix below will help determine where to concentrate stakeholder engagement efforts and why.

The table below identifies the key stakeholder groups and categories, the nature of their interest in the project and their level of interest in and influence over the project and is based on the colour code in the matrix below.

**Table 3.** Influence and Interest matrix - provides an overview of the proposed stakeholder engagement based on their level of interest and level of influence.

<b>Level of Influence</b>				<b>Level of Interest</b>	
	<b>High</b>	Involvement/engage	Involvement/Engage		Partner
	<b>Medium</b>	Inform	Consult		Consult
	<b>Low</b>	Inform	Inform		Consult
	<b>Low</b>	<b>Medium</b>	<b>High</b>		

<b>Color-coding</b>	<b>Engage closely and influence actively:</b> require regular and frequent engagement, typically face-to-face and several times per year, including written and verbal information
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	Keep informed and satisfied: require regular engagement (eg. every half-a-year), typically through written information
	<b>Monitor:</b> require infrequent engagement (eg. once a year), typically through indirect written information (e.g. mass media).

**Table 4:** Level of stakeholder engagement based on their level of interest and level of influence

Stakeholder group	Stakeholder	Nature of interest	Level of interest	Level of influence	Level of engagement
Project affected parties	Researchers and scientists interested in SF and IF calls	Interest in new projects and understanding the procedure competition. The knowledge-sharing platform.	High	Low	Inform and consult
	RDI/companies researchers and scientists recipients of SF and IF grants	Responsible for conducting research activities and interested in WB ESF standards, rules for project implementation and understanding the monitoring and reporting procedure.	High	Medium	Consult
	Staff of RDIs participating in transformation process	Interest in rules for project implementation and understanding the monitoring and reporting procedure. Capacity building, knowledge-sharing, technology transfer.	High	High	Inform and consult
	Participating RDIs and companies staff	Interest in the project and understanding rules and procedures, gaining new knowledge.	High	Medium	Consult
	Management and staff of companies who receive training under the project	Interest in the project and understanding rules and procedures, gaining new knowledge.	High	Medium	Consult
	Ministry of Finance/CFU, Borrower to the Loan Agreement	Loan Agreement oversight, procurement procedures, financial management procedures	High	High	Inform and consult
	Management and staff of BIO 4 Campus	Interested in TA Activities and WB ESF	High	High	Inform and consult
	Management and staff of AI Institute	Interested in TA and Capacity building Activities and WB ESF	High	High	Inform and consult
	Vulnerable groups/ scientists and researchers 1. Women scientists and researchers 2. LGBTI+Q researchers 3. Persons with disabilities researchers /scientist 4. Roma and other minorities scientists and researchers	Capacity building, knowledge-sharing, technology transfer	Medium	Medium	Inform and consult

	Participants/Subjects: These are the individuals who are the focus of the research, such as patients in a clinical trial, students in an educational study, or members of a community in a sociological study. These individual can also belong to vulnerable groups (Roma, women , elderly, children, Individuals who have a particular medical condition, LGBT+Q people with disabilities)	Interested in their rights, research procedure and their well-being during research  Interest in understanding, treating, or managing their condition	High	Medium	Inform and Consult
	Local communities  (Depending on the nature of the research, the findings may have implications for specific communities or groups. Engaging with these stakeholders can help ensure that research is relevant, ethical, and beneficial to those it aims to serve.)  1. Local communities living nearby BIO4 institute 2. Local communities living nearby research locations	Interested in health and safety of the activities to be performed within BIO4	High	Medium	Inform/Consult
	General Public (AI research findings may have broader societal implications or raise public interest)	Interest in AI development in Serbia and the safety of AI innovation applications. The interest of the public is high, especially in AI and BIO4.	Medium	High	Consult
Other interested parties	Chamber of Commerce	Interest in IF programs, collaboration between scientific and business sector, technology transfer, involvement in entrepreneurship discovery process under the Smart Specialization Strategy.	Medium	Medium	Consult
	Union of employees in the science sector	Their interests include negotiations with the government and the ministry to achieve better working	High	Medium	Consult

		conditions, as well as advocating for fairer and more adequate compensation for scientific workers.			
	Potential investors and entrepreneurship support organizations	Interest in timely implementation of the project and its impact to improved service delivery.	High	Medium	Inform and Consult
	Members of the Serbian diaspora benefitting from activities of the Serbian Diaspora Facility	Participation in SF & IF programs, as beneficiaries, mentors and investors, interest in new projects and understanding the procedure competition. The knowledge-sharing platform.	Medium	Low	Inform
	Serbian Venture Network	Dissemination of Project results and investors networking with IF beneficiaries	Medium	Low	Inform
	Serbian Entrepreneurs	Dissemination of Project results and investors networking with IF	High	Medium	Consult
	Digital Serbian Initiative, Serbia Innovates	Interested in overall Project impact, dissemination of Project results	Medium	Low	Inform
	Center for Promotion of Science	Dissemination of Project results	Medium	Medium	Consult
	Ministry of Environmental Protection, Institute for Nature Conservation of Serbia, Ministry of Culture	Competent authority for issuing research permits for SF grantees, if relevant. Interested in the enforcement of legal requirements in all aspects of research	High	Medium	Consult
	Ministry of Health	Improving collaboration with experts is crucial for enhancing the health of the population. Partnering with the scientific community in shaping healthcare policy is key. Engaging in research strengthens the ties between ministries and the academic sector.	High	Medium	Consult
	Ministry of Agriculture	Improving Food Production and Increasing Agricultural Productivity Through New Technologies and Innovations; Developing Sustainable Agricultural Practices that Protect the Environment; Enhancing Food Quality and Safety Through Research in Food Technology and Quality Control; Conserving Plant and Animal Genetic Resources; Developing New Value-Added Products; Improving Irrigation Efficiency and Water Resource Management.	High	Medium	Consult

	Ministry of Transport and infrastructure	Assistance to improve transport infrastructure planning and delivery, sustainability in urban transportation, application of AI.	High	Medium	Consult
	Ministry of Economy	Due to the need to raise the level of scientific literacy and spread scientific culture, ie. improving the competitiveness of the economy.	Medium	Low	Inform
	Private companies	Interested in scientific projects that can lead to new products, services or technologies that can be commercialized.	Medium	Low	Inform
	Business associations	Dissemination of Project results and networking	Medium	Low	Inform
	The Scientific community in Serbia	Interest in overall Project results and impact, programming of SF and IF calls, participation in programs and RDI transformation.	High	Medium	Consult
	Media and General Public	The interest of the media and the general public in scientific projects is reflected in various aspects, including diversity, quality, and accessibility of media data in Serbia. This interest is manifested through various activities and initiatives, such as legislative regulations and conferences on digital media for sustainable development.	Medium	Low	Inform
	Non-Governmental Organizations, especially those that deal with social aspects and environmental protection	Interested in project benefits, results of SF/ IF /AI and BIO4 Campus programs, and potential environmental and social as well as community health and safety impacts/risks.	Medium	Low	Inform and consult on selected topics
	International organizations such as the European Union	Finance scientific projects that contribute to solving global challenges and strengthening international cooperation.	Low	Medium	Inform

To ensure that all modifications concerning direct users and subprojects are appropriately addressed, SEP must conduct a thorough examination of the stakeholder list to determine if expansion and engagement with additional stakeholders are necessary. This evaluation involves the following key considerations:

**Relevance of Stakeholders:** The current stakeholder list must prioritize individuals or groups crucial to both present and future project objectives. If this is not the case, it is imperative to broaden the stakeholder base.

**Understanding Stakeholder Perspectives:** It is essential to have a comprehensive grasp of stakeholders' backgrounds, interests, willingness to engage with the project, and motivations. If gaps exist in this understanding, a reassessment of needs and a revision of the stakeholder list are warranted.

**Inclusivity of Vulnerable Groups:** Does the current engagement strategy adequately cover vulnerable groups? If not, the stakeholder list should be revised as well as the admission and evaluation criteria.

Throughout the Project, the list of stakeholders will need to be reviewed and verified if there is a need to expand the list and engage with other stakeholders at critical points during Project implementation. A potential update will be part of the Monitoring & Evaluation (M&E) segment of the Project.

## 2. Stakeholder Engagement Program

The purpose of the stakeholder engagement program is to inform, disclose and consult on various project documents and activities early on to establish a dialogue with Project Stakeholders from project planning through implementation and operation. Various stakeholder engagement activities are proposed to ensure awareness and meaningful consultations about Project activities. The key elements of an effective stakeholder consultation strategy for the development of AI and the use of AI in scientific research projects should include:

1. Organizing Stakeholder Workshops: NITRA/PIU/SF/IF/AI and BIO 4 Campus, will regularly organise workshops and roundtables to bring together key stakeholders for discussions on the progress, challenges, and future directions of AI research, development and application in scientific research. These sessions should encourage open dialogue and the exchange of ideas.
2. Promoting Public-Private Partnerships: NITRA/PIU/SF/IF/AI and BIO 4 Campus will help establish cooperation between research institutions, universities, and private companies to leverage complementary strengths and resources. This can accelerate AI innovation and ensure that research aligns with industry needs.
3. Enhancing Public Awareness and Engagement: NITRA/PIU/SF/IF/AI and BIO 4 Campus will implement public outreach initiatives to educate citizens about the benefits and risks of AI. This can include media campaigns, educational programs, and opportunities for the public to provide feedback on AI applications.
4. Strengthening International Cooperation: NITRA/PIU/SF/IF/AI and BIO 4 Campus will cooperate with international AI research centres and organizations to share knowledge, and best practices, and explore joint projects.
5. Monitoring and Evaluating Progress: NITRA/PIU/SF/IF/AI and BIO 4 Campus will establish clear metrics and Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) to track the impact and effectiveness of the AI strategy. They will regularly review and update the strategy based on stakeholder feedback and evolving technological and societal needs.
6. Stakeholders/PAP Perception Survey and Feedback: Twelve months after the project begins, the SF/IF/AI and BIO 4 Campus will conduct sample-based stakeholder satisfaction surveys to gather feedback on the following:
  - The engagement process and the quality and effectiveness of methods
  - The level of inclusiveness in the engagement process
  - The quality of communication and dialogue with internal stakeholders (PIU/IF/SF/AI and BIO4, etc.) during the implementation of research and innovative scientific projects.

The survey results will be soliciting feedback on the effectiveness of the project activities that will be used for communication level improvements. This will allow the PIU/IF/SF/AI and BIO 4 Campus to identify potential design issues related to access and implementation of the matching grant program and the effectiveness of advisory services. The survey data will be disaggregated by type of research projects and institutions. Survey results with proposed corrective measures will be published on PIU's website and discussed at consultation meetings.

Survey results, along with any proposed corrective measures, will be published on the NITRA/SF/IF/AI and BIO4 Campus website and discussed at consultation meetings.

By implementing this comprehensive stakeholder consultation strategy, the SAIGE Project can ensure its AI development efforts are transparent, inclusive, and responsive to the needs of all interested parties.

The NITRA/SF/IF/AI/BIO4 will continue to consult with and engage all relevant stakeholders and interested parties in different stages of planning and implementing its programs.

**Table 5.** Stakeholder engagement plan

Project Stage/ Component	Estimated Date/Time Period	Topic of Consultation/ Message	Method Used	Target Stakeholders	Responsibilities
<b>AF Appraisal and continuation of the project (all Components)</b>	May 2024 – Sep 2024	Project in general and timeline inclusive update of SEP, ESMF and ESCP	Meeting for additional financing and continuation of the project Media communication Printed communication materials Photographs, photo news Features/success stories	The government; The academic community; Interested researchers and scientists for SF and IF calls; RDI/companies researchers and scientists recipients of SF and IF grants; The staff of RDIs participating in the transformation process; Participating RDIs and company staff; Management and staff of companies who receive training under the project; Union of employees in the science sector; Potential investors and entrepreneurship support organizations; Members of the Serbian diaspora benefitting from activities of the Serbian Diaspora Facility; Ministry of Finance/CFU, Borrower to the Loan Agreement: Management and staff of Bio 4 Campus: Management and staff of AI Institute; Vulnerable groups/ scientists and researchers 1. Women scientists and researchers 2. LGBTI+Q researchers 3. Persons with disabilities researchers /scientist 4. Roma and other minorities scientists and researchers	NITRA/PIU/ SF/IF/AI and BIO4
<b>SF Science Fund (Component 1)</b>					

Research Grants, including AI Grants	Sep 2024 – 2026	Research and innovation in Serbia, Women in science, Project objectives and planned activities, Informing about call criteria Improving interactions with applicants and beneficiaries Issues in designing research and innovation support programs Innovative use of AI in research, Innovative use of AI in education, Development and advancement of AI to address societal needs, Ethical Considerations.	Interactive Web Content, Public meetings, Social Media Communication; Regular Progress Reports; Project Summary Reports; Email and Newsletter; Weekly Digests; Online/Virtual Presentations; Video Presentations; Informal Meetings and Events; Lunch Dates; Online Communities and Feedback Mechanisms; Online Surveys; Personalized Communication; Screen-to-Screen Meetings; Project Website; Access to Latest Information; Alternative Engagement Methods; In-Person Meetings.	The government; The academic community; Interested researchers and scientists for SF calls; RDI/companies researchers and scientists recipients of SF grants; Management and staff of companies who receive training under the project; Union of employees in the science sector; Potential investors and entrepreneurship support organizations; Members of the Serbian diaspora benefitting from activities of the Serbian Diaspora Facility; Ministry of Finance/CFU, Borrower to the Loan Agreement: Vulnerable groups/ scientists and researchers	SF/PIU
<b>Innovation Fund (Component 2)</b>					
AI Matching Grants for Firms	2024 – 2026	Improving interactions with applicants and beneficiaries, Informing about call criteria, Issues in designing research and innovation support programs, Improving interactions with applicants and beneficiaries, Identifying Relevant Grant Opportunities, Using AI to quickly analyze and categorize grant opportunities, Streamlining	The company's website, Data Analysis, Feedback Loops, Explainable AI, Providing transparency into how the AI weighs different factors, Personalization, Proactive Alerts, Collaboration Tools, Continuous Learning, Social Media, Press conferences, Press releases, Interviews for the media, Participation in events (conferences, panels, presentations	The government; The academic community, Interested researchers and scientists for IF calls; Funding entities; AI developers; Grant seekers; Grant funders; Oversight bodies that include: Regulatory agencies, ethics boards, and other groups responsible for ensuring the AI matching system is fair, transparent and accountable; Potential investors and entrepreneurship support organizations; Ministry of Finance/CFU, Management and staff of Bio 4 Campus; Management and staff of AI Institute; Vulnerable	IF/PIU

		<p>the Grant Application Process, Employing AI-powered tools to generate first drafts of grant proposals by entering basic project information; Ethical Considerations, Exploring the ethical, legal, and societal implications of AI in the context of grant funding, Potential for AI to automate repetitive tasks and promote fairness in the application process, Human supervision and grant validation, Consulting regarding best practices for using AI as a tool to assist and enhance the work.</p>	Face-to-face meetings.	groups/ scientists and researchers, Press and media; NGOs.	
<b>Component 1.2 R&amp;D Institute Reforms</b>					
AI Institute TA	2024 – 2026	<p>Identifying key AI-related risks and opportunities; How AI can be used while protecting citizens' rights; Exploring how AI may be used to improve productivity and economic competitiveness; Examining potential threats to national security from malicious uses of AI; Identifying ways to ensure AI systems are developed and deployed in</p>	<p>Regular Meetings; Clear Guidelines; Feedback Mechanisms; Digital Platforms: Leveraging digital platforms such as online forums, messaging apps, or collaborative tools. Public meetings, Social Media Communication; Press conferences Press releases Interviews for the media</p>	<p>The government, the academic community, industry, and other key groups on a transnational scale, end-users, input or data providers, developers, business leaders, ethical and legal advisors, investors, and regulatory bodies, international institutions, Incubators, accelerators and other entrepreneurship support organizations, Press and media; NGOs. Research institutes participating in the project, including the Institute of Field and Vegetable Crops Novi Sad, Institute of</p>	NITRA/PIU/AI

		an ethical, trustworthy and responsible manner that serves the public good; Discussing the role of international collaboration in advancing AI research and development; Discussion on the development of AI regulations focused on security, algorithmic rules, privacy, transparency and human oversight.	Participation in events (conferences, panels, presentations Face-to-face meetings.	Molecular Genetics and Genetic Engineering, Institute of Physics Belgrade, Institute for Application of Nuclear Energy INEP, Nikola Tesla Institute of Electrical Engineering, and Institute of International Politics and Economics.	
TA for BIO4 Team and Researchers	2024 – 2026	Work to support research and development in the field of biomedicine and biotechnology; Implementation of new technologies and knowledge in these areas. Developing and applying topological data analysis for multi-sensor exploitation; Investigating biophotonic cellular communication to understand mechanisms of performance; Developing biosensors for rapid and non-invasive health and performance assessment; Studying molecular signatures for recovery science; Sensor exploitation; team dynamics; cellular communication; biosensors;	Weekly team meetings to discuss course progress and any issues that arise; Participate in biweekly team meetings to prepare for discussions and coordinate responsibilities; Communicate with students via email, Canvas, and office hours to answer questions and provide support Collaborate with the course director(s) and other TAs to ensure consistent messaging and grading Provide regular updates to the supervising Ministry/faculty member on student progress and any concerns.	The government, the academic community, interested researchers and scientists, BIO4 staff and researchers, TA for Bio4, the transformation of participating RDIs, the transformation of participating faculties, press and media, and NGOs.	NITRA/PIU/BIO4

		recovery science, and team communication.			
TA for BIO4 RDIs	2024 – 2026	Research and innovation in Serbia, Women in science, Project objectives and planned activities, Informing about call criteria Improving interactions with applicants and beneficiaries Issues in designing research and innovation support programs.	Verbal Communication for RDI sessions for addressing specific needs and concerns; Visual Communication such as diagrams, flowcharts, and videos; Written Communication such as emails or notes; Non-Verbal Communication; Active listening; Face-to-face meetings; Focus on Accessibility and Relevance;	The government; the academic community; Interested researchers and scientists; BIO4 Staff and Researchers; TA for Bio4; Transformation of Participating RDIs; Transformation of Participating Faculties Press and media; NGOs.	NITRA/PIU/BIO 4
<b>Component 3. Project Management</b>					
Project Management	2024 – 2026	Importance of Stakeholders; Roles and Responsibilities; Stakeholder Engagement and Communication; Managing Stakeholder Expectations; Stakeholder Analysis and Strategies; Continuous Stakeholder Engagement; Regular communication and feedback mechanisms.	Interactive Communication; Push Communication: Used for conveying non-urgent information through emails, newsletters, or project outlines; Pull Communication: Suited for individuals who prefer accessing information at their own pace; Responsive Communication; Written Communication; Hold Regular Meetings; Be Inclusive; Be Clear and Precise: Understanding; Establish a robust communication framework that fosters collaboration, transparency, and successful project outcomes.	Internal stakeholders include the project team, project manager, sponsor, and other teams within the organization. External stakeholders comprise clients, end-users, subcontractors, suppliers, government entities, local communities, and the media.	NITRA/PIU/SF/IF/ AI a nd BIO 4 Campus

<b>PROJECT CLOSING</b>	2026	Program results Lessons learned Success stories	Conference-style event Media releases Media interviews	The government; the academic community; Research organizations, applicants and beneficiaries of research and innovation programs, researchers, firms, NGOs, industry associations, broader public.	NITRA/PIU/SF/IF/AI/BIO4 Campus
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Note: Highlight activities focused on vulnerable groups in the above table. Pay particular attention to vulnerable groups such as poor women, persons with disabilities, and others.<sup>i</sup> Under “Methods Used,” examples may include, as appropriate: (i) for government entities: correspondence by phone/email; one-on-one interviews; formal meetings; and roundtable discussions; and (ii) for local communities/vulnerable groups: letters to village leaders; traditional notifications; disclosure of project documentation in a culturally appropriate and accessible manner; community meetings; focus group discussions; outreach activities.

i. **Methods of communication with identified Stakeholders by of NITRA, Science Fund (Component 1), Innovation Fund (Component 2), R&D Institute Reforms (Component 1.2 ) including AI and BIO 4 Campus**

Methods of communication with identified target audiences through the SAIGE Project presence on the internet (not just via the NITRA, IF, SF, AI and BIO 4 websites); through printed, online audio-visual and social media. It also indicates what kind of information should be disseminated through which communication platform. The SAIGE Project aims to build awareness about the use of artificial intelligence in scientific research through a variety of visibility and informational materials targeted at potential applicants and the wider audience interested in AI and innovation projects.

**Visibility/Informational materials** – A strong visual identity will be developed for the SAIGE Project to create a cohesive and recognizable brand. This visual identity will be applied consistently across all visibility materials to reinforce the project's messaging and make it easily identifiable. Key elements of the visual identity include: logo and colour scheme; typography and graphic elements; templates for presentations, documents, and digital assets; print materials; roll-up banners and backdrops for events; leaflets, brochures, and posters with project details and key messages; notebooks, name tags, and agendas for participants; printed materials for specific events, such as conference programs.

Digital materials include: e-invitations and cover pages for social media; video clips and animations to explain the project and its benefits; interactive infographics and data visualizations and a dedicated website with comprehensive information about the project.

**Mass media Communication** - To effectively communicate with its relevant stakeholders, the NITRA, IF, SF, AI, and BIO 4 will leverage various mass media platforms, including electronic, print, and social media nationally and locally. This will generate regular and meaningful coverage opportunities, fostering a strong and lasting connection with its target audience.

**Press release** - The NITRA/SF/IF/AI and BIO 4 Campus will communicate the main achievements of the project on the Project's website and try to get stories in the relevant national and local media. IF communicates about major project achievements on IF's website and Facebook/ Twitter/LinkedIn/YouTube/Instagram page and tries to get stories in relevant media, such as national media and local media. Specific media will be identified depending on decisions like where the face-to-face workshops are organized. The IF will produce small video stories about successful initiatives supported via the project. These will be published on the IF website and social media. Similarly, the SF will use their website and social media to report on major project achievements. Also, AI and BIO 4 Campus will focus on privacy and liability, transparency, explainability, intellectual property, and copyright, as well as the need for comprehensive federal data privacy laws and AI literacy campaigns, including trustworthy AI, intelligent agents for cybersecurity, and more.

**Websites** – The Project will have its own website which will contain information about tenders and expressions of interest, as well as information from promotional events, workshops and other public events. The NITRA/SF/IF/AI and BIO 4 Campus websites will contain links to the Project's website (project logo). The IF will design a separate website for the Enterprise acceleration program where information about the project as well as press releases and other relevant project material are stored. Target group networks are urged to distribute relevant information about the project on their website. The SF website contains information about the current call for proposals and expressions of interest, as well as information from promotional events, workshops and other public events. The NITRA will also include information about the project and all major milestones on its website.

**Social media** - the IF uses major social media to provide short updates about projects and also uses it as a platform for regular and special communication activities. IF also uses Facebook, LinkedIn and YouTube to communicate the same stories as on the website and Twitter, to reach a wider audience. The SF uses social media to promote its program activities, as well as to promote Calls for Expression of interest for Peer Reviewers and Program Board Members, respectively. The media for communication shall be seen as fit for each stakeholder

taking into consideration the type and sensitivity of stakeholders. The AI in social media also possibly raise concerns about privacy, algorithmic bias, and the spread of misinformation. Responsible implementation and oversight are crucial as AI continues to evolve in this space.

**Communication Materials** - Written information will be disclosed to the public via a variety of communication materials including brochures, flyers, posters, etc. The project's website will be updated regularly (at least every quarter) with key Project updates and reports on the Projects. The project's website will also provide information about the grievance mechanism for the Project (Chapter 5).

**Awareness-raising events** will be organized to increase the knowledge of the target group about the possibilities and impact of scientific research projects that use artificial intelligence.

### 3. Information disclosure

Drafts of all ESF documents (i.e. ESMF, ESCP and SEP) will be publicly disclosed at least 7 days before Public Consultations on the websites of the implementing agency <https://nitra.gov.rs/cir/search?q=SAIGE>, consulted with relevant stakeholder representatives, and will be updated as necessary.

The disclosure packages will include:

- Project announcement including:
- Brief Description of Project
- Description of public consultation arrangements (time, place...)
- Ways of submitting comments and feedback
- Key deadlines
- The respective draft ESF documents

The public disclosure of the draft documents and the Project will be announced through written and electronic media as well as all available official social media accounts and web pages of the Government and Implementing agency, as part of the overall Stakeholder Engagement activities described above.

The comments on all disclosed data and ESF documents will be reviewed immediately upon arrival by the PIU E&S specialists. Major comments will be incorporated in the final version of the ESF documents and disclosed, together with a report on the feedback, i.e.

- (i) list of media the announcement was disclosed,
- (ii) content of the announcement,
- (iii) time of publishing,
- (iv) list of received feedback

#### a) Closing Feedback loop and reporting back to stakeholders

Stakeholders will be kept informed as the project develops, including reporting on project environmental and social performance and implementation of the stakeholder engagement plan and Grievance Mechanism, and on the project's overall implementation progress.

**Science fund** will carry out the following activities to close feedback loop

- Annual surveys on research programs
- Periodical and thematic surveys on research programs
- Interviews with external evaluators

The SF will organize promotional activities throughout Serbia upon launching future Calls for proposals. During the open calls, SF organizing weekly "open doors" online live sessions for interesting applicants during which information about the application and project implementation processes are provided, and their questions answered. The transcript of Q & A part of each "open doors" sessions is published on the SF website.

Earlier the SF organized a targeted budget workshop – live event and webinar, as well as webinar responses to frequently asked questions from applicants. The above events have raised a high level of public interest in SF's

activities and call for proposals. The SF will tailor the activities in line with future calls for proposals and the needs of the target audiences.

Lessons learned through PROMIS and other programs in the final stage of implementation will be applied to further program planning of the SF supported by the SAIGE Project. Applicants of PROMIS, as well as others who have participated in any of the SF's preparatory activities for PROMIS (presentations across Serbia, open doors, budget workshops, webinars, email enquiries/inquiries), will be requested to provide feedback on preferred research grant programs, the application process and the support provided by the SF during the application process, including trainings. The results thereof will be used to improve SF's communication and stakeholders' engagement strategy, as well as future programs under the SAIGE Project. This will inform the scope of future research grant programs (funding windows and themes), application procedures and requirements, and the design of on-demand support activities (e.g., webinars on the application process). A survey will be sent to applicants following the completion of the evaluation process and the announcement of grantees. Additionally, a survey will be sent to recipients of SF grants following the completion of their projects. Survey results and the effect of feedback received on research program scope and design will be published on SF website on an annual basis.

SF continues to be active in mainstream, traditional and digital media, promoting activities and sharing information about sub-projects teams and achievements in all programs, stakeholders, and SF as an institution.

To close the feedback loop and report back to stakeholders, the BIO4 and AI Institute activities should:

- Collect diverse feedback by implementing brief and frequent feedback cycles that engage a broad range of stakeholders, including clinicians, AI experts, and policymakers.
- Analyzes feedback to identify areas for improvement, such as data bias, ethical and legal policy considerations, and algorithm selection.
- From analyzing feedback, make decisions about how to optimize the AI system, such as adjusting training data, model parameters, and algorithms.

By closing the feedback loop and reporting back to stakeholders, the BIO 4 and AI Institute can ensure continuous quality improvement of their AI-based healthcare framework, maintain transparency, and build trust with the stakeholder community.

#### **Preliminary budget of NITRA, Science Fund (Component 1), Innovation Fund (Component 2), R&D Institute Reforms (Component 1.2 ) including AI and BIO 4 Compus for SEP implementation**

NITRA/PIU will be responsible for planning and implementing stakeholder engagement activities and other relevant outreach, disclosure, and consultation activities. The stakeholder engagement budget will cover the following activities based on the needs of the SEP:

- (i) development of communication strategy,
- (ii) applicant/beneficiary survey (after each grant round),
- (iii) media coverage expenditures,
- (iv) printed outreach materials,
- (v) video (clips) production, and
- (vi) workshops/sessions/events.

The tentative budget for these activities is US\$ 400 000.

To ensure successful SEP implementation, the Project PIU will consider engaging a part-time Communication Specialist under Component 3: Project Implementation and Monitoring.

The communication specialist will contribute to developing communication strategies throughout the project and will plan and oversee project communications across various media channels, including social media, TV, radio, and print. Additionally, they will maintain records of the implementation of the stakeholder engagement plan.

#### 4. Grievance Mechanism

A Grievance Mechanism (GRM) is a process for receiving, evaluating and addressing project-related complaints, feedback, questions and suggestions from stakeholders at the level of the project. The mechanism focuses not only on receiving and recording complaints but also on resolving them. A Grievance Mechanism (GRM) is a process for receiving, evaluating and addressing project-related complaints, feedback, questions and suggestions from stakeholders at the level of the project. The mechanism focuses not only on receiving and recording complaints but also on resolving them. All complaints, queries and suggestions should be registered and will follow the defined procedures to ensure efficient and timely response. Key definitions of grievance and complaint are as follows:

- complaint: an expression of dissatisfaction that is related to an impact caused by a project activity, which has affected an individual or group. Adversely, the interests of an individual or group and the individual or group wants a proponent or operator (or contractor) to address and resolve it (e. g. problems related to dust deposition, noise or vibration). A complaint is normally of a less serious nature than a grievance;
- grievance: a claim raised by an individual or group whose livelihood, health and safety, cultural norms and heritage are considered to have been adversely affected by a project activity which, if not addressed effectively, may pose a risk to operations and the livelihood, well-being or quality of life of the claimant(s).

The grievance mechanism described in this section includes both complaints and grievances.

- The project-based GRM is intended to serve as a mechanism to:
- allow for the identification and impartial, timely and effective resolution of issues affecting the project;
- strengthen accountability to beneficiaries, including project-affected people, and provide channels for project stakeholders and citizens at all levels to provide feedback and raise concerns.

Project level Grievance Mechanism has been established by the NITRA/PIU, consisting of a Central Feedback Desk (CFD) administered by the PIU and sub-project specific Grievance Admission Desks SF and IF (collectively referred to as Grievance Mechanism (GM). GM established and approved by the WB March 2022 <https://nitra.gov.rs/tekst/195/projekat-saige.php>.

SF, IF, BIO4 and AI Institute through PIU are responsible for overall grievance administration for their components, as local admission points for the uptake of grievances and acknowledgement of grievance receipt through local channels. Project-level GRM will provide a framework for complaints tracking, response, and resolution within the stipulated response times, thus closing the feedback loop. In addition to the GRM, legal remedies available under the national legislation are also available (courts, inspections, administrative authorities etc.) The project GRM will be managed by the central GRM point PIU.

##### a) The Purpose of the Grievance Mechanism

The purpose of establishing and implementing the Project's Grievance Mechanism, along with all other methods of engaging stakeholders, is threefold:

- to effectively provide information about the SAIGE Project to all stakeholders by addressing their specific questions and information requests,
- to prevent or resolve any negative environmental and social impacts of the SAIGE Project highlighted through individual grievances, and- to enable the analysis of received grievances, with the aim of directing future project implementation activities and stakeholder engagement efforts in order to achieve better overall outcomes.

The Grievance Mechanism addresses external stakeholders' grievances in the SAIGE Project (individuals/legal entities, organizations, and other interested parties), hereinafter referred to as complainants. This Grievance Mechanism is not intended for use by directly employed and engaged external project collaborators and other individuals associated with the SAIGE Project for whom the Project has established a special internal grievance mechanism.

#### a. Grievance Mechanism for IF, SF, BIO4 and AI:

Grievance Mechanism is a key way to mitigate, manage, and resolve potential, contingent, or actual negative impacts and contributes to the creation of positive relationships between all stakeholders and the SAIGE Project itself. Grievances will be submitted through the Grievance Mechanism by:

- Individuals/legal entities directly affected by the project, i.e. potential users of the Project,
- Other stakeholders that are interested in the Project – include individuals, groups, and subjects on whom the project may not have a direct impact, but who consider that their interests are affected by the project and/or who could in some way influence the project and the process of its implementation.

The grievance mechanism includes two main steps:

- Central registration of grievances, and
- Monitoring the status of grievances and the grievances management process.

Central registration of grievances takes place at the level of the NITRA (PIU), where the Central Registry.

On the website of the SAIGE Project's PIU, precise information will be posted to serve stakeholders when submitting grievances, questions, comments, concerns, and methods for obtaining feedback, including the option for anonymous grievance submission.

The grievance procedure is designed to be accessible, effective, easily understandable and without costs to the complainant. Any grievance can be brought to the attention of the GRM personally or by telephone or in writing by filling in the grievance form by phone, e-mail, post, fax or personal delivery to the addresses/numbers to be determined. All grievances can be filled anonymously.

The contact information of the grievance manager for submitting any grievances, questions, or suggestions regarding the:

Ministry of Science, Technological Development and Innovation
<input type="checkbox"/> by post to Nemanjina 22-26, Belgrade
<input type="checkbox"/> in hand, indicating “for SAIGE Project” at the Ministry, Nemanjina 22-26, 11000 Belgrade
<input type="checkbox"/> by E-mail: saige@nitra.gov.rs
Science Fund of Serbia
<input type="checkbox"/> by post to 27. Marta 39/II, first floor / III, Belgrade
<input type="checkbox"/> by E-mail: misljenje@fondzanauku.gov.rs
Innovation Fund
<input type="checkbox"/> by post to Veljka Dugoševića 54, Belgrade
<input type="checkbox"/> in hand, indicating “for SAIGE Project” at the Reception desk Veljka Dugoševića 54, Belgrade
<input type="checkbox"/> by E-mail: katapult@inovacionifond.rs
If your grievance is anonymous, the answer will be published on the website of the Serbia Accelerating Innovation and Entrepreneurship Project – SAIGE <a href="https://nitra.gov.rs/cir/inovacije/projekat-saige">https://nitra.gov.rs/cir/inovacije/projekat-saige</a>

The information about how to submit project related suggestions and complaints will be posted at visible place in BIO 4 and AI institute premises and in their respective websites.

#### Procedure for receiving and processing grievance

1. Reception of grievance: Designated personnel at the SAIGE Project, specifically for PIU/NITRA, the SF, the IF, BIO 4 Campus, and AI Institute, are responsible for receiving complaints.
2. Grievance Reception Specialist: On the same day, the specialist at the Ministry, SF, IF, BIO 4, and AI Institute records the received complaint, assigns it a unique number, and enters it into the complaints register (Annex 2).
3. Acknowledgment of grievance: The Grievance reception specialist must inform the complainant within one (1) working day that the grievance has been received.

4. Clarification of Unclear grievance: If a grievance is unclear, the Grievance reception specialist must provide the complainant with guidance on how to rephrase it for clarity to enable competent assessment.
5. Handling of Persistently Unclear grievance: If a revised grievance remains unclear or if the complainant fails to respond to requests for clarification, the relevant entities will issue a decision rejecting the grievance with a detailed explanation.
6. Communication of Unresolvable Issues: If a grievance cannot be resolved or requires no action, the complainant will receive a notification with a detailed explanation of why the issue remains unresolved, along with guidance on further steps or legal remedies if dissatisfied.
7. Response Drafting: The organization responsible for addressing the grievance (PIU/NITRA, the SF, the IF, BIO 4 Campus, and AI Institute) will draft the response.
8. Objective of Investigations: All investigative actions aim to understand the issues raised in the grievance and reach a consensus for a satisfactory resolution.
9. On-Site Visits: At any stage of grievance resolution, the resolving entity may decide to conduct on-site visits to achieve a satisfactory resolution.
10. Conclusion and Signature: The conclusion of the grievance is signed by the authorized personnel at PIU/NITRA, the SF, the IF, BIO 4 Campus, and AI Institute. The signed conclusion is updated in the complaints register and forwarded to the complainant.
11. Response Timeframes: If a response cannot be provided within seven (7) working days or thirty (30) working days, the complainant will be informed of the reasons and status of the complaint.
12. Legal Recourse: In case of an unsatisfactory resolution, the response to the grievances should advise on the option to seek legal remedies in accordance with the legal framework of the Republic of Serbia. The appeals mechanism complements but does not replace legal procedures.

## Grievance log

The PIU/ NITRA, the SF, the IF, the BIO 4 Campus, and the AI Institute will maintain a grievance log to ensure that each complaint has an individual reference number and is appropriately tracked and recorded actions are completed. When receiving feedback, including grievances, the following is defined:

- Type,
- Category,
- Deadline for resolving the appeal, and
- Agreed action plan.

Each complaint should be assigned an individual reference number and is appropriately tracked and recorded actions are completed.

The log should contain the following information:

- Name of the grievant, location, and details of the grievance,
- Date of submission,
- Date when the Grievance Log was uploaded onto the project database,
- Details of corrective action proposed,
- Date when the proposed corrective action was sent to the complainant (if appropriate),
- Date when the grievance was closed out,
- Date when the response was sent to the grievant.

## Reporting

1. Experts handling complaints at the SAIGE Project (NITRA, the SF, the IF, BIO4, and AI Institute) are required to prepare reports on complaints, objections/queries/comments submitted within the complaint mechanism on a quarterly basis (Annex 2);
2. These reports are submitted to the JUP in accordance with the reporting schedule of the project or upon request.

## **Monitoring**

### **Summary of how SEP implementation will be monitored**

The SEP will be periodically revised and updated as necessary in the course of project implementation in order to ensure that the information presented herein is consistent and is the most recent and that the identified methods of engagement remain appropriate and effective in relation to the project context and specific phases of the development. Any major changes to the project-related activities and to its schedule will be duly reflected in the SEP.

Semiannual and internal reports on public grievances, enquiries and related incidents, together with the status of implementation of associated corrective/preventative actions will be collated by responsible staff in PIU/NITRA, the SF, the IF, BIO4, and AI Institute and referred to the senior management of the Project. The Semiannual report will provide a mechanism for assessing both the number and the nature of complaints and requests for information, along with the Project's ability to address those in a timely and effective manner.

Information on public engagement activities undertaken by the Project during the year may be conveyed to the stakeholders in the possible ways:

- Publication of a standalone semiannual report on the project's interaction with the stakeholders.
- Monitoring of a beneficiary feedback indicator on a regular basis.

### **Monitoring Indicators**

The indicators to be monitored include:

- Number of public grievances received within 6 months and number of those resolved within the prescribed timeline,
- Number of communication messages and activities targeting digital inclusion within 6 months,
- Number of awareness messages created to increase trust in digital communications,

### **Reporting back to stakeholder groups**

The SEP will be periodically revised and updated as necessary in the course of project implementation. Semiannual summaries and internal reports on public grievances, enquiries, and related incidents, together with the status of implementation of associated corrective/preventive actions, will be collated by responsible staff and referred to the senior management of the project. The summaries will provide a mechanism for assessing both the number and nature of complaints and requests for information, along with the Project's ability to address those in a timely and effective manner.

### **Description of grievance mechanism of implementing parties IF and SF**

#### **a) Innovation Fund Grievance mechanism**

The IF has an operating GRM in place. All complaints are recorded and processed by the IF staff using the established procedures during the piloting phase of IPA 2011. Formal complaints about the outcome of the evaluation process (or other grievances) is recorded and summarized in the IF's "Complaint Monitoring Tool". The Tool contains info regarding the complaint(s) such as Project ID, Nature of Complaint, Receipt Date, Complain Date, Detailed Description of the Complaint, Action Taken, Outcome, and Status: Pending / Closed. Complaints are submitted by way of a formal letter (via email), written in English, up to 500 words. All complaints are responded to within 8 days of receipt. All complaints are processed regularly, and where applicable, an independent Investment Committee is contacted for assistance. The Applicants' right to file a fact-based objection to the outcome of the Application status is described in

Program manuals (under 5.5. Applicant Grievance Mechanism):

[http://www.inovacionifond.rs/cms/files//program-katapult/Program\\_manual\\_v2.3\\_ENG.pdf](http://www.inovacionifond.rs/cms/files//program-katapult/Program_manual_v2.3_ENG.pdf)

IF Program Managers are responsible for ensuring that each Application receives an objective and fair initial peer review, that the process is transparent, that all applications are treated with equal opportunity and that all applicable laws, regulations, and policies are followed.

#### **b. Science Fund Grievance Mechanism:**

The complete documentation related to the grievance mechanism on the SAIGE project is available on the Science Fund website <https://fondznanaku.gov.rs/akta-fonda/> since March 2022.

The grievance mechanism is in place for employees of the Project Implementation Unit (PIU) and external collaborators working on the SAIGE project. It provides a formal process for submitting and resolving complaints. The key components of the grievance mechanism include:

- Application form for PIU employees and collaborators to submit complaints
- Grievance resolution process for addressing employee and external collaborator grievances
- Complaints resolution mechanism to handle and investigate grievances
- Complaints form for submitting grievances to the RS Science Fund

The availability of this grievance mechanism documentation demonstrates the Science Fund's commitment to ensuring fair treatment and providing a channel for employees and researchers to voice concerns related to the SAIGE project.

#### **c. World Bank Grievance Redress Services**

Communities and individuals who believe that they are adversely affected by a World Bank (WB) supported project may submit complaints to existing project-level grievance redress mechanisms or the WB's Grievance Redress Service (GRS). The GRS ensures that complaints received are promptly reviewed in order to address project-related concerns. Project-affected communities and individuals may submit their complaints to the WB's independent Inspection Panel which determines whether harm occurred, or could occur, as a result of WB's non-compliance with its policies and procedures. Complaints may be submitted at any time after concerns have been brought directly to the World Bank's attention, and Bank Management has been given an opportunity to respond. For information on how to submit complaints to the World Bank's corporate Grievance Redress Service (GRS), please visit: <http://www.worldbank.org/en/projects-operations/products-and-services/grievance-redress-service>

A separate Labor Grievance Mechanism exists which is described in details in the Labor Management Procedures developed for this Project.

The WB and the NITRA do not tolerate reprisals and retaliation against project stakeholders who share their views about Bank-financed projects.

### **5. Monitoring and Reporting of the SEP**

During all phases of the SAIGE Project implementation, information about the stakeholder engagement activities will be published on the Project website.

Component 3 of the Project will support monitoring and evaluation (M&E) activities to track, document, and communicate the progress and results of the SAIGE Project, including monitoring of the Stakeholder Engagement Plan. The PIU will be responsible for the overall compilation of progress and results. Feedback and grievances received through the project grievance mechanism will be aggregated and included in Semi-annual reports.

A comprehensive set of indicators (number of articles published in the press; the number of meetings/consultations held; the number of respondents to surveys; the number of grievances resolved etc), related to stakeholder engagement performance is presented in Table 9. below. The achievement of indicators shall rely on information from the NITRA, SF, IF, BIO4 and AI and the Grievance Log.

**Table 6. Monitoring indicators**

<b>Monitoring of stakeholder engagement indicators</b>			
<b>Indicators</b>	<b>How will it be monitored</b>	<b>Responsibility</b>	<b>Frequency</b>
Number of grievances received, in total, on the website, disaggregated by complainant's gender and means of receipt (telephone, email, discussion)	Grievance Log	PIU through data collected from NITRA, SF, IF, BIO4 and AI	Semi-annually
Number of grievances which have been (i) opened, (ii) opened for more than 30 days, (iii) those which have been resolved, (iv) closed, and (v) the number of responses that satisfied the complainants, during the reporting period disaggregated by category of grievance, gender, age and location of complainant.	Grievance Log	PIU through data collected from NITRA, S, IF, BIO4 and AI	Semi-annually
Average time of complaint's resolution process, disaggregated by gender of complainants and categories of complaints	Grievance Log	PIU through data collected from NITRA, SF, IF, BIO4 and AI	Semi-annually
For each meeting, the number and nature of comments received, actions agreed upon during these meetings, the status of those actions, and how the comments were included in the Project's environmental and social management system	Minutes of meetings signed by the attendees, number of attendees and feedback information	PIU through data collected from SF and IF	Semi-annually
Number of meetings and outputs of these meetings organized by the Science Fund, including open doors, consultations for grantees, press conferences.	Number of meetings, number of attendees and feedback information.	PIU through data collected from SF	Semi-annually
Number of meetings, and outputs of these meetings organized by the Inovation Fund, including training for the Applicant and the content of application feedback.	Number of meetings, number of attendees and feedback information.	PIU through data collected from IF	Semi-annually
Number of meetings, and outputs of these meetings organized by the BIO4, including information related to artificial intelligence.	Number of meetings, number of attendees and feedback information.	PIU through data collected from BIO4	Semi-annually
Number of meetings, and outputs of these meetings organized by the AI including information related to artificial intelligence.	Number of meetings, number of attendees and feedback information.	PIU through data collected from AI	Semi-annually
Surveys for the Application process and the selection process for IF	The number of respondents Number of answers	PIU through data collected from IF	Semi-annually
The number of respondents to surveys conducted by NITRA, SF, IF, BIO4 and AI	Number of surveys, the number of people surveyed and feedback information.	PIU through data collected from NITRA, SF, IF, BIO4 and AI	Semi-annually
Number of press materials published/broadcasted in the local, regional,	Number of press materials	PIU through data collected from	Semi-annually

and national media related to NITRA, SF, IF, BIO4 and AI		NITRA, SF, IF, BIO4 and AI	
Number and location of community awareness-raising or training meetings related to the application of artificial intelligence in scientific and innovative projects organized by the NITRA, SF, IF, BIO 4 and AI.	Minutes of Meetings and list of attendees	PIU through data collected from NITRA, SF, IF, BIO4 and AI	Semi-annually
Number of targeted meetings with vulnerable stakeholders organized by the NITRA, SF, IF, BIO 4 and AI.	Minutes of Meetings and list of attendees	PIU through data collected from NITRA, SF, IF, BIO4 and AI	Semi-annually
Number and nature of engagement activities with other stakeholders, disaggregated by category of stakeholder (Governmental departments, interested ministries, Chamber of Commerce of Serbia, etc.), organized by the NITRA, SF, IF, BIO 4 and AI	Minutes of Meetings and list of attendees	PIU through data collected from NITRA, SF, IF, BIO4 and AI	Semi-annually
Trends in time and comparison of number, categories, and location of complaints with previous reporting periods	Grievance Log	PIU through data collected from NITRA, SF, IF, BIO4 and AI.	Semi-annually

### 6.1. Reporting back to stakeholder groups

Specific plans for engaging stakeholders related to Component 1, Component 2 and Component 1.2, implemented by NITRA/IF/SF/AI and BIO 4 will be periodically updated, as needed during the project implementation. Identified methods for engaging stakeholders will remain relevant in accordance with the project context and specificities.

Periodic summaries and internal reports on submitted complaints, investigations, and related incidents, along with the status of implemented corrective/preventive measures, will be collected by responsible personnel from NITRA/IF/SF/AI and BIO 4 and forwarded to the PIU. Summaries will provide a mechanism for categorizing the number and nature of complaints and requests for information, along with the ability of the Project to respond in a timely and effective manner.

Information about public engagement activities undertaken within Project SAIGE during the year may be presented to stakeholders in two possible ways:

1. Publishing an annual report on the interaction of the Project with interested parties.
2. Developing software solutions to enhance two-way interaction and feedback using survey platforms, such as Survey Monkey or other available internet platforms, to facilitate measurement and understanding of feedback (any platform in use can be applied), to meet citizen expectations for change resulting from their engagement, thereby improving the final project development outcome, with special emphasis on the application of artificial intelligence in scientific and research projects.

Regular monitoring of feedback indicators is detailed in Table 6. Monitoring indicators. Redefining the manner of receiving feedback from interested parties will be addressed in specific plans for engaging stakeholders.

In conclusion, as the SEP is a "living document", it will be upgraded and further adapted during the project to meet the specific needs of the Stakeholders.

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## **ANNEX 1**

### **Relevant legal and institutional framework**

Environmental and social legislation in Serbia has over 100 laws and regulations. The majority of these are harmonized with EU legislation. Below is a list the key laws and regulations of relevance for this SEP For a complete list and summary of each legislation, please consult Chapter 4 - Policy, Legal and Administrative Framework of the project-specific Environmental and Social Management Framework (ESMF) updated in May 2024.

The commitments and requirements of the Republic of Serbia to citizen engagement are not residing under a single self-standing law or regulation. However, the recognition of the importance of citizen engagement is infused in the legal system and clearly recognized by mandatory procedures provided under individual laws. Serbia having acquired the EU candidate country for membership status is taking a huge effort to reach environmental standards in line with the EU acquis which extends to issues of stakeholder and citizen engagement as well.

From the highest legal act down to an ample normative framework comprising the Serbian legal system, a strong commitment and openness to stakeholder engagement is evident. Key laws governing the stakeholder and citizen engagement activities include, but are not limited to:

**The Constitution of the Republic of Serbia** is passed in 2006 (the constitution was approved in the constitutional referendum of 2006, held from the 28-29th of October). It was officially proclaimed by the National Assembly of Serbia on November 8, 2006), the Constitution of RS proclaims the rule of law and social justice, principles of civil democracy, human and minority rights and freedoms, and commitment to European principles and values. Also, Article 74 states that “Everyone shall have the right to a healthy environment and the right to timely and full information about the state of the environment. Everyone, especially the Republic of Serbia and autonomous provinces, shall be accountable for the protection of the environment. Everyone shall be obliged to preserve and improve the environment.”

**Law on Environmental Protection** (“Official Gazette of RS” Nos. 135/2004, 36/2009, 36/2009, 72/2009-164, 43/2011-88, 14/2016, 76/2018 and 95/2018) is currently the main legislation relating to environmental protection in Serbia. This Law shall regulate the integral system of environmental protection which shall ensure the human right to live and develop in a healthy environment.

Among other things, the main goals are related to:

- Prevention, control, reduction and remediation of all forms of pollution to the environment.
- Environmental monitoring
- Information on disclosure of information and public participation.

**The Law on free access to information of public interest** (“Official Gazette of RS” Nos. 120/2004, 53/2007, 104/2009, 36/2010 and 105/2021) states that governmental agencies, social associations and officials are required to provide each person with the possibility of receiving and becoming acquainted with documents of public interest, except in cases anticipated by law. By virtue of this Law access to information shall be granted to all stakeholders, including every natural person or legal entity upon written request unless otherwise regulated by the Law. Within 15 days of receipt of a request at the latest, the authority shall inform the applicant whether the requested information is held, and grant him/her access to the document containing the requested information or issue or send to the applicant a copy of the document, as the case may be.

**Law on Public Information and Media** (“Official Gazette of RS” No. 92/2023) stipulates that public information is free and is not subject to censorship, that the public has the right and the interest to be informed on issues of public interest, that monopoly in the media is not allowed, that information on the media is public.

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**The Law on Environmental Impact Assessment** (“Official Gazette of RS” Nos. 135/2004 and 36/2009), regulates the impact assessment procedure for projects that may have a significant impact on the environment, the contents of the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) Study, the participation of authorities and organizations concerned, the public participation, trans-boundary exchange of information for projects that may have a significant impact on the environment of another country, supervision and other issues of relevance to impact assessment. This law has been fully aligned with Directive 2011/92/EU on the assessment of the effects of certain public and private projects on the environment.

However, due to entering into the force of the new Directive 2014/52/EU amending the Directive 2011/92/EU on the assessment of the effects of certain public and private projects on the environment in the EU, drafting of the new Law on Environmental Impact Assessment in compliance with it is ongoing. Also, provides a categorization of industries and projects and identifies types of environmental assessment required against respective categories of industries or projects and provides procedures for disclosure, presentation and consultation requirements, and sets these as mandatory with a disclosure minimum of 20 days. Other pieces of legislation regulating the EIA process are the following:

- Law on Strategic Environmental Impact Assessment (“Official Gazette of the RS”, Nos. 135/2004 and 88/2010);
- Rulebook on the contents of the EIA Study (“Official Gazette of the RS”, No. 69/2005);
- Law on confirmation of convention on information disclosure, public involvement in process of decision making and legal protection in the environmental area (“Official Gazette of the RS” no. 69/2005);
- Rulebook on the procedure of public inspection, presentation and public consultation about the EIA Study (“Official Gazette of the RS” no. 69/2005);

**The Aarhus Convention** was adopted on 25 June 1998, and the National Assembly of the Republic of Serbia issued the Law on Ratification of the Aarhus Convention on 12 May 2009. The aim of the Aarhus Convention is to strengthen the role of citizens and civil society organizations in environmental issues. It is based on the principles of transparency and participatory democracy. The progress in the implementation of the Aarhus Convention is visible in the area of access to information of public importance, which is the result of the dedicated work of the Commissioner for Information of Public Importance and the work of individuals within the ministry and local authorities.

Strategy for the implementation of the Convention on the availability of information, public participation in decision-making and the right to legal protection in environmental matters - Aarhus Convention. Also, the Republic of Serbia adopted a Strategy for the implementation of the Convention on the availability of information, public participation in decision-making and the right to legal protection in environmental matters - Aarhus Convention (Official Gazette of RS", No. 103/2011) it links environmental and human rights and is based on the belief that it is a basic right of present and future generations to live in an environment adequate to health and wellbeing. The convention is focused on achieving this through the implementation of three pillars: rights of access to information, access to decision-making, and access to justice. In the last year, this strategy is in the updated process.

The progress in the implementation of the Aarhus Convention is visible in the area of access to information of public importance, which is the result of the dedicated work of the Commissioner for Information of Public Importance and the work of individuals within the ministry and local authorities.

**Law on Climate Change** , (“Official Gazette of RS” No. 26/2021), and its implementation will establish a system for reducing greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions and ensure adaptation to changed climate conditions. This law applies to GHG emissions (i.e. carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>), methane (CH<sub>4</sub>), nitrous oxide (N<sub>2</sub>O), fluorocarbons (HFCs), perfluorocarbons (PFCs), sulphur hexafluoride (SF<sub>6</sub>) and nitrogen trifluoride (NF<sub>3</sub>)) caused by human activity, as well as to the sectors and systems exposed to the effects of climate change. Further regulates issuing of permits for GHG emissions to the plant operator, issuing of approvals for the aircraft operator's monitoring plan,

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monitoring, reporting, verification and accreditation of verifiers and other issues of importance for limiting GHG emissions and adapting to changed climatic conditions. Certain obligations are established for distributors and retailers of passenger vehicles. Furthermore, regulates the issuance of permits for GHG emissions to the plant operator, the issuance of approvals for the aircraft operator's monitoring plan and monitoring, reporting and verification. The plant operator and the aircraft operator are obliged to monitor GHG emissions based on the approved monitoring plan.

The law fulfils the obligations under the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change and the Paris Agreement and harmonizes national legislation with European Union regulation.

**Strategy for the Development of Artificial Intelligence in the Republic of Serbia for the period 2020-2025** ("Official Gazette of the RS", No. 96/2019). The legal basis for drafting the Strategy are the Law on the Planning System ("Official Gazette of the RS", No. 30/18) and the Decision on the Formation of the Workgroup for the Preparation of the Artificial Intelligence Development Strategy in the Republic of Serbia for the period from 2020 to 2025 ("Official Gazette of the RS", No. 73/19). This Strategy defines objectives and measures for the development of artificial intelligence whose implementation should result in economic growth, improvement of public services, advancement of scientific staff, and development of skills for the jobs of the future. Also, the implementation of the Strategy measures should ensure that artificial intelligence in the Republic of Serbia is developed and implemented in a safe manner and in accordance with internationally recognized ethical principles, in order to exploit the potential of this technology to improve the quality of life of each individual and the society as a whole, as well as to achieve Sustainable Development Goals.

**LAW on gender equality** ("Official Gazette of RS", No. 52/2021). This law regulates the concept, meaning and measures of the policy for achieving and promoting gender equality, types of planning acts in the field of gender equality and the manner of reporting on their realization, the institutional framework for achieving gender equality, supervision over the application of the law and other issues relevant for achieving and promoting gender equality.

**Law on Personal Data Protection** ("Official Gazette of the RS", No. 87/2018), regulates the right to protection of natural persons about the processing of personal data and the free movement of such data, the principles of processing, the rights of the data subject, the obligations of controllers and processors of personal data, codes of conduct, transfer of personal data to other states and international organizations, supervision of the implementation of this law, legal remedies, liability and penalties in case of violation of the rights of natural persons in connection with the processing of personal data, as well as special cases of processing. Also, controls the right to protection of natural persons in connection with the processing of personal data carried out by the competent authorities to prevent, investigate and detect criminal offences, prosecuting perpetrators of criminal offences or executing criminal sanctions, including preventing and protecting against threats to public and national security, as well as the free flow of such data. The main principles of the Law on Personal Data Protection in Serbia are as follows:

- Lawful, Fair, and Transparent Processing: Personal data must be processed lawfully, fairly, and in a transparent manner in relation to the data subject;
- Purpose Limitation: Personal data must be collected for specified, explicit, and legitimate purposes and not further processed in a manner that is incompatible with those purposes; .
- Data Minimization: Personal data must be adequate, relevant, and limited to what is necessary in relation to the purposes for which they are processed;
- Accuracy: Personal data must be accurate and, where necessary, kept up to date;
- Storage Limitation: Personal data must be kept in a form which permits identification of data subjects for no longer than is necessary for the purposes for which the personal data are processed;
- Integrity and Confidentiality: Personal data must be processed in a manner that ensures appropriate security of the personal data, including protection against unauthorized or unlawful processing and against accidental loss, destruction, or damage;

- 
- **Accountability:** The controller is responsible for, and must be able to demonstrate, compliance with the above principles.

These principles are similar to those outlined in the EU General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR), but the Law on Personal Data Protection in Serbia has some differences in its implementation and specific provisions.

**Law on prohibition of discrimination,** ( Official Gazette of the RS, Nos. 22/09 and 52/21). This law covers the general prohibition of discrimination, different forms and cases of discrimination, and the procedures for protection against discrimination. Additionally, the law establishes the Commissioner for the Protection of Equality as an independent state body responsible for carrying out the duties outlined in this law.

**Law on prevention of harassment at work,** (Official Gazette of the RS, No. 36/10), this law regulates the prohibition of harassment at work and in connection with work. It includes measures to prevent harassment and improve relationships at work, as well as procedures for protecting individuals exposed to harassment at work and in connection with work. The law addresses other issues relevant to preventing and protecting against harassment at work and in connection with work.

**Conclusion on the adoption of ethical guidelines for the development, application and use of reliable and responsible artificial intelligence** ("Official Gazette of RS", No. 23/2023), Ethical guidelines for the development, implementation, and use of reliable and responsible artificial intelligence aim to enable science, especially in the field of artificial intelligence, to develop and progress without allowing humans, as the central figure in all processes that affect them and whose indirect or direct actors, to be endangered and neglected. Additionally, artificial intelligence systems under development must align with the well-being of humans, animals, and the environment.

## ANNEX 2

### Grievance Application Form for Stakeholders

#### Republic of Serbia

#### Ministry of Science, Technological Development and Innovation

#### SERBIA ACCELERATING INNOVATION AND GROWTH ENTREPRENEURSHIP PROJECT - SAIGE

In case that you have a grievance/complaint related to the SAIGE Project, please complete the following Form, in line with the grievance mechanism established <https://www.mpn.gov.rs/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/SAIGE-Zalbeni-mehanizam-1-web-mpntr-SRB-ENG-novo.pdf>

N.B: The grievance and/or complaint shall address exclusively the SAIGE Project.

Contact Data:	
Your name and surname and contact data will not be disclosed, without your consent nor publicly available. These data will be used only for possible further communication with you and related to your grievance submitted.	
Grievance Reference Number:	
Contact Details <sup>i</sup> :	Name:
	Address:
	Tel:
	E-mail:
Gender of the grievance applicant (exclusively used for statistical purposes, and by your statement you agree with statistical data processing)	<input type="checkbox"/> Male <input type="checkbox"/> Female
How would you prefer to be contacted? Please tick box	<input type="checkbox"/> by post <input type="checkbox"/> by phone <input type="checkbox"/> by E-mail
Description of the grievance/ incident/concern/complain or comment (mandatory field):  <i>Please enter here</i>	
If grievance/concern/comment is related to exact event/case, please provide the place and date of the occurrence, as well as if the event and/or incident has been repeated:  <i>Please describe the exact event in details</i>	

What is your suggested resolution for the grievance?		
<i>Please describe here</i>		
How to submit this form to:	Ministry of Science, Technological Development and Innovation	
	<input type="checkbox"/> by post to Nemanjina 22-26, Belgrade <input type="checkbox"/> in hand, indicating “for SAIGE Project” at the Ministry, Nemanjina 22-26, 11000 Belgrade <input type="checkbox"/> by E-mail: saige@nitra.gov.rs	
	Science Fund of Serbia	
	<input type="checkbox"/> by post to 27 marta 39/II, First floor, Belgrade <input type="checkbox"/> by E-mail: misljenje@fondzanauku.gov.rs	
	Innovation Fund	
	<input type="checkbox"/> by post to Veljka Dugoševića 54, Belgrade <input type="checkbox"/> in hand, indicating “for SAIGE Project” at the Reception desk Veljka Dugoševića 54, Belgrade <input type="checkbox"/> by E-mail: katapult@inovacionifond.rs	
If your grievance is anonymous:	In that case, the answer will be published on the website of the Serbia Accelerating Innovation and Entrepreneurship Project – SAIGE <a href="https://nitra.gov.rs/cir/inovacije/projekat-saige">https://nitra.gov.rs/cir/inovacije/projekat-saige</a>	
Signature:		Date: