



Communications and Outreach Strategy

2021-2022

*Extractive Industries Transparency
Initiative Albania EITI*

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OUTLINE

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1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This Communications and Outreach Strategy guides the Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative in Albania (EITI Albania) efforts to provide relevant information to the public and stakeholders as part of its mission to increase transparency related to oil, gas and mineral resources industries in the country. EITI Albania operates under the belief that a country's natural resources belong to its citizens and follows EITI's global standard to promote the open and accountable management of oil, gas and mineral resources.

This strategy's target audience is the general public, at both the local and national levels, as well as various stakeholder groups. It aims to increase the level of knowledge and information on extractive industry's operations and impact on communities and improve a situation in which the information is limited, fragmented and open to misinterpretation. The strategy will deal with these issues through a combined effort of accurate information dissemination for the general public as well as direct engagement with stakeholder groups, including the extractive industry itself as well as relevant public and state institutions and civil society groups.

The primary goal of the strategy is to increase awareness on the current situation of the extractive industry in the country in the hope that awareness will translate into increased pressure for accountability and transparency and ultimately an increased positive impact of the industry on communities and the country's population and at large. The strategy also aims to create a conduit of feedback from stakeholders and the public to the extractive industries on the needs of the communities where resources are located, so that meeting obligations can be better targeted. Moreover, the strategy seeks to develop better informed discussions between communities and industry representatives about sustainable development.

The strategy plans to distribute EITI Albania's key messages through several channels. These include coverage on traditional media outlets (broadcast, print and online) and niche media (business and social focus). EITI Albania's own communication channels -- its social media accounts, the website, publications and paid advertising will also play a key role.

EITI Albania's communications will feature discussions of the organization's representatives with government and public officials whose work is tied to the extractive industry and/or communities most affected by that industry. Moreover, they will feature dialogue with civil society and public forums. The publication of these discussions will be done through the aforementioned channels for people not directly attending the forums either in person or

virtually through online tools. A special outreach will be dedicated to youth, reaching out to universities and high schools in areas of significant presence of the extractive industries to increase awareness of the EITI standards and foster local and national accountability and transparency for the industry.

2. COMMUNICATION OBJECTIVES

Extractive industries make up a key economic opportunity for communities around Albania, a country rich in natural resources. The communication goals of this strategy are based on the EITI principle to “underline the importance of transparency by governments and companies in the extractive industries and the need to enhance public financial management and accountability.”

As effective communication is essential to ensure transparency that leads to accountability, the primary goals of this Communication and Outreach Strategy are to:

- Increase the public's understanding of commitments and principles Albania has undertaken as part of EITI.
- Encourage discussion among the stakeholders and the public at large on the need for transparency on extractive industries.
- Push for awareness that leads to public pressure for sustainable development and the betterment of communities through better use of natural resources.
- Increasing the public profile of EITI Albania and the understanding of its mission, vision and role in society as well as to strengthen citizens' trust in institutions.
- The participation of EITI Albania staff and experts as op-ed and analysis contributors in traditional media.
- Enhancing the media's understanding of EITI Albania as a process contributing to good governance in the extractive sector and the role it has to play in ensuring the success of EITI objectives.

3. STAKEHOLDERS AND AUDIENCE

The target audience of this strategy includes EITI Albania's key stakeholder groups and the wider public:

- **The public**
 - Communities in extractive areas
 - The wider public across the country
- **State and public institutions**
 - Municipal government units
 - Central and regional government bodies
- **Civil society organizations**
 - Local civil society organizations
 - National organizations
 - Think tanks and research institutions
 - National chapters of international organizations
- **The business community**
 - Companies in the extractive sector
 - Other businesses impacted by extractive industry
 - Chambers of commerce and industry
- **Media and opinion-shaping platforms**
 - Traditional print, broadcast and online versions of traditional media
 - Online only media outlets
 - Niche business and trade media
 - Independent opinion influencers
- **Educational institutions**
 - National and regional universities
 - Students and representative organizations
 - Local high schools for youth outreach

4. STRATEGIC COMMUNICATIONS PLAN AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This strategy aims to combine various tools to reach its target audiences, including a strong calendar of activities as well as earned and paid coverage in traditional media (print, broadcast and online). Social media will also serve as a key communication tool. Moreover, a direct in-person approach will be applied in community and stakeholder meetings.

Opinion polls and anecdotal evidence suggest EITI Albania is far from reaching the status of being a household name in Albania, thus there needs to be renewed efforts in increasing awareness of what EITI is and what its principles are. As transparency and accountability are keywords here, this strategy recommends that EITI Albania continue to use its motto: "Transparency brings Accountability" (in Albanian: Ngatransparencavjenpergjegjshmeria).

To reach an audience that is as wide as possible, all communications directed to the general public must use an easy to digest language and all communications in general should take the approach to make complicated subjects easy to understood by the average member of the public.

Moreover, all communication practices need to be based on a solid database containing updated contact and professional information on stakeholders, journalists and any other professionals or youths participating at EITI Albania events or that have been identified as important contacts by EITI Albania as it seeks to disseminate information on its mission, work and activities.

4.1 Reaching out to local communities

Although recent opinion poll data is limited, based on previous opinion poll research, EITI Albania needs to work to increase its recognition among the Albanian public at large, and communities affected by the extractive industries in particular. Various tools could be used to address this goal. These include:

- Two roundtables per year with stakeholders held in local communities.
- Participation in television debates on public and private televisions broadcasting at the local and national level.
- Direct targeting on social media with information.
- Workshops and activities with civil society and youths.

4.2 Stakeholder discussions and meetings

Led by the Multi Stakeholder Group (MSG) meetings, these will include a wide variety of meetings with stakeholder groups, including local government, state institutions, civil society organizations, extractive companies, journalists and students.

These will be in the form of roundtables, workshops and forums, either in person or online depending on the pandemic situation at the time they are scheduled to take place.

Workshops with journalists and civil society activists on how to research and report on extractive industries data are also recommended.

Stakeholder meetings serve a two-fold purpose. First, they help create a two-way, direct in-person (or virtual) communication channel between EITI Albania and the stakeholders. Second, these discussions create further information that can be used to reach a wider audience through the other communication channels described below.

4.3 Media relations

As part of its media relations strategy, EITI Albania representatives should continually work to build relationships with journalists. A media list containing contact information for target outlets and journalists should also be at hand.

4.3.1 Television

Television has the highest penetration in the Albanian market, followed by online versions of print and broadcast outlets, thus television can serve as a powerful tool to get EITI Albania's message out. This strategy recommends a two-pronged approach, appearances in breakfast and afternoon/night talk shows by EITI experts in generalist or news channels such as Klan TV (highest national ratings) and News 24 TV (highest ratings among news-only channels). Other good outlets to appear include RTSH (public broadcaster with particular following in rural areas) and A2 News (educated, high earning viewership). Other important outlets would be SCAN TV (business news channel) and local television stations depending on the region or community targeted (i.e. TV Bulqiza, Berati TV). All these outlets have an online presence that draws its news primarily from the television coverage and would further echo engagement there. It's important to note that this would be earned editorial coverage on television and not directly tied to paid advertising that is described in a section below.

4.3.2 Print media

Unfortunately generalist print media in Albania has a minimal impact as a medium. Any coverage or advertising would be seen by an increasingly small number of people and would have more value in the online versions of the newspapers. Nonetheless, highest circulation “Panorama” and “GazetaShqiptare” are good options to get some coverage. When looking to target a specific audience. Trade magazines and newsletters are also useful.

4.3.3 Online platforms

There are now hundreds of online-only platforms in Albania. This strategy recommends careful contact with these platforms, limiting promotion to respected mainstream media and non-profit portals financed through international donors as well as niche business-focus and trade publication online portals.

4.3.4 Online opinion influencers

An increasing way to get attention is through online influencers who usually use social media to reach wide audiences there are trusted voices, these are typically politically-unaffiliated civil society activists, university professors and experts in the areas covered by EITI Albania's missions. While these are not journalists or media, they can be helpful in disseminating the message as their opinions are often quoted in the media. However, careful attention needs to be paid when dealing with activists so that the focus remains on the mission of transparency and accountability and EITI's involvement in that effort.

4.4 Social media

EITI Albania will continue its heavy use of Facebook to promote its events and information release to the wider audience this social media channel provides.

In addition, as the next stage in social media communications, this strategy suggests that three new elements be added to the social media approach.

- Twitter should also be used to reach a more niche audience of journalists and civil society activists.
- LinkedIn could be used to target business and professional stakeholders. Follow the lead of EITI's main global account on appropriate use of LinkedIn. This tool and the information on the followers it provides will also help to improve the EITI Albania contacts and stakeholders database mentioned above.

Use of these two new platforms would be less limited than Facebook but is vital to provide avenues of contact and feedback from target audiences. Some of the same infographic content produced for Facebook could be used in the other two social media channels.

- Moreover, the strategy recommends that EITI Albania create a dedicated channel on YouTube under its brand to host all the videos it has sponsored and created as they appear scattered in several accounts that are not owned by EITI Albania.

4.5 Website

The EITI Albania website is already a good repository of information and well indexed by Google, however, a methodical look at every page and section of the website should be undertaken periodically, i.e. twice a year, to make sure the latest information is available and uploaded to the website and that all links work.

Moreover, the website should be a good repository of all press releases, reports and other information distributed through social media, serving as an ultimate destination for anyone looking for information on EITI Albania's mission and activities.

The website should use tools like Google Analytics to their greatest extent to better understand how readers are reaching the website and what information is being sought most. That will help to understand the efficacy of social media and media relation tools that lead to the website as well as how to better target key messages to identified audiences.

4.6 Reports and publications

- EITI will continue to publish and disseminate in print and pdf formats the reports mandated by its mission.
- Existing brochures and other printed materials should be evaluated on whether they need to be republished with refreshed information and/or design.
- Relevant international reports and information packages from EITI Global could also be translated into Albanian and distributed to appropriate target audiences.

4.7 Paid advertising

While increasing awareness organically through the tools mentioned above is a primary goal, targeted paid advertising could also be useful. This would utilize some of the same tools discussed above, for example a short explanatory video on a television channel (that could then live on EITI Albania's own YouTube page).

Promoted posting on social media can also be a very effective tool at increasing awareness and the audience and should be frequently used since it has lower costs than purchasing time on television or space in outdoor advertising.

Continuing the current practice of purchasing outdoors advertising in specific areas is also recommended.

5. ACTION PLAN FOR COMMUNICATION ACTIVITIES

At the time of the writing of this plan, the length and impact of the COVID-19 pandemic are still unknown. Certain restrictions on holding in-person meetings could be in place as late as the summer of 2021, for example. Thus, some of the events described in the strategy and action plan might have to be held through online communication tools like Zoom, which have now been normalized and are likely to stay in place for some events even after the pandemic ends. It is recommended that a professional licence be obtained for Zoom to facilitate such meetings. It has a cost of about 200 USD per year.

5.1 Roundtables with local stakeholders

At least two roundtables per year should take place, located outside Tirana, one in a northern community (i.e. Bulqize) and one in a southern town (i.e. Ballsh) -- both tied to extractive industries. Keeping in mind the pandemic limitations on holding meetings, 2021 in-person activities might have to be pushed for later in the year.

- Announce upcoming meetings on social media a month in advance.
- Send save-the-date emails to invitees.
- Send invitations and agenda to invitees.
- Provide summary of discussion and photos on social media channels and the website.

5.2 Meetings with stakeholders

EITI Albania representatives hold meetings with stakeholders throughout the year. These meetings are to include at least one per year involving each of the following:

- Discussions with local and national state and public institutions on EITI's priorities.
- A roundtable with civil society organizations on the role CSOs can play to demand transparency and accountability.
- A forum with the business community (extractive sector and others) to discuss its needs and responsibilities in this area.
- A workshop with educational institutions (universities and high schools) to explore how the youth can be better informed and involved.

Each stakeholder activity should get:

- Social media coverage with photos and text on Facebook and Twitter.
- Most meetings should get a website article with text and photos too.
- High profile meetings (twice a year) should get a press release and photos sent to the media list.

5.3 Scheduled media appearances

EITI Albania's executive director or other representative should make a television appearance or a print/online interview/quote at least once per quarter. These could be tied to major report releases or as newsworthy events tied to the extractive industries happen. Here are some concrete proposed actions:

- Morning show appearance on A2 News ("DitaJone"), First quarter (Q1) - 2021
- Evening talk show appearance on News24 TV. Q2 - 2020
- Interview on SCAN TV. Q3 - 2021
- Interview with a major print/online outlet ("Panorama" or "GazetaShqiptare"/Balkanweb). Q4 - 2021
- Interview on RTSH1 or RTSH3 in programs that specialize on social/local issues. Q4 - 2021
- Interview with local television stations (i.e. TV Bulqiza, Berat TV). Q4 - 2021, Q1 2022

- Interview with niche publications of a chamber of commerce, i.e. AmCham Advantage Magazine. Q2 - 2022
- Appearance in news stories of highly watched Albanian sections of international outlets (VoA/ZeriAmerikes - Ditari), DW Shqip. Q3 - 2022.
- Afternoon talk show on Klan TV Q4 - 2021/2022.
- Afternoon/night talks show appearance on Top Channel TV Q3 - 2021/2022.
- Interview or quote on Monitor magazine article. Q4 - 2022
- Availability and preparation of an EITI Albania expert to be quoted in English in local/regional media outlets for international audiences (i.e. Tirana Times, Balkan Insight, SEENews, etc.) as well as top-tier international media outlets (i.e. AP, Reuters, Bloomberg, The Economist) to provide information on efforts to increase transparency in the extractive industries in Albania. (ongoing)

5.4 Regular updates and expanding social media channels

In all social media activities, an effort must be made to echo and crosslink with social media channels used by partner institutions such as members of the Multi Stakeholder Group (MSG), EITI Global and other institutions with which EITI Albania has cooperation agreements. The resulting multiplier effect is a win-win for all.

Concrete EITI Albania social media actions would include:

- Continue regular updates to Facebook page ranging from two per week during heavy activity months to once a month during the low summer and holiday seasons. (Ongoing)
- Re-establish Twitter account (@EITIALbania) for EITI Albania, which exists but hasn't been updated since 2019, and update it at the same frequency as the Facebook page. (Q1 - 2021)
- Create a LinkedIn page for EITI Albania and update at half the frequency of the Facebook page. (Q1 - 2021)
- Create a dedicated YouTube Channel for EITI Albania and upload videos created prior to the channel's establishment. (Q2 - 2021)

5.5 Release of key EITI Albania Report

With the EITI Albania Report scheduled to come out by the end of 2020, its release might fall out of the timeline of this strategy, but as it is a major event, it needs a full package of promotion. Depending on the release date, this could be in late January to end of February 2021 and takes into account an ongoing pandemic environment.

- Press release explaining the report is out and highlighting key findings to be sent to a list of key media outlets.
- Facebook/Twitter/Linked in text/infographics related to report.
- Zoom call with journalists and researchers
- Recording of Zoom call is then placed on the newly-created EITI Albania YouTube channel.

5.6 Promotion of key outputs: Open data portal and minerary register

Open data access portal unveiling event and promotion

With the upcoming open data access portal being one of the key outputs for EITI Albania in the near future, this strategy suggests incorporating communications to let the wider public, stakeholders and state institutions know about the portal during any external communication activity. The Open Data portal is an important innovation brought by EITI Albania to the country's institutions, increasing transparency and accountability by offering everyone with an internet connection the opportunity to access all data about extractive industries in Albania. It serves both as a good information tool and as a great example of what EITI Albania does to improve transparency. As such, the link to the portal and its branding needs to be at the forefront of any activity, and the following efforts should be undertaken:

- Repeatedly announce portal availability on social media.
- Issue a press release upon the portal's launch, explaining why it is important and how it can be accessed.
- Present the portal at a dedicated launch event (likely virtually through Zoom).
- Present portal at roundtables and stakeholder meetings.
- Mention the portal and how to access at all media appearances.
- Prepare a short video-graphic for use on social media and beyond.

Promotion of minerary register

With the new Minerary Register scheduled to be released by early 2021, efforts must be made to promote its importance and use in a similar way to the open data access mentioned above. These would include:

- Issue a press release when the register becomes available to explain its importance and uses as part of the overarching theme of increasing transparency.
- Promote on social media through links and a short video-graphic.

5.8 Purchase of advertising

Purchase time on local and national televisions with short, 2-3 minute videos on what EITI Albania does and how to reach its information. These videos would need to be professionally produced, relying primarily on graphics (recommended) and other means suggested by the production agency. These videos would also be uploaded to EITI Albania's newly-established YouTube channel. March and September are ideal times when people are at home watching television.

Purchase promoted postings and follow suggestions on Facebook and Twitter to increase the reached audience. As the costs are minor, this should be done for three days every time there is a major event.

Calendar of activities - 2021 (Activity number/Month)

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
5.1					X						X	
5.2				X	X				X	X	X	
5.3		X		X		X				X		
5.4	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
5.5	X	X										
5.6	X	X		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
5.7	X		X						X			X

Calendar of activities - 2022 (Activity number/Month)

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
5.1			X							X		
5.2		X	X	X	X				X	X	X	
5.3			X			X			X			X
5.4	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
5.5				X					X			
5.6	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
5.7	X		X						X			X