

# ACCESS TO EBRD INFORMATION

Traditionally it has been difficult to obtain information from the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD). If you wanted to know about EBRD financed projects or about the EBRD itself, its policies, procedures and structure, you were hard pressed to find information that met your needs.

Following pressure from civil society groups, governments and international organisations such as the G7, G22 and United Nations, the EBRD claims that it is now embracing transparency and openness. The fact is that it is still difficult to obtain certain information from the EBRD and the information that is made available is, in many instances, still hard to access, especially for people from the Central and Eastern European region. Information about projects that have a large impact on people's lives and the environment is still being withheld or made difficult to obtain.

This guide is designed to provide concerned citizens and NGOs with clear information on what EBRD information is made available to the public and how you can best access it.

## EBRD POLICY

The EBRD introduced a new Public Information Policy in July 2000. It was developed due to the increasing pressure on the EBRD to become more transparent and participatory. The policy clearly details what EBRD documents will be made available to the public.

The policy claims to be founded on four basic principles.

1. Transparency. The EBRD claims that it will make information about its operational activi-

ties available unless there is a compelling reason for confidentiality.

2. Compliance with the mandate. To ensure compliance with its mandate and accountability to shareholders, the EBRD states that it will ensure that EBRD member's views will remain at the heart of policy design and strategic decision-making.
3. Willingness to listen and receptivity to comment. While affirming that the EBRD will continue to decide its own strategies and operational activities, it states that it will listen to other parties.
4. Safeguarding the business approach to implementing the mandate. The EBRD emphasises the need to protect business-sensitive partnerships by ensuring confidentiality with commercially sensitive information, but also states that this will be balanced so as to satisfy EBRD stakeholders. It claims that confidentiality will not lessen accountability.

You can find the full Public Information Policy on the EBRD web site ([www.ebrd.com/english/about/policies/pip/main.htm](http://www.ebrd.com/english/about/policies/pip/main.htm)). Alternatively you can make a request to the Publications Desk (see below), or contact the EBRD resident office in your country. A list of Resident Offices and their contact details can be found at [www.ebrd.com/english/contacts](http://www.ebrd.com/english/contacts).

## WHAT INFORMATION IS AVAILABLE

The EBRD divides information into two categories, project-specific information and information on policies and strategies.

<b>PROJECT-SPECIFIC INFORMATION</b>			
<b>Document</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>When Available</b>	<b>Comments</b>
Project Summary Documents (PSD)	Provides very brief outline of the client, EBRD finance, project cost, objectives, expected transition impact and environmental impacts.  Also specifies project environmental category and contains contact details for enquiries.	Private sector projects: at least 30 days before consideration by the Board of Directors (unless reason for confidentiality provided).  Public sector projects: at least 60 days before consideration by the Board of Directors.	Release of information requires the consent of the project sponsor. Parts of the Project Summary Document can be withheld from release, or if the project is considered to be confidential in its entirety, no PSD will be produced.  For PSDs that have been released, go to <a href="http://www.ebrd.com/english/operat/projects/main.htm">www.ebrd.com/english/operat/projects/main.htm</a> . Questions can be directed to: <a href="mailto:quesprojectenquiries@ebrd.com">quesprojectenquiries@ebrd.com</a>
Environmental Impact Assessments (EIA)	Identifies potential environmental impacts of a "Category A" project. "Category A" projects are those where there are potentially diverse and significant environmental impacts which cannot be readily identified and quantified, and for which remedial measures cannot easily be prescribed.	Private sector "Category A" projects: 60 days prior to consideration by the Board of Directors.  Public sector "Category A" projects: 120 days before consideration by the Board of Directors.	Project sponsors are responsible for making the EIA available to the public. This must include having a copy available at, or near the project site. The EBRD requires sponsors to keep EIA-related documentation in the public domain until the completion of the project.  The EBRD keeps copies of the EIA and EIA executive summary in their Business Information Centre in London and in the EBRD Resident Office in the country of the project's location. Notices of this are posted on the EBRD website ( <a href="http://www.ebrd.com/english/enviro/eias/main.htm">www.ebrd.com/english/enviro/eias/main.htm</a> ).  The EBRD requests that Project Sponsors make the full EIA available in the official language of the country where the project is being undertaken. However, this is not binding. The Project sponsor is only required to make the executive summary of the EIA available in the local language. Most project EIAs are prepared in English.  Comments on the EIA should be directed to the project sponsor.
Public Sector Project Board Reports	Document that is presented to the Board when making their final decision with regards to financing. Includes details of the project and project sponsor, financial and economic analyses, summary of public participation process, key environmental issues, areas of risk, past experiences with the sector, and a President's recommendation.	Following project approval by the Board of Directors.	Only available on request. Requests should be made to the Project Enquiries Desk.

<b>POLICIES AND STRATEGIES</b>			
<b>Document</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>When Available</b>	<b>Comments</b>
Draft Sectoral Policies	Draft document, not yet approved by the Board of Directors that outlines the EBRD's priorities and objectives for a particular sector. May also include standards and procedures that they will follow.	After having been endorsed by the Executive Committee and discussed by the Financial and Operations Policies Committee. This is before final approval by the Board of Directors.	Will be posted on the web site for 45 days to allow for public comment. A summary of all comments submitted will be made available to the Board of Directors. After the policy's approval, the summary will be posted on the web site.
Final Sectoral Policies	Approved document that outlines the EBRD's priorities and objectives for a particular sector. May also include standards and procedures that they will follow.	Timeframe for public release not specified	Policies are available on the website <a href="http://www.ebrd.com/english/about/policies/main.htm">www.ebrd.com/english/about/policies/main.htm</a> and through Resident Offices and the Publication's Desk in London
Final Country Strategies	Outlines for a particular country of operation, the EBRD's investment portfolio to date, the transition impact of EBRD activities, the operational environment and lessons learnt. Importantly, it details objectives and priorities for future EBRD operations in the concerned country.	Following approval by the Board of Directors and consultation with the country concerned. No specific timeframe for public release given.	The EBRD can exclude parts of Country Strategies from public release if they feel the release of this information would undermine their dialogue with the country concerned, or, if its release would violate the law or prove a threat to national security of a member country.  Country strategies will be posted on the website <a href="http://www.ebrd.com/english/about/strategy/main.htm">www.ebrd.com/english/about/strategy/main.htm</a> . It appears that the EBRD is not putting strategies on the website that were approved prior to the introduction of the Policy. For country strategies that have not been posted on the website, it is necessary to contact the Publications Desk in London or a Resident Office.
Summary of Medium- and Long-Term Strategies	Summaries of a variety of documents that are neither sectoral nor country specific, but are used to guide future EBRD operations.	Following approval of the full strategy by the Board of Directors.	To date the CEE Bankwatch Network has no experience with Medium and Long-Term Strategies.

In addition to information on policies and strategies, and project-specific information, there is some general information made available to the public. This includes annual reports and other EBRD publications. For an up to date list of what is available see the EBRD website or contact the Publications Desk or a Resident Office.

## HOW TO GET INFORMATION

EBRD information is made available in the following ways:

### Resident Offices

There is a resident office in all countries that the EBRD operates in. For addresses and contact details go to [www.ebrd.com/english/contacts](http://www.ebrd.com/english/contacts).

The resident offices keep full EIAs, EIA executive summaries and Project Summary Documents for projects that are located in that country as well as all publicly available publications, policies and the Environmental Procedures.

### Website

The EBRD website ([www.ebrd.com](http://www.ebrd.com)) has an increasing amount of information on it, including policies (currently only the Public Information Policy, the Environment Policy and the Energy Operations Policy), the Environmental Procedures, project summary documents, country strategies, and some EIA executive summaries.

The website is in English, German, French and Russian. However, most of the documents that are on the site are only in English.

The website is confusing and it can be difficult to find the information that you need. A lot of useful information, including the country strategies and policies can be found in the 'About the EBRD' section, in the main menu.

The EBRD does not see it as their responsibility to distribute full project EIAs. Instead they see this as the role of project sponsors. The EBRD states that it is encouraging project sponsors to put full project EIAs on their own websites, and that they will provide notification of this, and possibly a link, on the EBRD site.

### Project Enquiries Desk

For information or specific enquiries related to projects, it is necessary to contact:

Project Enquiries Desk.

Tel: +44 20 7338 6282

Fax: +44 20 7338 6102

E-mail: [projectenquiries@ebrd.com](mailto:projectenquiries@ebrd.com).

### Publication's Desk

All documents that are made public, with the exception of full EIAs should be available through the Publications Desk. For a list of what is available, you must contact the Desk. A fee is charged for some publications while others are free of charge. However, the EBRD states that it reserves the right to charge for staff time and postage costs of supplying any information.

#### Publications Desk

Tel: +44 20 7338 7553

Fax: +44 20 7338 6102

E-mail: [Pubsdesk@ebrd.com](mailto:Pubsdesk@ebrd.com)

Documents that do have a charge can be purchased online at [www.ebrd.com/english/pubs/order/order.htm](http://www.ebrd.com/english/pubs/order/order.htm)

### Business Information Centre

Environmental Impact Statements are available at the Business Information Centre, which is also located at One Exchange Square, London, on the main reception floor. It is open from 9:00 – 17:00 Monday to Friday.

You must give 24 hours notice if you want to view an EIA. The EIA cannot be taken away from the Business Information Centre and no photocopying facilities are provided.

## TIPS ON REQUESTING INFORMATION FROM THE EBRD

### Make use of the Resident Offices

The Resident Office in each country of operation has a lot of information. Approach them first. It is likely to be faster to obtain information from them then it is through the London office. Contact details for Resident Offices can be found at [www.ebrd.com/english/contacts](http://www.ebrd.com/english/contacts).

It is often easier to find and contact your national resident office than it is to find and contact project sponsors.

### Work quickly

There can be as little as 30 days to provide comments on projects (in the case of private sector projects). It is therefore important to access information quickly so that you can provide informed and thoughtful responses.

## Don't give up

The EBRD is only now establishing systems for the widespread distribution of information. If you encounter problems in obtaining information, do not give up, keep trying. It may be that they have not had such a request before and do not know how to respond adequately.

## Make requests in writing

It is worthwhile making requests for information in writing, even if you are visiting a resident office, the Publications Desk or project sponsor's office in person. This creates a "paper trail" that you can refer to if you encounter problems.

## Make problems known

If you are encountering problems in accessing information quickly and easily, you should contact:

Outreach/NGO Relations Unit  
Tel: +44 207 7338 6620 or 6868  
Fax: +44 207 7338 6102  
E-mail address: [ngo@ebrd.com](mailto:ngo@ebrd.com)

If you become aware of environmental or health problems with a project, contact:

Environmental Appraisal Unit  
Tel: +44 207 338 6020  
Fax: +44 207 338 6848

If you become aware of procedural issues with a project, also contact:

Project Evaluation Department.  
Tel: +44 207 338 6107  
Fax: +44 207 338 6726

In every case it is useful to inform the Executive Director that represents your country and the Project Evaluation Department. A list of Execu-

tive Directors can be found at [www.ebrd.com/english/contacts](http://www.ebrd.com/english/contacts). Provide them with as many details of your problems as possible including dates, people you have dealt with, etc.

## LANGUAGE ISSUES

The EBRD has four official languages, English, French, German and Russian. EBRD documentation is almost always prepared in English and is only sometimes translated and made available in the other languages. Pressure should be placed on the EBRD to translate more documents.

The EBRD only requires project sponsors to make the executive summary of EIAs available in the local language of where a project is located. Sometimes the project sponsor does make the full EIA available in the local language, and it is always worthwhile making a request to the project sponsor that they do so.

## POLICY REVIEW

The EBRD claims that it will continually review the Public Information Policy and a report on its implementation will be presented to the Board of Directors annually. The CEE Bankwatch Network is committed to working for the improvement of the policy and would therefore like to hear of any problems you may have with access to information. Our contact details are at the bottom of this page.

## EBRD ADDRESS

The EBRD  
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London  
EC2A 2JN United Kingdom  
Tel: +44 207 338 6000  
Fax: +44 207 338 6100

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The CEE Bankwatch Network is an international non-governmental organisation (NGO) with member organisations from countries of Central and Eastern Europe and the Commonwealth of Independent States. The basic aims of the network are to monitor activities of the International Financial Institutions in the region, and to promote constructive alternatives to their policies and projects. The CEE Bankwatch Network was formally set up in 1995, and has become one of the strongest networks of environmental NGOs in Central and Eastern Europe.

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Kratka 26, Praha 10, 100 00, Czech Republic  
e-mail: [main@bankwatch.org](mailto:main@bankwatch.org)  
web-site: [www.bankwatch.org](http://www.bankwatch.org)