



Stakeholder Policy

1. Scope of policy/procedure

This policy document describes the follow aspects:

- how commitment to stakeholder engagement should be established;
- how stakeholder engagement should be integrated with governance, strategy and operations;

The stakeholder policy is based on the AA100 stakeholder engagement standard¹ and applies to any type of interaction with all stakeholders, referring to every individual, organization or group that has an interest in or is impacted by the activities of bpost.

The stakeholder engagement activities covered in this policy refer to all product of service categories of bpost. Stakeholders may be involved in defining the scope of the specific engagement activity (if applicable). The time frame of the stakeholder engagement depends on the specific engagement activity and shall be defined by the related owner individually. In general the stakeholder engagement should be considered an ongoing process where input is generated continuously. Based on the time frame of the engagement, it should be considered whether the engagement will look at long-term strategic issues or current concerns or both.

The scope of the engagement may be adjusted based on views and input from stakeholders (if applicable).

2. Objective of Stakeholder Engagement

Successful engagement depends on understanding why to engaging (the purpose), what to engaging on (the scope), and who needs to be involved in the engagement (ownership, mandate, stakeholders).

The purpose of stakeholder engagement is to generate input for the development or adjustment of the overall business strategy as well as to identify and address operational issues so that both elements (strategy and operations) can be aligned with the interests of the different stakeholder groups.

Stakeholder engagement therefore represents a crucial part of bpost's identification process of relevant focus areas and topics (including CSR aspects).

3. Guidance for identifying stakeholders

The CSR manager is responsible for identifying stakeholder groups and appoints individual stakeholder owners for each stakeholder group. The stakeholder owners in turns identify the specific stakeholders. The CSR manager identifies the stakeholder groups as any group or person that have a relevant influence on, and/or is impacted by, bpost's operations. The stakeholder owner identifies the individual stakeholders based on existing relationships.

¹ AccountAbility (2011). AA1000 STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT STANDARD 2011. Retrieved, the 12th of January 2017, from https://www.respect.at/dl/OtOKJKJMnMIJqx4LJK/AA1000SES_2011_Stakeholder_Engagement.pdf

The stakeholders, and their expectations, are identified through existing approaches and processes such as surveys, participation in relevant forums, social dialogue, examination of contracts with suppliers and customer feedback (notably via social networks) and via roundtables.

4. Guidance for prioritizing stakeholders

Stakeholder engagement provides valuable input for bpost in order to be able to operate in accordance with the expectations and needs of the most relevant and impacting stakeholders. Therefore, it is essential to prioritize the stakeholders. The prioritization should be done by creating a stakeholder matrix that represents the relevant impact of the stakeholder on bpost operations as well as the relevance of bpost for the stakeholder. The stakeholder matrix can be found in the [appendix](#).

In order to determine the relevance of each stakeholder, engagement owners should systematically seek to understand each stakeholder's:

- a. knowledge of the issues associated with the purpose and scope of the engagement;
- b. expectations of the engagement;
- c. existing relationship with the organization (close or distant; formal or informal; positive or negative);
- d. dependence (or otherwise) on the organization, which would necessitate that the stakeholder group should be able to express its views independently of management in order to contribute freely;
- e. willingness to engage;
- f. level of influence;
- g. type (civil society, government, consumer etc.);
- h. cultural context;
- i. geographical scale of operation;
- j. capacity to engage (e.g. language barriers, IT literacy, disability);
- k. legitimacy;
- l. relationships with other stakeholders.

The generated information about the stakeholder groups should be used to assign the relevance levels and thereby prioritizing the stakeholders.

5. Guidance on the stakeholder engagement process

bpost applies the PLAN DO CHECK ACT approach as a guidance for the stakeholder engagement process, which will be explained in more detail throughout this section. In section 5.a guidance is given on how to decide on the method of engagement, relating to the PLAN phase. Section 5.b explains how to prepare the stakeholder engagement which represents the DO phase and section 5.c relates to the ACT phase as it discusses how to engage the stakeholders. The CHECK phase of the approach relates to section 6 where guidance is given on how to evaluate and communicate the outcomes of the engagement.

a. Guidance for deciding on the method of engagement (e.g. dialogue, consultation, interactive website, etc.)

The approach applied will depend on the scope, purpose and timeframe of the engagement as well as on the stakeholder related attributes (dependency, responsibility, tension, influence, diverse perspectives – see [appendix for definitions](#)). The method of engagement should be selected based on the best fit with needs,

capacity and expectations of the relevant stakeholders. More than one method may be selected for any given engagement. Different methods may be used concurrently or sequentially.

In their planning process, engagement owners should also include activities and methods which are essential to enable engagement but are not considered formal engagement methods. Such engagement preparation methods focus on the three aspects:

- Receiving unsolicited information (through protest, letters, media, website, etc.);
- Tracking information (media tracking, internet tracking, social network tracking, second hand reports);
- Creating awareness (through bulletins, newsletters and brochures, websites, speeches and conference presentations, road shows, press releases, advertising and other public displays, lobbying).

Based on the input generated from the pre-engagement activities, as well as the nature and extend of stakeholder involvement, the engagement level should be determined. Stakeholder engagement can be classified in different levels and related engagement methods that best fit the engagement level:

Engagement level	Method
Consult Limited two-way engagement: organization asks questions, stakeholders answer	Surveys, focus groups, meetings with selected stakeholder/s, public meetings, workshops, online feedback mechanisms, advisory committees
Negotiate	Collective bargaining with workers through their trade unions
Involve Two-way or multi-way engagement: learning on all sides but stakeholders and organization act independently	Multi-stakeholder forums, advisory panels, consensus building processes, participatory decision making processes, focus groups, on-line feedback schemes
Collaborate Two-way or multi-way engagement: joint learning, decision making and actions	Joint projects, joint ventures, partnerships, multi-stakeholder initiatives
Empower New forms of accountability; decisions delegated to stakeholders; stakeholders play a role in governance	Integration of stakeholders into governance, strategy and operations management

b. Guidance for preparing the stakeholders engagement (e.g. when and how to introduce capacity building measures)

In order to prepare the engagement, the engagement owner should consider the following three aspects:

- **Mobilizing resources:** The resources needed for successful engagement need to be identified and approval generated. Relevant resources not only refer to those needed to perform the engagement but also those required to respond to the outcomes of the engagement. In case the necessary resources are not committed, the engagement should not proceed.
- **Building capacity:** Together with the stakeholders, the owner should identify where to build capacity to best align them with their needs. Capacity building may be relevant and beneficial in the areas of knowledge, skills and opportunities. When building capacity, it should be considered that in the case of providing financial support to stakeholders, it needs to be based on clear eligibility criteria and in a transparent manner. Common levels of knowledge and similar understandings of concepts should not be assumed and understanding need to be ensured. Additionally, it is essential to provide sufficient amount of time to create trust and enable understanding. A third party may be involved when needed.

- **Identifying and preparing for engagement risks:** Owner and stakeholders should identify and address engagement risks such as conflict between participating stakeholders, unwillingness to engage, participation fatigue, creating expectations of change that the organization is unwilling or unable to fulfil, lack of balance between weak and strong stakeholders, disruptive stakeholders, uninformed stakeholders, and disempowered stakeholders. Contingency plans on how to deal with the most likely or damaging risks should be made. Clear ground rules for the engagement, which are agreed by all participants, should be set and executed in case of disruption.

c. Guidance on how to engage stakeholder

The stakeholders first need to be invited and then briefed before they can be engaged. It is essential that stakeholders are invited to participate reasonably well in advance and that appropriate communications are used. Comprehensive and balanced briefing materials, which take language, disability and literacy issue, should be developed and provided by the engagement owner to ensure the success of the engagement.

During the engagement activity, performed by either the owner or a facilitator, first the ground rules (see section [5.b](#)) should be created and agreed on together with stakeholders. During the engagement, the purpose may be adjusted. The owner should be watchful to detect issues, immediately address and resolve them. The owners of the engagement or facilitator should ensure all views and discussions are appropriately captured. With the agreement of the participants, audio, video or photographic records of the engagement may be made.

The engagement and outcomes should be documented and translated into an action plan.

The outcomes and action plan should be communicated back in a written report to the participating stakeholders in an inclusive and consistent way to ensure they receive feedback. The written report may be supplemented by stakeholder events, one-to-one meetings and conversations, follow-up telephone briefings, or providing access to online information. The owner should also seek feedback on the information provided and revise it in response to any legitimate queries raised. Record needs to be taken of any queries raised and how the information has been revised.

6. Guidance on evaluating and communicating the outcomes of the stakeholder engagement

In order to ensure successful stakeholder engagement, generate all benefits, and identify potential improvement areas, it is essential to evaluate the quality of stakeholder engagement. The organization shall systematically monitor and evaluate the overall quality of the stakeholder engagement. Therefore, the owner needs to evaluate the quality of individual engagements including monitoring and evaluation of

- Commitment and integration;
- Purpose, scope and stakeholder participation;
- Process (planning, preparing, engaging, acting, reviewing and improving);
- Outputs and outcomes;
- Reporting.

The quality evaluation should be used to adjust the current engagement activities, if applicable.

The outcomes and implications (action plan) for bpost should be communicated externally and internally. Communicating to stakeholders on the value and impact of engagement should go beyond providing feedback to stakeholders who participated in specific engagements. bpost should publicly report on the

engagement activities to demonstrate their value contributions to the bpost strategy and operations (reference to the annual report and the website – CSR pages).

7. Appendix

a. Definitions

Stakeholder – individuals, groups of individuals or organizations that affect and/or could be affected by an organization's activities, products or services and associated performance with regard to the issues to be addressed by the engagement.²

Stakeholder engagement - the process used by an organization to engage relevant stakeholders for a clear purpose to achieve accepted outcomes. It is now also recognized as a fundamental accountability mechanism, since it obliges an organization to involve stakeholders in identifying, understanding and responding to sustainability issues and concerns, and to report, explain and be answerable to stakeholders for decisions, actions and performance.³

Dependency - groups or individuals who are directly or indirectly dependent on the organization's activities, products or services and associated performance, or on whom the organization is dependent in order to operate.⁴

Responsibility – groups or individuals to whom the organization has, or in the future may have, legal, commercial, operational or ethical/moral responsibilities.⁵

Tension – groups or individuals who need immediate attention from the organization with regard to financial, wider economic, social or environmental issues⁶

Influence – groups and individuals who can have impact on the organization's or a stakeholder's strategic or operational decision-making⁷

Diverse perspectives – groups and individuals whose different views can lead to a new understanding of the situation and the identification of opportunities for action that may not otherwise occur.⁸

² AccountAbility (2011). AA1000 STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT STANDARD 2011, p.6

³ AccountAbility (2011). AA1000 STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT STANDARD 2011, p.6

⁴ AccountAbility (2011). AA1000 STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT STANDARD 2011, p.20

⁵ AccountAbility (2011). AA1000 STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT STANDARD 2011, p.20

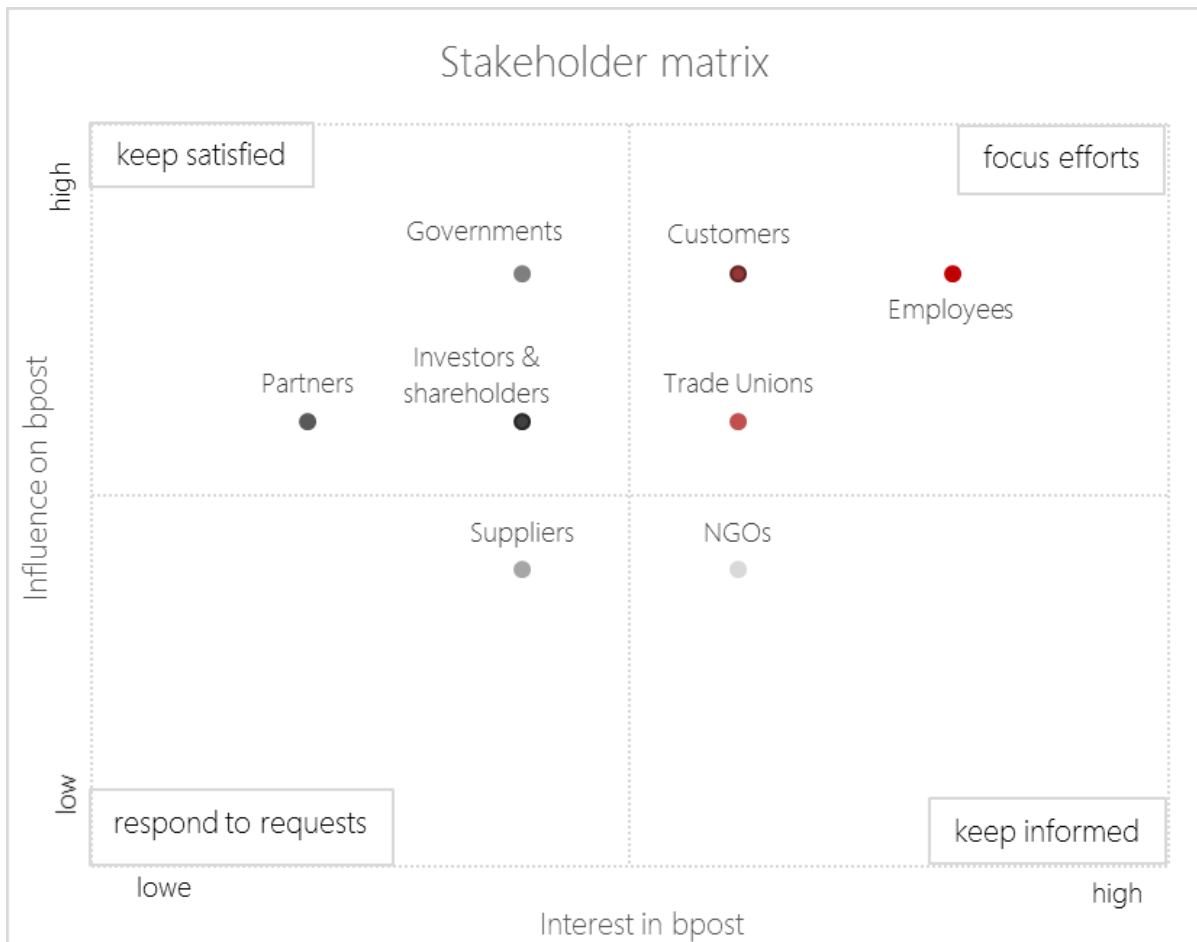
⁶ AccountAbility (2011). AA1000 STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT STANDARD 2011, p.20

⁷ AccountAbility (2011). AA1000 STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT STANDARD 2011, p.20

⁸ AccountAbility (2011). AA1000 STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT STANDARD 2011, p.21

b. Identified stakeholder groups and method of engagement at bpost

The prioritization of stakeholders (see [section 4](#)) is presented in the table below:



The stakeholder groups and related sub-groups, which are identified and re-assessed annually by the CSR manager of bpost based on the PLAN DO CHECK ACT process discussed in [section 5](#) and [6](#), are listed in the table below. Per stakeholder group (a) the relevance of these stakeholder for bpost, and (b) the engagement method are presented.

a) Stakeholder group	b) Relevance of engagement	c) Engagement method
Shareholders and Investors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Ensuring long-term commitment and continuous financial resources ▪ Generating (long-term) joint added value and benefits through interest alignment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Annual shareholder meetings ▪ Quarterly communications of our results ▪ "Investors relations" point of contact ▪ Annual payment of dividends
Customers <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Major customers and corporate customers ▪ SMEs, self-employed and liberal professions ▪ Residential customers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Strengthening trust ▪ Identifying opportunities for product optimization 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Publication of an information magazine for all customers ▪ Annual satisfaction surveys ▪ Account management for major and corporate customers ▪ Customer service contact point (+32 22 012345) ▪ Active presence on social networks (Facebook, Twitter) and website
Employees <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Staff ▪ Social partners 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Enabling positive customer experience ▪ Strengthening trust and loyalty ▪ Identification of business opportunities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Annual measurement of employee wellbeing and engagement ▪ Communication and awareness initiatives with staff on CSR themes ▪ Joint Committee meetings ▪ Organization of monthly consultations with social partners to implement and monitor change projects and projects affecting welfare at work
Suppliers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Revealing potential for joint benefits ▪ Enabling and contributing to sustainable innovations and sustainability in the value chain 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Study among main suppliers to gain greater insight into their vision and their sustainability results (Ecovadis methodology) ▪ Awareness raising among suppliers to encourage them to choose a sustainable environmental approach
Media	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Impact on the image and reputation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Issue of press releases and organization of press meetings
Authorities <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Federal government and the Minister of Public Enterprises ▪ Federal parliament (Infrastructure, Communications and Public Enterprises Commission) ▪ Cities and municipalities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Decisions impacting bpost's activities and license to operate 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Presentation by the CEO of the company's strategy to the members of the Chamber of Representatives Infrastructure Commission ▪ Regular contact with the government and local authorities to inform them of the company's plans and to seek solutions to the problems they may face with regard to bpost services
Partners <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ NGOs and Associations: Natuurpunt, PEFC, UN Global Compact, The Shift, The Club of Rome EU Chapter ▪ International Post Corporation (IPC), Post Europe ▪ Carbon experts: Deloitte, Greenloop and CO2logic 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Creating trust and loyalty ▪ Contributing to the identification of business opportunities ▪ Enabling/contributing to innovations and a sustainable development 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Participation in the International Post Cooperation environmental program ▪ Exchange of "best practices" with regard to sustainable development between postal operators, via the IPC and Post Europe, The Shift and The Club of Rome EU Chapter Sustainability networks. ▪ Investment in tools and projects with Deloitte, Greenloop and CO2logic to reduce carbon emissions

c. Stakeholder engagement governance at bpost

The engagement governance structure, related tasks and responsibilities are presented in the flow chart below:

