

**Public**

## Environmental and Social Data Sheet

### Overview

Project Name:	REHABILITATION OF PLOVDIV - BURGAS RWY PHASE II
Project Number:	2020-0555
Country:	BULGARIA
Project Description:	<i>The Project concerns the completion of the rehabilitation and modernisation works on the Plovdiv-Burgas railway line, which is part of the main Trans-European Transport network and part of corridor "Orient / East Mediterranean". The project will contribute to bringing the railway infrastructure into conformity with the TEN-T Regulation requirements</i>

EIA required: yes

Project included in Carbon Footprint Exercise<sup>1</sup>: yes

(details for projects included are provided in section: "EIB Carbon Footprint Exercise")

### Environmental and Social Assessment

#### Environmental Assessment

The project is a second phase of the Plovdiv – Burgas rail connection modernisation, resulting into an electrified, partly double-tracked railway connection equipped with modern trackside signalling system. More precisely, the project related works include:

- Renewal of 75 km and construction of 35 km of railway tracks, including realignments and track doubling on selected sections,
- Construction of a 850 m long railway tunnel,
- Modernisation and construction of 120 km of catenary,
- Removal and modernisation of some 40 level crossings,
- Installation of ERTMS Level 1 trackside signalling system on the whole Plovdiv – Burgas line, 290 line km in total.

In addition, the project foresees spot improvements in stations, like modernisation of catenary wires in siding tracks and modernisation of switches. Furthermore, a protective forest belt will be planted between Chernograd and Aytos railway stations acting as a natural barrier for adverse wind conditions.

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<sup>1</sup> Only projects that meet the scope of the Carbon Footprint Exercise, as defined in the EIB Carbon Footprint Methodologies, are included, provided estimated emissions exceed the methodology thresholds: 20,000 tonnes CO<sub>2</sub>e/year absolute (gross) or 20,000 tonnes CO<sub>2</sub>e/year relative (net) – both increases and savings.

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The maximum design speed of the modernised line is 160 km/h. Permitted axle load is 22.5 t.

The project is part of the Integrated Transport Strategy 2030 (ITS) in Bulgaria, which was subject to a SEA in accordance with Directive 2001/42/EC. The SEA procedure was adopted by Decision No 1-1/2017 issued by the Ministry of Environment and Water (MOEW). The ITS was approved by the Council of Ministers with decision N 336/23.06.2017.

The project falls under Annex I of the EIA directive and an EIA procedure was conducted. The environmental consent was issued in July 2018 (no.2-2/2018, issued on 18th July 2018).

The EIA decision contains mitigation measures both for general adverse environmental effects (like noise and pollution during construction) and for potential impacts on Natura 2000 sites (like disturbance to bird breeding).

An Appropriate Assessment process has been conducted in line with the Article 6(3) of the Habitats Directive regarding the project impacts on Natura 2000 sites. According to the Bulgarian legislation, the assessment of project impacts is an integral part of the EIA procedure and the Appropriate Assessment report is an annex to the EIA Report. The aforementioned EIA Decision approving the project contains also the decision of the Competent Authorities for affected Natura 2000 sites. With proper mitigation measures, no significant impacts are expected from the project implementation and operation on Natura 2000 sites.

More specifically, the project crosses the following Natura 2000 sites:

BG0000578 Maritsa river, BG0000429 Stryama river, BG0000443 Omurovska river, BG0000442 Martinka river, BG0000425 Sazliika river, BG0000205 Straldzha, BG0000418 Kermenski vazvishenia, BG0000192 Tundzha river and BG0000196 Mochuritsa river, BG0000192 Tundzha river, BG0000196 Mochuritsa River, BG0000205 Straldzha, BG0000208 Straldzha complex.

*The Black Sea Basin Directorate and the East Aegean River Basin Directorate issued Water Declarations concerning absence of impacts on 24<sup>th</sup> July 2018 according to article 4.7 of the Water Framework Directive, confirming that the project does not deteriorate the status of the water bodies or cause failure to achieve good water status/potential. The project is consistent with environmental objectives stipulated in the respective River Basin Management Plans (RBMP) 2016-2021.*

The mitigation measures in different project stages include:

- construction and operation stage:
  - construction machines have to meet noise emission standards use planned routes,
  - in certain areas works can only be conducted during daytime,
  - noise screens are to be installed in certain sections,
  - fencing in certain areas known to be prone for animals crossing the railway line,
  - introduction of over-passes for animals,
  - forest harvesting cannot be conducted during bird breeding season and
  - installing so called turbidity curtains to protect aquatic life forms during construction,
  - a monitoring plan is to be followed in terms of effects on environment and health of human beings.

Design, construction and operation stage related requirements are addressed by the project Promoter as they are legally binding and the EIA Decision is part of the construction permit.

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Project residual impacts include land take, permanent visual change of scenery and use of scarce resources.

### **EIB Carbon Footprint Exercise**

Based on Promoter's forecast of passenger and freight volumes, the Bank Services estimated that:

- The project will produce about 32 ktonnes CO<sub>2</sub>e/year,
- Project emissions savings are estimated to be about 6 ktonnes CO<sub>2</sub>e/year compared to the baseline.

The estimated values refer to an average year of the 30-year appraisal period.

The absolute emissions calculation assumes the effects generated by the project on the transport network. The baseline (without project scenario) considers emissions from existing rail and the road network of both passenger and freight traffic.

The calculation of emissions may be different from the promoter's estimate because of different assumptions and boundaries.

For the annual accounting purposes of the EIB Carbon Footprint, the project emissions will be prorated according to the EIB lending amount signed in that year, as a proportion of project cost.

### **Social Assessment**

In total 280 hectares of land was acquired. Expropriation procedures followed the national legislation. No residential or commercial buildings had to be demolished.

The project is expected to enhance accessibility to railway services for people with reduced mobility, as it is delivered in accordance with the relevant European technical requirements. More specifically, the project is delivered in accordance with the Technical Specifications for Interoperability concerning Persons with Disabilities and Persons with Reduced Mobility.

### **Public Consultation and Stakeholder Engagement**

The Integrated Transport Strategy 2030 was subject to public consultation as part of the SEA process.

Meetings for public discussions were held in the following municipalities on 14th and 15th June 2018 regarding the EIA:

- Chirpan,
- Bratya Daskalovi,
- Rakovski,
- Rodopi,
- Maritsa and
- Plovdiv.

During period 18th – 21th June 2018 public discussions were held in the following municipalities:

- Stara Zagora,
- Nova Zagora,

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- Sliven,
- Yambol,
- Tundzha,
- Straldzha,
- Karnobat,
- Aytos,
- Burgas and
- Kameno.

For example during the public discussion in Stara Zagora Municipality, concerns were raised regarding the expected exceedances of the noise levels in the environment in the region of Mihaylovo Village. As a result, the Promoter clarified that the project will lead to increased train speeds and as such will result into higher noise levels. However, these adverse effects on noise are addressed by design measures and construction of noise screens.

As a conclusion for the public consultation process, the Promoter prepared recommendations and adjusted the project (for example introducing more noise screens) following the public discussions. Description of these changes were submitted to the Ministry of Environment and Water (EIA-83/25.06.2018) as well as to the affected municipalities.

## Conclusions and Recommendations

The Promoter completed the EIA procedure as required and obtained the necessary environmental approval. The project, with the prescribed mitigants, has no significant effects on any Natura 2000 sites.

The project contributes towards climate change mitigation as it supports modal shift to rail, which in turn helps to offset some of the negative environmental impacts stemming from the construction period of the project.

The project is therefore acceptable for EIB financing in environmental and social terms.