

Environmental and Social Data Sheet

Overview

Project Name: SOFIA INTEGRATED URBAN TRANSPORT STAGE II
Project Number: 20200570
Country: Bulgaria
Project Description: The project consists of transport infrastructure and tram rolling stock investments to improve the public transport system in Sofia, Bulgaria.

EIA required: no

Project included in Carbon Footprint Exercise¹: no
(details for projects included are provided in section: "EIB Carbon Footprint Exercise")

Environmental and Social Assessment

Environmental Assessment

The project consists of a number of investments to improve the public transport system in Sofia, Bulgaria. There are four project components including:

- Component 3: Rehabilitation of 1.6km of double-track tramway infrastructure along "Kamenodelska" street;
- Component 5: Rehabilitation of 8.1km of double-track tramway infrastructure along "Tsar Boris III" boulevard;
- Component 6: Purchase of 13 new low-floor articulated tram rolling stock;
- Component 7: Upgrading of intelligent traffic management system (ITS) for urban public transport.

The components of the project formed part of the investment programme for Sofia Municipality that was developed for the Integrated Plan for Urban Regeneration and Development (IPURD) for the 2007-2013 period, and was continued under Priority Axis 1 of the Operational Programme Regions and Growth 2014-2020. The IPURD was subject to a strategic environmental assessment (SEA) screening procedure in 2013 also in accordance with the Environmental Protection Act and the Ordinance for environmental assessment of plans and programs. The Ministry of Environment and Waters concluded that an environmental assessment report was not required (decision No. CO-23 EO/2013) as the plan

¹ 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 CO₂e/year absolute (gross) or 20,000 tonnes CO₂e/year relative (net) – both increases and savings.

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was unlikely to have a significant negative impact on protected areas and natural habitats, populations and habitats of species. The Operational Programme Regions and Growth 2014-2020 was subject to SEA in accordance with Directive 2001/42/EC. At the level of Priority Axes, the impact of the programme on environmental and human health was positively assessed – referencing improving public urban transport in the populated areas.

The two components related to tram infrastructure fall under Annex II of Directive 2011/92/EU (Environmental Impact Assessment [EIA] Directive) amended by Directive 2014/52/EU and the relevant Bulgarian legislation (Environmental Protection Act; EIA Ordinance²). The components related to new tram rolling stock and ITS equipment do not fall under the scope of the EIA Directive and, therefore were not subject to EIA.

The EIA screening procedure was carried out for the tram infrastructure components of the project and a notification for investment proposal was submitted in 2016 to the competent authority, the Regional Inspectorate of Environment and Water (RIEW) for Sofia. The RIEW Sofia decided that no EIA was required. The negative screening (no. CO-83/30.06.2016) concluded that the project was not likely to have a significant negative impact on natural habitats, populations and habitats of species subject to conservation in protected areas. The screening summarises the reasons for decision following the criteria listed under Annex III of the EIA Directive. Relevant authorities and the public were notified during the procedure.

The screening decision also concluded that the tram infrastructure components are not likely to have a significant negative impact on Natura 2000 sites established under the EU Habitats (92/43/EEC) and Birds Directives (2009/147/EC). The closest Natura 2000 site identified to the project is B0000113 “Vitosha” (special protection area and site of community importance) and this is not crossed or expected to be affected during project construction or operation activities. The Ministry of Water and Environment issued a Natura 2000 declaration in 2016.

The project components are Paris-Aligned and consistent with the Climate Bank Roadmap. The investments cover zero direct emission mobile assets for the tram rolling stock, infrastructure that is required for zero direct emissions transport and ITS and other investments supporting efficiency improvements and transport demand management.

The promoter undertakes to redeploy and/or scrap replaced trams due to the acquisition of new tram rolling stock in accordance with the national environmental legislation and inform, to its satisfaction, the EIB about this during the project implementation.

The project is expected to support climate change mitigation and result in a net reduction in carbon emissions – principally as a result of passenger shift to public transport. Based on the scope of the new trams and road emission savings over an operating period, absolute carbon emissions were estimated at 1,125 tonnes CO₂e/year and relative emissions a decrease of 251 tonnes CO₂e/year³.

The construction phase of the tram infrastructure components may be a possible source for harmful noise and emissions from vehicles and machinery, in addition to household and hazardous waste. Environmental management plans during construction, in accordance with relevant legislation, will mitigate any negative effects – which if occur, would be minimal, local and temporary. No significant environmental impacts are expected during project operation.

² Ordinance on the conditions and procedures for assessing the environmental impact (EIA Ordinance)

³ Calculated based on EIB Carbon Footprint Methodology

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The project components included environmental mitigation measures such as for noise reduction, provisions of water drainage systems to prevent flooding and activities related to the improvement of the urban environment (planting areas with compensation scale 1:3).

A climate change and vulnerability assessment was developed as part of the preparation of components 3 and 5. The following climatic factors were found to have higher sensitivity: extreme change in temperature, extreme precipitation, wind speed, floods and storms. Based on a consideration of these risk factors, the project was considered to be of low vulnerability due to location, infrastructure type and based on current and forecast climate data. The project design was determined to be resilient to climatic factors. Existing design standards and operation and maintenance procedures are considered suitable adaptation.

Social Assessment, where applicable

The project components are located in an urban area and are expected to have positive social impacts – in terms of effects from improvement to public transport. No negative social issues were identified during construction, supply and implementation.

Public Consultation and Stakeholder Engagement

The notification of the investment proposal and the request for the assessment of the need to carry out an EIA were published on the Sofia Municipality website and made available to the public. The project components were not subject to EIA and therefore consultation under EIA procedure. The issued EIA screening decision is available on the RIEW website for information.

Other Environmental and Social Aspects

Development consents (building permits) covering the infrastructure works were issued between 2015 and 2017, considering the results of the EIA screening procedure for the project, and specifying requirements including, inter-alia, on environmental and social management.

Conclusions and Recommendations

As indicated above, the overall project is expected to contribute to the long-term development of urban public transport in the city of Sofia. Positive environmental impacts are expected from reducing road traffic related negative impacts and emissions (including GHG emissions) and hence also help mitigate climate change.

The promoter undertakes to inform the Bank, before project completion and to its satisfaction, on how replaced tram rolling stock are being redeployed and/or disposed of and provide the relevant scrapping certificate(s) as applicable, in line with EU, national regulation and industry best practice.

Overall, the project is acceptable for EIB financing in environmental and social terms, subject to the above undertaking.