

Luxembourg, 20th of July, 2022

Environmental and Social Data Sheet

Overview

Project Name:	<i>SOFIA MUNICIPALITY METRO L3 STAGE III-GREEN LOAN</i>
Project Number:	<i>2021-0719</i>
Country:	<i>Bulgaria</i>
Project Description:	An investment loan to Sofia Municipality to co-finance alongside the Recovery and Resilience Facility (RRF) the construction of the third stage of Sofia Metro Line 3. The project includes a twin-track metro line of approximately 8.6 km in length, 9 metro stations and the acquisition of new rolling stock for the metro network. The construction is divided into two lots: 3.0 km of twin tracks and 3 metro stations for Lot 1; and 5.6 km of twin tracks and 6 metro stations for Lot 2

EIA required: No

Project included in Carbon Footprint Exercise¹: No

Environmental and Social Assessment

Environmental Assessment

The construction of Sofia Metro Line 3 falls under Annex II of the Environmental Impact Assessment Directive 2011/92/EU amended by Directive 2014/52/EU. In this case, based on preliminary environmental assessments, the Ministry of Environment and Waters (MEW), as competent authority, screened out metro line 3 (Stages I, II and III) and therefore a full EIA was not required (Decision No. 10-PR/2013). Subsequent decisions (No. 10-PR/2015, No. 6-PR/2019 and No.2-PR/2020) were issued by the competent authority to confirm that the changes due to final design, including a new section of line 3 towards Slatina district (Stage III, lot 2) did not have significant environmental and social impacts and a full EIA was not required. The screening out decisions followed the criteria set out in Annex III of the abovementioned Directive.

The Sofia Metro Line 3 project is included in the General Development Plan of Sofia Municipality (GDP) for which a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) in accordance with Directive 2001/42/EC has been completed. In 2014 the necessary legal procedures were carried out for a new update of the GDP which included an update of the alignment of Sofia Metro Line 3. The competent authority, issued a decision (№ EO-12/201) stating that the modification of the GDP does not require a new strategic environmental assessment.

Benefits of the project: The project is expected to have an overall positive impact on the environment as a result of the increase in public transport service and quality. The project will contribute to environmental sustainability mainly through the decrease of the air pollutants, GHG emissions and noise generated by street vehicles as well as through the improvement of inhabitants' safety.

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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Environmental impacts: The project is constructed in the urban environment, and stations are mostly built inside existing street corridors. The main impacts identified during construction concern emissions of air pollutants and high levels of noise and vibration due to construction activities. These impacts will be mitigated through the use of best construction practices and appropriate technologies. Temporary traffic disruption due to construction in the street right-of-way will be mitigated by a construction and traffic management plan. In the operational phase noise and vibrations are expected to remain below allowed thresholds levels. The residual negative impacts of the project are deemed acceptable by the competent authority

Climate change adaptation: The Sustainable Energy and Climate Action Plan Municipality 2021-2030 includes a vulnerability assessment of the transport sector highlighting the risk of flooding, soil instability and extreme temperatures. The project comprises several measures to reduce these risks to acceptable levels including additional drainage capacity, elevated entrances at metro stations, soil stabilization techniques, monitoring plan of ground settlements and provision of air conditioning in metro trains.

Impacts on protected areas or biodiversity: The competent authority issued a Natura 2000 declaration for the entire line 3 which stated that the implementation of the project is not expected to have significant negative effects on Natura 2000 sites (Decision no. SO-35-OS/2010). The screening decisions also confirm that impacts in habitats, populations and habitats of species that are subject to protection are not likely to be impacted.

The distance between the project and the nearest Natura 2000 sites is:

- SPA Vitosha (code BG0000113) – more than 4000 m
- SPA Ribarnitsi Chelopechene (code BG0002114) – more than 4200 m
- SPA Dolni Bogrov - Kazichene (code BG0002004) – more than 3200 m

Alignment with Paris Agreement: The project supports investments in sustainable urban public transport by financing an underground metro line extension and zero direct emissions metro trains, being aligned with the Paris Agreement, according to Annex 2 the EIB's Climate Bank Roadmap.

Social Assessment

No involuntary resettlements are required for the implementation of the project. Only two private plots of land (of less than 0.1 Ha in total) are expected to be temporarily affected during construction. The project does not affect any identified vulnerable groups

Public Consultation and Stakeholder Engagement

Following the Spatial Planning Act and Environmental Protection Act in Bulgaria the citizens affected by the project were informed by the district administrations about the investment proposal for the construction of metro sections. The project's final design was updated as a result of the stakeholder engagement process following the Municipal Expert Council on Spatial Planning held in September 2021.

Other Environmental and Social Aspects

The principle of preventive action is respected following the mitigation measures stipulated in the EIA screening out decisions as conditions for project execution.



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Conclusions and Recommendations

The project was screened out by the competent authority and therefore a full EIA was not required based on the criteria set out in Annex III of the Environmental Impact Assessment Directive. The expected environmental and social impacts are not expected to be significant being limited to the construction phase and minimized through appropriate mitigation measures. Overall, the project is expected to have a positive impact as a result of the increase in public transport service and quality.

Considering the above, and the experience with the promoter in previous operations, the project is acceptable for EIB financing in environmental and social terms.