

Environmental and Social Data Sheet

Overview

Project Name:	SOFIA MUNICIPAL ROADS REHABILITATION
Project Number:	2011-0595
Country:	Bulgaria
Project Description:	The project comprises construction, reconstruction, expansion and rehabilitation works of 22 small-sized roads in Sofia, totaling about 56 km. The project will contribute to bring the network to current safety standards and to alleviate key bottlenecks enhancing traffic fluidity
EIA required:	NO
Project included in Carbon Footprint Exercise ¹ :	NO

Summary of Environmental and Social Assessment, including key issues and overall conclusion and recommendation

The project is part of the 2009 City Master Plan, for which a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) was concluded, in compliance with EU SEA Directive 2001/42 (Opinion on EC N1.-1/2009 of the Minister of Environment and Water).

The project comprises 22 small-sized investments on the road network in Sofia. The selected schemes will contribute to improve road safety and alleviate key bottlenecks thus reducing traffic congestion and improving public transport. The project also includes infrastructure for cycles so that users can also benefit from the new and upgraded local roads.

All the schemes are less than 10 km of continuous length and there are no motorways or express roads included in the project, therefore the roads fall into Annex II of the EIA Directive 2011/92/EU and hence competent authorities decide on a case-by-case basis whether a full EIA, including public consultation has to be carried out or not. To date, screening decisions are awaited for all the schemes and required as disbursement condition against them.

The project's impact at the construction stage will be short-lived and reversible, at a level which is deemed acceptable. Furthermore some additional positive impacts will derive from the operation, reducing the noise and pollution levels in the vicinity of the affected roads. The project, as part of the City Master Plan, is expected to contribute to an overall improvement of the urban environment by encouraging the use of public transport, also partially reducing private car usage. Finally, the majority of the roads include footpaths, cycle tracks and public transport infrastructure (tram tracks and catenaries for trolleybuses and trams) which contribute to sustainable mobility.

No impacts are expected on Natura 2000 sites, nevertheless the Promoter shall provide evidence of compliance with the Habitats Directive (92/43/EEC) and Birds Directives (79/409/EEC) by submitting, as a disbursement condition, the appropriate certificates per scheme (Form A/B or equivalent) issued by the competent authority.

The institutional capacity of the Promoter to manage the environmental issues in the project is deemed adequate and therefore, subject to the conditions described above, the project is acceptable for the Bank in Environmental and Social terms.

¹ Only projects that meet the scope of the Pilot Exercise, as defined in the EIB draft Carbon Footprint Methodologies, are included, provided estimated emissions exceed the methodology thresholds: above 100,000 tons CO₂e/year absolute (gross) or 20,000 tons CO₂e/year relative (net) – both increases and savings.

Environmental and Social Assessment

Environmental Assessment

As a Member State, Bulgaria has harmonised its environmental legislation in line with the relevant EU Directives (namely, EIA, Habitat/Natura 2000 and Birds Directives). The city already has a Master Plan, for which the SEA has been realised.

The competent authority for environmental issues (EIA and Natura 2000) in Sofia, for all projects of urban and regional interest - such as the schemes in the present project, is the Regional Environmental Inspectorate from the Ministry of Environment. For schemes of national interest, such as primary roads, the competent authority is also the Ministry of Environment at national level.

The project comprises construction, reconstruction, expansion and rehabilitation works of roads already included in the City Master Plan and in the Transport Infrastructure Program for construction and reconstruction works in Sofia (2013-2016). The roads are scattered throughout the city and works include rehabilitation of tram tracks and catenaries where existing. All the schemes fall into Annex II of the EIA Directive 2011/92/EU and to date, screening decisions are awaited for all the schemes and required as disbursement condition against them.

In general, the investments will be implemented in urban and urbanised areas which lack precious natural values. The project will not have any significant negative impact on water conditions or groundwater pollution, neither result in any changes or pollution of the ground surface and soil or their loss. In addition, no changes which would have a significant influence on plants and animals will be introduced. Flora losses will be limited to the clearance of tree stands and shrubs growing along the streets in locations in which new trees and shrubs will be planted. The project implementation will have a positive influence on the living conditions of the city inhabitants, as well as on the environment and the city's spatial layout.

The project will have an impact on the environment both during construction and operation. At construction stage, the project will increase noise levels, and will impact water and air quality. Special mitigation measures are being considered in the designs in order to minimise impacts and, in most cases, improve original conditions of existing roads such as drainage systems, management of earthworks, waste, and landfills, reparation of the vegetation damaged with local species and wildlife protection with underpasses or rehabilitation of existing structures. The project's impact at the construction stage will be short-lived and reversible, at a level which is deemed acceptable.

At operation stage the major impacts will be connected to noise, pollution and road use generated waste however the project should bring about environmental benefits as it should decrease traffic-related emissions thanks to the improvement of traffic conditions and public transport infrastructure, with the elimination of current long queues at intersections, where the related "stop&go" circulation regime is one of the main factors provoking high levels of pollution. Special mitigation measures have been proposed in order to minimise these impacts as the introduction of greenery and decorative green lanes.

The above-mentioned measures are considered sufficient.

Social Assessment, where applicable

Land is already available for all the schemes of the project except the ones coded 3A, 3B and 5 where the land acquisition process is currently on-going. There are no resettlements included in the project and no complaints regarding land acquisition were raised during the public consultation phase of the City Master Plan.

The probability that non-governmental institutions (e.g. ecological, the protection of cultural heritage, protection of consumer rights etc.) raise any protest or make any complaint about the investment shall be considered as minor.

Public Consultation and Stakeholder Engagement, where required

All the roads included in the project are part of the City Master Plan that was presented for discussion at a joint meeting of the municipal expert council for spatial planning (MECSP) and the national expert council for spatial planning and regional policy (NECSPRR) of the Ministry of Regional Development and Public Works. On the basis of the submitted reviews and opinions of the Preliminary EIA report, the two expert councils made a joint decision to adopt the preliminary draft of the Master Plan - Sofia and recommended to the Sofia Municipal Council (SMC) to allow the transition to a "Final project" phase.

The Master Plan of Sofia Municipality was adopted with Decision № 51/19.11.2009 of Protocol 697 and with Decision № 960/16.12.2009 by the Council of Ministers.

Other Environmental and Social Aspects

According to the SEA, a monitoring programme will be carried out by the city in all road projects included in the City Master Plan. The analysis must be performed with special consideration of noise emission and emission of dust and gases into the air. In the case that acceptable values of the noise level have been exceeded, adequate acoustic protection measures must be implemented.

Road Safety is expected to improve as the project will upgrade the road network to current safety standards.