

Environmental and Social Data Sheet

Overview

Project Name: **SOFIA NORTHERN SPEED TANGENT**
Project Number: 20140141
Country: Bulgaria
Project Description: Construction of approximately 16 km of a dual carriageway motorway (2x3) shortcutting the Sofia Ring Road in the north of the city.

EIA required: yes

Project included in Carbon Footprint Exercise¹: no

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

The project has been included in the Operational Programme Regional Development (OPRD) only in 2013. The OPRD was subject to a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) following Bulgarian legislation in accordance with SEA Directive 2001/42/EC. The environmental report was approved on February 2007. The competent authority, The Ministry of Environment and Waters (MoEW), has considered that there is no need to review the SEA after the incorporation of the motorway project.

The motorway project falls under Annex I 7b of the EIA Directive 2011/92/EU for which EIA is mandatory. The MoEW is the competent authority to issue EIA decisions in consultation with other authorities with responsibilities on environmental aspects. Based on the EIA Report and the results from the public consultations, the MoEW issued a positive EIA Decision in April 2011.

The MoEW is also the Competent Authority for NATURA 2000 sites. The nearest NATURA 2000 protected sites are; (i) Dolni Bogrov – Kazichene (BG0002004) located at 1 km eastbound of the end of the project and the (ii) Chelopechene Fish-ponds (BG0002114) located at some 3 km north to the end of the project. The NATURA 2000 declaration (Form A) dated 23rd October 2012 concludes that the project is not likely to exert a significant negative impact on natural habitats, populations and habitats of species subject to conservation.

Following the requirements of the approved EIA, the present investment minimises the main residual negative impacts of the motorway; (i) it abates the noise levels with noise barriers (ii) it provides for over/underpasses for multiple species and (iii) it provides landscaping.

Overall, the positive impacts during operation (such as: increased safety, noise and emission reduction and diversion of transit traffic from the inhabited areas) would outweigh the adverse impacts during construction.

The project goes along agricultural and industrial areas and no resettlements are foreseen.

The project is therefore acceptable for the Bank financing from an environmental and social point of view.

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

SEA

The initial OP-Regional Development (OPRD) was approved in September 2007 and it was subject to a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) following Bulgarian legislation and in accordance with SEA Directive 2001/42/EC. The EA report was approved as part of the ex-ante evaluation in February 2007.

The present project was included as an amendment to the initial OPRD by a decision of the Monitoring Committee (MC), decision number 99-00-6-6967/04 of July 2013.

In line with the Bulgarian legislation and the SEA Directive all amendments of the OPRD are deemed to be subject to a mandatory procedure for the assessment of the need for revised Environmental Assessment (EA). On July 26th 2013 The Ministry of Environment and Waters (MoEW) issued the Decision № EA-24/2013 which, taking as a basis the unlikelihood of the project having significant negative impact on Natura 2000 protected areas, concluded that no revision of the EA should be carried out.

The decision of MoEW was published on the OPRD's website and on the MoEW's website and following this decision the revised OPRD and the Decision of MOEW were sent to the European Commission on September 27th 2013 and the revised programme was approved by European Commission with Decision № C (2014) 1876 from 1st April 2014.

EIA

The project relates to the "construction of motorways and express roads" and falls under Annex I 7(b) of the EIA Directive 2011/92/EU which is fully transposed in Bulgaria by the Environment Protection Act (EPA) and for which the EIA is mandatory.

EIA procedure

The MoEW is the competent authority to issue EIA decisions in consultation with other authorities with responsibilities on the environmental sector. Based on the EIA report and the results of the public consultations the MoEW issued a favourable EIA Decision No.6-3/2011 of April 2011.

The nearest NATURA 2000 protected sites are; (i) Dolni Bogrov – Kazichene (BG0002004) located at 1 km eastbound of the end of the project and the (ii) Chelopechene Fish-ponds (BG0002114) located at some 3 km north to the end of the project. The NATURA 2000 declaration dated 23rd October 2012 concludes that the project is not likely to exert a significant negative impact on natural habitats, populations and habitats of species subject to conservation.

The new motorway passes over two aquifers, the Sofia Valley Neogene-Quaternary Waters (BG1G00000NQ030) and the Sofia Kettle Neogene Waters (BG1G00000N033) but no impacts are foreseen if the measures identified in the EIA are implemented.

Mitigation measures

The EIA recommends to implement a number of measures during design, construction and operation in order to minimize the impacts of the project on the air quality, the water quality (surface and underground), the mineral diversity, the land resources, the landscape, the vegetation cover, the fauna, construction waste and local population, these including:

- Noise Barriers
- Re-cultivation
- Underpasses for small animals
- Landscaping activities

Apart from them, other mitigation measures will be taken during the construction and operation stage. These include specific monitoring and are comprised in the Environmental Management Plan (EMP) developed as part of the detailed design.

The mitigation measures are satisfactory to the Bank.

Occupational health and safety will follow the EHS Directive and the relevant industry safety requirements. The country has subscribed to International Labour Organisation (ILO) core labour standards.

Development Consent / Construction Permit

According to Bulgarian legislation the Construction Permit/Development consent is issued not only on the basis of an approved EIA procedure but of a number of other documents related to the future works. Construction Permits for big linear projects are issued for specific works, normally section by section along the line of route following design completion. Additionally, the Water Body Use Permits will be required for all construction, modernization or rebuilding works on structures crossing surface water bodies. Such a permit gives the right to use a surface water body and is a basis for approval of the investment designs and issuing of Construction Permits.

Development Consent in the form of a Construction Permit is depending on the completion of designs and land acquisition and at the time of the project appraisal, it was not yet issued by the Ministry of Regional Development and Public Works.

Positive impacts

The project implementation is expected to overcome current problems along the corridor by using a completely new route as well as providing a road link with better operational conditions. The environmental benefits of the project may be expressed by:

- A transfer of traffic from city centre to the new motorway that, providing for an overall reduction of emitted exhaust gasses and noise achieved due to the reduced travel time, decreased travel length and eliminated congestion.
- As the alignment of the motorway is located away in the periphery of the city, the population directly affected by a high level of noise and harmful emissions will be limited.
- Moreover, the population of the towns and villages presently situated along the existing road will be subject to less noise and air pollution.
- Significant decrease of the number of traffic accidents along the new alignment is foreseen.

Social Assessment, where applicable

The project is essentially located in agricultural land and industrial land and does not require any resettlement of persons. However the price offered for the expropriation of land has resulted in a mediatized social, political and legal situation between a number of landowners and the Administration.

Public Consultation and Stakeholder Engagement, where required

When preparing the relevant EIA decision, The Ministry of Environment and Waters consulted the Sofia Municipality and the communities situated along the project. The general public was informed by announcements in regional newspapers and was given access to the EIA. Four public hearings were carried out. During those hearings the residents of the "Vrazhdebna" residential district and the company "Vienna Real Estates EOOD – Sofia", objected the EIA and requested to change the alignment of the project to the north of the existing Vrazhdebna cemetery. The changes were considered, an addendum to the EIA was prepared and the objections were withdrawn.