

Environmental and Social Data Sheet

Overview

Project Name: RAILWAY NIS-DIMITROVGRAD
Project Number: 20160341
Country: Serbia
Project Description: Modernization and electrification of the existing railway line Niš-Dimitrovgrad (aprox. 82 km) and construction of railway by-pass around Niš (aprox. 22 km).

EIA required: Yes

Project included in Carbon Footprint Exercise¹: No

Environmental and Social Assessment

Environmental Assessment

The project will be located in Serbia, an EU candidate country, currently in the process of alignment with the EU *acquis*. In particular, the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) Directive 2011/92/EU has been partially transposed and full transposition including amendments introduced by Directive 2014/52/EU is expected to be achieved in 2017.

The Promoter of the project is the Serbian Railways Infrastructure. A Project Implementation Unit (PIU) has been established in the organisation. The PIU will receive assistance by consultants with international experience, including, among other, support in relation with the environmental aspects of the project implementation.

The project consists of three components:

1. Modernization of the existing railway line Niš – Dimitrovgrad, specifically of the section Sićevo – Dimitrovgrad (approx. 82 km); and
2. Construction of a new railway by-pass of the City of Niš up to Sićevo station (approx. 22 km);
3. Electrification of the section Crveni Krst – Pantelej, Niš by-pass and section Sićevo – Dimitrovgrad.

Component 1, modernisation of the section Sićevo – Dimitrovgrad, will be implemented within the existing right of way with no substantial change to the railway alignment, apart from the extension of some tracks at the stations. This component has been screened in and an EIA procedure is currently being undertaken.

If situated in the EU, Component 2 would fall within the scope of Annex I of the EIA Directive 2011/92/EU as amended by Directive 2014/52/EU. That is, a full EIA would be mandatory. This component was subject of a full EIA in 2015-2016. The main purpose of the bypass is to avoid operation of freight trains on the section Niš - Sićevo. This section runs through the centre of the City of Niš and has a significant number of level crossings with the related negative impacts in terms of severance, safety as well as noise. Five alternative alignments

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.

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were evaluated in the Feasibility Study. As per the selected alternative, the by-pass will be located in northern part of the city, as much as possible using the right of way of the existing line Niš – Zaječar and after that running parallel to the motorway, thus minimising the incremental impacts in terms of land take, noise and severance. The Competent Authority (Ministry of Agriculture and Environmental Protection) issued an Environmental Approval in July 2016. The approved EIA report specifies mitigation measures to be implemented, such as waste water treatment, prohibition of closure of amphibians migratory routes, installation of noise screens, and specific conditions for foundations of bridges.

Concerning Component 3, the electrification of the section Sićevo – Dimitrovgrad has been screened in and an EIA procedure is currently being undertaken. The only additional land take is related to the construction of two power substations. For the electrification of the section Crveni Krst – Pantelej, the Promoter will submit a request for screening to the Competent Authority.

Concerning protected sites, the project runs on existing alignment through a protected Nature Park Sićevačka Klisura, which is included on the list of Officially Nominated Candidate Emerald Sites (RS0000031) and categorised as an International Birds Area, Important Plant Area and Prime Butterfly Area. A statement confirming absence of significant impact of the project on the site has been requested from the Competent Authority for the conservation of protected sites (Ministry of Agriculture and Environmental Protection).

Overall, the project will contribute to improvement of the quality and reliability of railway services for both passengers and goods, and thus to modal shift from road to rail with the consequent reduction of energy consumption, noise, and emissions of pollutants and CO₂. All this should result in an improvement to the environmental situation in comparison to the “without project case”.

The project will also reduce freight train operations through the centre of the City of Niš. These trains will be running on the by-pass on which all the crossings with roads will be implemented by means of over or underpasses. In addition, the level crossings on the Sićevo – Dimitrovgrad section will be modernised. Thus, the project will improve safety.

The main residual negative impacts consist of land take, some localised noise/vibration, occasionally dust and mud on the access roads during the construction; all these for a limited number of receptors. These residual negative impacts are partly offset by the expected modal shift facilitated by the investment.

Social Assessment, where applicable

The main adverse social impact is related to resettlement. The construction of the by-pass requires acquisition of around 1660 land plots and physical resettlement of some 60 households in the City of Niš. The modernisation of existing line requires some land take for construction of power substations, with no physical resettlement. The extension of tracks in the stations of Ostrovice and Bela Palanka will require resettlement of two buildings owned by the Promoter.

The Promoter, jointly with the City of Niš, prepared Resettlement Policy Framework (RPF). The RPF is in accordance with the Serbian legislation and the relevant EIB standards. It contains, among other, the entitlement matrix and will be the basis for preparation of Resettlement Action Plan(s) (RAP). The draft RPF was consulted in September 2017 and the final version has been disclosed on the websites of the Promoter and EIB.

The RPF will be followed by a Resettlement Action Plan (RAP) that will include a census of all the project-affected persons and will ensure all project affected people will improve or, at least, have restored their pre-project level livelihood. The RAP will be prepared concurrently with detailed designs and implemented in a manner consistent with the handover of site to

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works contractors. The PIU will receive assistance by consultants with international experience, including, among other, support in relation with the implementation of the RAP.

The RAP is expected to be developed in consultation with all project-affected persons, to ensure acceptance of the proposed mitigation measures and facilitate the involuntary resettlement process.

In accordance with national law on labour standards and obligations deriving from International Labour Organisation (ILO) conventions ratified by Serbia (Serbia ratified all ILO fundamental conventions), the works contracts will comply with ILO core labour standards. Contractors shall ensure occupational and community health & safety as part of their works contracts.

Public Consultation and Stakeholder Engagement

For the Niš by-pass, public consultation took place in 2016 in the framework of the EIA.

For the electrification of the Sićevo – Dimitrovgrad section, public consultation will take place within the framework of the EIA procedure that is currently being undertaken.

Concerning resettlement, two public hearings took place, one in Bela Palanka on 14 September 2017 and another in Niš on 15 September 2017. The announcement and the draft RPF had been published on the websites of the City of Niš and of the Promoter prior to the hearings. The hearings were also announced in the local newspapers.

Some 50-60 project affected persons and local media attended the public hearings. The practical aspects of the resettlement process, including for affected people with no formal property titles, were explained.

Conclusions and Recommendations

The project consists of 3 components, and requirements concerning the EIA vary.

For modernization of tracks of the Sićevo – Dimitrovgrad section, the EIA is being carried out. Prior to any disbursement of funds for financing works of this component, the Promoter shall submit to the Bank the EIA report and the environmental consent issued by the Competent Authority..

For construction of a railway by-pass around the City of Niš the Promoter carried out a full EIA and obtained the corresponding Environmental Approval.

For the electrification component, the EIA is being carried out for Sićevo – Dimitrovgrad section and screening decision will be requested from the Competent Authority for the Crveni Krst – Pantelej section. Prior to any disbursement of funds for financing works of this component, the Promoter shall submit to the Bank the EIA report and the environmental consent issued by the Competent Authority; or, for the section Crveni Krst – Pantelej, evidence that no EIA is required.

The project runs on existing alignment through the Nature Park Sićevačka Klisura protected site. Prior to any disbursement, the Promoter shall submit to the Bank a statement issued by the Competent Authority attesting that the project will not entail any significant negative impact on the site.

The project requires significant resettlement. An RPF has been prepared by the Promoter and the City of Niš and is in accordance with the Bank's standards.

Prior to any disbursement of funds for financing works of a particular component, the Promoter shall submit to the Bank for this component, and to the Banks satisfaction, an approved RAP and Environmental and Social Management Plan (ESMP), evidence that RAP



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and ESMP are being properly implemented, including completion of resettlement and execution of all compensation payments and livelihood restoration measures to the relevant stakeholders prior to commencement of works. The Promoter shall undertake to implement the project in accordance with RPF, RAP and ESMP and not to commence any resettlement before agreement of the Bank to the corresponding RAP.

The project's residual negative impacts during construction and operation are limited and partly offset by the expected modal shift facilitated by the investment.

Under conditions indicated above, the project is acceptable for EIB financing in environmental and social terms.