



Technical Assistance to Connectivity in the Western Balkans EuropeAid/13785/IH/SER/MULTI

NORTH MACEDONIA

Environmental and Social assessment for EBRD gap analysis and review of design for Rail Corridor VIII, Section 3 in North Macedonia (Kriva Palanka - border with Bulgaria)

This sub-project is still ongoing. The description that follows is for information purposes only and subject to the sub-project's completion.

Partners:

- European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD)
- European Investment Bank (EIB)
- Ministry of Finance (MoF)
- Ministry of Transport and Connections (MoTC)
- Public Enterprise for Railway Infrastructure (PE ZRSM Infrastructure)

Budget of Technical Assistance:

- Euro 411,000

EU contribution¹:

- As above (100%)

Technical Assistance provided by:

- CONNECTA (Technical Assistance to Connectivity in the Western Balkans)

The Eastern section of Rail Corridor VIII, which has a total length of 88.1km and runs across the north-eastern region of North Macedonia - from Kumanovo to the border with Bulgaria, is part of the indicative extension of the TEN-T Core Network to the Western Balkans.

The EBRD and the EIB are considering providing part of the finance to the Ministry of Finance of the Republic of North Macedonia and the final beneficiary (PE ZRSM Infrastructure) for the construction of Section 3 of the Eastern section of Rail Corridor VIII and the electrification of the entire Eastern section, hereinafter, the Project.

This is a greenfield project and as such has been categorised as a Category A project by the EBRD, which means that a comprehensive Environmental and Social (E&S) Impact Assessment (ESIA) and associated documents must be available.

The CONNECTA assignment tasks included:

- 1) Assessment of the existing environmental, social and design documentation and preparation of complementary documentation so as to fulfil the requirements of the EBRD in relation to the E&S; and
- 2) Review of the original design except for the railway stations.



The Project comprises the following:

- 1) Section 3: Construction of 23.4 km of new single-track railway with design speed max. 100 km/h between Kriva Palanka and the border with Bulgaria; and
- 2) Electrification for Sections 1, 2 and 3.

The construction of Sections 1 and 2 is ongoing. The design and the Environmental and Social Impact Assessment (ESIA) for Section 3 was undertaken in the period leading up to 2017 by another technical assistance instrument.

Results achieved by the TA:

- Detailed review of available E&S data (GAP Analysis Report);
- Site visits and Biodiversity surveys conducted. Environmental measurements (water, air, soil, noise) and noise impact modelling;
- ESIA complementary documentation developed; and
- Review of the original design and preparation of two reports covering the systems and civil structures.

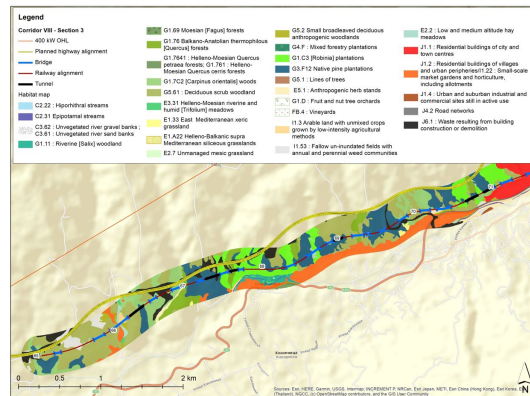
¹ EU contribution concerns only Technical Assistance services for project development

Environmental and Social review component

The available E&S documentation was reviewed against the lenders' environmental standards, additional surveys and measurements were conducted and where necessary, appropriate mitigation measures were proposed.

Based on the gap assessment, a comprehensive set of E&S documents was developed to compensate for the gaps identified and provide project compliance with the relevant E&S requirements of the lenders. The package consisted of the following documents:

- Supplementary ESIA Report (Addendum);
- Supplemental Biodiversity Report;
- Biodiversity Management Plan;
- Resettlement Action Plan;
- Stakeholders Engagement Plan;
- Environmental and Social Management Plan; and
- Environmental and Social Action Plan,
- Non-Technical Summary.



Habitat map for part of Section 3

Technical review component

The available detailed design was examined to determine its completeness and fitness for an international tender, its compliance with the European Technical Specifications for Interoperability and to establish what updates were needed. The actual updates were not undertaken by CONNECTA.

The following railway components were reviewed for Section 3: civil works including bridges, tunnels, culverts and retaining walls and signalling and telecommunications. The electrification was reviewed for all 3 sections.

The civil structures were important because of the hilly terrain requiring 24 tunnels and 52 bridges.

Two reports were prepared covering the civil structures and systems. The findings were discussed with both the reviewer of the original design and the designer.



Uzem (municipality of Kriva Palanka) - view on the last curve of the alignment

Benefits expected due to Technical Assistance:

- The Project is compliant with the Lender's Environmental and Social requirements and standards;
- Appropriate E&S management, measures and actions have been identified; and
- The design review has reduced the risk of claims from the Contractor(s) whether these claims relate to increased costs or time extensions.

Impacts anticipated:

- Section 3 of the Rail Corridor VIII will be compatible with EU standards of interoperability;
- The likely costs of construction and time for completion from the point of commencement of the construction are likely to be lower than if CONNECTA was not tasked with this assignment; and
- Reduction of the environmental and social impacts of introducing this railway section.