

Notification to an affected Party of a proposed activity
" Development and implementation of investment projects for the construction of Strumyani-Berovo Border Cross Check Point (BCCP Klepalo) altogether with the required connecting engineering infrastructure, including a project for construction of Road III-1008 Strumyani - Klepalo BCCP" under article 3 of the Convention

1. INFORMATION ON THE PROPOSED ACTIVITY	
(i) Information on the nature of the proposed activity	
Type of activity proposed	Development and implementation of investment projects for the construction of Strumyani-Berovo Border Cross Check Point (BCCP Klepalo) altogether with the required connecting engineering infrastructure, including a project for construction of Road III-1008 Strumyani - Klepalo BCCP.
Is the proposed activity listed in appendix I to the Convention?	Yes ☐ No ☒
Scope of proposed activity (e.g. main activity and any/all peripheral activities requiring assessment)	The investment proposal envisages the construction of the following new engineering infrastructures: 1. New BCCP Strumyani Berovo . The Strumyani-Berovo border cross check point (BCCP) will be part of the national land border with the Republic of North Macedonia. It is located in the western part of Blagoevgrad district and is about 20 km from the town of Strumyani. 2. New Borehole to ensure the water consumption needs for the operation of Strumyani-Berovo BCCP. 3. Construction of Road III – 1008 “Strumyani – BCCP “Klepalo”- to ensure the road connection two route alternatives have been developed. 4. New Power Supply Line to ensure the electricity consumption needs for the operation of Strumyani-Berovo BCCP. 5. New Optic Connection Line – to ensure the connectivity of the BCCP. The line will follow the route of the Road. By Decision of the Council of Ministers No. 215 of 23.03.2023, the engineering infrastructure subject to this notification has been declared a "site of national importance".

Scale of proposed activity e.g. size, production capacity

The investment intention includes the construction of the following new infrastructure elements:

New BCCP "Strumyani-Berovo"

The BCCP "Strumyani-Berovo" will be part of our land border with the Republic of North Macedonia. It is in the western part of the Blagoevgrad region and is about 20 km from the village of Strumyani. Now, there is no border control at the BCCP "Strumyani-Berovo", and the RNM has an infrastructure that is subject to reconstruction. The future site covers an area of about 11 acres and is located on a steep slope with a slope to the north, about 1300 m. Altitude.

The main technical parameters for the BCCP "Strumyani-Berovo" have been adopted by the Interdepartmental Council on Border Control and the Joint Expert Commission under Articles 3 and 4 of the 1999 Intergovernmental Agreement, namely:

The border cross checkpoint will be two-sided, on both sides of the border, respectively on the territory of the Republic of Bulgaria and on the territory of the Republic of North Macedonia and will be connected to a road route at which the intersection with the border is determined.

- Working hours – 24 hours, 7 days a week (24/7);
- The border checkpoint will be for the passage of passenger and freight vehicles with a total technically permissible maximum weight of up to or equal to 3.5 tons.

A borehole to meet the water consumption needs during the operation of the BCCP "Strumyani-Berovo"

Within the framework of the investment proposal, it is envisaged the construction of a water abstraction facility intended for domestic water use and fire extinguishing of the new BCCP. The selected location for its construction, based on an engineering and geological study, is northeast of the buildings of the complex, but within the site for the construction of the BCCP.

According to the current separation of groundwater bodies in Bulgaria, the groundwater in the region is part of the GWB with code BG4DGW001PtPz125 "Crack waters in Vlahino-Ograzhdensko-Malashevsko-Osogovo metamorphites" with a total area of 1250 km², average thickness of 750-800 m., non-pressure aquifer and natural resources - 1430 l/s.

Project for the construction of road III – 1008 "Strumyani – BCCP "Klepalo"

The road, subject to this investment intention, will be part of the national road network III-1008 (Kresna - Kulata) Strumyani-Mikrevo-Razdol-border Macedonia and is of the third class. The site is in southwestern Bulgaria - Blagoevgrad District, Strumyani Municipality.

The beginning of the road section is located at km 22+000. At km 22+305 the route of the existing road deviates in a south-western direction and continues its development, passing through the village of Razdol to the village of Klepalo, where the end of the third-class republican road is located.

	After km 22+305, road III-1008 has insufficient gauge, and its technical elements do not meet the requirements for a republican road of the third class. In the village of Razdol there are sections where the road passes into a single-lane gauge with a width of less than 4.50 m due to the presence of two-sided construction. In the village of Klepalo, the road is without a permanent pavement - single-lane, with compromised road base and asphalt layers. The section after km 22+305 of road III-1008 loses its direction relative to the location of the BCCP "Klepalo" border checkpoint and cannot be used as the main route for a future connection with the Republic of North Macedonia. The end point of the project section is located on the border between the Republic of Bulgaria and North Macedonia at the built BCCP on the territory of the Republic of North Macedonia. At the moment, there is no road route with a durable pavement for connection of road III-1008 with the BCCP "Klepalo". Two options have been developed to ensure the direction "Strumyani - BCCP "Klepalo" - option 1 and option 2. Both developed options follow almost their entire length the routes of existing agricultural/forestry roads, which are mainly used for logging and access to a former border post and the existing border crossing point on the territory of the Republic of North Macedonia. <u>New Power Supply Lile 20kV "Goreme" from Kresna substation.</u> After coordination with the competent electricity distribution company, it is envisaged that the power supply of the "Strumyani - Berovo Border Checkpoint" will be carried out through the construction of a new transformer station and for its supply, a new 20kV cable should be laid from an existing railway pole of the 20kV "Goreme" overhead line to the site of the new border checkpoint. <u>New Optic connection line "Municipality of Strumyani - Mikrevo - Razdol - Klepalo – Border of North Macedonia" from km 0+000 of RP III-1008 to the site of the BCCP.</u> It is planned to build a new fiber optic cable line (FOCL) "Municipality of Strumyani - Mikrevo - Razdol - Klepalo - Macedonia Border" from km 0+000 of the republican road III-1008 "Strumyani – BCCP "Klepalo" to the site of the BCCP "Strumyani-Berovo", and it will be laid along the entire length of the road (existing and new), through the banquet of the road.
Description of proposed activity (e.g. technology used)	Construction activities such as earthworks, buildings and installations, water and power supply, road infrastructure, retaining walls, optic cable for ensuring the site connectivity and communication, etc. Detail description of the proposed activity is presented in <i>Annex I to the Notification.</i> <i>Annex II</i> to the Notification presents schemes and maps of the the BCCP site and both alternatives of the road.

Description of purpose of proposed activity	The purpose of the investment proposal is to build the necessary infrastructure for a New border cross- check point, ensuring facilitated border crossing between the Republic of Bulgaria and the Republic of North Macedonia, in accordance with the requirements of Regulation EU 2016/399 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 9 March 2016 on a Union Code on the rules of movement of persons across borders (OJ L 77 of 2016) (Schengen Borders Code) and a border control zone creating the possibility of carrying out border control under specific circumstances. With the construction of road III-1008 "Strumiani - BCCP "Klepalo" and the BCCP "Strumiani-Berovo" a national space for cross-border cooperation will be opened, which provides an opportunity for new development of the region, including solving problems with employment and income of the population. In structural terms, it is envisaged to stimulate the development of small and medium-sized enterprises, as well as tourism and the service sector. The project overall objective is "Developing sustainable, climate resilient, intelligent and intermodal national, regional and local mobility, including improved access to TEN-T and cross-border mobility" which is to improve regional connectivity and boost the economic growth of the programme area by facilitating the increasing traffic, strengthening communication links on the territory of both countries and extending access to core TEN-T, incl. the connection with Corridors IV and VIII. The investment proposal is to ensure the appliance of Policy objective 3 „A more connected Europe by enhancing mobility “, under Interreg VI-A - IPA Bulgaria - North Macedonia Programme.
Rationale for proposed activity (e.g. socio-economic basis, physical geographic basis)	The common challenge of the project is strengthening the regional connectivity and facilitating the increasing traffic of people by developing sustainable, climate resilient, intelligent and intermodal national, regional and local mobility, including improved access to TEN-T and cross- border mobility. The need for strengthening the regional connectivity and to facilitate the increasing traffic of people and goods between Bulgaria and North Macedonia has since long been on the agenda. The regional consultations in 2019 have clearly identified the BCCP Strumyani – Berovo as an investment of strategic importance to be supported by the Interreg VI-A IPA Bulgaria-North Macedonia programme, taking into account the gradual expansion of the socioeconomic interlinkages between the two countries due to positive prospects of the EU enlargement. On 14 June 1999 in Skopje, an agreement between the Government of the Macedonia and the Government of Bulgaria for opening new international road Border Crossing Check Points (BCCP) Strumyani – Berovo and Simitli – Pehchevo was signed. Missing links in the CB provision of business services and such of general interest are a main factor behind the negative demographic dynamics that the area exhibits. The

	lack of infrastructure favouring the provision of services of community and business interest further impose severe social implications including increased social exclusion and inequalities, as well as challenges for recreational service provision, labour markets and housing. In terms of interregional connectivity, the lack of railway connection between the two countries and the increasing cross-border traffic have urged the need to improve service capacity of the current BCCP and enlarge TEN-T access, taking also into account the prospects of the accelerated EU enlargement. Wide socio-economic benefits with spillovers and externalities extended outside the border area (spreading to Western Balkans). With the improved regional connectivity, the cumulative effect of all EU investments in the mobility domain (North Macedonia – Bulgaria CVIII Rail Interconnection (Beljakovce – Kriva Palanka), Flagship 1 - Connecting East to West of the EU's Economic and Investment Plan for the Western Balkans) will further strengthen the cooperation between various stakeholders and the building of regional value chains. Furthermore, the investments under this priority will contribute to the EU external policy by adhering to most up-to-date standards in safeguarding security and border control. The broad and multi-sectoral impact of the investments on various EU policy strands defend its strategic orientation on the regional connectivity and crossborder mobility in an area that is soon expected to join the EU family. The lack of railway, high-speed road and/or highway connection between the two countries, the increasing cross-border traffic, the prospects of expanding the access to core TEN-T network result in insufficient border-crossing possibilities and hamper freight and passenger transport. There are only 3 operational border checkpoints along the border, servicing a population of about 1 million people. All these missing links and the untapped mobility potential in the scope of connectivity have urged the need to improve border and TEN-T access taking also into account the prospects of EU integration process.
Additional information/comments	The project “ESTABLISHMENT OF A NEW BORDER CROSS CHECK POINT (BCCP) STRUMYANI-BEROVO (“KLEPALO”) BETWEEN BULGARIA AND NORTH MACEDONIA” is to be performed simultaneously on the both sites of the border. The notification refers to the activities to be performed only on the territory of the Republic of Bulgaria. A Decision No 215/23.03.3023 of the Bulgarian Council of Ministers defines the investment as a Project of National Significance on the territory of the Republic of Bulgaria. Such a decision is a prerequisite facilitating the national territory arrangement procedures in view of their timing considering the programme period. Moreover, having in mind that the strategic project under the programme is to fund only the construction of the BCCP site as eligible activity, the Bulgarian state (using other financial instruments) will ensure the simultaneous construction of the access road (and all related

	environmental and territory arrangement procedures) to the border of the Republic of North Macedonia which infrastructure is a precondition for the functioning of the BCCP on the Bulgarian site.
(ii) Information on the spatial and temporal boundaries of the proposed activity	
Location	The investment proposal is divided into two major projects – the site of the BCCP Klepalo and Road III-1008 Strumyani – BCCP – Klepalo with two alternatives. All of them are located on the territory of Strumyani Municipality, Blagoevgrad Region.
Description of the location (e.g. physical-geographic characteristics, socio-economic characteristics)	The area of the investment is mountainous with existing slopes and goes through Malashevka Mountain. Most of the lands are forestry. The future BCCP site covers an area of about 11 acres and is located on a steep slope to the north, at about 1300m above sea level. The BCCP site is located entirely in the land area of Klepalo village, Godumanitsa locality. The proposed road alternatives affect the land areas of Klepalo, Razol and Gorna Ribnitsa villages. The locations of all elements of the investment falls under NATURE 2000 site. Hence a comprehensive appropriate assessment is to be carried out in view of prescription the most appropriate biodiversity protection and conservation measures. The exact location can be seen in Annex II to the Notification.
Rationale for location of proposed activity (e.g. socio-economic basis, physical-geographic basis)	The location of the BCCP site on the territory of the Republic of Bulgaria is selected to correspond on the location of the already existing infrastructure on the territory of the Republic of North Macedonia. There is no option for an alternative site to be proposed, hence evaluated. The route of the road is selected to connect the future BCCP site with the already existing national road network, and particularly the existing part of the road III 1008. There are two alternatives, as some of the lines are covering each other following the existing village road. The variants of the road are based on nature, relief, and geological possibilities and consider the existing limitations. The investment will allow the construction of convenient and accessible infrastructure, connecting the settlements in the area, as well as providing opportunity for fast connection between the Republic of Bulgaria and the Republic of North Macedonia, and hence a connection with the Adriatic-Ionian sea region towards Turkey for transit of goods and passengers.
Time frame for proposed activity (e.g. start and duration of construction and operation)	Construction is expected to be completed in a period between a year and a half and two years with all permitting and operation permits procedures. The operational period is not limited by time.

Maps and other pictorial documents connected with the information on the proposed activity	Maps are attached. See Annex II.
Additional information/comments	None
iii) Information on expected environmental impacts and proposed mitigation measures	
Scope of assessment (e.g. consideration of: cumulative impacts, evaluation of alternatives, sustainable development issues, impact of peripheral activities)	The EIA will be undertaken in line with the Bulgarian Environment Protection Act (State Gazette /SG/, issue 91/2002, last amended SG issue 54/2020), the Ordinance on the terms and conditions for making EIA; the National Biodiversity Act, the Ordinance on Appropriate Assessment on the impact on protected areas, as well as the respective EU Directives; other guidelines and normative documents issued by the European Commission: EIA guidance – scoping, EIA guidance – EIA report, Guidelines on the Assessment of Indirect and Cumulative Impacts as well as Impact interactions, Espoo Convention (in case of necessity), Technical guidance on the climate proofing of investments in network infrastructure and physical assets covering the programming period 2021-2027, DNSH Technical guidance, etc. When performing scoping of the assessment, the content and the extent of the assessment shall be identified, as well as the information to be included in the EIA Report. Scoping also establishes and specifies the key issues and impacts that must be considered. This preliminary information shall be submitted to the competent authority to obtain scoping opinion. The assessment will focus on those issues that are important for decision-making regarding the Project and will address baseline conditions, potential impacts, proposed mitigation measures and conditions for post-design control.
Expected environmental impacts of proposed activity (e.g. types, locations, magnitudes)	Impacts on air: The air emissions concern both the construction and the operation phase of the site and the road. The construction works will give rise to generation of dust and emission from vehicles locally, with minor impact, mitigated by proper measures. During the operation phase of the project the emissions into ambient air are subject of proper mathematical modelling and assessment as well as climate proofing. Both the site of the BCCP and the road will be emitters. Respective mitigation measures will be prescribed. The project will not give rise to any significant impact that would affect community health. Impacts on water: Water will be affected by the development of the project, as there will be water consumption but only for limited purposes - domestic to cover the needs the staff of the new BCCP, and in case of a need of a vehicle disinfection and fire safety. The wastewater is foreseen to be locally purified and stored in tanks. No wastewater discharge is foreseen. No significant impacts on surface and groundwater resources are foreseen. For water intake a permission is to be issued. Impacts on soil and land use: The main impact on land use and soil will be during the construction of the road and the

	site, as all territories will be changed from their existing status to a new one (forestry/agriculture to urban). During the operation phase, the impact will be limited to the width of the line/site and its obligatory buffer zone. The impacts will be only the territory of the Republic of Bulgaria and mitigation and compensation measures will be provided. Impacts on flora and fauna: Biodiversity will be significantly affected during both phases – construction and operation as the existing natural conditions will be changed. The impacts will be round the route of the road and the site, and its buffer zone. Considering the fact that the location of the new construction are within NATURE 2000 site, a comprehensive appropriate assessment will be made, hence mitigation and compensation measures will be provided. Impacts from noise and vibrations: The new road and the site is a source of noise and vibration during both phases – construction and operation. The impacts will be local and mitigation measures will be provided. Impacts on population: The scale of the expected impacts indicates that there will be no significant impact with regard to community health. Impact mitigation includes measures to minimize nuisance impacts, such as noise and vibrations.
Inputs (e.g. raw material, power sources)	The <i>natural resources, raw materials and other materials</i> that will be used in the construction and operation phases of the investment proposal are: earth and rock masses, aggregates, crushed stone, drainage material, sand, timber, water, as well as processed metal raw materials, reinforced concrete products, steel structures, diesel fuel and electricity. The earth masses generated during the formation of the earth bed along the site, the route and the drainage systems are to be used for the backfills and reclamation of the affected land. If additional construction materials are needed, they will be delivered as a commodity product from the market, by type and quantity in accordance with the project. Power supply: During the construction phase, fuels will be used for the construction mechanization, mainly diesel fuel. The necessary electricity for any installation works along the route of the road will be provided by diesel generators, and at the BCCP site by the national electric network. During the operation of the BCCP site and facilities, electricity will be used for the general operation needs, control and measuring devices, signalling and other elements related to the reliability and safety of technological processes. Traction electricity will be provided by substation supplied by the national electricity network. Water supply: During the construction phase, water will be used for: preparation of concrete mixtures and other construction solutions, for compaction of embankments, for wetting of temporary roads and construction sites for prevention of dust emissions into the air, for household needs of the staff. During the operation phase, the main processes are not related to water consumption. Water will be used for: domestic needs of the staff of the BCCP, fire safety and

	disinfection in case of a need. The water for the indicated needs will be supplied from local source – borehole to be drilled on the site.
Outputs (e.g. amounts and types of: emissions into the atmosphere, discharges into the water system, solid waste)	<i>Emissions to the air:</i> • Internal combustion gases (CO, NOX, SOx, etc); • Particulate matter - dust (PM10). • <i>Waste water:</i> Domestic and cleaning wastewater will be treated locally on the site and stored in tanks. No wastewater discharge is foreseen into any water bodies. <i>Waste:</i> • Construction waste; • Scrap metals, wood, packages, etc; • Waste oil; • Waste from electrical and electronic equipment. • Soil and Rocks • Asphalt mixtures • Solid domestic waste; Emissions to the air, waste water and different types of waste are expected to result from the construction works as well as during the operation.
Transboundary impacts (e.g. types, locations, magnitudes)	The EIA report will include investigation into transboundary impact. At this stage the impacts that are identified on the Bulgarian environment (at a local, regional or national level) will have no relevance with regard to potential transboundary issues, e.g., in regard to impact on air and water quality, and biodiversity. No significant transboundary impacts are expected.
Proposed mitigation measures (e.g. if known, mitigation measures to prevent, eliminate, minimize, compensate for environmental effects)	The mitigation measures will be detailed in the EIA report, however, they will cover the following principal elements: • Mitigation against the emission of harmful gases and dust to the air; • Design of a comprehensive water management scheme to avoid any impact on water quality and resources; • Provision for proper management of land use and soil reclamation; Prescription of appropriate technical measures to compensate the impact on forestry lands. • Prescription of appropriate technical measures to compensate the impact on biodiversity disturbance. • Prescription of appropriate technical measures for minimizing the impact of noise and vibrations; • Limitation of some activities in order to minimize the impacts on population. • Any other applicable measures, shall the need arise. A plan for implementation of measures to prevent, reduce or eliminate significant negative impacts on the environment and human health shall be prepared as a part of the EIA study and will be addressed to each stage of the project realization, as follows: • for the design stage; • during construction works; • during operation.
Additional information/comments	None

(iv) Proponent/developer	
Name, address, telephone and fax numbers	Regional Administration Blagoevgrad, 9 "Georgi Izmirliiev" sq. Blagoevrad, 2700, Bulgaria, Tel: + 359 73 881 401 Fax: +359 73 88 14 03 Contact person: Krasimira Krumova Project Manager, tel. 0888 868 669 E-mail: Krasimira.Krumova@blagoevgrad.egov.bg <i>And</i> Road Infrastructure Agency 3, "Macedonia", sq. Sofia 1606, Bulgaria Contact Person: Nina Stoilova Head of EIA and Environment Department Tel: + 359 2 9173 268 e-mail: n.stoilova@api.bg
(v) EIA documentation	
Is the EIA documentation (e.g. EIA report or EIS) included in the notification?	Yes ☐ No ☐ Partially ☒
If the answer to the above is no or partially, description of additional documentation to be forwarded and (approximate) date(s) when documentation will be available	Additional information may be sent upon request after receiving the written response to the present notification (Reply to a notification of a proposed activity under Article 3 of the Espoo convention), and at the second stage of the national EIA procedure, which will be the scoping stage.
Additional information/comments	The language of the EIA documentation will be English in case of a positive answer from the affected party and expressing a will to participate in the EIA procedure.
2. POINTS OF CONTACT	
(i) Points of contact for the possible affected Party or Parties	
Authority responsible for coordinating activities relating to the EIA (refer to decision I/3, appendix) - Name, address, telephone and fax numbers	Ministry for Environment and Physical Planning St. Goce Delcev b.b., MTV Building - 10th floor 1000 SKOPJE, Republic of North Macedonia Telephone: + 389 2 3251 400 Fax: + 389 2 3220 165 E-mail: infoeko@moepp.gov.mk , cc. d.rendevska@moepp.gov.mk
List of affected Parties to which notification is being sent	Republic of North Macedonia
(ii) Points of contact for the Party of origin	
Authority responsible for coordinating activities relating to the EIA (refer to decision I/3, appendix) - Name, address, telephone and fax numbers	Ministry of Environment and Water 22 Maria-Luisa Blvd., 1000 SOFIA Telephone: + 359 2 988 25 77 Fax: + 359 2 986 25 33 E-mails: cabinet.minister@moew.government.bg ; edno_gishe@moew.government.bg ; mgandzhova@moew.government.bg

Decision-making authority if different than authority responsible for coordinating activities relating to the EIA - Name, address, telephone and fax numbers	N/A
3. INFORMATION ON THE EIA PROCESS IN THE COUNTRY WHERE THE PROPOSED ACTIVITY IS LOCATED	
(i) Information on the EIA process that will be applied to the proposed activity	
Time schedule	The expected duration of the national EIA procedure is about eighteen months.
Opportunities for the affected Party or Parties to be involved in the EIA process	Yes
Opportunities for the affected Party or Parties to review and comment on the notification and the EIA documentation	Yes
Nature and timing of the possible decision	At this stage, it is not possible to predict the nature of the EIA decision, as it fully depends on the EIA documentation to be elaborated and on public participation in the procedure. Expected timing – within eighteen months.
Process for approval of the proposed activity	In compliance with Bulgarian environmental legislation (Environmental Protection Act), the Ministry of Environment and Water of Republic of Bulgaria is the competent authority for issuing the EIA decision. The following steps shall be followed as per the requirements of the Bulgarian legal framework: - Submission of the EIA Report to the Ministry; - Quality assessment of EIA Report by the Ministry - Public consultations in the affected municipalities; - Issuance of final decision by the Ministry. A favourable EIA decision is required for issuing a construction permit under the Spatial Development Act.
Additional information/comments	None
4. INFORMATION ON THE PUBLIC PARTICIPATION PROCESS IN THE COUNTRY OF ORIGIN	
Public participation procedures	In accordance with the Bulgarian legislation, the public is entitled to access to the EIA documentation for a period of 30 days prior to holding the public hearing. The public is entitled to prepare written comments and statements and propose those for discussion during the public hearing or to submit them in writing. Minutes shall be prepared during the public discussions, which will be attached to the EIA Report.
Expected start and duration of public consultation	The public will be given access to the EIA documentation after a positive assessment of the EIA report quality and prior to the public hearing. At this stage, it is not possible to make a forecast for the possible dates for the public consultations

	and hearings. Taking into account the legal requirements, it might be within eight to ten months after the beginning of the procedure.
Additional information/comments	If the affected party express a will to participate in the EIA procedure, a public hearing may be organized at its territory. A translation from and to English will be needed.
5. DEADLINE FOR RESPONSE	
Date	Four weeks from the date of receiving the notification.

Annexes to the Notification:

- **Annex I** Detail description of the proposed activity;
- **Annex II** Schemes/ maps/ of the planned infrastructure – locations and routes with parameters.