
Concept for public participation

under Art. 9, para 3 of Regulation No 347/2013

PCI 6.8.3 Gas Interconnection Bulgaria - Serbia
(IBS)

Project promoter: Bulgartransgaz EAD

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Introduction

Regulation (EU) No 347 entered into force on 17 June 2013. Its provisions concern the identification of projects of common interest, necessary for implementation of priority corridors and thematic areas of the trans-European energy infrastructure. The Regulation facilitates the timely implementation of the projects of common interest to the EU by accelerating permit granting processes and by enhancing public participation;

According to Art. 9 (3) of the Regulation, the promoter of the project of common interest concerned, within an indicative period of three months from the start of the permitting process, should develop a concept for public participation. The concept shall be developed in accordance with the guidelines set out in Annex VI to the Regulation and include:

- (a) the identified stakeholders;
- (b) the measures envisaged for public participation and consultations;
- (c) Plan of activities;
- (d) the human resources allocated to the tasks concerned.

General project information

PCI 6.8.3. Gas Interconnection Bulgaria - Serbia (IBS) is a Project of Common Interest (PCI) according to Regulation (EU) 347/2013, priority corridor: North-South Gas Interconnections in Central Eastern and South Eastern Europe (NSI East Gas).

By Decision No 111 of 15 February 2013 of the Council of Ministers, the site: Interconnection Bulgaria - Serbia on Bulgarian territory has been declared a national site within the meaning of § 1 of the Supplementary Provisions of the State Property Act and a site of national significance within the meaning of §5, item 62 of the Supplementary Provisions of the Spatial Development Act.

The intentions of the Republic of Bulgaria to implement the project follow the diplomatic line of the well-established diplomatic relations between the two countries according to the signed Memorandum of Understanding under the Project for construction of Interconnection Bulgaria-Serbia signed on 19 January 2017 (Councils of Ministers Decision No 873 of 14 October 2016), Memorandum of Understanding for the Project Gas Interconnection between Bulgaria and Serbia, signed on 14 December 2012.

In May 2018 the Minister of Energy of the Republic of Bulgaria and the Minister of Mining and Energy of the Republic of Serbia signed a joint declaration on the construction of the gas interconnection, by which and with the consent of the European Commission, Bulgartransgaz EAD was selected as a project promoter and future operator of the interconnection.

A joint commitment has been undertaken by both parties on construction of the gas pipeline by mid-2022.

Technical description of the project and route map

Interconnection Bulgaria – Serbia (IBS) is envisaged as a reverse connection which will connect the national gas transmission networks of the Republic of Bulgaria and the Republic of Serbia.

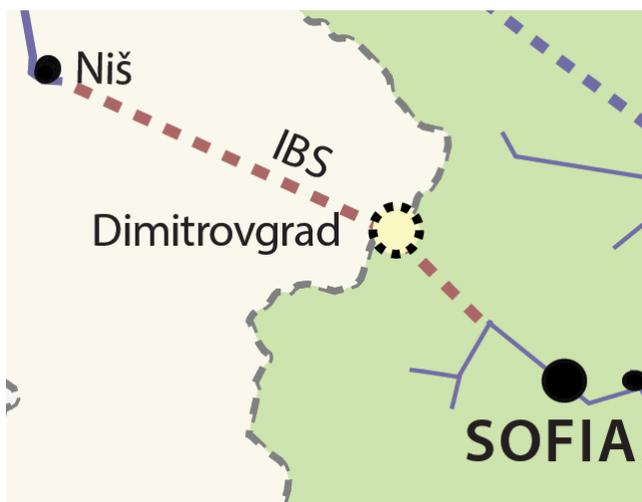
The gas pipeline's total length is approximately 170 km from the town of Novi Iskar, Republic of Bulgaria to the city of Niš, Republic of Serbia, 62 km of which on Bulgarian territory.

Following its construction, the gas interconnection will have a throughput capacity of 1.8 bcm/y with reverse flow capability.

Characteristics of the gas transmission pipeline route:

- Start: Existing site of Pigging facility Novi Iskar of the national gas pipeline;
- Length of the gas transmission pipeline from the start point to the Bulgarian-Serbian border crossing point of about 62 km;
- Gas pipeline branch to AGRS Slivnitsa of about 0.2 km length;
- Gas pipeline branch to AGRS Dragoman of about 0.1 km length;
- End: Bulgarian-Serbian border.

Route map:



Identified stakeholders

Stakeholders' identification was carried out based on an analysis of the groups of persons, organizations and institutions and their direct or indirect relation with project implementation, on the basis of which they were assigned to the following groups:

- **Persons, organizations, institutions directly related to project implementation such as:**
 - Ministry of Energy of the Republic of Bulgaria as a previous project promoter and an economic entity which will transfer project assets to Bulgartransgaz EAD;

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- Central level executive authorities - to overcome administrative obstacles to the acquisition of site rights under the national legislation for project development and implementation; for coordination of DSP-PP amendments and for coordination of a technical design;
- Local administration - municipalities along the route - preliminary talks have already been initiated and formal communication on including the pipeline route in some of the general urban development plans of the municipalities;
- Managing authority of Operational Program Innovation and Competitiveness regarding approval of Programme amendments (No and date of the decision of the Commission C (2018)8712 of 11.12.2018. No. and date of the decision of the member state 664 of 19.09.2018) according to which Bulgartransgaz EAD becomes eligible beneficiary for direct funding of activities for obtaining a building permit for the site. Communication with them will continue when the project proposal for financing is approved and an administrative contract is concluded;
- scientific and public organizations - in connection with implementation of activities related to protection of environment and the cultural archaeological heritage;
- users of affected properties - upon establishment of limited rights in rem and during construction works, for clarifications in connection with excavations, as well as for land usage after commissioning;

➤ **The general public, such as:**

- Other state institutions and regulatory agencies;
- European institutions;
- Non-profit organizations and public organizations/NGOs for environmental protection;
- Local/national media, etc.

In line with the characteristics of the identified major stakeholder groups, this concept of public participation has been developed, and various measures and consultation channels are provided for, as set out in details below.

The main objective is to reach out to all affected members of the public as much as possible.

Measures for public participation and consultations

The concept for public consultation, developed by Bulgartransgaz EAD, envisages a constant high level of stakeholders' awareness regarding the project implementation, progress achieved, applicable regulatory procedures, rights and obligations of all parties in the process.

This concept provides for the development of a variety of information/displaying materials (presentations, brochures, official documents, information charts and maps, comments' forms, etc.) that are tailored to the identified stakeholder groups and channels through which they will be provided. The following forms of communication are in place that respect the principles of the Regulation for broad public participation:

➤ **Public consultations/public events**

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Ever since the company was designated as the new project promoter, Bulgartransgaz EAD participates actively in and works closely with the individuals and institutions directly involved in project implementation.

Public consultations on the project within the meaning of Art. 9 (4) of Regulation No 347/2013 were initiated by:

- Public discussions of Bulgartransgaz EAD Ten-Year Network Development Plan.

In order to comply with the principles of transparency and to enable public participation, Bulgartransgaz EAD published a draft of the company's 2020-2029 Ten-Year Network Development Plan. The plan covers TSO's activities envisaged for implementation over the next ten years which will ensure the security of gas supply, the readiness of the gas transmission system to meet the expected future natural gas supply and demand levels in the region, as well as achieving diversification of natural gas supply sources and routes. The IBS project on Bulgarian territory is part of the plan, given the decision taken to transfer the project from the Ministry of Energy to Bulgartransgaz EAD.

The public consultation on the Plan's approval is taking place as a broad public discussion in which all stakeholders have the opportunity to take part.

- Public consultation on the publication of the Community Ten-year Network Development Plan prepared by ENTSG and the relevant Regional Plans.
- Upcoming public discussions in all affected municipalities/settlements along the route of the new gas pipeline, within the procedures for approval of the DSP amendments and renewal of the environmental procedures.

Initial activities for the IBS realization on the Bulgarian territory were carried out by the Ministry of Energy of the Republic of Bulgaria in its the capacity of a project promoter. By funds under Operational programme Development of the Competitiveness of the Bulgarian Economy 2007-2013 the gas pipeline design activities have been initiated and the following more important results have been obtained:

- Detailed Spatial Plan (DSP-PP) - Final design has been developed and approved by an order issued by the Minister of Regional Development and Public Works in 2015;
- Investment Design - Technical design phase has been developed;
- The competent environment authority issued two decisions:

As a next step in completing the gas pipeline design and issuing a building permit, Bulgartransgaz EAD is about to update the developed DSP-PP for the project and the environmental decisions, as well as to develop a new investment design. Funding from the Operational Programme Innovation and Competitiveness will be provided for the implementation of these activities. Following the applicable legislation, Bulgartransgaz EAD will implement all information and publicity measures when drafting the above documents. The competent state authorities, as well as the local authorities along the gas pipeline route will be notified in writing - mayors of the respective municipality(s), region(s) and mayoralty(ies), and the affected population - through the mass media and/or by other appropriate means. Public meetings will be organized locally at announced locations and dates, as another element of the public engagement measures through public consultations.

➤ **Website**

In compliance with the requirements of Art. 9 (7) of Regulation (EU) No 347/2013 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 17 April 2013, Bulgartransgaz EAD developed a

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website for the project on the Company's website. It provides information to the general public about the project, its scope, objectives, contribution, terms, funding. The site will contain links to information relevant to the implementation of EU projects of common interest and complies with the requirements set out in Annex VI, item 6 of Regulation (EU) No 347/2013.

The website is one of the first sources of information for the public and provides conditions and ways of communication with the project promoter (through the possibility to submit comments, questions and recommendations on the project by a feedback form).

Following the guidelines under Annex VI, the project website includes as basic and binding information the following materials:

- information brochure;
- a regularly updated non-technical summary reflecting the current state of the project, with a clear indication in case of updates of the changes made to previous versions;
- project planning and public consultation with a clear indication of the dates and places for public consultations and hearings, as well as the thematic issues related to these hearings;
- contact details to obtain the full set of documents;
- contact details to submit comments and objections from public consultations.

➤ **Brochures/leaflets and other printed materials**

If necessary, according to project development and the public interest, in addition to the minimum information required by Regulation (EU) No 347/2013 and described in more details above in *Website* section, the promoter may inform about the activity also by other appropriate information printed media such as: brochures, short print materials, presentations designed to match the relevant stakeholder group for which they will be targeted.

The concept envisages mostly short printed materials including text with images, graphics and other visual elements intended to be disseminated primarily to the general public. These materials will, if necessary, be distributed to the public by letters or displayed at public places.

Plan of the activities

Specific information on planning of the forthcoming public discussions on the project will be provided in the course of the project development and will be consistent with the decisions taken by the relevant competent authorities.

Human resources in charge of implementation of the transparency and public participation activities

The transparency and stakeholder consultation measures will be carried out mainly with internal resources within the company that will guide and organize the processes.

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The use of external resources is also envisaged, which may be related to the preparation/design/presentation of relevant information materials or the organization and holding of meetings/events, etc.