



EUROPEAN COMMISSION

PRESS RELEASE

Brussels, 26 February 2012

Commission approves EUR 274 million co-investment for the Struma motorway in Bulgaria

The European Commission has approved a contribution of EUR 274 million from the EU Cohesion Fund to the Struma Motorway, a major infrastructure project in the Yugozapaden region of South West Bulgaria. Besides providing a faster and safer trans-European connection for EU motorists and carriers, over 600 000 local residents are expected to benefit from shorter travel times, better environmental conditions and connectivity, increasing the attractiveness of their region to business and investment.

Commenting on the decision, Commissioner for Regional Policy, Johannes Hahn said *"This project improves the region's competitiveness and attractiveness to investors. As well as creating the right conditions for growth and job creation, it also means safer and more sustainable infrastructure for the citizens of Bulgaria and the entire Internal Market."*

The project is situated along the Trans European Network for Transport (TEN-T) Priority project 7 and concerns the construction of a dual carriageway between Dolna Dikanya (south of Sofia) and Blagoevgrad (lot 1 and 2) and from Sandanski to the border crossing with Greece at Kulata (lot 4). The total combined length of these three sections is 68.5 km and is due for completion end 2015. The project also foresees the preparation of the more complex construction of the Blagoevgrad-Sandanski section (lot 3) in the budgetary period 2014-2020, which will comprise tunnels bypassing the ecologically sensitive Kresna gorge.

The investment comes through the priority 'Development of road infrastructure along the Trans-European and major national transport axes' of the EU co-financed "Transport" programme for 2007-2013. The Cohesion Fund, will finance EUR 274 million out of a total investment EUR 342 million.

Background

Two other sections of the Struma Motorway have already been completed in 2011; the 19km Liulyn Motorway, (co-financed under the pre-accession ISPA programme) and the 22 km Daskalovo-Dolna Dikanya section (co-financed with a loan from the European Investment Bank). When the Struma motorway project is complete, a continuous motorway route will be available from Sofia to Kulata, with a 40-minute reduction in travel time.

This is a so-called "major project" which is subject to a specific decision by the European Commission as its total investment (VAT included) is above EUR 50 million, whereas otherwise projects are approved at national or regional levels.

Contacts :

[Shirin Wheeler](#) (+32 2 296 65 65)

[Annemarie Huber](#) (+32 2 299 33 10)

Bulgaria has been allocated EUR 6.85 billion from the Cohesion Fund, the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) and the European Social Fund (ESF) from 2007-13. The co-financed Transport programme accounts for some EUR 1.6bn, of which EUR 744 million of the Cohesion Fund has been reserved for motorway construction. Other motorway construction projects that have been approved under this programme are Trakiya and Maritsa Motorways, Kardjali-Podkova and the connection between the Sofia Ring Road and the Hemus Motorway.

More information:

[EU cohesion policy in Bulgaria](#)

[EU-funded 'Major Projects'](#)

[Project contact](#)