



EUROPEAN COMMISSION
DIRECTORATE-GENERAL
ENVIRONMENT
Directorate E - Implementation & Support to Member States
ENV.E - The Director

Brussels,
ENV.E/ACD

21 JAN. 2019

Subject: Kresna Gorge in Bulgaria

Dear petitioner,

Commissioner Karmenu Vella asked me to thank you for your email on Kresna Gorge in Bulgaria, for the accompanying video and for your commitment to protect Europe's nature.

Struma motorway is a major infrastructure project aimed at ensuring better connectivity within Bulgaria and with its neighbouring countries. The project is part of the Trans European Network for Transport, for which the European Commission provides co-financing through the European Union budget.

The project is divided into several lots. According to the current plans of the Bulgarian authorities, Lot 3.2, which is the only missing link of the motorway, would cross the area of Kresna Gorge which is a protected Natura 2000 area with high concentration of biodiversity representing an important migratory corridor for animals. Therefore, the legal requirements of EU environmental legislation should be respected when developing this last section of the motorway.

Please note in this context that economic activities are not completely banned in Natura 2000 sites. However, pursuant to art 6.3 of the Habitats Directive¹ the competent authorities must agree on a plan or project only after having ascertained that it will not adversely affect the integrity of the Natura 2000 sites concerned.

The Commission has not yet received an application for EU funding for Lot 3.2. Once Bulgaria submits this application, presenting all elements of the project, the Commission will carefully evaluate it under the Regulation governing the European structural and investment funds (ESIF) and the relevant EU environmental legislation (including EIA² and Habitats Directives).

Let me reassure you that the Commission will only approve the co-financing if the project is compliant with EU legislation.

Yours faithfully,

Aurel CIOBANU-DORDEA

c.c.: WEMOVE.EU (info@wemove.eu)

¹ Council Directive 92/43/EEC of 21 May 1992 on the conservation of natural habitats and of wild fauna and flora. OJ L 206. 22.7.1992, p. 7–50

² Directive 2011/92/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of 13 December 2011 on the assessment of the effects of certain public and private projects on the environment. OJ L 26, 28.1.2012, p. 1–21