
Concept for public participation

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

PCI 6.20.2 Chien UGS Expansion (BG)

Project promoter Bulgartransgaz EAD

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Introduction

Regulation (EU) No 347 enters 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) a plan of activities;
- (d) the human resources allocated to the tasks concerned.

General project information

The project for Chiren UGS expansion (PCI 6.20.2) envisages capacity increase in stages of the only gas storage facility on the territory of Bulgaria in order to achieve larger volumes of stored gas including increased gas reservoir pressure and higher daily average withdrawal and injection rates.

The project aims to:

- increase the active gas volume of up to 1 bcm (now 550 mcm);
- increase the daily withdrawal capacity up to 10 mcm/d and the injection capacity up to 8 mcm/d (the maximum daily withdrawal capacity is now 3.82 mcm/d, and the maximum daily injection capacity - 3.2 mcm/d).

Achieving these objectives will be possible through the drilling of 10 new high flowrate exploitation wells and 3 new observation wells as well as the construction of the necessary aboveground facilities and infrastructure.

The project for Chiren UGS Expansion is:

- [Project of Common Interest for the EU](#): in accordance with Regulation (EU) 347/2013, priority corridor: North-South Gas Interconnections in Central Eastern and South Eastern Europe (NSI East Gas).

Investment, included in key European investment plans:

- Part of [Ten Year Network Development Plan 2020 \(TYNDP 2020\)](#), developed by ENTSOG;

- Part of [Gas Regional Investment Plan \(GRIP\) 2019](#) for Central and Eastern Europe (CEE GRIP);
- Part of [Gas Regional Investment Plan \(GRIP – Based on ENTSOG’s TYNDP 2018\)](#) for the Southern corridor region (Southern Corridor GRIP);
- Part of [Ten-Year Network Development Plan of Bulgartransgaz EAD](#).
- Part of the Energy Strategy of the Republic of Bulgaria and an integral part of the infrastructure contributing to the concept of gas distribution centre on the territory of the country, together with the infrastructure modernization projects of Bulgartransgaz EAD, the liquefied natural gas terminal near Alexandroupolis and the interconnectors with Serbia and Greece.
- Priority project for the Three Seas Initiative acknowledging its importance in terms of security of energy supply for the country and the region.

The implementation of Chiren UGS Capacity Expansion project will:

- Guarantee the security of supply to consumers in Bulgaria and the region;
- Enhance market integration to achieve a single interconnected regional and pan-European market;
- Boost market competition;
- Encourage gas trade in the region.

Technical description of the project and map of the activities

Currently, the following survey activities have been carried out in support of the storage facility expansion project:

- Chiren reservoir geomechanical simulation,
- Surface gas analysis in the area of Chiren structure,
- 3D seismic surveys performed on the area of the Chiren structure (an activity co-financed under CEF).

The results from the completed set of surveys serve as a basis determining the best option of expansion of Chiren UGS.

In order to achieve the objectives of the expansion, work will continue in three main areas:

Activity 1: Design, construction and commissioning of new above ground equipment

Design, construction and commissioning of new above ground facilities on the territory of Chiren UGS will be carried out within the Activity, including a compressor station (CS) with auxiliary equipment to ensure reliable and continuous operation in gas injection and withdrawal mode, a new gas metering station (GMS), other facilities and management systems.

Location of activities: The new facilities are envisaged to be located in the lands of Chiren village, Vratsa Municipality, Vratsa District, close to the existing facilities of Chiren UGS.

Activity 2: Design and construction of a new gas pipeline in the section VA Butan - Chiren UGS

Design, construction and commissioning of a gas transmission infrastructure from VA Butan to Chiren UGS will be carried out within the activity. Characteristics of the gas transmission pipeline route:

- Start location: existing site of VA Butan from the existing gas transmission infrastructure;
- End location: Underground Gas Storage Chiren.

Technological sites and an optic cable line are envisaged to be constructed in the easement of the gas pipeline. Envisaged technological sites:

- Pigging Facility, Dn 700 at VA Butan;
- Valve assembly with a branch to provide an opportunity to supply adjacent areas in case of a financial, economic and commercial interest;
- Pigging Facility, Dn 700 at Chiren;

Location of activities: The route of the section from VA Butan to Chiren UGS runs through northern Bulgaria and the territory of Vratsa District.

Activity 3: Design and construction of underground equipment

The activity includes design and drilling of ten new exploitation and three observation wells, as well as new gatherings (gas pipelines) connecting the exploitation wells with the above ground equipment, including the compressor station.

Location of activities: In northwestern Bulgaria, Vratsa District - Chiren structure area (concerning the wells and gas gatherings) and the site of CS Chiren on the territory of Chiren UGS.

Map of the activities:



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:**
 - The Ministry of Energy of the Republic of Bulgaria in its role of principal of Bulgartransgaz EAD and the Minister of Energy as a national competent authority designated by the state to be responsible for facilitating and coordinating the permit granting process for the projects of common interest;
 - the European Commission's Directorate-General for Energy, monitoring the correct and timely implementation of the project in connection with its PCI status;
 - European Climate, Infrastructure and Environment Executive Agency - CINEA, as a managing authority of the Connecting Europe Facility according to which the PCI 6.20.2 is eligible and has already received European co-funding for the realisation of the 3D seismic surveys, required for the completion of the stage of survey activities;
 - Bodies of the executive power at central level - to overcome any administrative issues linked with the acquisition of site rights under the national legislation, project

development and implementation; for coordination of DSP-PP amendments and for coordination of the technical design;

- Local administration – municipalities on the territory of which the project is located;
- Scientific and public organizations - in connection with the implementation of the project survey activities related to the protection of the environment and the cultural archaeological heritage;
- Owners/users of the affected properties - during the survey activities, the establishment of limited rights in rem and the construction works;

➤ **The general public, such as:**

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

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 all interested representatives 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. The concept envisages that the consultations and discussions can be organized virtually in case of impossibility or inappropriateness of physical meetings:

➤ **Public consultations/public events**

Bulgartransgaz EAD has already launched public consultations within the meaning of Art. 9(4) of Regulation No 347/2013 for the project at an early stage of its implementation.

In the period 2019 r. - 2020 Bulgartransgaz EAD executed 3D field surveys on the on the Chiren structure area, spanning on almost 200 sq. m. To enable the survey, local owners or users of lands (almost 23 000 individual properties) in the separate populated areas had to be notified and agree with the execution of the surveys. In the course of the campaign of raising the awareness of the local community, Bulgartransgaz EAD provided information on both the technology and the impact of the 3D surveys, and the need thereof in the context of the overall project for Chiren UGS expansion. Information has been provided at:

- meetings organised with the local community, held at the separate populated areas;
- during the surveys;
- at meetings with the representatives of local administrations;
- at meetings with the representatives of local environmental authorities.

Early in 2021, in relation with the entry of the PCI in the next stage of development, namely the design and issuance of permits, the following steps have been taken to inform the community of Bulgartransgaz EAD investment intentions:

- ✓ A notification to the general public was published on 03.02.2021, on Bulgartransgaz' EAD website, Section News, for an investment intention for the construction of new above ground facilities.
The notification on the investment intention is published on the website of the competent environmental authority, Ministry of Environment and Water as well.
All interested parties are thus informed of the forthcoming activities at the earliest stage of their development.
- ✓ The information on the PCI 6.20.2 website has been updated to accommodate the updated status of implementation of the project activities.
- ✓ In March 2021, a public consultation in regard with the approval of the Ten-Year Network Development Plan of Bulgartransgaz EAD for the period 2021-2030 has been arranged.
The TYNDP has been published on the Company's website and its consultations are organised as an extensive public debate where all interested parties have the opportunity to take part. TYNDP provides updated information on the parameters and deadlines of the individual activities that would be realised to enable the expansion of the gas storage facility.
- ✓ Public consultation on the publication of the Community Ten-year Network Development Plan prepared by ENTSOG and the relevant Regional Plans.
- ✓ Organisation of public discussions in the affected populated areas within the scope of the project, within the environmental procedure on-site and according to a timetable, approved by the affected municipalities, regions and mayoralities.
- ✓ In September 2021 meetings have be held with the affected users of lands in connection with the need of carrying out engineering and geological surveys.

Procedures will be organised concerning all elements of the planned new infrastructure in line with the environmental legislation and the related requirements related to informing the public. The environmental procedures relating to the construction of the gas pipeline and the drilling of the wells are to be launched in October 2021 in strict compliance with all transparency and publicity measures.

➤ **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 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 page contains 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 (<https://www.bulgartransgaz.bg/bg/pages/razshirenje-kapaciteta-na-pgh-chiren-poi-6-20-2--134.html>) 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's website includes as basic and obligatory information the following materials:

- an 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. If necessary, the materials will be circulated amongst the members of the public by placing them at public places or by some other means.

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 campaign that will guide and organize the processes.

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.