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**DOCUMENT OF THE EUROPEAN BANK
FOR RECONSTRUCTION AND DEVELOPMENT**

STRATEGY FOR BULGARIA

**REPORT ON THE INVITATION
TO THE PUBLIC TO COMMENT**

PUBLIC

1. INTRODUCTION

The objective of this report is to summarise key comments received from stakeholders during the consultation period on the Bank's Strategy for Bulgaria and provide the Bank's management responses.

In accordance with the EBRD Public Information Policy (PIP), the draft Strategy for Bulgaria was posted on the EBRD website in English and Bulgarian for 45 calendar days starting from 1 November 2019 until 15 December 2019. During the consultation period no written comment was received by the EBRD.

Information about the public consultation process was posted on the EBRD's dedicated webpage "Have your say", which highlights the latest opportunities for the public to comment on the Bank's policies and strategies under review. The Communications Department also advertised the public consultation on social media. In addition, targeted notifications of the consultation process were sent to local and international civil society organisations (CSOs) that have expressed interest in the Bank's work in the country.

In line with the Bank's increased efforts to involve civil society at an early stage of country strategy development, the EBRD organised a consultative meeting with civil society organisations on 2 July 2019 to gather civil society's feedback during the preparatory phase for developing the draft Strategy. The consultation was hosted by the Resident Office in Sofia and attracted 12 participants from 12 different civil society organisations. The EBRD was represented by the Head of the Resident Office; the Economic, Policy and Governance team; the Country Strategy Coordination team and the Civil Society Engagement Unit. The summary of the meeting and the list of CSO participants to the consultation process are provided in the Annex 1. The summary of the meeting was shared with participants.

ANNEX 1

EBRD Strategy for Bulgaria**Consultation with civil society, 2 July 2019 (Sofia RO)****List of CSOs participating to the consultation process**

CSO	• Association for Innovative Development
Participants	• Bulgaria Economic Forum
[12 present]	• Bulgarian Helsinki Committee
	• CEE Bankwatch Network
	• Center for Energy Efficiency EnEffect
	• Centre for Liberal Strategies (CLS)
	• Institute for Market Economics (IME)
	• National Union of Worker Producers co-operatives (NUWPC)
	• Open Society Institute (OSI)
	• Transparency International Bulgaria
	• Trend
	• UN Global Compact Network Bulgaria

Summary of key messages from CSOs:

According to civil society the business environment is still weak and not competitive. For this reason the EBRD's support to economic diversification, SMEs development and promotion of entrepreneurship is welcome.

Civil society indicated that meaningful public-private dialogue platforms are still missing in Bulgaria. A strategic approach is needed in social and economic inclusion policies, in particular in closing the gender pay gap in employment. The EBRD was encouraged to support educational opportunities, including vocational training, with the objective to support the creation of skilled labour force vis-a-vis the country structural demographic challenges such as aging and migration.

Civil society highlighted the need for investments in innovative technologies and innovation as well as the need for a greater involvement of the EBRD in the upgrade of transport and municipal infrastructure. The EBRD was also requested to step-up its efforts towards transition to more green and sustainable energy resources, including by supporting the decarbonisation path. Energy poverty was also highlighted as a key challenge in the country.

In the field of governance, more transparency is needed as a measure to curb corruption. The integration of Bulgaria in the regional markets should also be regarded as a priority to support closing regional gaps.