

Sofia

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Plan for the development of Sofia Municipality

International location

The Municipality of Sofia is a unique juncture of four global transport destinations: the inter-continental diagonal main Northwest-Southeast route (London-Budapest-Sofia-Istanbul-Calcutta), the meridian-bound Euro-African main route (Helsinki-Moscow-Sofia-Thessalonica-Cairo), the diagonal Euro-African main route (Tunis-Duras-Sofia-Bucharest-Odessa-Omsk) and the emerging transport corridor around the 40th parallel from the Caspian Sea via the Black Sea towards the Adriatic Sea (Potti-Varna-Sofia-Skopje-Duras).

European location

Three of the Pan-European Transport Corridors cross on the area of Sofia District.

Corridor No. 4 – Budapest-Vidin-Sofia-Thessalonica (Istanbul);
Corridor No. 8 – Duras-Skopje-Sofia-Burgas-Varna;
Corridor No. 10- Belgrade-Sofia-Plovdiv-Istanbul;

The intra-Balkan and domestic roads are also part of the Sofia juncture. Sofia is the true urban, geographic and transport centre of the Balkan Peninsula. The comparison of the distances between the capitals of the Balkan states and some bigger cities, measured along the international roads traversing the region, indicates that Sofia is characterized by the shortest average distances – 455 km, followed by Skopje – 523 km and Thessalonica – 530 km. This is an objective ground for the future development of the city and the rest of the municipal territory as an important centre not only in the country, but also in the region of Southeast Europe.

Because of its strong economic impact and big demographic mass, the Municipality and its centre – the city of Sofia, possess a strongly developed field of influence, which is not observed for any of the rest of the districts and big cities in the country. The influence of the city of Sofia and Sofia Municipality extends to both the zone of direct impact (the eight neighboring municipalities of Sofia District) and the entire area of the Southeastern Planning Region.



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European crossroads

Strategic objective 1

“Accelerated and sustainable economic growth and development of a knowledge-based economy and information society for attainment of the average levels of development of similar administrative-territorial units in the EU”

The first strategic objective may be described as an objective of growth and sustainability, based on improvement of the economic competitive capacity in the framework of the European regions (EU-27).

This may be achieved by means of:

- Creation of conditions for rapid introduction of innovations
- Transfer, creation and introduction of high-tech technologies
- Raising of the educational characteristics and professional structure of the workforce according to the demand of the modern labour market
- Development and upgrading of the quality of the business services infrastructure and the operation of the functional systems habitation, labour and recreation
- Creation of modern manufacturing and storage areas of complex set-up and cores of business and trade services centres, etc.
- Development of modern and environmentally friendly tourism industry, including sports infrastructure for conducting of European, international and Olympic competitions
- Other conditions influencing the attraction of investment and business initiatives in all economic spheres. The urban marketing and effective work and potential of the municipal administration are of particular importance in this respect.

For achieving the development level of other similar territorial structures in the EU it is necessary to maintain and promote high economic growth. This objective sets a somewhat higher development threshold than the average for the EU-27. Sofia Municipality comes close to that level. It is a model and a motor for the regional and economic development of the Republic of Bulgaria, the Southwestern Planning Region and Sofia District, it possesses a potential to achieve the parameters of economic and regional development characteristic for EU regions of similar area and population size, which are higher than the average levels for EU-27.

Strategic objective 2

“Balanced and sustainable development through development of the local potential”

The EU policy for balanced regional development on the area of the Union is based on the establishment of a polycentric network of big cities and development of metropolis spaces aimed to stabilize migration processes, promote economic and social development and balance the “core-periphery” relationship.

Achievement of a balance of the territory is a strategic task for two reasons: the need of more equitable development of the municipal area and a chance to attract funding to that end from the EU Funds and other sources of financing.

Strategic objective 2 is related to overcoming of the weaknesses in the development of the Municipality, namely the disparity in the development of the core (the city of Sofia) and its hinterland (the surrounding area).

Achievement of the main and other strategic objectives may be realized through tapping the potentials of the surrounding area and establishing there of conditions for habitation, recreation and business equitable to those in the core, as demonstrated by the practice and situation in other similar regions in the EU.

Balanced development should extend beyond the boundaries of the Municipality and cover the entire area of the Sofia agglomeration, as laid down in the Strategy for Regional Development of Sofia District for the Period 2005-2015 and in the Regional Development Plan of the Southwestern Planning Region (2007-2013).

The accelerated and uncontrollable migration towards the core might place the city of Sofia in a threshold spatial and technical condition that would act as a barrier to achieving sustainability in the development of the Municipality and the region as a whole.

In order to curtail that threat it is necessary to undertake measures for:

- Spatial development of the Northern Arch (as per the Master Plan of the city of Sofia and Sofia Municipality);
- Promotion and support for the development of the buffer manufacturing and warehousing zones on the area of the agglomeration (eastern zone in the Elin Pelin area – Ravno Pole, and western zone in the Bozhurishte area – Kostinbrod);
- Setting up of secondary centres for complex services, located along the inner transport ring (the Ring Road);

The implementation of these and other measures will require enhanced partnership between the municipal and regional authorities, the NGO sector and businesses within the boundaries of Sofia Municipality and the Sofia agglomeration and setting up of a joint Advisory Board.

Strategic objective 3

“Development of the European territorial co-operation and positioning of the city of Sofia in the network of big European cities as an important centre on the Balkans and in Southeast Europe”

Strategic objective 3 is related to the complex development of the system of functional environments – business environment, residential, labour and recreation environments and services in the broad sense of that term.

The positioning of the city of Sofia in the polycentric system of the big cities in the EU depends on the properties of the environment, the transport infrastructure, the efficiency of the governance system, the living standard of the population, the efforts for protection of the natural environment and the cultural and historical heritage.

The achievement of the major objective will be realized through focusing on priority sectors, specific objectives related to the development of these sectors, operations under each of the objectives and concrete activities related to the application of each of the operations.