

R E P U B L I C O F B U L G A R I A



**NATIONAL RAILWAY
INFRASTRUCTURE COMPANY**

ISO 9001

BUREAU VERITAS
Certification



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**Railway Activities on Biodiversity conservation
And habitats protection**

**National Railway Infrastructure Company
- Responsible for the environmental protection
(DRAFT)**

**April 2010
Sofia, Bulgaria**

National Railway Infrastructure Company (NRIC) is the Bulgarian Infrastructure Manager. The company is responsible for the rail track and structure (tunnels, bridges, level crossings, stations, etc.) maintenance as well as for the maintenance of signalling and telecommunications equipment and catenary.

The Bulgarian rail network length is 4,071 route-km with standard rail gauge, of which 24 percent is double track, and 67 percent is electrified. The main Bulgarian railway lines length is approximately 2,915 km of the railway network.

The electrical poles of the NRIC’s catenary are often a preferred place by the white storks, for building their nests.



White Stork (Ciconia ciconia)

The White Stork (Ciconia ciconia) is a waterfowl family species Storks (Ciconiidae) protected by the Bulgarian Biodiversity Act.

There are around 10,000 to 12,000 nesting pairs in Bulgaria.

The White Stork is widespread, however declining species that reproduces in the warmer parts of Europe. The White Stork is a migrating species and mainly stays the winter in tropical Africa.

Unfortunately by building its nests on the catenary poles the White Stork creates a number of problems.

In case of the insulation system breakdown the heavy overhanging branches cause serious short-circuits, the nests ignite and burn together with the eggs or young birds from one hand, and results in the railway traffic interruption and contingency costs for damages recovering and the power supply reactivation.



As a responsible company for the environment protection and biodiversity and habitats conservation the National Railway Infrastructure Company has taken actions for reducing the rail operation negative environmental impact.



In 2009 was made a detour on the entire grid system as all the White stork nests on the poles along the NRIC's catenary were located and registered.

Their total number for the entire rail network was 54.

The next step which was undertaken by the Company was to develop a draft high-voltage insulated platform on which to lay the Stork nest.

According to the current Bulgarian legislation the activities on the White Stork nests moving or demolition require a specific authorization by the competent authority - Ministry of Environment and Waters and Regional Inspectorate of Environment and Waters in particular.



Platform developed for a pilot installation of Orizovo station

Once the platform has been developed, its pilot placing on in randomly selected nest was performed, and then monitored for the birds' reaction.

Although the financial condition of the Company, there has been decided to be performed activities on nests destruction and re-building along the Company's electrical grid throughout the country.

The National Railway Infrastructure Company and Bulgarian Society for Birds Protection (BDZP) decided to work together for solving the problem. NRIC and BDZP have started common activities on the Project, The work has been separated between the two organizations, and NRIC developed a design for the platform and was also responsible for the platforms installation and necessary permits obtaining. The Bulgarian Society for Birds Protection was responsible for the monitoring of the installed platforms advantages and birds reaction.

The White Stork is a migratory bird; therefore the activities performed on the nests insulation could be carry out only during the winter period when the nests are not occupied.

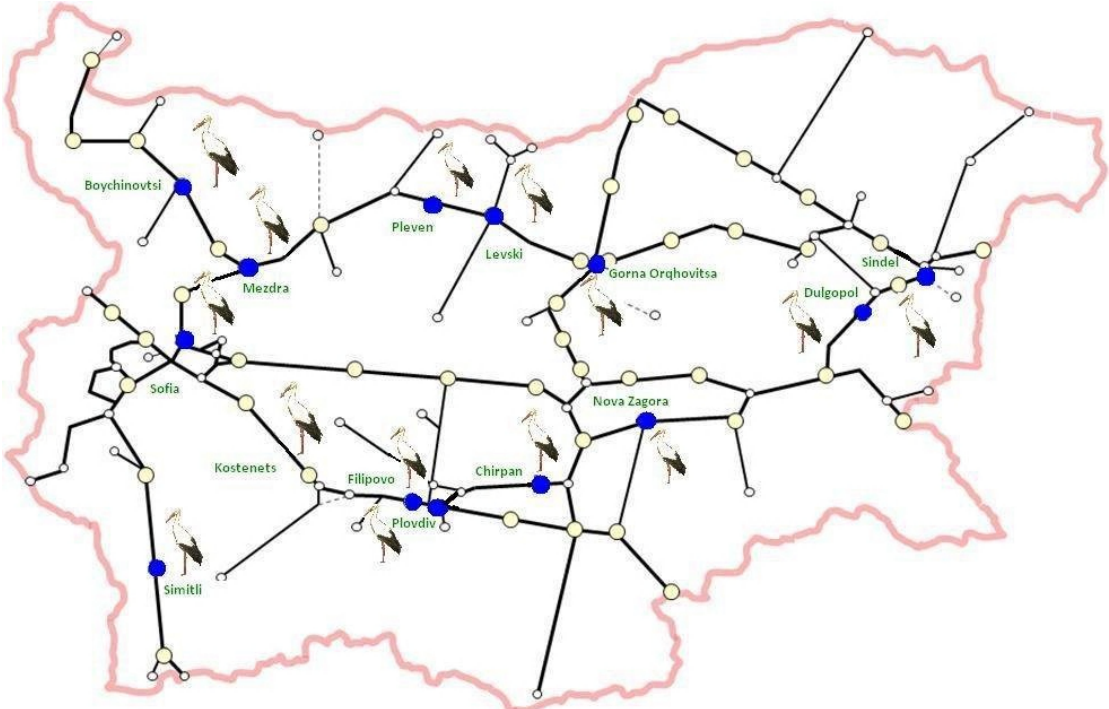
In September 2009 National Railway Infrastructure Company prepared all the necessary documentation and submitted it to the Ministry of Environment and Waters in order to receive a permission for destroying and re-building 54 White Stork nests on platforms.

According to the Permission terms and conditions the platforms shall be placed not later than March 1, 2010.

The necessary funds for the platforms materials were provided by NRIC and for those nests in the Plovdiv and Stara Zagora regions were received donations from the Plovdiv municipality and UBB bank.



The implementation of activities on the nests destruction and re-building on the platforms was conducted by the teams for the power supply equipment maintenance and monitored by the relevant Regional Inspectorate of Environment and Waters.



Location and number of platforms placed

Mezdra	4	Ilyantsi	1	Filipovo	4	Pleven	3	Dulgopol	2
Boychinovtsi	1	Simitli	1	Chirpan	7	Levski	1	Sindel	3
Kostenets	5	Plovdiv	2	Nova Zagora	1	Gorna Oryahovitsa	7		

The work implementation was accompanied by a number of difficulties;

- Nest own weight (a single nest weighs over 100 kg)
- Unsuitable weather conditions (winter situation)
- Even cases of the workers superstitious prejudices to destroy the White Stork nest.

Activities on the White Stork nests demolition and re-building on the platforms, thanks to the full cooperation of the to the Bulgarian Society for Birds Protection, became a media event and due to their scale the abovementioned activities are indicated as best practice and good example that should be followed by all the Bulgarian Power supply companies.

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