

Luxembourg, 13 October 2025

Public Environmental and Social Data Sheet

Overview

Project Name:	VIA15 NETHERLANDS PPP (2018-0217)
Project Number:	2018-0217
Country:	The Netherlands
Project Description:	The ViA15 Project will increase the capacity and improve road safety of the Dutch motorway network in the vicinity of Arnhem. The project consists of: 1.) Construction of a new 12km section extending the A15 from Ressen to the A12 2.) Widening of the existing A15 between Valburg and Ressen 3.) Widening of ~11km on the A12 between Duiven and Oud-Dijk. The new 12km extension of the A15 will include a sunken section and bridges over existing infrastructure. On both motorways a number of junctions will be redesigned and reconstructed.
EIA required:	yes
Project included in Carbon Footprint Exercise ¹ :	yes

Environmental and Social Assessment

Environmental Assessment

Compliance with applicable environmental legislation:

The project falls under Annex I of the EIA Directive 2011/92/EU as amended by Directive 2014/52/EU, requiring a full Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA).

An EIA was carried out and an Environmental Impact Report (*Tracénota/MER*) was produced in July 2011, compliant with the directive requirements. As the project design evolved, the EIA was updated accordingly and in March 2017, the EIA (as part of the draft Infrastructure Route Decree "*Tracébesluit A12/A15 Ressen–Oudbroeken (ViA15)*") was approved by the competent authority (the Minister of Infrastructure and Water Management).

¹ Only projects that meet the scope of the Carbon Footprint Exercise, as defined in the EIB Carbon Footprint Methodologies, are included, provided estimated emissions exceed the methodology thresholds: 20,000 tonnes CO₂e/year absolute (gross) or 20,000 tonnes CO₂e/year relative (net) – both increases and savings.



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Following this approval, a large number of stakeholders filed appeals against the project. The initial Tracébesluit of 2017 was subsequently amended by the “*Tracébesluit A12/A15 Ressen–Oudbroeken (2019)*” issued on 18 February 2019 to address stakeholder concerns.

A further amended Tracébesluit was issued on 7 September 2021 (“*A12/A15 Ressen–Oudbroeken (2021)*”), which incorporated an extended assessment of nitrogen deposition (using a 25 km impact radius instead of 5 km) and included additional mitigation and compensatory measures. After a protracted legal procedure, the Tracébesluit (as modified) was declared irrevocable on 2 October 2024 by the Council of State (Raad van State), meaning all appeals have been resolved and the project now has final approval to proceed.

Protected nature areas/Natura 2000

The road corridor passes through two Natura 2000 site and runs in the vicinity of others. In 2017, an Appropriate Assessment under the Habitats Directive was performed as part of the EIA to evaluate impacts of the project on all of these sites. In total 10 sites were evaluated. The main impacted sites are:

- Veluwe Forest (Natura 2000 site NL9801023): The A15 extension crosses a corner of this site and the A12 runs close to it. The assessment concluded that the project would have no significant negative impact on the Veluwe, as the redistribution of traffic due to the project is expected to slightly reduce overall nitrogen emissions in that area, potentially resulting in a neutral or slightly positive effect. Rhine Tributaries (Natura 2000 site NL2014067): The new A15 segment will cross the Pannerdensch Kanaal over a bridge, intersecting the Rhine river branches. The assessment identified some disturbance and habitat loss for species like the Eurasian beaver and great crested newt, as well as potential impacts on habitat for various bird species in these riverine areas. However, these effects were assessed as not significant – they do not threaten the integrity or conservation objectives of the Natura 2000 sites
- Rhine River Branches (Natura 2000 site NL2014038): During construction, temporary disturbances (noise, light, vibration) will occur. Species such as bats (e.g. the pond bat), beaver, and certain non-breeding waterfowl (e.g. wigeon) may experience temporary disruption. Mitigation measures (e.g. timing restrictions, lighting shields) will minimize these impacts, and the residual effects are considered not significant in the EIA. Once operational, the project’s redistributed traffic pattern is expected to improve air quality slightly in some localities (due to congestion relief), helping avoid long-term significant nitrogen deposition in these sensitive habitats.
- Adjacent German Natura 2000 sites (near Autobahn A3, sites DE4104301 and DE4203401): The project will increase traffic flowing into Germany via the A12, potentially raising traffic-induced nitrogen deposition and noise in nearby German protected areas. The environmental assessment determined that these cross-border effects will be minor; the projected increase in nitrogen deposition and noise levels in the German sites is not significant and will remain within acceptable thresholds.

A supplementary Appropriate Assessment carried out for the 2021 Tracébesluit revealed that, without additional action, the incremental nitrogen deposition from the project could indeed pose a risk of deteriorating the natural characteristics of several Natura 2000 sites in the region. To address this, the promoter incorporated extra mitigation measures focusing on nitrogen emission reduction.



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Landscape, cultural history and archaeology

The extension of the A15 will introduce a new highway through an existing landscape, unavoidably altering its visual character. There will be negative visual impacts on the open agricultural and riverine landscape, as a highway and associated infrastructure (bridges, interchanges, noise barriers) are large man-made features. The chosen alignment and design have been developed in consultation with landscape experts to minimise these impacts where possible. During planning, adjustments were made to protect cultural heritage sites; notably, the A15's alignment was slightly shifted further away from the historical Diesfeldt farmhouse neighbourhood in Groessen to preserve its cultural-historical value. Archaeological surveys have been carried out along the route, and any significant finds will be excavated or protected before construction. Overall, while some adverse landscape and cultural heritage impacts are inevitable, mitigation measures have been put in place to reduce them to an acceptable level.

Noise

Constructing and operating the extend A15 will lead to increased traffic noise in areas close to the new or widened road sections. The design alternatives studied result in higher noise levels, so the focus has been on mitigation. The project includes extensive noise reduction measures in its design. With these measures (barriers, low-noise asphalt, etc.), the residual noise levels are expected to comply with national noise regulations. Noise levels are likely to decrease in areas along the existing road network where traffic will be diverted from.

Air Quality

The project will have mixed effects on air quality. Locally, in the immediate vicinity of the new A15 and widened A12/A15, concentrations of traffic-related pollutants (NO₂, PM₁₀, etc.) will increase due to higher traffic volumes. However, on a wider urban-regional scale, the project is expected to yield a slight air quality benefit for residents of Arnhem and surrounding towns. By providing a direct through-connection (A15) and additional lanes, the project will divert long-distance and regional traffic away from congested local roads in urban areas. This should reduce traffic jams and stop-and-go traffic in Arnhem, leading to lower emissions in those populated areas and improved urban air quality. The EIA's dispersion modeling showed that all pollutant concentrations with the project will remain within EU and national air quality limits, and thus **no additional air quality measures** (beyond standard vehicle emissions standards) are required for human health.

On the other hand, **nitrogen deposition (NO_x/NH₃)** affecting natural ecosystems has been a key concern. The new highway will lead to higher total NO_x emissions in the region, which can deposit on nearby sensitive habitats and biodiversity areas. Because these ecological effects cannot be fully avoided by route choice or engineering alone, the project includes compensatory measures to counterbalance the nitrogen increase. With the mitigation and compensation measures in place, the net regional NO_x emissions increase due to the project is mitigated, and critical loads for nitrogen deposition in protected nature areas are not exceeded.

Climate adaptation

The design of the road infrastructure has been updated based on a Climate Risk and Vulnerability Assessment (CRVA). Additional measures are, amongst others, re-enforcement of the section that is to be built below the natural ground level (also called "sunken") to counter rising ground water levels, as well as increased water retention basins located near

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the motorway to mitigate the risk of extreme precipitation events. These measures meet the technical screening criteria set for substantial contribution to climate change adaptation in Annexes of the Climate Delegated Act of the EU taxonomy and the associated finance is anticipated to qualify for EIB's CA&ES Finance Tracking for Adaptation.

Mitigating and compensation measures

The EIA and subsequent studies enumerate a range of mitigation and compensation measures that the promoter must implement to avoid, reduce, or offset the project's environmental impacts. In particular, to address **nitrogen deposition impacts on Natura 2000 sites**, the following key measures have been adopted:

- **Speed limit reduction on A50:** Imposing a maximum speed of 100 km/h on the A50 motorway between the Waterberg and Beekbergen junctions (approximately 14 km north of Arnhem) during 6:00–23:00 hours daily^[5]. This measure will take effect when the A15 extension opens, ensuring that regional traffic emissions are reduced in parallel with the new road's introduction.
- **Habitat compensation planting:** Creation or restoration of additional Natura 2000 habitat area to compensate for any residual nitrogen impact. Specifically, about **700 m²** of hay-meadow habitat (classified as *Glanshaver- en vossenstaartheiland*, a type of grassland) and **~300 m²** of riparian grassland (*stroomdalgrasland*) will be established within the Rijntakken Natura 2000 area (near the IJssel/Rhine river branches)^[1]. These compensatory habitat plots aim to improve the ecological quality and nitrogen uptake in the area, offsetting the project's effects.
- **External nitrogen offset (“extern salderen”):** **Six agricultural operations** (livestock farms) in the region have been or will be purchased and their environmental permits permanently withdrawn, ceasing their activities so that their ongoing nitrogen emissions are eliminated. The resultant reduction in ammonia/nitrogen deposition (termed “nitrogen credit”) is allocated to the ViA15 project, effectively balancing out the additional nitrogen load from the road.

Other mitigation measures include:

- Sections of the road are sunk below grade, and landscaping (tree planting, earth berms) will be used to help to reduce noise, visual intrusion and integrate the road into the surrounding scenery
- in Groessen, a high noise barrier will be erected near the historic church to shield it and the village from excessive traffic noise.
- Noise-insulating pavement will likely be used to further reduce rolling noise.
- the new bridge over the Pannerdensche Kanaal will feature an upstand (raised edge) that doubles as a built-in noise screen running along the bridge, providing noise attenuation without the need for separate freestanding walls.

EIB Carbon Footprint Exercise

The project is included on the following basis:



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- Estimated annual third party greenhouse emissions from the use of the project in a standard year of operation:
 - Forecast absolute (gross) emissions are 389,900 tonnes of CO₂ equivalent per year and
 - Forecast emission savings are 11,400 tonnes of CO₂ equivalent per year.

A reduction of 342,000 tonnes of CO₂ is expected over the 30 years study period.

Public Consultation and Stakeholder Engagement

Public consultation has been an integral part of the ViA15 project development since its inception. The process formally began in 2008 with the publication of a Start Memorandum (*Startnotitie*) outlining six design options; this was made available for public comment, and several information meetings were held. Subsequently, in 2011, a draft Environmental Impact Report was published and subjected to consultation. Stakeholders – including residents, local interest groups, and environmental NGOs – provided feedback, which led to adjustments in the project. For example, in response to concerns raised, the Minister selected a preferred alternative in 2012 that shifted the A15 alignment further from the Diesfeldt neighborhood in Groessen to preserve that community's character.

In 2015, the draft Tracébesluit (route decision) was published and again opened to public scrutiny. Numerous objections and suggestions from stakeholders at that stage resulted in modifications to the design. One notable change was the covering of an open tunnel section near Helhoek: local residents collaborated with the project team to co-design a covered section of the cutting, mitigating noise and visual effects for the village. The final draft Tracébesluit was signed in March 2017, following a public inquiry period between 16 March and 28 April 2017 during which all interested parties could submit their views. After the Tracébesluit 2017 was adopted, affected parties (over 40 individuals, businesses, and organizations) lodged appeals, as described earlier. The decision was revisited and amended in 2019, with that amended decree also made available for public review and subject to appeals up until April 2019.

Throughout this protracted process, the promoter (Rijkswaterstaat, the Dutch road authority) and the Ministry engaged proactively with regional and local authorities. This is reflected in several bilateral agreements concluded with stakeholders such as the Province of Gelderland, the Municipality of Arnhem, and other local municipalities. These agreements cover co-financing, flanking measures on local roads, and additional environmental or community investments to enhance the project's acceptance and benefits. Also, after the formal planning approval, stakeholder communication remains a priority. Following the Council of State's final judgment in late 2024, the project team has committed to keeping residents informed about next steps and progress. They are providing updates through project newsletters and the official website, and will hold discussions with directly affected residents and businesses to address concerns as the project moves into the implementation phase.

Other Environmental and Social Aspects

During implementation, the Concessionaire will be required to adhere to comprehensive environmental management obligations. An Environmental Management Plan (EMP) will be developed by the Concessionaire, detailing how construction and operation will comply with all permit conditions and environmental measures. This EMP will be reviewed and supervised by the competent authority. Specific environmental and social (E&S) monitoring arrangements



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will be set up – for example, monitoring noise levels, air quality, and ecological indicators at defined intervals – to ensure that mitigation measures are effective. Key performance indicators related to environment and safety will form part of the contract. The concessionaire must implement the project in accordance with EU and national legislation as well as the EIB's requirements.

Conclusions and Recommendations

The project is acceptable for EIB financing from an Environmental, Climate and Social standpoint.