

Environmental and Social Data Sheet

Overview

Project Name:	AUGUSTOW BYPASS
Project Number:	20130205
Country:	Poland
Project Description:	The project concerns the construction, on a new 34 km long alignment, of the bypass of the town of Augustow in north eastern Poland.
EIA required:	Yes
Project included in Carbon Footprint Exercise ¹ :	No

Summary of Environmental and Social Assessment, including key issues and overall conclusion and recommendation

The project falls under Annex I of the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) Directive 2011/92/EU. In 2008-2009, an Environmental Assessment was undertaken for the main alignment and a positive Environmental Decision was issued by the Competent Authority in December 2009. In line with current Polish legislation, so called "Supplemental EIAs", detailing mitigation measures, have been/are being prepared as part of the submission for building permits. Copies of these supplemental EIAs are to be submitted to the Bank prior to disbursement.

The project is situated in an environmentally sensitive region hosting multiple protected areas and species. In 2007, Augustow bypass, on an earlier more environmentally damaging alignment, was the subject of an infringement proceeding by the Commission which eventually resulted in the then ongoing works being suspended by the Polish courts. Thereafter, during 2008, a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) was undertaken for the entire Via Baltica corridor in Poland, of which the project forms a part, to identify the most environmentally acceptable alignment from several different alternatives, including alternatives around Augustow. The project now adopts a new alignment recommended as minimising risks to protected areas though it does result in some limited displacement of residential properties. Nevertheless, the project still has the potential to impact three Natura 2000 areas; so the provisions of the Birds (2009/147/EC) and Habitats Directives (92/43/EEC) apply. The selected alignment does not cross these sites, but runs within a few 100 meters at its closest as well as crosses the Rospuda River which connects two Natura 2000 areas. An appropriate assessment was carried out as part of the EIA procedure to assess the risks to protected areas and define necessary mitigation measures. The formal opinion of the Competent Authority for Nature Conservation as to the impact of the project on protected areas and species is to be obtained prior to disbursement.

The project will divert long distance traffic away from the existing national highway which crosses both Augustow town as well as N2000 sites and should therefore improve the environmental situation in those places.

Subject to the conditions outlined above, the project is acceptable from an environmental perspective for financing by the EIB.

¹ Only projects that meet the scope of the Pilot Exercise, as defined in the EIB draft Carbon Footprint Methodologies, are included, provided estimated emissions exceed the methodology thresholds: above 100,000 tons CO₂e/year absolute (gross) or 20,000 tons CO₂e/year relative (net) – both increases and savings.

Environmental and Social Assessment

Description. The bypass will form, for 13 km, a section of the “Via Baltica”, Pan European Corridor 1 between Helsinki and Warsaw. The section on the Via Baltica will be built to 2 x 2 expressway standard. The remaining 21 km will be designated as National Road No. 8 and built to a 2 x 1 access controlled national highway standard. Three bridges have to be constructed: over the Rospuda, Kamienny Brod and Szczeberka rivers.

Environmental Assessment and Variant Analysis. The project is located in the north-east part of the country in one of the regions described as the “Green Lungs of Poland”. In the mid 2000’s, works had commenced on the construction of a bypass around Augustow, an important spa town. The alignment selected at that time cut across a unique and protected natural habitat, the Rospuda valley. An infringement proceeding launched by the Commission resulted in a court injunction in 2007 preventing further works on this old alignment. During 2008, a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) was undertaken, addressing Directive 2001/42/EC, for the whole “Via Baltica”, which covered, inter alia, the issue of the Augustow bypass alignment. This SEA compared several alternative main alignments (broadly either through Bialystok or through Elk), plus several sub-alternatives within each². The variant through Elk was selected which then determined the location of the expressway portion of the project. Subsequently, an EIA procedure was undertaken for the main alignment of the whole project around Augustow in 2008-2009. This again assessed three different main alignment options at the more local level, together with the “do nothing case”, plus further sub-alignments. One of the options assessed was the previously approved alignment; on this occasion, the old alignment was determined to be incompatible with the Habitats Directive. The other two alignments were deemed to be compliant with the Habitats Directive and were therefore compared on a multi-criteria analysis basis. The final selected alignment posed the least risk to natural habitats and protected species. However, other criteria were weaker in comparison to the alternative (e.g. the selected alignment has more social impacts in terms of noise and displacement, plus it is somewhat longer). A positive Environmental Decision was issued in December 2009. In line with current Polish legislation, so called “Supplemental EIAs” for section of S61 expressway and major part of National Road No. 8, detailing mitigation measures, were prepared as part of the submission for building permits. These supplemental EIAs completed the pre-construction EIA procedure.

The supplemental EIA procedure is still ongoing for a small part of National Road No. 8 which includes Augustów junction which will be completed once the Regional Director for Environmental Protection issues its Statement (RDOŚ).

The project also required a separate environmental procedure, performed at the local level, for a short access road (from Szkocja junction to its meeting with local road no. 655) for which the head of Raczki Community gave his positive decision in September 2011.

Natural Habitats and Protected Species. The region contains the largest concentration of protected areas in Poland including 4 national parks; 13 landscape parks; over 270 natural reserves; as well as about 5,700 natural monuments. The project is located in the vicinity of three Natura 2000 areas: Augustow Primeval Forest Site of Community Interest (SCI) (PLH 200005), the Augustow Primeval Forest Special Protection Area (PLB 200002) and Rospuda Valley SCI (PLH1400022). The alignment also crosses Koniecbor Forest, another important natural habitat.

In accordance with Article 6 of the Habitats Directive, an appropriate assessment was performed, including preparation of an inventory of species in the project zone, as part of the environmental assessment. The most sensitive natural habitat relates to the Rospuda Valley which contains well preserved and rather unique wetlands as well as acts as an important animal migration corridor. The site contains over 40 species in Annex 1 of the Birds Directive, including the short-toed snake eagle, greater spotted eagle as well as the Eurasian eagle owl. The forest adjacent to the river is also an important refuge for large predatory mammals i.e. wolf and lynx.

Impacts and Mitigants. The main residual negative impacts of the project are: (i) the conversion of about 448 ha of agricultural, forest and some lightly developed land; (ii)

² http://viabaltica.scottwilson.com.pl/index.php?option=com_frontpage&Itemid=1

displacement of a small number of residential properties; (iii) increased noise and vibration for about 580 properties adjacent to the new alignment; (iv) habitat and community severance; (v) use of resources and generation of waste during construction; and (vi) visual disturbance from some locations. The positive environmental impacts include improved road safety; reduction of noise, vibration and local pollution in settlements along the existing alignment; and diversion of long distance traffic away from the protected areas to the north of Augustow.

The Environmental Decision prescribes a large number of mitigating measures including: (i) four large fauna overpasses and 37 underpasses or adapted drainage to accommodate the passage of fauna; (ii) fencing of the whole alignment; (iii) installation of noise barriers, natural foliage and window insulation to reduce noise levels in affected properties; (iv) closed drainage system include retention tanks and separators; (v) afforestation and landscaping in prescribed locations; (vi) restrictions on construction (timing, location); and (vii) preventative archaeological measures. In addition, monitoring is to be performed with respect to noise and vibration, emissions, water quality and fauna.

Public Consultation and Stakeholder Engagement. Public consultation took place as part of the EIA procedure. Special public hearings were also convened during 2008. The selected variant makes a difficult balance between the interests of local residents and natural habitats. Concerns were raised about negative impacts of the selected alignment; especially noise, increased air, soil and water pollution, and community severance. Wherever feasible, mitigating measures have been incorporated into the project design.