

Environmental and Social Data Sheet

Overview

Project Name: MODERNISATION SZOLNOK - SZAJOL RAILWAY LINE
Project Number: 2015-0040
Country: Hungary
Project Description: The project is a major allocation under Cohesion Fund FL III Phasing Rail Investments and consists of the modernisation of the Szolnok - Szajol railway line section
EIA required: yes
Project included in Carbon Footprint Exercise: no

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

The project is part of the upgrade programme of the existing railway corridor between Budapest – Szolnok – Szajol – Békéscsaba and Lőkőháza state border towards Romania. The section is part of two TEN-T core networks (Mediterranean and Orient East/Med) and the ERTMS priority corridor.

The 2007-2013 Transport Operational Programme (TOP) for Hungary, under which the project was presented, underwent a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) procedure and the environmental effects were assessed.

The project falls under Annex I of Directive 2011/92/EU and was therefore subject to environmental impact assessment (EIA). An EIA report was prepared for the revised project and submitted to the competent authority in 2012. On the basis of the findings of this assessment, the Competent Authority issued the environment permit for the project on 26 April 2013.

Public consultation was carried out during the environmental permission process though no complaints were received from interested parties.

Part of the project is situated close to NATURA 2000 sites. The opinions of the competent authorities were issued in the environment permit of 2013 and confirmed that there are no significant negative impacts on these sites.

The project is environmentally sound, given that it is a rehabilitation of an existing rail infrastructure on a key section of two TEN-T corridors and protects the railway line from floods from the river Tisza. The project will contribute to sustainable transport objectives by making rail transport more attractive and better placed to face competition from road. The project will also contribute to climate adaption. Therefore, it is expected to have a positive overall environmental impact. The project is considered to be acceptable from an environmental perspective.

Environmental and Social Assessment

Strategic Environmental Assessment

The project is included in the Transport Operational Programme (TOP) year 2007-2013 which was subject to a SEA. The SEA was carried out for the operations which involve a physical impact and include potential projects listed in the Annexes I and II of the EU legislation applicable at the time, which has now been replaced by Directive 2011/92/EU. The TOP was approved in 2007 (CCI 2007HU161PO007) and included the corresponding SEAs.

Environmental Assessment

The project comprises the reconstruction of 6.4 km of railway line, together with the construction of a new Tisza Bridge, reconstruction of the Zagyva river bridge and widening of the embankment in some sections for flood protection.

The project falls under Annex I of Directive 2011/92/EU and was therefore subject to an environmental impact assessment (EIA). An EIA procedure was undertaken for the project in 2008 and an environmental permit was issued on 30 October 2008 based on this EIA. Due to a number of technical changes to the project in 2012, the National Inspectorate for Environment, Nature and Water (OKTVF, the competent authority) required the environment permitting procedures to be repeated. An EIA report was prepared for the revised project (the current design) and submitted to the competent authority on 18 December 2012. As a conclusion of the EIA procedure, the environment permit for the project was issued on 26 April 2013 (decision no. 14/07759- 62/2012).

Subsequently this document was amended on 24 May 2013 (by Ref. No. 14/07759-66/2012). The amendment is related to the requirements of nature conservation and noise protection and was stemmed from a request to the Promoter to clarify certain points. The amendment introduces clearer conditions regarding the particular locations of the proposed measures and timing of the works.

Environmental Impacts and Mitigation

The main impacts of the project during the construction phase will be on water resources (including flood management, water quality, surface water and groundwater), noise and vibration, air quality, soil, biodiversity, flora and fauna, waste management, landscape, environmental health, socio-economic impacts, and the built-up environment.

Additionally impacts during the operation phase include noise, impacts on ecology, risk of ground and water contamination due to spillages or oil leakage, and on the landscape. Relevant mitigation measures have been proposed to reduce, offset and eliminate these impacts (drainage system, noise barriers, etc.) and set as conditions in the environmental permit and its amendment.

Mitigation measures during the construction phase cover dust limitation, top soil covering, and limiting construction near watercourses; waste management; appropriate timing of works for biological seasons. The measures adopted during operations covers inclusion of water traps and filters in the drainage system and installation of noise protection walls. The proposed measures were considered sufficient to mitigate most of the impacts.

Natura 2000 Sites

The project borders the following Natura 2000 sites:

- **SCI Közép-Tisza (HUHN 20015) and SPA Közép-Tisza (HUHN 10004)** - the project runs directly adjacent to these sites for approximately 680 m at the Tisza Bridge.
- **SCI Alsó-Zagyva hullámtere (Alsó-Zagyva flood plain) (HUHN 20089)** - the project runs directly adjacent to this site for approximately 300 m at the Zagyva Bridge.

An appropriate assessment has been undertaken for the project as part of the EIA (in accordance with Article 6(3) of the Habitats Directive). The assessment considered that the impacts of the Zagyva Bridge reconstruction will mainly remain within about 150-200 m of the works. The indirectly affected area of the works will, to a minor extent, also affect the neighbouring conservation area (SCI Alsó-Zagyva hullámtere), primarily through noise, light, and air pollution arising from traffic load and potentially through proliferation of weeds. The assessment also considered that the project will temporarily impact an area of approximately 30m by 680m on the edge of the area of the Közép-Tisza SCI and SPA due to the Tisza Bridge construction, whilst the indirect impacts were expected to extend as far as 150-200m.

Luxembourg, 9 November 2015

In order to protect the species living in the affected areas, restrictions (mitigation measures) were considered necessary when works are performed in the period of April to June, i.e. during breeding periods.

The competent authority concluded that, if the mitigation measures are observed, the renewal of the Zagyva and Tisza Bridges will not significantly affect the Natura 2000 priority species and habitats.

Public Consultation

The public was informed of the start of the EIA process in 2013 by an announcement on the website of the environmental authority. The EIA documentation was published by the City of Szolnok and Szajol for a period of 30 days, during which no comments were made. A public hearing was held in Szolnok on 12 April 2013. No comments that would be relevant for the environmental impact were received. The decision of OKTVF, the inspectorate approving the EIA and issuing the Environmental Permit was published on their website.