Luxembourg, 28 February 2018

Environmental and Social Data Sheet

Overview

Project Name:	OOSTERWEEL CONNECTION
Project Number:	20160779
Country:	Belgium
Project Description:	The Oosterweel link (part of the TEN motorway Amsterdam-Paris) will close the northern part of the ring road around Antwerp. It is one of the major projects of the Master Plan made by the Flemish Government aimed to reduce traffic congestion in the Antwerp Region.
EIA required:	yes

Project included in Carbon Footprint Exercise[1]: yes

(details for projects included are provided in section: "EIB Carbon Footprint Exercise")

Environmental and Social Assessment

Environmental and Social Assessment

For the realisation of the Oosterweel Connection project, a change in the Regional Spatial Implementation Plan (RSIP)[2] was needed. According to the regional SEA legal framework, an adaptation of the RSIP to accommodate a project which is subject to EIA requirements requires the assessment of the plan in a Strategic Environmental Assesment (SEA).

When the project and the related change in the RSIP was first presented for SEA notification on 15th of May 2003 the applicable regional legal framework was the MER/VR-Decree of 18/12/2002 transposing the SEA Directive (2001/42/EC). This initial plan and the related SEA covering a broad set of transport infrastructures around the city of Antwerp, including the Oosterweel connection, was approved already on 5th May 2005 by the competent Authority (Administratie Milieu-, Natuur-, Land- en Waterbeheer, Cel Mer) at the Flemish Regional Government Level. A project EIA for the Oosterweel connection was finalised on 17th February 2007 and approved by the competent authorities on 30th March 2007.

[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.

[2] A RSIP or Gewestelijk Ruimtelijk Uitvoeringsplan is a plan in which the Regional government defines the land uses in a certain area. If the realisation of a project requires changing the land use in the area a change of the RSIP is needed. This change is subject to a seperate process with public consultation. In cases where impacts on specifically listed uses or activities are expected, this change also requires an assessment in the form of SEA, a EIA at plan level.

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Since then the Oosterweel connection project has undergone significant changes following the Flemish Government's decision of March 2010 to reassess and redesign the project. While the original design was largely making use of bridges and viaducts for connecting the river tunnel with the existing road network on the Right River Bank, the current design alternatives make use of a series of tunnels to reduce noise and emission impacts of the new and existing connecting infrastructure. This design change impacts significantly the social and environmental impact of the project and required a new SPIP and consequently a new SEA under the new regulatory framework applicable in Flanders (Plan-MER, decree 27th April 2007). The new SEA public notification was completed on 8th November 2011. The second SEA was executed over the period 2012-2013 and approved by the competent Authority on 10th February 2014.

The project is situated near to or passes through the following Special Protection Areas (SPA) (1) Birds Directive area 'The Tufted Duck and the Blokkersdijk' , BE2300222), (2) The Habitats Directive area 'Scheldt and Durme estuary from the Dutch border to Ghent', BE2300006).

As part of the SEA process an appropriate assessment at plan level in line with the requirements of Directive 92/43/EEC was executed and completed in January 2014. The competent Authorities have advised positively on the project and have provided a statement to the Bank (Form A, signed 12th September 2017) that the plan will not have significant negative effects on a site of nature conservation importance. An assessment in line with the Water Framework Directive has also been executed as part of the SEA. The competent authorities have confirmed in their approval letter that the SEA process has followed the legislation applicable at the time of execution of the assessment that transpose the respective SEA Directives.

Environmental and Social Issues

The construction of the Oosterweel connection requires the implementation of three separate project components for which the impacts are assessed in three project EIA's: Project EIA Left Bank Infrastructure works, the Project EIA Oosterweellink (Right Bank & Scheldt tunnel) and the Project EIA Dry Dock.

- The EIA for the Left Bank Infrastructure has started with notification on 27th of May 2015 and has been finalised by early June 2017. The EIA was approved by the competent authorities on the 7th of July 2016. For the EIA for the Left Bank Infrastructure a separate appropriate assessment in line with requirements of Directive 92/43/EEC and a more in depth ecologic assessment were executed. The former concluded that no significant impacts on the special protected areas are to be expected. The latter prescribed mitigating measures to limit temporary impact during construction by reorganising the construction site access road.
- The EIA for the Dry Dock has started with notification on 19th of December 2016 and was finalised on 24th of August 2017 and approved the 30th August 2017. An appropriate assessment was executed as part of the EIA which concluded that no significant impacts on the special protected areas are to be expected.
- The EIA for the Oosterweellink (Right Bank & Scheldt tunnel) is ongoing and expected to be finalised in the first half of 2018. The notification process started in August 2015. EIA guidance was provided on 22th December 2015. After additional stakeholder consultation additional guidance was provided in March 2017 and again in July 2017 regarding the assessment of alternative technical solutions and the methodology used to compare the environmental impacts of these alternative technical solutions in the EIA.

The promoter will be required to, as applicable, address the issues raised in the SEA in the project EIA's and make sure the prescribed mitigating measures are taken during construction and operation of the infrastructure.

The final project EIA for the Oosterweellink subcomponent (Right Bank & Scheldt tunnel) including the cumulative impacts of the different project components is to be completed, approved by the competent authorities and provided to the Bank as a condition for first disbursement.

The competent authority will need to certify that there are no remaining significant impacts on Natura 2000 areas or biotopes to be expected from the project component Dry Dock.

Subject to these conditions, the project is acceptable for the Bank in Environmental terms.

Environmental Impact and mitigation

The SEA (2014) compared 7 different alternative locations and operational variants (road charging, heavy traffic reductions, speed limitations) for the road connection in different development scenarios with the reference situation without the plan. The analysis concluded that the base alternative Oosterweel had the most positive impacts on road traffic congestion in the region. Most plan alternatives were nevertheless assessed to have significant ecological impacts on protected areas. The SEA indicated that the base alternative Oosterweel provided potential to improve some spatial quality issues in the north-east of Antwerp if the final project design would maximize the use of sub ground level infrastructure and tunnels. The plan alternatives were assessed to have an overall limited impact on emissions from air pollutants and noise. In the reference situation a gradual autonomous improvement of the air quality in the area is expected but nevertheless a non-compliance with the applicable thresholds for NO2 (40 µg/m³) and PM2.5 (20 µg/m³) is still anticipated for reference year 2020. The plan would have a small positive impact on the presence of these pollutants but finally only a marginal impact on the size of the population that will be exposed to air quality levels below the European target as a result of background pollution.

Given the significant environmental and social impacts expected from the plan, the SEA prescribed a series of mitigating measures for all the alternatives studied. Main mitigating measures for the finally selected alternative (Oosterweel) are related to:

- Design & construction
    - Work zone design & road shoulder construction in accordance with ecological principles and limiting impact on heritage site;
    - Maximal protection of ecological corridors, avoidance of tubing of rivers and water streams, protection of river borders, maximising infiltration possibilities;
    - Reduction of spatial footprint as far as technically possible and protective measures (cover when possible) along to protect residential area's;
    - Provision of safe and comfortable connections for pedestrians and cyclists;
    - Provision of air suction infrastructure to obtain emission reduction at both tunnel entrances;
- Limiting the impact on protected area's and creation of additional habitat's:
    - Alignment of the works with breading season of the birds in the vicinity of protected area's;
    - Designation of Burgse Weel as part of the Flemisch Ecological Network as part of the SPIP;
    - Appropriate construction of salt marshland at the sunken tunnel in the Scheldt ;

- Development of 18 ha of marshland outside the flood protection at Sint-Annabos location, development of Sint-Annabos as a varied nature and recreational area, conservation of the Southern Sint-Annabos;
- Reconstruction of areas used for construction on Noordkasteel as a reed swamp;
- Noise reducing measures to mitigate negative impact on protected Natura 2000 areas Blokkersdijk and Scheldt river

The impacts and main mitigation measures described in the separate project EIA's: Project EIA Left Bank Infrastructure works, the Project EIA Oosterweellink (Right Bank & Scheldt tunnel) and the Project EIA Dry Dock are summarised below.

Project EIA Left Bank Infrastructure works concluded that while the project will have only a limited impact on road traffic capacity and congestion, significant road safety improvements are to be expected as well as a reduction of traffic on secondary roads and through residential areas. The spatial impact is limited as the project design already included several measures to limit the impact. Ecological impact is expected to be negative but also largely mitigated by accompanying measures. Social and health impacts related to emissions of air pollutants and noise are positive for some area's and negative for others. The latter can be reduced by mitigating measures.

Main mitigating measures proposed relate to the reconstruction of habitats after the project completion as well as further measures related to ecological connections. Both are part of a detailed ecological design plan which needs to be developed. Other mitigating measures relate to additional noise barriers, noise reduction during the works, speed reduction on the connecting highway and design adaptations on parallel road crossings in view of improved safety for pedestrians and cyclists.

Project EIA Dry Dock

The construction of the Dry Dock for the construction of the tunnel elements is planned to be located in the Port of Zeebrugge. The Dry Dock will be constructed as a first phase of a larger project to widen the Boudewijncanal in the port of Zeebrugge. The EIA concluded that impacts are expected on soil and water bodies. Some temporary impact from emissions to air is expected during construction but can be largely mitigated. Important impacts are to be expected on Fauna and Flora as the project results in direct impacts on biotopes (for which compensations have been implemented as part of the Strategic Plan of the Port of Zeebrugge), temporary changes in the salt-sweat water balance and temporary impact on fauna during the works, which can be mitigated. The EIA concludes that when the mitigating measures are implemented the final negative impacts of the project are not considered significant.

The project area for the dry dock coincides with Habitat directive area 'Polders' (BE2500002) and bird directive area (BE25000932). Therefore an appropriate assessment has been executed as part of the EIA process. As part of the earlier Strategic Planning process for the Port of Zeebrugge and the related SEA process significant compensation measures have already been implemented, resulting in delisting (Flemish Government decision 17th July 2000) of the part of the Bird directive area that coincided directly with the project area. Nevertheless the appropriate assessment concluded that the project could still have some impact on Natura 2000 areas and biotopes and some mitigating measures are proposed. The competent authority will need to certify that there are no remaining significant impacts on Natura 2000 areas or biotopes to be expected from this project component.

Other environmental and Social Aspects

Land acquisition needed for the realisation of the project is expected to be limited as most of the area on which the project will be realised is in property of the Promoter or has been transferred or acquired by the Promoter from other public bodies. According to the latest status (January 2017) the Promoter had acquired 86% of the land needed to realise the project. Of the remaining 14%, 13% is the property of other public bodies depending on the Flemish Region for which a transfer is foreseen and only 1% has to be acquired in agreement or expropriated from private or public owners. It concerns land owned by companies and public bodies; none of this land is residential. Expropriation values are defined and the process supported by autonomous federal or regional authorities in line with the applicable legal framework.

The promoter will be responsible for environmental management of the project under the supervision of the environmental competent authority, and as set out in the project's environmental management plan. Specific E&S monitoring arrangements and the potential identification E&S performance indicators will take place once such environmental management plans are developed by the Promoter.

EIB Carbon Footprint Exercise

The project is included on the following basis:

- Estimated annual third party greenhouse emissions (vehicular use, from existing and generated demand) from the use of the project in a standard year of operation:
  - Forecast absolute (gross) emissions are 251 100 tonnes of CO2 equivalent per year; and
  - Forecast emissions savings are 22 200 tonnes of CO2 equivalent per year.
- The project boundaries are:
  - "Baseline case" – the existing network comprising E17, E34 and R1 renewal
  - "With project case" - the additional network comprising R1 new
- The baseline is the forecast third party emissions, in the absence of the project, from the existing network only within the project boundary defined above.
- The forecasts reflect the Services' assumptions on traffic, traffic growth, speed flow, infrastructure capacity and fuel consumption. The absolute emissions forecast include both the existing and additional network.

For the annual accounting purposes of the EIB Carbon Footprint, the project emissions will be prorated according to the EIB lending amount signed in that year, as a proportion of project cost.

Public Consultation and Stakeholder Engagement

Public consultation and stakeholder engagement for the different SEA's and EIA's related to the project has been executed in compliance with or exceeding the requirement of the applicable legal framework.

For the SEA the public consultation of the Notification dossier took place between 16th of November 2011 and 16th December 2011. This is done in accordance with the legal framework by making the information physically available in the affected communes. The RSIP was subject of a separate public consultation from 16th of June 2014 until 14th of August 2014.

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For the Project EIA for Left Bank Infrastructure works, the public consultation of the Notification dossier took place between 1th of June 2015 and 30th of June 2015 in Antwerp and 5th of June 2015 and 4th of July 2015 in Zwijndrecht .

For the Project EIA for the Oosterweellink (Right Bank & Scheldt tunnel), the public consultation of the Notification dossier took place between 1th of September 2015 and 30th of September 2015 in Antwerp.

For the Project EIA for the Dry Dock, the public consultation of the Notification dossier took place between 27th of December 2016 and 25th of January 2017 in Brugge.

Conclusions and Recommendations

- The project is split in different project components and environmental and social impacts are assessed in a Strategic EIA and 3 separate project EIA's. Project EIA Left Bank Infrastructure works, the Project EIA Oosterweellink (Right Bank & Scheldt tunnel) and the Project EIA Dry Dock. The project EIA Oosterweellink (Right Bank & Scheldt tunnel) is still ongoing;
- The SEA and EIA's prescribed a series of mitigating measures to limit the environmental and social impacts of the project. These are to be addressed as part of the design and project implementation;
- The project contributes to climate change adaptation with 6% of the project cost being attributed to specific climate adaptation measures as part of the project scope, in particular providing for incremental improvements of flood protection infrastructure, drainage systems and measures aimed at decreasing of urban overheating.
- The final project EIA for the Oosterweellink subcomponent (Right Bank & Scheldt tunnel) including the cumulative impacts of the different project components is to be completed, approved by the competent authorities and provided to the Bank as a condition for first disbursement.
- Prior to the first disbursement the Promoter shall provide to the Bank a copy of the opinion (Form A or similar) by the competent authorities confirming that there are no remaining significant impacts on Natura 2000 areas or biotopes to be expected from the project component Dry Dock in Zeebrugge
- Subject to these conditions, the project is acceptable for the Bank in Environmental terms.

PJ/SQM/ECSO 15.10.15