TEN-T AND NATURA 2000: THE WAY FORWARD

Integrating biodiversity into transport planning to prevent impacts on Natura 2000

The EU countries except Bulgaria and Romania where the GIS Natura 2000
RSPB.

European Communities (2005)
Assessment of impacts on the integrity of Natura 2000 sites as required by
The analysis focused on 21 Priority Projects because at the time of the analysis,
• EU and European Investment Bank funding must not be provided to
• High level Natura 2000 coordinator needed to ensure integration of
• Strong mechanism to resolve TEN-T and Natura 2000 conflicts

Action needed by the European Commission
Adopting these recommendations will help transport planning fully
developers and private investors.

NGOs' recommendations to EU decision-makers, international
The Way Forward
portal to enhance scrutiny
to scrutinise transport spending
strong statement to this effect and establish a fully operational system
European Commission and European Investment Bank should make a
unsustainable projects such as those damaging Natura 2000. The
Natura 2000 with other policy areas including TEN-T

• Better monitoring and collection of data on impacts of transp ort on
• Better accessibility to up to date TEN-T and Natura 2000 data
• Need coordination of assessments and resolution of conflicts by

Action needed by national Governments
• Need high quality assessments - Strategic Environmental Assessments
• Greater transparency of information on traffic data forecasts

Action needed by European Project
• Further guidance on integration of environmental concerns in

Coordinators
6(3) Appropriate Assessments should be carried out for international
transport planning – particularly guidance on how strategic Article
assessments (Strategic Environmental Assessments, Environmental

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TEN-T and Natura 2000: The way forward

Following on from previous studies, this report assesses the potential conflicts between the Trans-European Transport Network (TEN-T) Priority Projects and the Natura 2000 network. If Europe is to lead the way to truly sustainable development, it is essential that EU transport and environment policies are joined up both politically and technically and this report aims to promote a positive approach to such joined-up government.

Trans-European Transport Network (TEN-T)

The TEN-T is the European Union’s Transport Infrastructure Framework. Initially adopted in 1990, it now includes Priority Projects on 30 international axes plus wider transport projects. By 2020 it is envisaged that the TEN-T will include 89,500 km of roads, 94,000 km of railways, 11,250 km of inland waterways including 210 inland ports, 294 seaports and 366 airports.

Natura 2000

Natura 2000 is the European ecological network which is one of the cornerstones of the EU’s environmental policy and is a world leading approach to conservation. It is comprised of Special Protection Areas (SPAs) designated under the EC Birds Directive and Sites of Community Interest (SCIs) identified under the EC Habitats Directive. When completed, the Natura 2000 network is expected to cover more than 20% of the territory of the European Union.

How transport projects can damage Natura 2000

Transport infrastructure can have a wide range of impacts on Natura 2000 and wider biodiversity. Direct effects such as habitat loss from transport location and development and indirect effects such as water and air pollution, fragmentation and disturbance from the operation of transport. In addition, secondary-induced effects such as the impacts of development ‘encouraged’ by the transport networks and cumulative effects.

How the analysis was carried out

Data from the European Commission was used to identify Natura 2000 sites falling within 2 or 5 km (conservative buffers) centred on the Priority Projects, using GIS (Geographical Information System) analysis. The 2km buffer represents the area likely to be affected by direct impacts, the 5km buffer the area likely to be affected by indirect impacts. Then local knowledge, of BirdLife Partners and other organisations, was used to evaluate how many of the sites falling within these buffers are actually likely to be affected by the development of the Priority Projects. Twenty-four organisations contributed to this second ‘verification’ phase.
Findings

• 379 SPAs (8.0% of all the SPAs in the EU25) and 935 Sites of Community Interest (pSCIs) (4.4% of all SCIs/pSCIs in the EU25) are likely to be affected by twenty-one TEN-T Priority Projects.

Priority Projects (PPs) with possible high impact on Natura 2000 sites unless planned carefully

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PP No.</th>
<th>PP name</th>
<th>SPAs potentially affected</th>
<th>pSCIs/pSCIs potentially affected</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>PP1</td>
<td>Railway axis Berlin-Verona/Milan-Bologna-Naples-Messina-Palermo</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>117</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PP3</td>
<td>High-speed railway axis of south-west Europe</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>148</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PP6</td>
<td>Railway axis Lyons-Trieste-Divaca/Koper-Divaca-Ljubljana-Budapest-Ukraine border</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>109</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PP24</td>
<td>Railway axis Lyons/Genoa-Basle-Duisburg-Rotterdam/Antwerp</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PP8</td>
<td>Multimodal axis Portugal/Spain-rest of Europe</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PP18</td>
<td>Rhine/Meuse-Main-Danube inland waterway axis</td>
<td>14 (62)*</td>
<td>79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PP22</td>
<td>Railway axis Athens-Sofia-Budapest-Vienna-Prague-Nuremberg/Dresden</td>
<td>16 (43)*</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Total number of SPAs in the EU25 plus the number of Important Bird Areas (IBAs) in Bulgaria and Romania, as a surrogate for impacts on SPAs in Bulgaria and Romania.

• 8.0% of SPAs and 4.4% of pSCIs potentially affected may not appear to be a very large threat. However, the study only looked at impacts on individual Natura 2000 sites. There will also be impacts on the overall coherence of the whole Natura 2000 network and on protected species, such as large mammals (wolf, elk, lynx) outside Natura 2000 sites.

• Priority Projects are the tip of the ‘TEN-T iceberg’, implementation of the whole TEN-T network could have much more severe impacts, both on individual sites and on Natura 2000 network coherence. With anticipated consequences of climate change, if our ecosystems are to survive they will need to be well connected and consideration and assessment of impacts on network coherence and fragmentation in Europe – already the world’s most fragmented continent – will become even more important.

Potential conflicts between Priority Project 3 High-speed railway axis of south-west Europe. The table below gives details of the numbers of sites that could be affected.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>SPAs</th>
<th>SCIs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>France</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Portugal</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spain</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>117</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
• All modes of transport have environmental impacts, even rail projects frequently promoted as environmentally friendly on carbon dioxide reduction grounds. Hence, it is essential that transport projects are developed as sustainably as possible, factoring in and reducing potential impacts on other environmental resources, such as Natura 2000.

• To avoid potential impacts, it is essential that both strategic and detailed project planning fully integrate Natura 2000 considerations as is required by European environmental law. There are positive examples that demonstrate that this is possible, but unfortunately also many examples where this really needs improving.

Integration of Natura 2000 and transport planning across the EU

Positive examples

• ‘Appropriate assessment’ of German Federal Transport Infrastructure Plan - shows that consideration of Natura 2000 at the strategic level is feasible and can avoid conflicts, costs and delays at the project stage;

• The Integrated water management project on Flemish part of the River Scheldt – demonstrates that it is possible to plan integrated projects that reconcile transport development with nature and achieve a net gain for Natura 2000;

• Rail Baltica Feasibility Study on Rail Baltica railways in Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania and Poland – which demonstrates coordinated strategic planning incorporating environmental assessment.

Negative examples

• Danube inland waterway axis in Austria, Germany, Belgium, Hungary, Netherlands, Slovakia, Romania and Bulgaria – the piece meal approach to project planning and lack of strategic planning/Strategic Environmental Assessment for the whole axis could result in basin-wide ecological impacts undermining the coherence of the Natura 2000 network;

• Via Baltica, Poland – where the lack of strategic planning and salami-slicing of projects on a corridor has led to court challenges and delays/higher costs at the project level due to Natura 2000 conflicts;

• Transport projects included in Spanish plans for regional /cohesion spending – inadequate assessments of Spanish strategic infrastructure and Operational Programmes for EU funding means that transport projects with potential impacts on Natura 2000 sites could be included in plans for spending EU-funds.
The Way Forward

NGOs’ recommendations to EU decision-makers, international funding institutions, corridor coordinators, national transport developers and private investors.

Adopting these recommendations will help transport planning fully integrate Natura 2000 considerations. They are relevant to all TEN-T infrastructure projects, not just the Priority Projects. The majority are also relevant to transport projects outside the TEN-T network.

Action needed by the European Commission and European Investment Bank

Understanding the impacts
- Need for Impact Assessment audit of the entire TEN-T network to assess impacts predicted in 2003 assessment
- Impact Assessment for any TEN-T revision proposals should be led jointly by the European Commission’s Environment and Transport and Energy Directorates

Resolving the conflicts
- Strong mechanism to resolve TEN-T and Natura 2000 conflicts needed – for example by the Commission’s Inter-Departmental Coordination Group on Biodiversity
- High level Natura 2000 coordinator needed to ensure integration of Natura 2000 with other policy areas including TEN-T

Only funding sustainable projects
- EU and European Investment Bank funding must not be provided to unsustainable projects such as those damaging Natura 2000. The European Commission and European Investment Bank should make a strong statement to this effect and establish a fully operational system to scrutinise transport spending
- Need greater transparency of funding information through central portal to enhance scrutiny

Complying with EU environmental law
- Stronger enforcement of EU nature legislation and quality control of assessments (Strategic Environmental Assessments, Environmental Impact Assessments and Appropriate Assessments) in relation to transport projects by the Commission supported by additional resources
- Further guidance on integration of environmental concerns in transport planning – particularly guidance on how strategic Article 6(3) Appropriate Assessments should be carried out for international corridors and national plans

Data/information
- Better accessibility to up to date TEN-Ts and Natura 2000 GIS data
- Greater transparency of information on traffic data forecasts

Action needed by European Project Coordinators

Understanding the impacts and resolving conflicts
- Need high quality assessments - Strategic Environmental Assessments and strategic Appropriate Assessments should be carried out for all international corridors
- Need coordination of assessments and resolution of conflicts by Project Coordinators, or where a Coordinator has not been appointed by national governments in collaboration

Action needed by national Governments

Understanding the impacts/development of sustainable projects
- Need stronger emphasis on development of sustainable projects - assessment of alternative solutions (including innovative ones to make transport more sustainable and biodiversity friendly) should be given more priority
- Need high quality assessments - robust Strategic Environmental Assessments and strategic Appropriate Assessments for national sections of international corridors and robust Environmental Impact Assessments and project level Appropriate Assessments for individual projects

Data/information
- Better accessibility to up to date TEN-T and Natura 2000 data
- Better monitoring and collection of data on impacts of transport on Natura 2000
Construction of Augustow Bypass in Poland, part of the TEN-T corridor known as ‘Via Baltica’, threatens the pristine Rospuda Valley wetlands within Augustow Primeval Forest Natura 2000 site and the numerous species and habitats for which this is protected, which include wolf, lynx and lesser-spotted and white-tailed eagles. Lack of proper consideration of biodiversity during the planning of this project has lead to it being referred to the European Court of Justice.

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We would particularly like to thank the European Commission for providing us with access to the GIS data and the University of Leuven for allowing us to visit to access the Natura 2000 data, which they hold on behalf of the European Commission.

5 The EU countries except Bulgaria and Romania where the GIS Natura 2000 data was not available at the time of the study.
6 The analysis focused on 21 Priority Projects because at the time of the analysis, six of the Priority Projects had already been completed or were about to be completed, and for the remaining three projects there was no transport data available.
7 Important Bird Areas (IBAs) are identified by BirdLife International based on standardised, scientific criteria and considered as candidates for SPAs within the European Union.
8 Assessment of impacts on the integrity of Natura 2000 sites as required by Article 6(3) of the Habitats Directive.

Photo credits for front page:
Eagle owl - Tomaz Mihelic, Construction of Augustow Bypass, Poland - Malgorzata Górska, Lynx in Biebrza Valley, Poland - Potr Talata, Background images: cover Danube Delta wetlands - Daniel Petrescu, pages 2-4: Red-breasted Geese – Sebastian Bugariu

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