Ministry of Environmental Protection and Regional Development
Republic of Latvia

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Environmental Impact Assessment of the Rail Baltica project

Iveta Jegere
Environment State Bureau
Head of division for Environmental Impact Assessments
The scope of the project

*Rail Baltica* – an electrified European standard gauge public railway line for a combined traffic of passenger and freight trains.

The Intended activity includes: construction of the railway line in the territory of Latvia from the Estonian border up to the Lithuanian border, including branch line to Riga and the respective infrastructure related thereof:

- railway stations (in Riga and Riga International Airport), freight and passenger terminals, service points, depots, bridges, tunnel etc.),
- construction of the power supply of the railway infrastructure line,
- and reconstruction of other infrastructure at crossings.
The transboundary nature

Rail Baltica in Latvia is a part of the plan to develop a north-south transport corridor of the TEN-T network that would connect the Baltic countries with the railway network of Poland and other EU countries. The Intended activity is related to the activities of a similar nature and scope intended in the territories of other countries.

Rail Baltica may have a substantial transboundary impact due to its transboundary nature.

Provisions regarding performance of an environmental impact assessment within the transboundary context were observed. Republic of Lithuania and the Republic of Estonia approved their intention to participate in the impact assessment.
1. Impacts in relation to organization and performance of construction works, taking into account inconveniences and disturbances (*mobility, accessibility*...)

2. Territory fragmentation and barrier effect

3. Impacts on the hydrological regime and drainage conditions

4. Impact on quality of crossed watercourses, fish fauna and water ecosystems

5. Probability and significance of changes in the contemporary geological processes, including karst processes, river bank denudation and landslides

6. Changes in the hydrological conditions on the resources and quality of potable underground water

7. Changes in the soil quality
The scope of EIA (2)

1. Impact on air quality (construction and operation)
2. Noise impact (construction and operation), noise mitigation measures
3. Vibration
4. Electromagnetic field
5. Impacts on biodiversity and specially protected territories
6. Impacts on landscape and cultural heritage
7. Risk and accident assessment
8. Transboundary impacts
9. Interconnection of impacts and cumulative impacts
10. Limitations and conditions for implementation
Parallel EIAs of related projects:

1. Extraction of minerals (gypsum) in Rail Baltica corridor

2. Estonian – Latvian 3rd power transmission interconnection from Sindi (Kilingi – Nõmme) in Estonia to Salaspils (vai RīgasTEC – 2) in Latvia (2012-2016).
Extraction of minerals (gypsum) in Rail Baltica corridor

**Challenges:**
- No railway route alternatives in this sector
- Tight time frame (start of RB ~2020)
- Necessity to relocate a magistral gas pipe (mine)
Challenges:
Route and location depends on the final decision regarding RB
Tight time frame (end of project/start of RB ~2020)
Public consultations and final decision

Espoo Notification 05/02/2015.

Initial public discussions were held from 13/02/2015 to 15/03/2015 and from 04/09/2015 to 24/09/2015.

Public discussion of environmental report was held from 11/11/2015 to 11/12/2015

During the initial public discussion more than 600 individual and collective submissions were received (from the public representatives including natural persons and legal entities, as well as other stakeholders such as public authorities and local governments). During the report stage – less than 100 submissions were received.

The reasoned conclusion of Environment State Bureau - 18/12/2015.

Development consent - voted by the Cabinet of Ministers on 09/08/2016, issued 24/08/2016.
Challenges with regards to route alternatives

Natura 2000 site “Vitrupes ieleja” (crossing alternatives)
Alternative B2 vs C5
Transboundary context

In parallel:
Latvia – EIA
Lithuania – EIA
Estonia - SEA

Transboundary communication:
Notification 05/02/2015.
Consultations 11/2015 – 01/2016 (2 months) + meeting in Lithuania (09/01/2016)

Main transboundary issues
Transboundary scale of the project, local impacts and nuisances, Natura 2000 (Estonia).
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Thank you for your attention!