



Strasbourg, 14 May 2003
[files05e_2003.doc]

T-PVS/Files (2003) 5

CONVENTION ON THE CONSERVATION OF EUROPEAN WILDLIFE
AND NATURAL HABITATS

Standing Committee
23rd meeting

Strasbourg, 1-5 December-2003

Possible new file

**Construction of the 'Via Baltica' Motorway
(Poland)**

Report by the Government

*Secretariat Memorandum
established by
the Directorate of Culture and of Cultural and Natural Heritage*

Warszawa, 14. 04. 2003 r.



Undersecretary of State
Ministry of the Environment

Chief Nature Conservation

Ewa Symonides

Referring to your letter which deals with Via Baltica Motorway I would like inform you as follows.

Via Baltica road is at the present at the stage of changing local land use plan in Sztabin commune. It is the result of the need of the planned ring road of Sztabin and the new bridge over the Biebrza river on the track of the distance of 500 meters passing through Biebrzański National Park.

In spite of many problems combined with the route of the new express road through the protected area especially Biebrzański National Park and Knysyn Forest, there is necessity of improving the technical conditions the express road Białystok - Augustów which will be conducive to the National Park protection. The reason is that the present state of the road is very bad and has negative influence on Biebrza ecological corridor. The existing road, which is passing through Sztabin and Suchowola commune, do not fulfil environment protection requirements and does not meet ecological standards. The Biebrza bridge is posing serious threats to people as well as for fauna and flora.

The planned route was chosen from several variants proposed by the General Direction of Motorway. Finally, after many studies and researches as the best, from the environmental and human protection point of view, was chosen consisting of usage of the existing road to new planned road aimed to limit to the minimum the negative impact on the Biebrza National Park areas.

Present condition of natural environment of the Biebrzański National Park is still unsatisfactory and a serious changes are being considered to improve technical project of Via Baltica international motorway on the territory of the Biebrzański National Park. As a result of intervention of the Ministry of the Environment, some corrections in technical project of Białystok option has been introduced with regard to motorway standards and possible ways (discussed division). Present technical specifications contain

1. excavation existing road embankment on 155 meters length, which will create an ecological corridor for animal migration (currently there is no possibility of such migration)
2. building a new road on estacade (210 meters long)
3. setting acoustic screens on the estacade
4. collecting and draining waste-water from 500 meters long road stretch with storm water drainage (ecological tanks, situated outside of Biebrzański National Park).

We would like to underline, that modernization and upgrading of an existing road to express motorway will significantly improve the condition of the natural environment in the Biebrzański National Park. What is important, despite the possible choice between Łomża and Białystok options, it must be taken into account that the existing road can not be closed. It has a great importance for local traffic, providing the local communities and people the possibility to reach their place of work, agricultural land (properties), shopping etc. It is true, however, that it does not meet ecological standards and need to be significantly rebuilt/improved.

I would like to stress, that modernization of the road No. 8 is still at the early stage of preparation. No formal decision has already been taken with regard to its location and route. Environmental Impact Assessment will be carried out twice: firstly before issuing the terms of spatial management conditions by local authorities (after updating the local spatial management plans) and, secondly, before issuing the investment approval by Voivod Authorities. It means that ecological consequences will be properly considered at the later stages of this particular project.