

Constructing Lugoj-Deva highway, part of Pan-European Corridor IV

Country, region: Romania, Hunedoara County

Name of the organisation which implemented the project: Ministry of Transport, Romania

Total size of the project in EUR: 690m Euros

Name of the EU fund that supported the project: Structural Funds (ERDF)

Name of the Operational Program; Operational Programme 'Transport'

Implementation time: Partially completed in 2011-13, but some sections were delayed until 2014 by environmental objections, which have now been overcome by incorporating green infrastructure elements.

Short description of the project, aims, targets, project activities

Modernization and development of the national transport infrastructure outside the TEN-T priority axes aiming at sustainable national transport system

Estimated impacts on biodiversity and ecosystem services

Lugoj-Deva motorway route dates back to 1993 and crosses an ecological corridor important in the Western Carpathians. This corridor is about 10 km wide and is used by many animal species, including large carnivores: bears, wolves and lynx. Cutting this corridor means isolating populations of animals, with consequences such as inbreeding and slow extinction of species, which has serious repercussions throughout the food chain in nature.

The highway project originally did not meet environmental requirements, which was all the more serious as the route passes through a protected Natura 2000 site, and cut off migration routes for large carnivores. The original Environmental Impact Assessment was incomplete because it was based on erroneous assessments- for example, the monitoring of large carnivores was done in winter, when bears hibernate, and the planners did not accept that bears moved regularly across the highway route. The local Zarand Association, supported by Fauna and Flora International and WWF-Romania, carried out studies to show summer-time migration routes, and requested mitigation measures as a condition for obtaining the environmental approval. This was successful: various mitigation methods were agreed, to be paid for from the construction budget.

How did project leaders, authorities, NGOs or other stakeholders try to avoid harmful impacts, if the project had any?

WWF-Romania collaborated with Zarand Association to identify areas of connectivity, and to arrange international workshops where all stakeholders involved in highway construction were

informed of threats to the biodiversity of the area. This was the first time since work started on the highway when all main actors were brought together. In addition, international experts were included, from Infra Eco Network Europe (a network that provides independent expert advice on environmental planning of major projects). The intervention, under which the NGOs were supported by the Commission in identifying a failure to properly apply EU environmental legislation, was successful because it gave a strong position to NGOs in their direct negotiation with the Ministry of Transport and the highway designers.

Finally, to meet recommendations made for the environmental approval, the decision was taken to build five wildlife over-passes, two viaducts and three tunnels, essential elements of green infrastructure that significantly reduce the pressure and risks to the integrity and functioning of ecosystems. They specifically allow bear migration from Apuseni to Carpathian Mountains: in December 2013 the Romanian Government announced that they had received environmental approval, having agreed to bear tunnels costing over €30m.

Author of the case study: Nat Page in cooperation with WWF Romania and Fauna and Fauna International, UK/Zarand.

Contact with CEEweb member: Nat Page, nat@fundatia-adept.org, +40 748 200088.