

Mr. Romas Svedas

Chair of the Implementation Committee
Convention on Environmental Impact Assessment
in a Transboundary Context (ESPOO Convention)



29. April 2021

In advance by e-mail: [REDACTED]

Świnoujście container terminal, Poland – construction project with major consequences for the environment and local residents – enforcement of the protocol must be ensured

Dear Mr. Svedas,

With this letter, I would like to inform you about a construction project in Poland – in the direct vicinity of my constituency in Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania. I am following the progress of this project with great concern. Poland is planning to build a massive container terminal in Świnoujście in the Pomeranian Bay. According to the Szczecin and Świnoujście Seaports Authority (ZMPSiŚ S.A.), the construction of a container port with 2 million TEU (Twenty-foot Equivalent Units) is in the planning stage. A tendering process for external investors wishing to implement the project is still open.

The documents relating to this project make it clear that Poland is planning the largest container port in the Baltic Sea region. For this purpose, a pier with the dimensions 1400 m x 500 m is to be built in the Baltic Sea, on which container ships up to approx. 400 m long can be handled.

Given the dimensions of this project, I am very concerned about the ecosystem in the Pomeranian Bay and the neighbouring regions. The European Union has declared large areas of this region as European Natura 2000 protected area. The area where the container terminal will be built is located in this protected zone.

Conservationists and residents on both sides of the border are afraid that the project will damage the environment in a way that is irreversible, regarding the mainland and the marine ecosystem. The huge amount of land used by port construction usually destroys large amounts of the natural environment. A significant change in the coastal currents with effects on both countries is to be expected because of the new port. The Pomeranian Bay is an area for resting and spawning for many species

of fish. An increase in shipping therefore will not only disturb this habitat, but, due to emissions caused by ships and the harbour itself, also become a burden on the marine fauna on both the German and the Polish side. In addition, the risk of naval accidents (with their unpredictable consequences for the environment) increases with a growing number of ships in the shallow waters of the Baltic Sea.

The potential consequences of the construction project for the environment, nature and the people living in the border region between Germany and Poland make it imperative that Germany participate in the planning. The short distance of less than 5 km from Świnoujście to the border with Germany illustrates this.

Due to these circumstances, I believe that Poland must involve the German side in an appropriate manner. According to Article 3 (1) of the ESPOO Convention, Poland must involve the German side appropriately if significantly adverse cross-border effects are expected to occur. Furthermore, it is obliged to give the possibility of consultation following Article 5. This must take place at the latest when the public is informed, which, in my opinion, happened when the call for tenders was published in 2016. However, Poland subsequently failed to consult the German authorities accordingly and to allow a reasonable period during which the German authorities would have been able to share their views on the project.

Rather, the Polish government assumes that any influence of the German side in the construction of the container terminal can be ruled out. This becomes clear when reading the response of the Polish Ministry of Infrastructure to the request of the Polish Sejm MP Tomasz Aniśko (see the attachment to this letter).

I would like to contradict this view and still see an obligation to participate, considering all the arguments outlined above.

Furthermore, the Polish side has not yet submitted an environmental impact assessment as required by the European Union and the ESPOO Convention (Article 4). It is clear that this assessment would confirm that the German side will be affected by the new port.

The lack of ambition of the German national and regional governments to claim their right to be consulted should not serve as an excuse to deprive German citizens from their right to information and consultation.

Against this background, I would like to ask you to examine this case in detail and to ask Poland to meet its obligations under the Treaties. This is of great importance for people and nature on both sides of the border.

Sincerely



Dr. Hannah Neumann
Member of the European Parliament

Information on the Natura 2000 areas

<https://natura2000.eea.europa.eu/Natura2000/SDF.aspx?site=PLH320019#7>

<https://natura2000.eea.europa.eu/Natura2000/SDF.aspx?site=PLB320002#7>

<https://natura2000.eea.europa.eu/Natura2000/SDF.aspx?site=PLH320018>

Tender for the deep water container terminal Świnoujście

<https://www.port.szczecin.pl/en/offer/deepwater-container-terminal/#>