



Baltic Marine Environment Protection Commission

Working Group on the State of the Environment and Nature
Conservation

STATE & CONSERVATION
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Submitted by	Coalition Clean Baltic
Reference	Doc. 1-2, Art.7,15,17 of the Helsinki Convention (1992)

Background

On 8 April 2016, the Polish Ministry of Maritime Economy and Inland Waterways organised in Elblag a conference on the planned construction of the Nowy Świat navigable shipping channel through the Vistula Spit. Conditions of the planned investment consisting of a waterway connecting the Vistula Lagoon and the Gulf of Gdańsk were presented during this event. Short video introducing the concept of the investment project was published by the Maritime Office in Gdynia: <https://youtu.be/Vhkk3iH3cec> already in 2015.

In his opening statement, the Polish Minister of Maritime Economy and Inland Waterways, Mr Marek Gròbarczyk, emphasized the great determination of the Ministry as well as the government in paving the way towards the execution of this investment. He also highlighted the far-reaching approval of the European Commission for the proposed solutions. Official documents of the Ministry of Maritime Economy and Inland Waterways are available at the ministry's website: <https://www.mgm.gov.pl/183-budowa-kanalu-zeglugowego-przez-mierzeje-wislana>

According to the Polish media, the investment project is highly prioritised by the Polish Government despite numerous protests and concerns expressed by Polish environmental NGOs and general public, including the appeals submitted to the EC (see attached).

Coalition Clean Baltic, with its Member Organisations consisting of environmental NGOs in the Baltic Sea Region would like to express our concerns with the plans presented by the Polish Ministry of Maritime Economy and Inland Waterways. The planned investment covers, inter alia, the excavation of the Vistula Spit and could have multiple harmful effects on the nature and environment, above all for priority species and habitats protected under the EU Habitats Directive and Natura 2000. The area of the Spit and the Lagoon is also listed as a HELCOM Marine Protected Area. At the same time, the investment lacks detailed analysis, which could permit to assess its added value in terms of the economic and social aspects as well as improving Poland's security. According to our knowledge, the proposed actions are in breach of respective EU legislation as well as Articles 7,15,17 of the Helsinki Convention (1992).

Action requested

The Meeting is invited to take note of the concerns expressed by CCB and Polish NGOs and request Poland to follow the requirements set in the Helsinki Convention (1992) with regards to nature protection and conservation of biodiversity, environmental impact assessment and information to the public.

Warsaw, 24.05.2016

Commissioner Karmenu Vella
Commissioner João AGUIAR MACHADO

European Commission
Directorate-General for Environment
1049 Brussels, Belgium

Re: Position of the European Commission with regard to a complex investment consisting of a waterway connecting the Vistula Lagoon and the Gulf of Gdańsk planned by the Polish Ministry of Maritime Economy and Inland Waterways.

Dear Commissioners,

On April 8th 2016, in Elblag the Polish Ministry of Maritime Economy and Inland Waterways organised a conference on the planned construction of the Nowy Świat navigable shipping channel through the Vistula Spit. Conditions of the planned investment consisting of a waterway connecting the Vistula Lagoon and the Gulf of Gdańsk were presented during this event.

In his opening statement, the Minister of Maritime Economy and Inland Waterways, Mr Marek Gròbarczyk, emphasized the great determination of the Ministry as well as the government in paving the way towards the execution of this investment. He highlighted the far-reaching approval of the European Commission for the proposed solutions.

The Polish non-governmental organizations (NGOs), active in the area of environmental protection, are concerned with the plans presented by the Ministry. The planned investment covers, inter alia, the excavation of the Vistula Spit and could have multiple harmful effects on the nature and environment, above all for priority species and habitats protected under Natura 2000. At the same time, the investment lacks detailed analysis, which could permit to assess its added value in terms of the economic and social aspects as well as improving Poland's security.

With reference to the above, as well as the position of the Polish Ecological Club, sent to the European Commission on the 16th February 2016, which presented the main environmental threats resulting from the planned investment, the undersigned NGOs strongly appeals to the Commission to:

1. Present the position of the European Commission with regard to the planned investment consisting of a waterway connecting the Vistula Lagoon and the Gulf of Gdańsk
2. Refer to the statement made by the Minister Marek Gròbarczyk referring to the far-reaching approval of the European Commission for the proposed solutions', in particular with regard to the considerable negative effects on priority species and habitats.
3. Include the undersigned NGOs in the investment consultation process at the European Union's level.

Please find attached the position of the Polish Ecological Club, sent and supported by XX Polish NGOs, referring to the project "Constructing a waterway connecting the Vistula Lagoon and the Gulf of Gdańsk

Sincerely yours,

Maria Staniszevska
Polish Ecological Club

In the name of:

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