

# COUNCIL OF EUROPE —————

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## EUROPEAN COMMITTEE FOR THE CONSERVATION OF NATURE AND NATURAL RESOURCES

Working Party on the European Diploma

Siebengebirge Nature Reserve  
(Federal Republic of Germany)



COE098331

On-the-spot appraisal

by

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## Introduction

The SIEBENGEBIRGE Nature Reserve having already been the subject of a comprehensive report to the European Committee for the Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources, after an on-the-spot appraisal by Prof. F Bruno, there seems no need to revert to the matter, the scientific, cultural and landscape value of the reserve being well established.

I would only add that I consider the Siebengebirge reserve as one of the most outstanding landscapes in Europe; it therefore deserves the European Diploma, granted by the Council of Europe in 1971. However, to maintain such privileged status, it is imperative that not only the greatest attention be given to maintenance, protection and management of this area, as is the case up to now, but also that any exterior interference which might influence or threaten the natural balance of the system be avoided.

The present report will therefore be limited to examining the possible consequences of the eventual construction of an express railway line to the east of the considered area, with particular regard to effects on the fauna, flora and landscape values.

However, I wish to point out, in connection with this railway line project, and regardless of the value of the nature reserve that it may affect, that such trunk communication project, whether railway or highway, - the latter being responsible for disturbances of a higher degree, - always causes a serious disturbance of air, water drainage, soil erosion, and affects directly the ecological balance of the area through which it passes. It is therefore indispensable that a landscape architect be part of the team in charge of the study of the project right from the very beginning, to give qualified advice to the other professionals on the team on the effects that the planned line may have on the area considered, and if need be make recommendations for an itinerary that would produce less disturbance, or other measures to reduce the damage caused by the new line. From a purely economic standpoint, the landscape architect's co-operation at this very early stage would reduce considerably the expenses involved, by directing the planning in such a way that it would not require any major alternations at a later stage.

Obviously, the construction of any such important communication line will always result in a compromise between, roughly speaking, landscape value and modern technique. Therefore, it is indispensable for efficient planning that the landscape architect and the technicians work closely together, right from the first draft, to reach the "best of worse" solution. The landscape architect's role in this team is to advise on the best route, which avoids the worst damage, and to provide landscape planning to reduce or repair, as far as possible, the unavoidable damage caused to nature.

Influence of the projected railway line on the considered area

From the information I gathered during the two days that I spent on the spot during this appraisal, it appears that the Deutsche Bundesbahn proposed a project relative to the construction of a railway line along the north and east boundaries of the Siebengebirge Nature Reserve, which when submitted to the local authorities and authorities concerned with the management of the nature reserve, did not meet with their approval.

During the well organised meeting on 14 October, both viewpoints were exposed and widely discussed by the representatives of both parties, who all had sound and valid arguments.

To every participant's apparent surprise, the Federal Minister of Agriculture, Dr. Deneke, declared that for financial reasons the project would not materialise immediately, but be postponed for perhaps a year or more.

Some 15 personalities concerned with the project were present at this meeting, besides the above-mentioned Federal Minister. Among them were: Mr Gerd Wend, Department Director of the Bezirksregierung Köln, the Burgomaster of the town Königswinter, and Dr H Offner, member of the board of the association "Verschönerungsvereins für das Siebengebirge".

From the discussions at the meeting, it appeared that nowhere does the projected line cut through the territory of the nature reserve. However, it may affect access to the reserve from the east, and even the immediate surroundings of the town of Ittenbach. It also appeared that the main nuisance would be noise.

The north-western part of the projected line is underground, surfacing east of the A 15 highway Cologne-Frankfurt, the next stretch of about 4.5 km being levelled through the relief of the hilly countryside. Where the line cuts into the land, below the level of the surrounding soil, between two slopes, the noise will probably be less nuisance than along the stretches where the line is built on a bank. For such parts of the line, where noise could constitute a serious nuisance to the population, adequate technical measures must be taken to reduce it. As far as I understood, tests have been undertaken by the Deutsche Bundesbahn, with this specific track in mind.

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From a landscape point of view, taking into consideration the above-mentioned measures to reduce nuisances, careful and skilled landscape planning to avoid or reduce the scars that the line will inflict upon the countryside is indispensable. This is the specific task of a landscape architect trained in roads and traffic problems. From the contacts that I had with the representatives of the Deutsche Bundesbahn at the meeting, I felt that they had a positive approach in this regard.

On the same day and the following one, an excursion to the area was organised. The small group that took part in it provided further explanations and answered all my questions. I was most impressed, not only by the beautiful scenery, with a very high potential for tourism and recreation facilities, but also by the excellent management, which takes into due consideration the preservation of the existing values of the landscape and their natural balance.

The excursion confirmed the above opinion: it is mainly from the eastern part of the projected line, where it approaches nearest to the Siebengebirge reserve, that considerable nuisance may result, mainly from noise, if no adequate measures are taken to avoid it or rather to reduce it to a permissible level. However, I would remark that in the same area the A 15 highway, now being enlarged to 6 lanes, is already the origin of a considerable amount of pollution and noise. Moreover, these nuisances will increase in future, with the increased density of traffic. Clearly, if no measures are taken against noise, the projected railway line will further intensify the problem.

Conclusion            The projected railway line does not run through the nature reserve of Siebengebirge.

Noise nuisance can be expected to reach the eastern parts of the reserve, and extend eventually to the town of Ittenbach.

At the present stage of knowledge, the various techniques for protection against noise should probably make it possible to reduce the resulting nuisance to a permissible level.

Provided adequate measures are taken, it may be possible to build the projected line according to the present plans, without causing such damage to the physical and biological integrity of the Siebengebirge Nature Reserve that the Council of Europe might be forced to reconsider the status granted to the area by the European Diploma.

Even taking it for granted that the line would be built with due consideration for all the imperatives set up for the protection of the landscape, realisation of the project may influence the decision of the Council of Europe, when the classification of the granted diploma into one of the three categories is considered.

#### RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that the Deutsche Bundesbahn contact officially the Bundesanstalt für Vegetationskunde, Naturschutz and Landespflege, in Bonn-Bad Godesberg, requesting the qualified advice of a reliable landscape architecture consultant office, to co-operate on the final studies leading to the definitive plans for the building of the line, with a view to solving the problems indicated in the above conclusion.

Should this not be done, landscape planning being neglected or not adequately carried out in due course, the nuisance resulting from the projected communication line may eventually cause the Council of Europe to reconsider the status of the nature reserve, as stated above.