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CONVENTION ON THE CONSERVATION OF EUROPEAN WILDLIFE
AND NATURAL HABITATS

Standing Committee

31st meeting
Strasbourg, 29 November – 2 December 2011

**Implementation of Recommendation No. 110/2004
on minimising adverse effects of above-ground electricity
transmission facilities (power lines) on birds**

REPORT BY THE GOVERNMENTS

*Document prepared by
the Directorate of Culture and Cultural and Natural Heritage*

CONTENTS / SOMMAIRE

- 1. Malta / Malte
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.
- 6.

MALTA / MALTE

MALTA'S REPORT ON THE STATUS OF IMPLEMENTATION OF RECOMMENDATION NO. 110 (2004) ON MINIMISING ADVERSE EFFECTS OF ABOVE-GROUND ELECTRICITY TRANSMISSION FACILITIES (POWER LINES) ON BIRDS

The present contribution provides an overview on the current state of affairs with regards to the progress achieved vis-à-vis the goals of the Recommendation No. 110 (2004).

General Comment

It is worth noting that Malta does not operate a railway service within its territory, and as such no overhead electricity transmission lines, conductors and towers associated with railway infrastructure, are present in Malta.

In addition, two of the four voltage levels achieved and distributed in Malta fall under the category of medium voltage, as described in the Recommendation No. 110 (2004), the 11kV and the 33kV levels.

The 33kV systems consist of overhead lines and underground cables, with a length of 60km and 154km respectively. Mindful of the need to safeguard the environment and enhance energy efficiency, Enemalta¹ is undertaking activities to improve its policy. For instance, future 33kV circuits shall be installed underground. On the other hand, the 11kV system spread throughout the Maltese Islands is predominantly installed underground, with future installations of 11kV circuits to be also laid underground. Enemalta has so far installed 1041km of underground cables and 159km of overhead lines for this service. Furthermore, Gozo is supplied with electricity from Malta via submarine cables.

By referring to the map² showing the distribution of the voltage systems in Malta, one can note that the cliffs situated at the western and north-eastern coast of Malta are free from any medium and high voltage infrastructure. The coastal cliffs often support large colonies of seabirds some of which are legally protected. As such maintaining these locations free from electricity infrastructure significantly reduces additional impacts on flight paths, rafting zones and breeding sites for such species.

With regards to the specific paragraphs of the Recommendation, the status of their implementation is found below:

Paragraph 1: Take appropriate measures to reduce bird mortality

Front line prevention aiming at the reduction of detrimental effects to birds caused by above-ground electricity transmission facilities is taken at a primary stage when dealing with a planning proposal. On the basis of impact to visual amenity and landscape, the standard approach for such proposals is to recommend the refusal of such proposals within or in the vicinity of areas Outside Development Zone (ODZ) and notwithstanding that the proposal may or may not be located within an area sensitive to avifauna.

On the other hand, existing commitments for land use could exist requiring the installation of such amenities. On a proactive note, conditions appended to permits issued for such proposals, recommend the removal of any disused electricity poles within or in the vicinity of the proposed area.

¹ Enemalta Corporation is the sole provider in the energy field in Malta, which offers a broad range of services to both the industrial, commercial and domestic sectors.

² A map showing the distribution of the voltage systems in Malta can be found at <http://www.enemalta.com.mt/page.asp?p=927>

Paragraph 2: Apply, as far as possible, measures reported in T-PVS/Inf(2003)15, to avoid electrocution, collisions and reduction of habitat availability

Most of the measures reported in T-PVS/Inf(2003)15 are being indirectly applied through various initiatives and policies. Additionally, as stated above, the ordinary approach taken, when dealing with such issues, is to recommend the refusal of proposals for electricity poles in ODZ areas, notwithstanding that the proposal may or may not be located within an area sensitive to avifauna. If commitments for land use exist, requiring the installation of such amenities, underground installation and rerouting is recommended.

Presently, Malta is experiencing a shift towards the provisioning of electrical services, through underground trenches or tunnels, thus reducing the requirement for the installation of additional poles and transformers.

Paragraph 3: Exceptional high interest areas for birds and protected areas (Natura 2000 and Emerald)

As provided in the above, the installation of required services is being rerouted through underground tunnels and trenches. This approach is being widely used throughout the national territory including protected areas designated under the Natura 2000 and Emerald networks in Malta.

Paragraph 4: Systematically collect data

There are no documented bird collisions with electric powerlines in Malta.

Paragraph 5: Communicate to Standing Committee steps adopted

As yet, communication with the Standing Committee on the implementation of the Recommendation No. 110 (2004) has not occurred.