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CONVENTION ON THE CONSERVATION OF EUROPEAN WILDLIFE  
AND NATURAL HABITATS

**Standing Committee**

38<sup>th</sup> meeting  
Strasbourg, 27-30 November 2018

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**Follow-up of Recommendation No. 175 (2015) on the  
monitoring of the agreement concluded in the frame  
of Complaint No 2013-5 (Lithuania)**

**- REPORT BY THE GOVERNMENT -**

*Document prepared by  
the Ministry of Environment of the Republic of Lithuania*

- November 2018 -



**LIETUVOS RESPUBLIKOS APLINKOS MINISTERIJA  
THE MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF LITHUANIA**

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## **PROGRESS REPORT**

### **CLOSED FILE 2013/5: PRESUMED IMPACT OF A CONSTRUCTION OF OVERHEAD POWER LINE (OHL) IN AN ENVIRONMENTALLY SENSITIVE AREA IN THE LITHUANIAN – POLISH BORDERLAND**

Taking into account Recommendation No. 175(2015) of the Standing Committee, adopted on 4 December 2015, on the monitoring of agreement concluded in the frame of complaint No 2013/5 (Lithuania), the Ministry of Environment of the Republic of Lithuania provides the following information on the progress made to implement this recommendation.

#### **1. Implementation of Monitoring Programme of OHL**

##### ***General information***

The Monitoring Programme was approved by the Environmental Protection Agency on 11 May 2016. The Monitoring programme is foreseen for three-year period from 2016 to 2018.

The detailed information on monitoring locations, methodologies and assessment criteria is provided in the Monitoring programme which was submitted to the Secretariat as the attachment to the letter of the Ministry of Environment of 9 August 2016.

General information on the Monitoring Programme was provided in the Progress report sent by the Ministry of Environment to the Secretariat on 19 September 2017. The Progress report also provided information on amphibians, reptiles and birds monitoring done in spring of 2017. In this progress report we provide the information on birds monitoring done in autumn of 2017 and other information related to the implementation of Recommendation No. 175(2015).

The monitoring is conducted by non-governmental organizations – bird monitoring by the Lithuanian Ornithological Society, other parts of monitoring – by the Lithuanian Fund for Nature.

##### ***Birds monitoring***

The birds monitoring started in autumn of 2016 and was continued in 2017. The report of 2018 monitoring and bird counting results should be available at the end of 2018. The end of monitoring is spring of 2019.

##### ***Counting results of migrating geese aggregations (2017)***

In 2017 spring season aggregations of migrating geese were counted in the locations indicated in the Monitoring Programme. Counting was done in 2 locations near Angininkai and Žuvintas lake. All geese species leaving overnight locations were counted. Migrating geese flocks were formed of different species – during the first countings most of the flocks were formed of Bean geese (*Anser fabalis*), later more Greylag geese (*Anser anser*) and Greater white-fronted geese (*Anser albifrons*) were observed.

Countings of migrating geese in autumn of 2017 were done in the beginning and second part of August, in the beginning of September and on the first, second and third decades of October. Geese of all species leaving overnight locations were counted. Flocks of geese were increasing with every counting – most numerous flocks were observed during the latest countings.

During the monitoring 5 different geese feeding areas around the Angininkai and Žuvintas lakes were found. It should be noted that feeding places varied depending on locations where land cultivation works were carried out at the time of counting. In the beginning of August no geese were observed

Counting results of geese in 2017

Location of observation	Spring observations of aggregations			Autumn observations of aggregations				
	Dates of counting							
	09.03.2017	31.03.2017	16.04.2017	23.08.2017	02.09.2017	01.10.2017	16.10.2017	23.10.2017
Angininkai lake	520	1700	1110	78	570	220	700	620
Žuvintas lake	1100	2000	410	220	672	1160	1600	1740

**Counting results of migrating water birds (2017)**

Monitoring locations were selected in OHL safety zone and in the adjacent areas (1-2 km from OHL safety zone). Waterbirds were counted in four lakes: Žuvintas, Angininkai, Rimietis and Galadusis. Birds in all lakes were counted from selected observation points which allowed to overview lakes and properly count the birds. Depending on the size of lake there were selected from 2 to 5 observation points. The biggest aggregations of waterbirds were observed in Žuvintas lake – there were counted up to 1000 individuals. Much less birds were counted in other three lakes – in Rimietis up to 150 individuals, in Galadusis and Angininkai lakes – up to 100 individuals.

Counting results of waterbirds in 2017

Location of observation	Spring observations of aggregations		Autumn observations of aggregations			
	Dates of counting					
	13.04.2017	26.04.2017	23.08.2017	02.09.2017	22.10.2017	12.11.2017
Angininkai	93	43	103	168	121	21
Žuvintas	74	140	1140	879	482	56
Rimietis	84	52	79	76	39	29
Galadusis	98	54	16	31	52	19

**Counting results of migrating cranes (*Grus grus*) (2017)**

The first counting of cranes was carried out in the first decade of September and later repeated twice in September and October. Birds were counted in the morning and in the evening waiting the cranes leaving from and returning to overnight sites. Two observation points with good overview of the site were selected for counting.

Quite sizeable flocks of cranes were observed already in August, in September these flocks increased. In the evenings cranes were also moving from one field to another until they finally were leaving to overnight sites in raised bog. Part of birds landed into overnight sites in complete darkness. In the beginning of October cranes were not observed – they left country on the last days of September.

## Counting results of cranes in 2017

Location of observation	Autumn observations of aggregations		
	Dates of counting		
	02.09.2017	22.10.2017	12.11.2017
Angininkai lake	120	176	0
Žuvintas lake	320	532	0

**Monitoring of OHL-related bird deaths**

Recording of bird deaths was carried out in the territories (within the OHL route safety zone) where most intensive flows of migrating birds are anticipated. Monitoring was conducted by the route method. There were selected 5 routes.

Recording of dead birds was carried out at the time of most intensive migration (two one-month periods per year): in spring (end of March – April) and autumn (end of September – October).

In spring of 2017 dead birds were not found. Remains of 4 birds were found in autumn. 2 remains of birds were found during the search on 23 September near Simnas lake – Song Thrush (*Turdus philomelos*) and feathers of Common Blackbird (*Turdus merula*), and 2 on 1 October near Angininkai lake – feathers of gull (*Larus sp.*) and remains of Song Thrush.

**Monitoring of Amphibians and Reptiles**

Monitoring of Amphibians and Reptiles started in 2017. Countings were done in May and June. European fire-bellied toad (*Bombina orientalis*) were found – in all monitoring locations, the Northern Crested Newt (*Triturus cristatus*) – in 2 of 9 monitored pools.

European green toad (*Bufo viridis*), Natterjack toad (*Bufo calamita*) and European tree frog (*Hyla arborea*) were not found in the monitored area.

The European pond turtle (*Emys orbicularis*) was not found in selected monitoring locations within OHL safety zone, observations were done on 14-05-2017, 28-05-2017 and 08-06-2017. There were also some observations carried out in places outside OHL safety zone where suitable habitats for species are present (on 08-06-2017, 25-06-2017 and 30-07-2017)

**Monitoring of habitats**

On 2017 in 6 monitoring points (locations), where the OHL route crosses habitats of Community interest (6210 Semi-natural dry grasslands (steppe), 6450 Northern boreal alluvial meadows, 6510 Lowland hay meadows, *Dactylorhiza incarnate*), 60 permanent plots each of 4 m<sup>2</sup> were arranged for observation and monitoring of habitats. The observation of vegetation and habitats was continued in 2018, the report of monitoring and observed changes will be available at the end of 2018.

**2. Gas Interconnection Poland-Lithuanian pipeline (GIPL). Progress report.**

In 11 May 2018 Transmission System Operators of the Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia and Poland have signed an agreement on the Gas Interconnection Poland Lithuania project cross-border cost allocation.

On May 24 2018 Lithuanian and Polish gas transmission system operators (TSOs) AB Amber Grid and GAZ-SYSTEM S.A. have signed a grid Connection Agreement to invest into Gas Interconnection Poland-Lithuania (GIPL) thus starting a construction stage of the project.

On June 7 2018 AB Amber Grid has launched an international tender to carry out the construction works of the Gas Interconnection Poland-Lithuania (GIPL) in the territory of the Republic of Lithuania

On July 18 2018 AB Amber Grid has launched an international tender to acquire steel pipes of the Gas Interconnection Poland-Lithuania (GIPL) in the territory of the Republic of Lithuania.

It is provisioned to sign contracts on construction of GIPL and on acquisition of steel pipes in April 2019, a start of pipeline construction works in the territory of Lithuania is planned in August-September 2019.

Second quarter of 2019 is provisioned as a start of pipeline construction works in the territory of Lithuania, after international tender is over.

It is provisioned to sign contracts on construction of GIPL and on acquisition of steel pipes in April 2019, a start of pipeline construction works in the territory of Lithuania is planned in August-September 2019. GIPL pipeline is planned to be completed and put into operation in December 2021.

In 2018 or in 1<sup>st</sup> quarter of 2019 it is planned to announce public tenders procurement for monitoring for construction period, in 2020 1<sup>st</sup> quarter – for post-construction (for 4 years) monitoring.

Contract for environmental monitoring for construction period is planned to be signed until June 2019, duration of monitoring – until the end of construction works, i.e. 31 December 2021.

Contract for environmental monitoring for post-construction period is planned to be signed in August 2020 (until the end of the 1<sup>st</sup> stage of construction works), implementation of contract (conduction of monitoring) is foreseen for 4 years after completion of each construction stage. The

last report of monitoring should be submitted until 31 December 2025.

Vice-minister

Martynas Norbutas

- October 2018 -



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**1. Implementation of Monitoring programme of OHL**

***General information on Monitoring Programme***

The Monitoring Programme was approved by the Environmental Protection Agency on 11 May 2016. The Monitoring programme is foreseen for three-year period from 2016 to 2018.

The environmental monitoring covers the following objects falling within the area of impact of the OHL route: valuable flora complexes (OHL route safety zone); birds (OHL route safety zone and adjacent areas); amphibians and reptiles (OHL route safety zone).

Locations of monitoring have been selected in the area of impact of the OHL route, in the territories in which valuable habitats or sites of rare plant species have been mapped before construction and which are crossed by the OHL. Monitoring of birds includes monitoring of aggregations of migrating birds and monitoring of OHL-related bird deaths.

The European pond turtle (*Emys orbicularis*) monitoring locations have been selected within the OHL safety zone at places where habitats suitable for the species are present, as well as taking into account the information received from the Association Rudamina Community.

Monitoring of Amphibians and Reptiles includes monitoring of European fire-belied toad (*Bombina orientalis*), the Northern Crested Newt (*Triturus cristatus*) and monitoring of other 11 protected amphibian species that are indicated in the EIA Report and were found or could be present in the OHL safety zone and adjacent areas. These species are: Common toad (*Bufo bufo*), Natterjack toad (*Bufo calamita*), European green toad (*Bufo viridis*), Moor frog (*Rana arvalis*), European common frog (*Rana temporaria*), Edible frog (*Rana esculenta*), Pool frog (*Rana lessonae*), Marsh frog (*Rana ridibunda*), Garlic toad (*Pelobates fuscus*), Smooth newt (*Triturus vulgaris*), European tree frog (*Hyla arborea*).

The detailed information on monitoring locations, methodologies and assessment criteria is provided in the Monitoring programme which was submitted to the Secretariat as the attachment to the letter of the Ministry of Environment of 9 August 2016.

### ***Birds monitoring***

The birds monitoring started in autumn of 2016 and is continued in 2017. The report of 2017 monitoring and bird counting results should be available at the end of 2017.

### ***Counting results of migrating geese aggregations (2016 October)***

Local (breeding) and migrating Greylag geese (starting from beginning of August), migrating Greater white-fronted and Bean geese (from end of September) in various water bodies are forming long-term resting aggregations. Birds flow from these resting and overnight areas to the fields to feed in the early mornings and are return in the evenings to overnight locations.

During the field works all geese species (*Anser albifrons*, *Anser fabalis*, *Anser anser* and *Branta leucopsis*) migrating from overnight areas (Žuvintas and Angininkai lakes) to feeding areas were counted.

Results of 2016 monitoring showed that the number of individuals in resting geese aggregations was not stable. The number of birds in aggregations was increasing every next (later) counting. During the first counting (07-10-2016) – 1396 birds were counted, during the second counting (19-10-2016) – 2752 birds, during the third counting (30-10-2016) – 3520 birds.

During the monitoring 6 different geese feeding areas around the Angininkai and Žuvintas lakes were found. It should be noted that feeding places varied depending on locations were land was cultivated at the time of counting. During the first counting (07-10-2016) -1138 birds were counted, during the second counting (19-10-2016) – 1090, during the third counting (30-10-2016) – 940.

During the first 2017 spring counting (09-03-2017) – 1620 birds were counted in overnight (resting) areas, during the second counting (31-03-2017) – 3700 birds, during the third counting (16-04-2017) –1520 birds.

### ***Counting results of migrating water birds***

Monitoring locations were selected in OHL safety zone and in the adjacent areas (1-2 km from OHL safety zone). In 2016 birds the first time were counted on the second decade of September, the second counting was done on the second decade of October and the third counting – on the first decade of November.

In 2016 the biggest bird aggregations were observed in Žuvintas lake – up to 1330 birds, less water birds were counted in other 3 lakes –in Rimietis up to 150, in Galadusis and Angininkai lakes up to 100 waterbirds.

In spring of 2017 countings were done on 13<sup>th</sup> and 26<sup>th</sup> of April. As in previous year the biggest bird aggregations were observed in Žuvintas lake – up to 140 birds, in Rimietis lake up to 82, in Galadusis – 95, in Angininkai –up to 75 waterbirds.

### ***Counting results of migrating cranes (Grus grus)***

In summer time aggregations are being formed by not breeding cranes, these aggregations are joined by juveniles and migrating cranes at the end of summer and autumn. Aggregations assemble in big raised bogs and in abandoned or even in cultivated flooded peat bogs. Cranes migrate from these areas to feed in fields in the mornings, and in the evenings return for overnight.

Birds were counted once on the third decade of September, and twice in October. Despite the good observation conditions cranes were not registered in any of two observation points. According to received information some cranes migrated to raised bog from the opposite direction (from Marijampolė side) and these could not be seen from observation points. Local observers informed that cranes were observed earlier in September in the southern part of Žuvintas lake, but later left the area.

It is proposed to count cranes in September next year as in October most of cranes have already been left the country.



**Monitoring of OHL-related bird deaths**

In 2016 autumn (September and November) were found 3 remains of dead birds: Black-headed gull (*Larus ridibundus*), Common Goldeneye (*Bucephala clangula*) and Song Thrush (*Turdus philomelos*).

In spring of 2017 dead birds were not found.

**Monitoring of Amphibians and Reptiles**

Monitoring of Amphibians and Reptiles started in 2017. Countings were done in May and June. European fire-bellied toad (*Bombina orientalis*) were found – in all monitoring locations, the Northern Crested Newt (*Triturus cristatus*) – in 2 of 9 monitored pools.

European green toad (*Bufo viridis*), Natterjack toad (*Bufo calamita*) and European tree frog (*Hyla arborea*) were not found in the monitored area.

The European pond turtle (*Emys orbicularis*) was not found in selected monitoring locations, countings were done on 08-06-2017, 25-06-2017 and 30-07-2017.

**Monitoring of habitats**

In 2017 in 6 monitoring points (locations), where the OHL route crosses habitats of Community interest (6210 Semi-natural dry grasslands (steppe), 6450 Northern boreal alluvial meadows, 6510 Lowland hay meadows, *Dactylorhiza incarnate*), 60 permanent plots each of 4 m<sup>2</sup> were arranged for observation and monitoring of habitats. The observation of vegetation and habitats will be continued in 2018.

**2. Gas Interconnection Poland-Lithuanian pipeline (GIPL). Progress report.**

Environmental management and monitoring plans for construction and post-construction period of GIPL were prepared on 22 July 2016, plans were made public on AB Amber Grid (the operator of Lithuania's natural gas transmission system) website <https://www.ambergrid.lt/lt/news/naujienos/dujotiekiujungtiestarpplenkijosirlietuvosstatybosirpostatybiniolaikotarpioaplinkosapsaugosvaldymoairmonitoringoplanas>. No public comments were received. These plans were approved by the Environmental Protection Agency on 2 September 2016.

Implementation of GIPL construction works in Lithuanian territory are postponed preliminary for 2 years due to changes of pipeline route on Polish side. Earlier construction works were planned to start in the October of 2016, the end of construction – in June 2018. All pre-construction preparatory works are completed (finished) in 2016.

In the first semester of 2018 it is foreseen to announce tender for construction works, and to start construction works – in the second part of 2018, to complete – in 2021. Information about the beginning of construction will be announced on the AB Amber Grid website (<https://www.ambergrid.lt/lt/>) and owners of the land will be informed individually.

Vice-minister

Martynas Norbutas