Tuzla – Podisor Pipeline Site Visit Report

1. Objectives

The goal of the site visit was to gain a better understanding of the proposed work corridor for the Tuzla – Podisor pipeline, and identify possible places of interest along the route, both from an environmental and social perspective. To achieve this, the consultant team, consisting of 2 social and 1 biodiversity expert, have organized a 2-day site visit, in which they have been accompanied by a designated team of experts from Transgaz.

Before the site visit took place, a Travel Risk Assessment has been developed in order to identify possible COVID-19 related risks and offer mitigation measure in order to ensure the minimization of contagion during the site visit.

2. Mission Plan

The following mission plan has been initially proposed and agreed with Transgaz, but due to the situation on the field and the difficulty in accessing certain points on the route, the initial list of points of interest has been reduced to 14, as is detailed in the chapter 3.

Visit plan

Week of 17th and 21st of May was selected for this field visit. A number of 3 days were estimated for this. The major activities planned for the 3 days of site visit were:

- 18th of May: Short meeting in Bucharest with Transgaz team selected to accompany the consultant on the field in order to agree on the timeline for visiting each point of interest.
- 18th and 19th of May: Site visit on the identified points across the pipeline's route.
- 20th of May: Day in the office (Bucharest) with EBRD and Transgaz representatives to discuss all the findings from the site visits and address any additional questions.

Points of Interest:

No.	Km.	Details	Reason for visit
1	0	Pipeline starting point	Understand how the starting point was chosen and the reasons why it had been reconsidered since the 2018 plans.
2	74-76	The pipeline crosses the Danube First HDD site	Pipeline intersects Canaralele Dunării (ROSCI0022) and Dunăre – Ostroave (ROSPA0039) protected areas, and the HDD site is located nearby Cochirleni village.

No.	Km.	Details	Reason for visit
3	91-95	The pipeline crosses Bratul Borcea Second HDD site	Pipeline intersects Mlaștina de la Fetești (ROSCI0319) and Bratul Borcea (ROSPA0012) protected areas. The HDD corridor crosses under a structure on the Northern bank of the Danube. We need to understand what kind of structure is present and if it will be affected in any way by the drilling.
4	101	The RoW is situated close to what appears to be a military base and a military airport.	Understand if the pipeline might have any impact on the military activity in the area.
5	114-115	The pipeline crosses close to a farm.	Assess the potential impacts on the nearby farm, since the RoW overlays one of the access roads for a length of over 100 m.
6	152-154	The pipeline crosses a water course/canal OS and DT nearby	Understand the positioning of the site organization and pipe laydown area, and the procedure for crossing the canal
7	175-176	The pipeline crosses a protected area and is located nearby a settlement.	Pipeline intersects Valea Mostiștea (ROSPA0105) protected area, and is neighboring the villages of Frasinet and Frasinetu de Jos.
8	198-201	HDD site. Pipeline crosses what appears to be wetland. Pipeline crosses a national road (DN4).	Assess the potential impacts on the local community and the natural environment.
9	236	The RoW crosses what appears to be an informal waste dump site.	Assess the impacts on the informal landfill, if any.
10	241-248	The pipeline crosses a protected area.	Understand how the activity will impact the site given the fact that the pipeline intersects the Comana (ROSPA0022) protected area for a length close to 7 km

No.	Km.	Details	Reason for visit
11	271	DT Stoenesti	Understand the positioning of the pipe laydown area since it neighbors both Mirau and Stoenesti villages.
12	272-274	The pipeline crosses through a protected area. The RoW is close to what appears to be an animal farm.	Understand the natural and social impact that the pipeline might generate in the area given the fact that the pipeline intersects the Comana (ROSCI0043) protected area and crosses very close to a potential farm
13	296	The RoW is a few meters away from a structure	Assess any potential for economic impacts.
14	300	The pipeline crosses a railway and an access road leading to a big farm	Understand if the pipeline might generate any economic impacts on the farm, since the road appears to be the only access way.
15	304	The pipeline crosses close to a farm.	Understand the potential impacts on the farm
16	308	The end of the pipeline.	Understand the construction activities in the area and how it will impact the surrounding activities.

Aspects planned for discussion during the pre-visit meeting:

Administrative:

1. Availability of Trangaz team to accompany the Consultant team on the field, in order to identify the selected points of interest.
2. Starting point
3. Points of interest to be discussed in day 1 and day 2

Project related aspects:

1. Procedure and reasons for selecting of another e starting point of the project?
2. Information about the workforce of the foreign company that was selected to perform the construction work. Will they use local workforce for the construction activities? Are there any plans

for the construction of worker camps for foreign workers? If yes, how many and where will these be located? On contrary, what accommodation means for the foreign workers are foreseen?

3. Areas presenting any geotechnical concerns
4. Is micro-rerouting considered in order to minimize impact on certain agricultural land plots
5. Points across the route that need to be discussed prior to the site visit to understand the importance/relevance of visiting these.

No.	Kilometer	Details	Question
1	72	The pipeline crosses in the proximity of a potential informal settlement	Is there any procedure in place to deal with informal settlements and land users that might be impacted by the construction?
2	125-126	The pipeline overlays a road for a few hundred meters	Is rerouting considered in case similar situation occur?
3	228	The pipeline crosses a Natura 2000 protected watercourse	Which crossing method will be selected to minimize the impact?
4	241-246 and 272-275	Passing through protected areas	Is rerouting considered in order to avoid the protected area?

3. Site Visit Findings

The following points of interest have been visited by the consultant team, accompanied by the Transgaz designated team.

Km.	Image	Findings
0		**Connection point with Gas station owned by the Black Sea Gas extraction operation company:** • TG pipeline will go along the future planned access road designed for the Gas station. There is no map yet where to observe the overlaps between the two projects – the gas pipeline and the access road. • Proximity to railway station • Proximity to a temporary structure / shelter for animals / cows • Grazing area for cows • The proximity to Black Sea shore might overlap with the high interests for future development of touristic activities – this aspect should be further investigated by analyzing the local development plans and during consultation with interested parties in the sector. • Proximity to waste depositing area – illegal dumping. Several areas were observed where construction waste has been deposited. • Here there is a mosaic of man-made habitats: pasture, abandoned orchard, irrigation canal and cultivated land. • In the area there are small mammal species Nanospalax leucodon, Talpa europaea, Apodemus sp. and Mus sp. • The area is also part of the coastal migration corridor for birds and is a nesting place for species among Paseriformes.

Km.	Image	Findings
63		**Hill area with rocky formations:** • Geological aspects - rocky formations are presents and visible, mainly lime stones • Maybe this area used to be a drill area for nearby army unit and the formations visible on google earth are just wholes in the ground made by the fires • Further investigations are needed in order to understand / confirm if the military unit used this area for such drills and if there is any chance to find unexploded materials • located in a habitat mosaic area and crosses the pontosarmatic steppe (priority habitat) and pontosarmatic bushes (priority habitat) • In the area it is recommended to monitor the activity of small mammals, even on the route of the pipeline being identified a group lair of Spermophilus citellus, and in the immediate vicinity signs of the presence of the species Nanospalax leucodon • the specific vegetation of the ponto-sarmatic steppe may have protected flora elements: Moehringia jankae (in the area of calcareous outcrops), Echium russicum (plant with biannual cycle requires monitoring 2 consecutive flowering seasons to confirm / deny presence) or Hymantoglossum caprinum (orchid). • Wind farm located in the proximity – further investigations are needed in order to understand the development plans for expansion of the farm if the case • Once the pipeline reaches the bottom of the hill, the route enters in a valley that is sometimes a flooding area for a small water stream that is a tributary to Danube – further hydrological and meteorological data should be analysed in order to understand the flooding risks
72		**Structures situated nearby the pipeline's work corridor:** • No structures were identified on the ground • The work corridor is situated nearby a parking site for vehicles for agriculture

Km.	Image	Findings
		
74		**Danube crossing – right bank of the river – HDD entry point:** • HDD work area is located on agricultural lands nearby a village – approximately 250 m away from nearby households • No access road to HDD work site • HDD site is outside the protected area, the most important biodiversity issue is the population of amphibians that can be affected by impact with work vehicles and by artificial traps formed during the works. • Access roads used for transportation of equipment and machinery necessary for HDD is not yet decided, but the national road crossing the village nearby is in good condition

Km.	Image	Findings
93		**Borcea – exit point of HDD that will be used under the Borcea branch of Danube (second HDD on Danube):** • HDD site will be located on flooding area of Danube • Pasture area • Natural protected area, the area is dominated by pastures where individual actives of Spermophilus citellus have been observed. The area is also certainly important for amphibian populations during the rainy periods of the transition seasons (spring and autumn). Careful monitoring of these groups is recommended, including during the works. • The structure – temporary household – is situated within the construction corridor, right next to the river. The HDD exit point will be located approximate 150 m away from this point. Further investigations are needed in order to understand if the structure will be affected by the HDD work. • The area located in the vicinity of the HDD site on the Danube shore is used for leisure • Animal grazing on the pasture area
175 - 176		**Mostistei valley:** • A farm is located close by km. 175 • The crossing is situated close to Frasinet village. • The area is used by recreational fishermen • Construction corridor is situated close to an informal sport field • An animal farm is situated nearby as well • Natural protected area. The transit of the wetland with specific vegetation is recommended to be done following a careful monitoring of the presence of nesting species and the activity of reptile and amphibian species. For Lutra lutra, knowing the territory of a couple could stretch for several kilometers of waterfronts, cannot be a special problem. • Wetland

Km.	Image	Findings
201		**HDD crossing of the Arges river:** • HDD situated on nearby farm land • The Arges river is protected by embankments on both sides, thus reducing the flooding risk in the area • In points of this type it is recommended to monitor the avifauna activity, small mammals, reptiles and amphibians activity in the site organization area.
225		**Pipeline laydown area:** • Pipeline laydown area situated close to Zboiu village • The access road is an agriculture dust road • The access roads to construction corridor and the pipeline laydown areas are not yet determined • The pipeline laydown sites are already established and these areas should not suffer any modification • There are no specific issues in terms of biodiversity.

Km.	Image	Findings
228		**Pipeline crosses a stream part of the Comana protected area:** • Located on a tributary of the basin of the Comana ROSCI 0043 natural park. • The course is a connectivity corridor between two important sectors of the Comana Natural Park and it is important that the hydrological dynamics are not affected.
242		**Comana protected area:** • located inside ROSCI 0043 in an area of mosaic habitats: agricultural lands, pastures, watercourses, discontinuous living areas. • Vineyards are situated nearby the construction corridor and it might be that one or two land plots with vineyards might be impacted • Grazing areas for animals will be impacted • Here it is recommended an assessment of amphibian and reptile populations and continuous monitoring during the project implementation period to reduce the impact of vehicle collision, high mortality due to dehydration as a result of trapping such as pits / dry ditches from which these animals can't go out anymore. On the route of the pipeline where excavations are carried out, the presence of nests and burrows must be carefully monitored and it is recommended to avoid work in these sectors during nesting periods or for species hibernating in the soil, avoiding hibernation periods.

Km.	Image	Findings
248		**Comana protected area:** • Located at the pipe entry limit in ROSCI 0043. • The area is defined by agricultural land. The part of potentially sensitive habitats in Comana Park being crossed by horizontal drilling for the most length the potential impact is minimal. The land seems to be intensely fertilized and treated with herbicides and insecticides. • Km 248 is situated at the beginning of the protected area
295 - 296		**Structures situated nearby the work corridor:** • located near the town of Clejani in an area of agricultural land alternating with pasture sectors with ruderalized vegetation • Between km 295 and 296 there are several oil extraction wells – further investigations are needed in order to determine the impacts associated with the oil extraction field. • Permits have been obtained from the oil extraction company and for undercrossing the oil collection pipes • Inventory of contaminated sites / areas • A structure is visible nearby km 296 – this looks like a water tank and water extraction wells but the structures are not yet finalized. It seems that the investment was made for irrigation purposes but was never finished. Further investigations are needed in order to determine the owner of these investments and the future plans since the construction corridor is very close by • There is a possibility that bird species may be present in areas of this type, especially granivores and insectivores for food. Also in the ruderal vegetation there may be active nests of passerine nests during the nesting periods.

Km.	Image	Findings
304		**Farm located close to construction corridor:** • The farm is located in the proximity of the construction corridor but the nearest structured looks deteriorated. It might be that the farm is no longer operational or has reduced its operation considerable. Further investigations are needed in order to understand the impacts of the construction / operation of the pipeline on this farm • No potential presence of rare plant species or mammalian traces that live mainly in the soil that could be disturbed by the project
308		**Connection point to Podisor station:** • No particular aspect noticed. • The pipeline will under-cross BRUA pipeline and will access the station

Other aspects observed during site visit:

- The pipeline route crosses mainly agriculture lands that seems to be worked by large companies
- According to TG, there are approximately 6400 land owners already identified, but we do not have any information about the users. Large farms / agricultural production units are important stakeholders for this project since their operations will be distrusted by the construction activities
- According to the official documents, the pipeline route was chosen so that it minimize the impacts on land plots , reduces fragmentation and reduces the risks of generation of orphan land – this needs to be further analysed based on data on land plots available and the one that will be collected in the land acquisition process
- The route is avoiding settlements – there are only few cases where the route of the construction corridor goes nearby settlements. Only 5 cases of lands situated in the built-up area are currently recorded.