

Study on the “ Connection of the Foz Tua Hydroelectric Dam to the National Electricity Transmission Grid of 400 kV”

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Overview

1. Preceding facts. The only purpose of the 400 kV voltage power line that is currently being studied is to connect the Foz Tua dam to the national grid; therefore the planning should have been included since the beginning. The study for this power line began in 2011, two years after the dam approval, a proceeding completely unacceptable. The study had several forth and comes, regarding the UNESCO requirements and the uneasiness to find acceptable solutions for this power line. To allow at this point the high-power line, taking thus the dam for an accomplished fact, shows a policy of decision making that embarrasses Portugal and the Environmental institutions.

2. Impacts and uselessness of the Foz Tua dam. The Foz Tua dam and its high power-voltage line produce huge environmental impacts, namely: the destruction of the ecological diversity and valuable landscape of the Tua Valley, the depreciation of the Alto Douro Wine Region, the destruction of the singular Tua Railway Line, and the dilapidation of the possibilities for quality tourism development relying on local assets. This project produces only 0,1% of energy in Portugal (0,6% of electricity) but implies a cost going over an increase of 2% in the electricity household bills.

3. Scope of the studies and cumulative impacts. The cumulative impacts over water quality, river ecosystems, depopulation, mobility, wine production, destruction of agricultural land and the risks existing for coastal and coastline population have not been taken into account. The cumulative impacts carried out by this power line and the dam were grossly under-evaluated as well as other existing high power voltage lines and other infra-structures. The possibility of an underground power line was not taken into account, taken before-hand as infeasible.

4. Impacts caused by the power line and infringements of the commitments made with UNESCO. All the alignment lines proposed in EIS imply significant impacts over the Alto Douro Wine Region: or they cross areas of high sensibility for rare and protected species (e.g. Black stork). The compensation and minimising measures of the impacts proposed are essentially pointless.

5. Evaluation methodology of the impacts. The methodology put into practice in the EIS is utterly inappropriate, not taking into account the balance between the positive and negative impacts, under-evaluating the main impacts of the project. The alternative considered the best in the EIS is exactly the one that was more criticized by UNESCO in the beginning.

Conclusion. The overall balance of the impacts caused by the high-voltage power line of the Foz Tua dam are very negative. As a consequence, we demand it to be cancelled.