

D4.3 Report on 4 public information events and on 2 permitting/planning meetings

Marius Strecker, TenneT



Co-funded by the Intelligent Energy Europe
Programme of the European Union

The sole responsibility for the content of this publication lies with the authors. It does not necessarily reflect the opinion of the European Union. Neither the EACI nor the European Commission are responsible for any use that may be made of the information contained therein.

TenneT: SuedLink

BESTGRID – Report on 4 public information events and on 2 permitting/planning stakeholder meetings, including environmental NGOs

Table of Contents

I. Description of project aims	3
The project: challenges	3
1. Public acceptance	4
2. For the first time: the national <i>Bundesfachplanung</i> procedure	4
Communications approach: information – dialogue – participation	5
II. Report on public information events: local dialogue and participation	7
Background	7
Events as part of the dialogue campaign and involvement	8
Communal info-marts	8
Realisation of the communal info-marts – central element of the early informal project dialogue	10
III. Report on 2 permitting / planning stakeholder meetings	18
Planning goals / rationale behind Action Plan 2	18
Methodology and approach	18
Identification of topics, issues and role of NGOs	19
Cooperation since March 2014 with NABU Niedersachsen	19
Identification of ecological risks	20
Mapping of relevant stakeholders	20
Development of a methodology: corridor management to connect habitats	21

Cooperation at work.....	22
Two site visits in the secondary mountain region	22
Organisation and realisation of two round table events	23
Topics of discussion.....	27
Results by the end of the cooperation	27

I. Description of project aims

The project: challenges

A secure supply of electricity is an essential prerequisite for living in a modern industrial society. For this we need an efficient and sustainable infrastructure. Although that applies to every industrial country, Germany in particular is facing a unique challenge.

With its *Energiewende* – the energy transition – Germany has set itself extremely ambitious goals. In order for this mammoth project to be successful, the necessary infrastructure needs to be created. This applies not only to electricity generation but also to the power grids that have to be expanded and rebuilt, in order to bring renewable energy to consumers.

At around 800 kilometres, the SuedLink BESTGRID project is the largest infrastructure project for energy transition in Germany. With a transmission capacity of 4 GW, the power transmission line will create the urgently needed link between the wind power generated in the north and the consumer centres in the south of Germany. The project partners are the two transmission network operators TenneT and TransnetBW. According to the current state of planning, two connections are being realised within SuedLink. The BESTGRID project is the connection between Wilster (Schleswig-Holstein) and Grafenrheinfeld (Bavaria).

The German Government's plan is for, renewable energies to meet at least 80 per cent of the electricity demand in Germany by 2050. However, the necessary generation capacities to achieve this are being primarily developed in the north, whereas large consumer centres are situated in the south of Germany. The gap between the electricity supply and demand will continue to widen if further nuclear power stations in Bavaria and Baden-Württemberg are phased out.

This north-south gap will endanger supply security in Germany if the necessary infrastructure is not provided in time. According to the Grid Development Plan 2013, a total of 3,600 kilometres of new transmission lines must be built over the next ten years. This applies particularly to north-south connections such as the SuedLink.

The challenges with SuedLink, central to the *Energiewende*, are twofold:

1. Public acceptance

On the one hand, there is as a central problem in terms of public acceptance of new infrastructure. Most Germans – according to public opinion surveys – are still in favour of the energy transition and the phasing out of conventional energy. However, when it comes to specific planning of the necessary infrastructure in their area, this approval rate drops sharply.

2. For the first time: the national *Bundesfachplanung* procedure

The national planning procedure that the Grid Expansion Acceleration Act (NABEG) envisages for SuedLink is known as the *Bundesfachplanung* (Federal Sectoral Planning). It replaces the land use planning process used for inter-federal state and cross-border projects. With a unified nationwide procedure, the *Bundesfachplanung* is designed to accelerate planning for urgently required transmission lines. The German Federal Network Agency (BNetzA) is responsible for this process.

The *Bundesfachplanung* process is a new planning procedure for inter-federal state and cross-border power line projects in accordance with the Grid Expansion Acceleration Act (NABEG). The *Raumordnungsverfahren* (Land Use Planning Procedure) will continue to be used for all projects that only affect a single federal state. Whereas the *Raumordnungsverfahren* is conducted by the relevant federal state authority, the Federal Network Agency (BNetzA) as the central national authority is responsible for the *Bundesfachplanung* procedure.

In addition, an important innovation with the *Bundesfachplanung* procedure is the early and comprehensive involvement of the civil society. This is intended to ensure an open discussion in the planning process for the new transmission lines and to enable comments from the public and public institutions to be incorporated at a very early stage.

SuedLink is one of the first projects going through this new planning process, the *Bundesfachplanung*. All parties involved – from public interest groups and authorities to developers and the public – are unsure about the process and possibilities of the new procedure.

Communications approach: information – dialogue – participation

A rapid expansion of the electricity grid is essential for creating a secure and stable electricity network in Germany and Europe. This is only possible, however, with the acceptance of both the local population in densely populated Germany and the authorities involved.

Whilst it used to be sufficient for the transmission network operators to provide accompanying information as part of the regulatory approval process, these days infrastructure can only find acceptance through a multi-layered, participatory debate. Whether integrated in the regulatory approval process or initiated informally and independently, companies now need to integrate public communication fully into their project planning. Planning processes can only be improved and new scope for manoeuvre created if there is a systematic expansion of public information and participation. The social conditions for large power line projects have changed. The communication must respond comprehensively and appropriately to this.

“Communicating comprehensively and appropriately” – what does this mean? A simple “as much content as possible and as technically precise and detailed as possible,” would be an inadequate response here. This is because people can also be overwhelmed and overloaded with information. This is especially true if they are interested laymen rather than experts. Accordingly, the transmission network operator must provide tiered, coordinated information, to ensure that everyone can find exactly the information they are looking for: clear and well-presented basic information that is understandable to all interested parties, as well as more detailed technical information and comprehensive documentation for all those who want to go into detail.

TenneT wants to realise the important SuedLink transmission line construction project in dialogue with local people and decision-makers, and help ensure that the most positive results possible are achieved for all sides.

In order to achieve this, three progressive levels of communication are necessary: information – dialogue – participation.

TenneT believes that all stakeholders are entitled to:

- Continuous and truthful **information**

- A transparent and **sincere dialogue**
- Simple, low-threshold **involvement**.

An important aspect here is that TenneT will begin this comprehensive communication process even before the official approval process (*Bundesfachplanung* and *Antragskonferenz*, where the investigation scope will be specified and the requirements for the application documentation determined). The information on the project, further proceedings and the possible corridor routes, etc., should, therefore, be provided early on and the local stakeholders should already be involved in the dialogue and in the planning before the formal approval process begins.

II. Report on public information events: local dialogue and participation

Background

Transparency and dialogue. Providing comprehensive and early information for all stakeholders and getting them involved before and after the *Antragskonferenz* is the key to successful project communication.

People and interest groups who can influence a project like SuedLink or have a general interest in the project are referred to as stakeholders. TenneT is pursuing a systematic stakeholder approach with SuedLink.

The stakeholder dialogue for SuedLink can, therefore, only succeed if:

- the information provision and participation are started as early as possible
- all relevant stakeholders are involved, including critical actors
- the network operator and the approval authorities take the concerns and fears of the people seriously
- the discussion partners develop genuine trust in each other
- all parties show a willingness to compromise and are willing to put the common good ahead of their own interests
- rules and responsibilities are defined as clearly as possible in the participatory processes
- existing scope for manoeuvre – in terms of both content and time – is clearly identified, in order to discourage any unrealistic expectations with subsequent disappointments, and
- local politicians and the media also assume responsibility and are willing to help shape the dialogue in a constructive manner

With stakeholder dialogue, it is essential to realise that the interests of local stakeholders are sometimes very different or even contradictory. For example, a compromise proposal that convinces one group can intensify protests from another. As the transmission network operator, TenneT needs to take the concerns of all sides seriously and clearly communicate

that the elaboration of a specific route proposal can only ever be a trade-off between different values and legitimate interests.

Events as part of the dialogue campaign and involvement

As part of the communication strategy TenneT planned different events and dialogue formats for the different stakeholders, giving all identified stakeholders the possibility to discuss and get their opinions across. In order to reach a maximum number of people, TenneT wanted to conduct all of these different events locally, so that the same events will be repeated several times less than 100 kilometres apart – and not just in the main cities but directly in further important towns along the proposed corridors.

As planned, the events should contain the following elements (formats are tailored to the respective audience/stakeholder group):

- Information: all relevant project information
- Dialogue: the NGOs involved (such as Deutsche Umwelthilfe – DUH) will discuss their perspectives on the project with TenneT and other stakeholders
- Participation: relevant suggestions to improve the corridor and any issues raised that need to be examined will not only be documented, but will also be forwarded and included in the planning.

The format used for the events: communal info-marts, (*Bürger-Infomärkte*).

Communal info-marts

The aim of the communal info-marts is to establish personal and direct dialogue with the local stakeholders (face-to-face contact), providing an opportunity to receive suggestions and opinions directly on the ground, in order to give people an understanding of the project but, at the same time, to receive suggestions for improving planning.

Initially, TenneT planned at least 4 public information events and, for this reason, a “report on 4 public information events was included as deliverable in the BESTGRID framework. As TenneT conducted many more public information events, the following report and evaluation is not limited to 4 info-marts, but encompasses all public information events conducted in 2014.

The info-marts were supplemented by various other communication measures. Brochures, fact sheets, a telephone hotline, a website, and a newsletter.

As stipulated by law, TenneT and project partner Transnet BW have developed a potential corridor route for the SuedLink connection of Wilster and Grafenrheinfeld. Before the official approval process – *Bundesfachplanung* – began, this proposed corridor route was presented to the public, published online, and a comprehensive project dialogue was initiated. The local info-marts were the central element of this project dialogue.

They were intended to give interested local people the opportunity to consider the proposal at an early stage and ask questions. In addition, people were able to comment directly on the proposed corridor route and suggest alternatives – thus, helping to improve the planning process.

TenneT is obligated to review all comments and proposals from this public participation. Moreover, the proposals made by the public for alternative corridor routes are considered whenever this may help to supplement the route corridor proposal in a meaningful way. They are added as additional alternatives in the subsequent application for *Bundesfachplanung*.

Realisation of the communal info-marts – central element of the early informal project dialogue

The SuedLink project was discussed at 22 local forums along the entire corridor route in 5 federal states (Schleswig-Holstein, Lower Saxony, Hesse and Bavaria).

The info-marts were held centrally in the communities – either in municipal buildings such as town halls or in suitable rooms in restaurants or hotels. Good local accessibility was important.

Identified stakeholders were generally invited in advance, such as mayors, local authorities, NGOs etc. At the same time, the general public was also invited to the events via press invitations and adverts in the regional media.



Einladung

Infomarkt zum Leitungsbauprojekt „SuedLink“

Liebe Bürgerinnen und Bürger,

die Energiewende erfordert den Ausbau unserer Stromnetze. Hierbei spielt die geplante Gleichstromverbindung Sued-Link eine zentrale Rolle.

Noch vor Beginn des Genehmigungsverfahrens wollen wir mit Ihnen in einen Dialog treten.

Im persönlichen Gespräch mit dem SuedLink-Team können Sie sich anhand des Kartenmaterials über die

bisherige Vorplanung informieren, aber auch direkt Hinweise und Anmerkungen zum vorgeschlagenen Trassenkorridor einbringen.

Wir laden Sie herzlich ein und freuen uns auf Ihren Besuch!

TenneT TSO GmbH

www.suedlink.tennet.eu

TenneT

TenneT ist der erste grenzüberschreitende Übertragungsnetzbetreiber für Strom in Europa. Mit ungefähr 20.000 Kilometern an Hoch- und Höchstspannungsleitungen, 96 Millionen Endverbrauchern in den Niederlanden und in Deutschland gehören wir zu den Top 5 der Netzbetreiber in Europa. Unser Fokus richtet sich auf die Entwicklung eines nordwesteuropäischen Energiemarktes und auf die Integration erneuerbarer Energie. Taking power further.

SuedLink - ein Gemeinschaftsprojekt von TenneT und TransnetBW

www.tennet.eu



The info-marts lasted for several hours (normally from 3pm to 8pm), enabling the majority of people to attend.

The focus was not on one-dimensional information. Instead, information was presented in bundles on themed partition screens (grid expansion need, proposed route corridor, procedure, technology). TenneT staffs were on hand to answer additional questions. The main focus though was on the presentation of the planning proposals using map materials. Questions were also considered at this stage, but it was mainly an opportunity to comment on the existing route corridor proposal, to make specific improvement suggestions or to propose alternative corridor routes: either on large maps of the region, on the specifically provided feedback forms or directly in conversation.

Experiences and evaluation: attendees, satisfaction with the format and participation

On average, around 300 visitors per info-mart took the opportunity to talk to the experts from the SuedLink project team about planning, technical and environmental issues. **In total this means: more than 6,000 qualified conversations between project planners and local citizens!**

Evaluation

As a BESTGRID partner, the International Institute for Applied Systems Analysis (IIASA) is not only providing early input for the action plans, as a neutral research organisation it is also conducting analyses to understand issues relating to public acceptance in the local communities.

In analysing the activities of the four different BESTGRID projects and their impact on and acceptance by the stakeholders, IIASA aims to contribute to a better understanding of the public acceptance and awareness issues.

IIASA designed specific stakeholder surveys in order to evaluate the public info-marts. This evaluation is included in a special report on the topic in the BESTGRID framework.

Here are some of the results:

The info-mart attendees who filled out the feedback forms responded in a broadly positive manner.

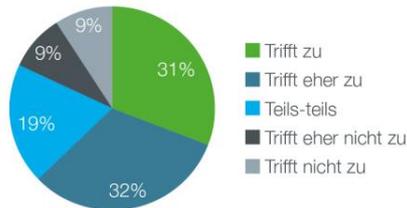
The info-marts...

...deliver important information (66 %)

...are an opportunity to participate with your own comments (71 %)

...show that TenneT takes people's opinions about SuedLink seriously (48 %)

„Die Informationsveranstaltung hat mir die SuedLink-Projektplanung transparent und verständlich gemacht:“



Stand: 10.10.2014

Die Infomärkte...

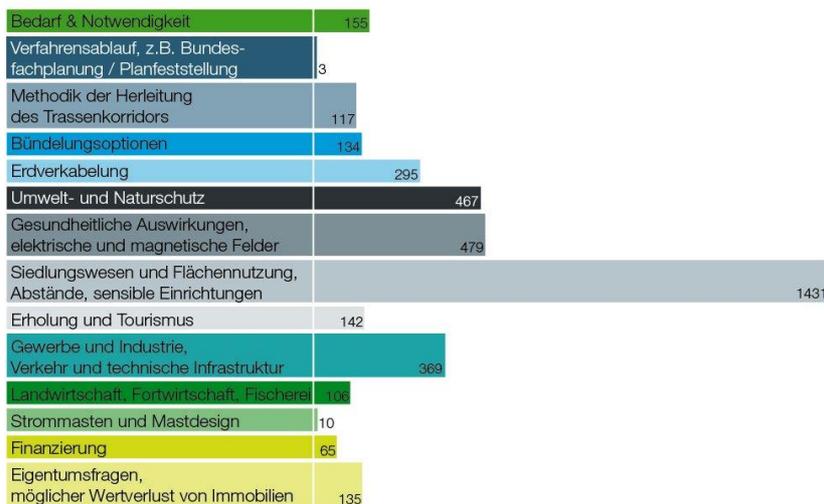
- ... liefern wichtige Informationen (66%)
- ... bieten Gelegenheit, sich mit eigenen Anmerkungen zu beteiligen (71%)
- ... vermitteln den Eindruck, dass man – zumindest teilweise – noch Einfluss auf die Planungen hat (61%)
- ... zeigen, dass TenneT die Äußerungen der Menschen zu SuedLink ernst nimmt (48%)

Themes that local people care about:

To gain a better understanding of people's concerns and to understand which themes local people are focussed on, TenneT has sorted all incoming questions, comments and suggestions (also beyond the information events) that it has received under primary theme headings.

Fundamental issues like the discussion about general need and necessity, and the structure of the process were just as important as specific planning comments relating to land use, distances and sensitive equipment.

Wie häufig haben sich Bürgerinnen und Bürger zu den einzelnen Themen geäußert?



* Mehrfachnennung pro Stellungnahme möglich

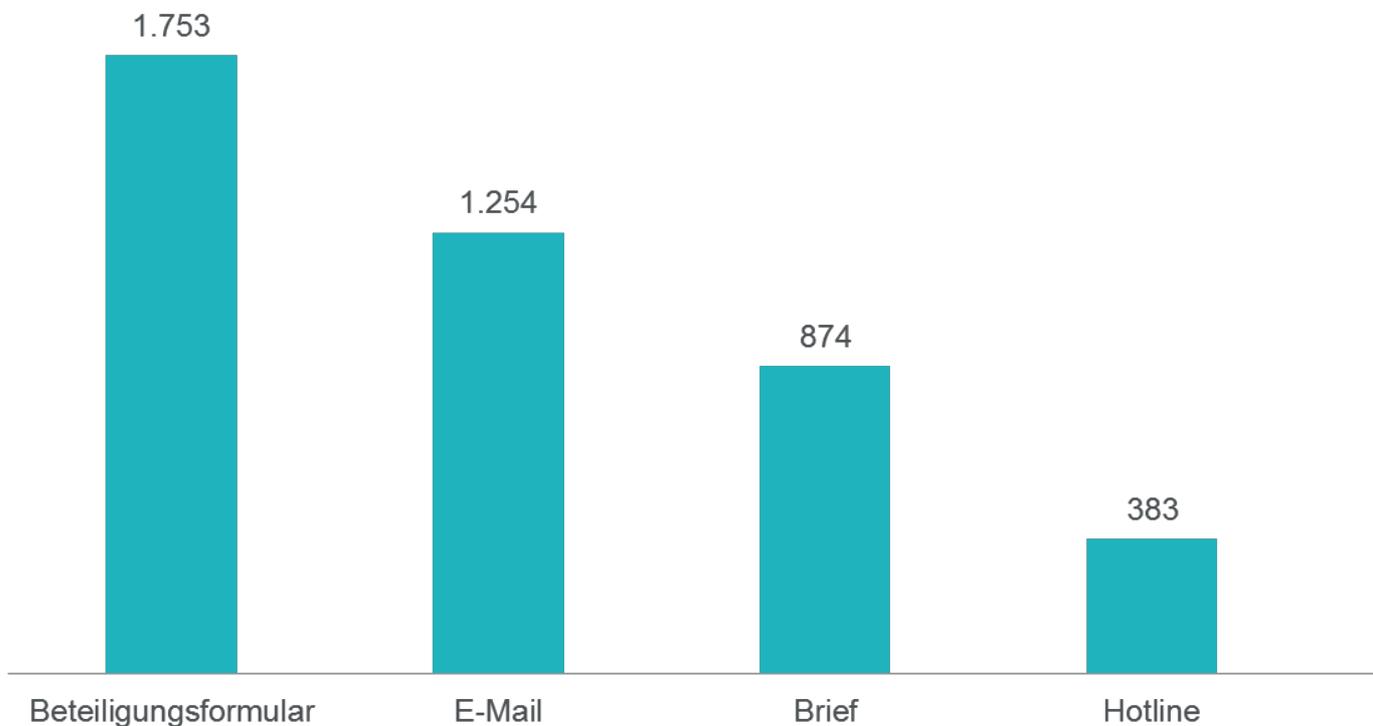
Participation

Although TenneT has also used other channels to seek the involvement and participation of local people (hotline, website), direct communication with people at the communal info-marts has proved the most effective.

40 % of all queries TenneT received came through the feedback forms at the info-marts.

Heaviest participation via forms at info-marts

Total number of queries: 4,378



Profile of the stakeholders surveyed at the info-marts

The most active group of stakeholders are:

- Men between the ages of 40 and 60
- living in the direct vicinity of the route corridor or less than 1 km away
- who own their home

The groups by age

- Between the ages of 46 and 60: 46 %
- Older than 60: 24 %
- Younger than 25: 7 %

Men took part in the feedback process more than women (68 % men, 32 % women)

The further the stakeholders live from the corridor, the lower the participation in the feedback process

- Closer than 1 km: 49 %
- 1 – 5 km: 27 %
- 5 – 10 km: 10 %
- 10 – 15 km: 5 %

Homeowners are the most concerned (55 %)

- Homeowners: 20 %
- Renters: 16 %
- Other: 9 %

Issues and criticisms of the info-mart format

A frequently expressed criticism from citizens' groups was that TenneT is shying away from confrontation with this format, seeking to make itself untouchable. However, it is precisely because no opportunity for confrontation was given – the public was bombarded with information from a podium – with space being provided instead of personal conversations, that all interested citizens were able to speak and find out what they wanted based on their individual need for information and discussion.

The info-marts have only had moderate success in communicating that people have an actual influence on the planning for SuedLink before the approval process commences. The favourable attitude to this question, the undecided attitude and the negative attitude are each of parity here.

The information material distributed at the info-marts was seen as insufficient by a majority of respondents. The material used largely provided general information; more specific materials should be created for future projects, especially local maps and information. Explanations should also be presented so as to be as clear, verifiable and graphic as possible.

Schematic overview of the responses from the 309 feedback questionnaires

	Trifft zu	Trifft eher zu	Teils-teils	Trifft eher nicht zu	Trifft nicht zu
Die Informationsveranstaltung zum Projektdialog SuedLink hat mir wichtige Informationen geliefert.	42 %	24 %	15 %	12 %	7 %
Ich hätte mir eine andere Veranstaltungsform gewünscht.	19 %	9 %	19 %	24 %	29 %
Die Informationsveranstaltung hat mir die SuedLink-Projektplanung transparent und verständlich gemacht.	33 %	32 %	15 %	9 %	11 %
Die Informationsveranstaltung hat mir ausreichende Möglichkeiten zur Abgabe von Hinweisen und Anregungen gegeben.	38 %	23 %	23 %	9 %	7 %
Es gab ausreichende Möglichkeiten für ein direktes Gespräch zu den mir wichtigen Fragen.	57 %	19 %	14 %	4 %	6 %
Ich habe den Eindruck, dass ich noch vor Beginn des Genehmigungsverfahrens Einfluss auf die Planungen zum SuedLink nehmen kann.	19 %	17 %	25 %	17 %	22 %
Ich habe den Eindruck, dass TenneT meine Anmerkungen zum Projekt SuedLink ernst nimmt.	32 %	24 %	22 %	13 %	9 %
Die vor Ort angebotenen Informationsmaterialien zu SuedLink sind nützlich für mich.	7 %	9 %	14 %	46 %	24 %

It is striking that those who respond are mainly of a similar age, male and well-off. The task of further communication must be to incorporate other stakeholder groups as well.

Further development: Feedback info-marts

As the 22 public information events held at the start of the informal project dialogue were so successful and well-received, TenneT will continue with this format. The initiated direct dialogue shall also be maintained as things develop.

Indeed, the results of the project dialogue, i.e. the processing and incorporation of specific suggestions from the public, were in turn presented and discussed in each region at feedback info-marts, in parallel to creation of the application documents.

Conclusion on the public information events

The analysis generally shows that the format of the info-marts is a good and expedient tool for public participation.

TenneT reacted promptly, at the feedback info-marts, to expressed criticisms (“I would have liked a different form of event”), by providing more map materials, sometimes with presentations or by moderating question/answer sessions.

The general dilemma between satisfying the stakeholders' demand for public discussion and avoiding endless debates certainly remains. This dilemma cannot be solved through the format of the info-marts.

The challenge remains of motivating younger target groups to take part. This requires the development of communication tools that will specifically reach younger target groups.

III. Report on 2 permitting / planning stakeholder meetings

Planning goals / rationale behind Action Plan 2

TenneT intends to optimise the power transmission lines, taking into account all natural resources and cultural assets with the aim of minimising the adverse effects on people and the environment.

In Germany there are no statutory requirements stipulating a minimum distance from electrical transmission lines or transformer stations to nature conservation areas and other sites particularly important for nature protection, such as breeding and resting sites. Instead, individual cases have to be examined in accordance with the requirements of the German Federal Nature Conservation Act. TenneT is planning and constructing all new power lines so as to minimise the negative impact on the environment and nature.

In order to realise the project and improve social acceptance, it is important to engage stakeholders and consider environmental concerns at the earliest possible point in time.

Here, TenneT is aiming to foresee and/or prevent challenges and issues in planning the new grid that would otherwise arise at later stages and likely lead to controversies and delays in the approval procedure later on.

The aim of this project is not only to identify issues and concerns at an early point but also to identify opportunities (e.g. connect and enhance ecological corridors), in order to add positive components to the discussion.

Methodology and approach

A pilot project was planned for a geographically well-defined region selected along the potential corridor. TenneT would be co-operating with an independent environmental expert, in order to create a local stakeholder discussion format. A local NGO would be subcontracted to provide detailed input in researching and compiling advice with regard to

local conservation stakeholders and their potential concerns and ideas relating to the specific local environment.

The subcontracted NGO would focus on researching whether the planned grid corridor and power line could be used to connect habitats by implementing a special/well-adapted corridor management (*Pflegemanagement*) system.

The intention was to organise two expert workshops with the support of a regional NGO with a local regional focus, where environmental experts would present and discuss their findings and also discuss challenges and opportunities – ideally this would lead to planning optimisation and a basic consensus with local environmental stakeholders.

Identification of topics, issues and role of NGOs

TenneT's ideas about new possibilities for researching environmental aspects of the planned grid corridors were discussed with the partner in the BESTGRID project: BirdLife.

BirdLife came to the following conclusion about relevant topics for the project.

Between

- a) wildlife habitat creation/management, e.g. usage of grid corridors to connect relevant habitats, and
- b) mitigation of impacts on certain species (e.g. black stork)

a) is the more interesting option.

Cooperation since March 2014 with NABU Niedersachsen

TenneT and NABU Niedersachsen began their cooperation in the BESTGRID initiative in March 2014. The aim was to identify the major natural environmental challenges and concerns related to the project and help overcome these at an early stage. Therefore, one of the main ecological risks already known in building new power lines – the risk of destroying habitats under the power line – was selected for closer consideration. At a second stage, this should be examined to ascertain what could be done to overcome the risk and perhaps turn

it into an opportunity by developing the power line corridors into part of the existing habitat network.

One of the necessary steps to examine these topics and to realise two expert workshops on them was also to help identify key stakeholders in the field of nature conservation.

From TenneT's point of view, acceptance is one of the most important aims that can be achieved by promoting discussions with experts and authorities at an early stage of projects. This may lead to new solutions, such as for the licensing procedure, making it as robust as possible. The results of the cooperation – especially the stakeholder analysis and the methodology for connecting habitats – are integrated afterwards into the SuedLink planning and licensing procedure, with the cooperation partner NABU supervising progress.

Further definition of each point:

Identification of ecological risks

Extensive environmental impact assessments (EIAs) are conducted during the planning and authorisation of grid projects, both at the levels of national infrastructure planning, corridor selection and detailed routing and project design. It is a legal requirement for the responsible TSOs (also TenneT) to provide an EIA of these projects. Shortcomings in the environmental assessment processes can lead to substantial delays in approval procedures and to objections from environmental authorities and/or the public and environmental NGOs.

To overcome this challenge and to make the EIA process as robust as possible, the BESTGRID project will include local environmental expertise at a pre-EIA scoping stage. This will help to identify the major natural environment challenges and concerns before the EIA begins, and help to ensure the EIA process is as comprehensive and inclusive as possible.

Mapping of relevant stakeholders

To ensure an inclusive process both for the identification of risks concerning the whole SuedLink project and for the development of a methodology for the connection of habitats in a region to be defined and to get a comprehensive impact assessment of the line, it is necessary to identify knowledge carriers and experts. Therefore, one of the tasks was the

mapping of relevant stakeholders with environmental knowledge and a stake in the SuedLink project.

Furthermore, TenneT and NABU Niedersachsen contributed to the development of a plan to involve them actively in the planning and development of a methodology of corridor management to connect habitats. This is especially important as, on the one hand, there is only very little experience of using grid corridors to connect habitats while, on the other, building bridges between biotopes impacts many areas of human activity, especially agriculture, forestry, transport infrastructure and tourism.

Development of a methodology: corridor management to connect habitats

Fragmentation of habitat accounts for a large amount of loss of biodiversity. Barriers such as urban development, industrial estates and infrastructure especially intersect habitats as obstacles to migrating animals. Thus, solutions for (re-)connecting habitats and biotopes are increasingly being investigated. One possibility to connect isolated habitats is the active ecological management of grid corridors along electricity transmission lines. Designing the area around pylons and the corridor, e.g. as open and half-open habitat (*Offenland- und Halboffenlandhabitate*), could function as a bridge to allow certain target species to migrate between habitats. Note, however, that the function of the habitat connection depends in every individual case on existing habitats nearby or the existence of vulnerable key species.

Against this background, the aim of the cooperation was to support and give input to the development of a methodology for a corridor management concept to connect existing habitats with open and half-open corridors¹ focussed on some key species in an

¹ Please note: The intention of a linkage of biotopes (as known in the cross-border linkage of biotopes "länderübergreifender Biotopverbund") is to connect existing habitats. While creating new 'artificial' biotopes might be valuable, these measures cannot compensate the intersection and division of existing and sensitive areas that have been connected prior to construction of the line.

exemplary German secondary mountain region based on the BfN script 346².

The methodology should explain how to consider at an early stage the opportunity of using the SuedLink project to connect existing habitats with a potential benefit for the chosen target species. The application of this methodology will help to inform/influence relevant decisions regarding location and mitigation/compensation measures, which will be set up for the SuedLink project.

The methodology should draw upon existing practices of traditional grid corridor management (*traditionelle Trassenpflege*) and recently discussed ecologic grid corridor management as tested in other TenneT projects. The purpose of drafting a methodology for corridor management to connect habitats is to go beyond these existing practices at TenneT for ecological benefit. BfN Script 346 will be used as a reference document in setting up such a methodology.

The developed methodology will then be applied later on in an area traversed by SuedLink.

Cooperation at work

At a kick-off-event in March 2014, the project partners defined their cooperation and the next steps, including the format of the two stakeholder workshops.

The beginning was marked by two site visits in the secondary mountain regions by the project partners and other environmental stakeholders.

Two site visits in the secondary mountain region

Two site visits took place in the secondary mountain region of Lower Saxony near the proposed SuedLink corridor as published by TenneT in February 2014.

NABU Niedersachsen had invited additional representatives from local Holzminden groups and from the Hameln-Pyrmont district for the two site visits in the mountains. There was a

² Drobnik, J. et al. (2013), Skripten 346, Die Bedeutung von Korridoren im Hinblick auf die Umsetzung des länderübergreifenden Biotopverbunds in Deutschland. Hrsg. Bundesamt für Naturschutz BfN (http://www.bfn.de/fileadmin/MDB/documents/service/Skript_346.pdf)

See also: Burkhardt, R. et al. (2004): Empfehlungen zur Umsetzung des § 3 BNatSchG "Biotopverbund". Hrsg. Bundesamt für Naturschutz BfN (http://www.bfn.de/0311_publicationen.html#c5820)

very constructive and practical discussion on the themes: how can we link biotopes, how can we improve corridor management – with a focus on Natura 2000 nature reserves, where can we select model regions for the BESTGRID project.

A region was selected locally as an example for underground cabling, in order to facilitate evaluation of the potential of biotope linking via underground cable. Two forest aisles were also chosen to be used for evaluation of biotope linking through forest aisles.

The regional NGO also brought extremely critical themes to the discussion, e.g. crossing mountain ranges / low mountain regions and specific themes relating to Natura 2000 nature reserves or conservation areas. Discussion mainly centred on strategies to identify sensitive areas from a conservation perspective, and with regard to new construction planning how to identify sensitive regions or how these can be avoided initially.

If avoidance is not feasible because of other restrictions, then appropriate prevention and minimisation measures should be undertaken.

Organisation and realisation of two round table events

The first round table was held on 5th September 2014.

Title:

Route planning in Germany's low mountain ranges – conflicts and opportunities for conservation and species protection 05.09.2014

Participants:

27 representatives of authorities, local governments, planning offices, nature conservation groups, science, citizens' groups and transmission system operators

Agenda:



Trassenplanung im Bereich der deutschen Mittelgebirge Konflikte und Möglichkeiten für den Natur- und Artenschutz

Programm 05.09.2014

10.00 Uhr	Begrüßung Vorstellung des Projektes	Elke Meier, NABU Niedersachsen Theresa Schneider, BestGrid
10.20 Uhr	Netzausbauplanung <i>Diskussion</i>	Eric Neuling, NABU
10.45 Uhr	Kaffeepause	
11.00 Uhr	Rechtliche Rahmenbedingungen bei Trassenplanung im Bereich von Natura 2000 - Biotopschutz und Entwicklung	Michael Gerhard, Judith Zahn, Landesbüro der Naturschutzverbände NRW
11.30 Uhr	Auswirkungen von Freileitungen sowie Erdkabeln auf Natur und Landschaft im Mittelgebirge <i>Diskussion</i>	Dr. Frank Scholles, Magrit Putschky, Leibniz Universität Hannover Institut für Umweltplanung
12.30 Uhr	Mittagspause	

- 13.30 Uhr **Biotoptypen des deutschen Mittelgebirges** **Dr. Olaf von Drachenfels,
NLWKN**
- 14.00 Uhr **Fachliche Chancen und Risiken einer nachhaltigen
Biotopvernetzung bei Trassenplanung im
Mittelgebirge aus Sicht der NLF Naturdienstleistungen** **Ludwig Stegink-Hindriks,
NLF**
- Diskussion*
- 15.00 Uhr **Kaffeepause**
- 15.15 Uhr **Tierische Sukzessionskontrolle - Biotopvernetzung in
der Praxis** **Dietmar Althaus,
Stadt Bielefeld**
- Diskussion*
- 16.00 Uhr **Abschluss der Veranstaltung**

The second round table was held on 24th October 2014.

Title:

Route planning in Germany's low mountain ranges – conflicts and opportunities for conservation and species protection

Participants: 18

Agenda:



2. Runde Tisch

**Trassenplanung Im Bereich der deutschen Mittelgebirge
Konflikte und Möglichkeiten für den Natur- und Artenschutz**

Programm 24.10.2014

10.00 Uhr	Begrüßung	Elke Meier, NABU Niedersachsen Theresa Schneider, BestGrid
10.05 Uhr	Naturschutzfachliche Kriterien zur Korridorsuche <i>Diskussion</i>	Dr. Frank Scholles, Magrit Putschky, Leibniz Universität Hannover Institut für Umweltplanung
10.45 Uhr	Kaffeepause	
11.00 Uhr	Umweltseitige Auswirkungen von Erdkabeln und Freileitungen auf der Höchstspannungsebene (380 kV) <i>Diskussion</i>	Dr. Kerstin Winkler-Hartenstein, ERM
11.45 Uhr	Dauerpflege-Konzepte zur Biotopvernetzung <i>Diskussion</i>	Ludwig Stegink-Hindriks, NLF
12.30 Uhr	Mittagspause	
13.30 Uhr	LIFE Elia project Creating green corridors under overhead electrical lines (Belgien) <i>Diskussion</i>	Simon de Voghel Gerard Jadoul
14.30 Uhr	Kaffeepause	
14.45 Uhr	Biotopvernetzung durch Energiestrassen in der Praxis <i>Diskussion</i>	Frank Bemshausen, PNL
16.00 Uhr	Abschluss der Veranstaltung	

Topics of discussion

Both round table events saw intensive discussion, drawing on national and international examples. The main discussion points were:

- Which conflicts of route planning can be minimised through early incorporation of conservation and species protection?
- Which opportunities for biotope linking are initiated through new approaches to planning?
- What subsequent use is possible for improving ecological structures on energy routes in low mountain ranges, particularly in forest areas?
- Which criteria apply to FFH areas?

The complete documentation of the two round tables is published at:

<https://niedersachsen.nabu.de/umwelt-und-ressourcen/aktionen-und-projekte/BESTGRID/index.html>

Results by the end of the cooperation

The report from NABU Niedersachsen focuses amongst other things on prompt identification of ecological risks. Please see the NABU final report (Annex) for comprehensive documentation in this regard. What follows is an overview of the most important points, described as common planning practices:

- In some areas, wider corridors, e.g. of 4 km in width would provide a far wider scope to avoid conflicts with nature, infrastructure, agriculture or settlements. However, a wider corridor might affect the overall length of the power line segment and, therefore, the planning process has to be reconsidered.
- Greater consideration must be given to the effects of infrastructure bundling. The findings of the cooperation show, however, that the bundling requirement must still be followed as a general rule, which is based, amongst other things, on the stipulations of the BNatSchG – but in special cases does force an examination and, where necessary, an expansion of the investigation area to detect and to avoid conflicts in the wider planning process that arise due to bundling. E.g. in cases where highly protected and vulnerable forest biotopes or bird habitats with vulnerable species are

strained already, the effects on nature or species could be reduced by diverting the new power line through a more distant area of lower ecological value.

- Stringent realisation of suitable avoidance measures – plus a review of the opportunities for biotope linking and the preservation and advancement of biodiversity in the planning and realisation of SuedLink

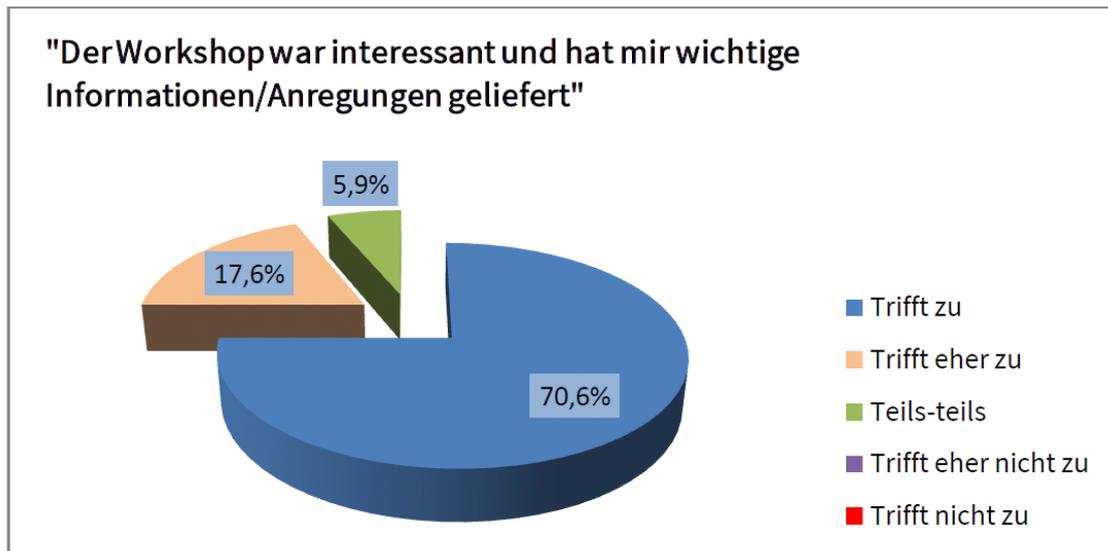
A challenge that had to be dealt with at the round table discussion was: the project falls under the legislation of NABEG (The German Grid Extension Acceleration Act). Thus, a public proposal conference (*Antragskonferenz*) was supposed to be held at the beginning of the cooperation ~1st/2nd quarter 2014 (probably beginning of April). The planned round tables (second and fourth responsibility) were originally to have taken place after the proposal conference, when more concrete issues could have been discussed. Due to delays in the overall process, the public proposal conference did not occur within the period of cooperation. This could not be foreseen and the round table conferences had to deal with more general issues and recommendations.

Some of the questions that should be discussed in the future and for future projects are listed below. Note that the pilot project specifically does NOT expect to respond to these questions in detail; the listed questions can be a starting point for an advanced discussion:

- **Identification of existing habitats to be connected and definition of potential target species:** what characterises the potential habitats to be connected (focus on open and half-open habitat in a German secondary mountain region)? Which species are meant to profit from the ecological enhancement? Which are those in central Germany with the most potential to benefit the chosen target species? How are they likely to use the corridor (transit/migration corridor or primary habitat corridor)?
- **Requirements and needs of single species:** what requirements does future corridor management need to meet in order to achieve the intended results and respect the specific legal species protection issues? What needs (area, flora, human intervention) have to be fulfilled for the probable target species?
- **Detailed planning and design:** what synergies and conflicts might arise? How will human activity (transport, agriculture, forestry, tourism) influence the corridor's habitat quality?
- **Management and monitoring:** how does the corridor need to be managed and

maintained? How can the ecological functioning of the corridor be monitored and evaluated? How can the corridor's functions be enhanced after completion?

In general, the participants were satisfied with the round table, as a survey of those who attended the 1st event showed. Over 70 % found the workshop interesting



Conclusion on the 2 stakeholder round table events

At the two round tables, which were organised by NABU Niedersachsen, it was apparent that the exchange between environmentalists, conservationists, planners and authorities is fundamental at the professional level.

They succeeded in the first stage, for example, in discussing what optimised route planning would look like in terms of the opportunities for habitat linking from a conservation perspective. Which habitats (specifically in Germany's low mountain regions) are predominantly suitable, how do they differ, what are the risks, disadvantages and opportunities for underground cabling and overhead lines? What can and ought to be bypassed and, e.g. straddled, where is underground cabling the better option? Thanks to the interdisciplinary composition of the round tables, the attendees were able to tackle these themes on a controversial-constructive basis. In the second event, the focus was on the model regions and on developing the opportunities for realisation. It was also important at this stage to present existing examples – including from other countries. On this basis, the

participants determined that the opportunities for implementation can be evaluated realistically – even if the actual contribution to a biotope network always depends on the individual case. Despite this, early incorporation of a review can also lead to additional positive side-effects. For all documentation published in relation to the round tables go to:

<https://niedersachsen.nabu.de/umwelt-und-ressourcen/aktionen-und-projekte/BESTGRID/index.html>

The created “guardrails” can and should be transferred to the planning for the SuedLink pilot project and subsequent specific measures follow.

Cooperation with NABU to establish specific themes demonstrated that the process is important, but must be undertaken as a long-term strategy. General themes were identified by means of the two round tables, which ideally may lead to concrete pilot projects as the planning and approval processes continue.