

Environmental Impact Assessment

Screening

(According to Schedule III of S.L. 549.46)

ERA Reference no.: EA 00018/16
PA Reference no.: PRE-APP
Project Title: Malta-Gozo Tunnel
Location: Malta, Gozo
Screening date: July 2018

1. Description of Proposal

1.1. Outline of project/development

The above-captioned proposal entails the Malta-Gozo Tunnel project. It involves the excavation and construction of a tunnel connecting the islands of Malta and Gozo. Following a preliminary analysis, four tunnel alignment options were taken into consideration. Given that an immersed tube tunnel would result in extensive environmental impacts on the seabed, a bored tunnel is being recommended by the developer. In this regard, the immersed tube tunnel option (see Figure 1 – Option 3) was not considered further.

As from 2016, the developers initiated a process of gathering information on the sub-surface conditions of the proposed tunnel route between Malta and Gozo, in order to establish a geological model of the area under investigation, which eventually will form the basis for the final design of the tunnel. Furthermore, a multibeam echosounding sub-bottom profiler was used to produce a detailed mapping of the sea-floor, which will identify any faults, shallow sediments and any tectonic activity. In addition to these investigations, a survey to investigate fluid seepage in the Malta-Gozo Channel was also carried out, as well as an airborne survey to measure methane and carbon dioxide in the study area. Preliminary coring investigations were completed in February 2018, and the results from these extracted cores together with the analysis from the seismic investigations are currently being incorporated to create a geological model of the area under investigation.

The tunnel alignment and portal locations for Options 1, 2, and 4 in Figure 1 below were thus considered further. The portal locations considered for Options 1, 2 and 4 were as follows (see Figure 1):

- For Option 1: Portals located in Malta on Route 1 on the southern slope of Marfa Ridge, and in Gozo on Route 2 west of Nadur and east of the racecourse, on the ridge just below the Kenuna Tower.
- For Option 2: Portals located in Malta on Route 1 on the southern slope of Marfa Ridge, and in Gozo near the junction of Route 2 and Route 110 north of Mġarr.
- For Option 4: Portals located in Malta near Biskra in the Mellieħa Bay Valley, south of the Natura 200 site and bird sanctuary, with a short connection to Route 1 over agricultural land on the northern slope of Mellieħa Ridge, and in Gozo near the junction of Route 2 and Route 110 north of Mġarr.

Upon review by the developer of the portal options considered, it was concluded that the portal location on the Malta side for Options 1 and 2 would negatively impact the Għadira Nature Reserve, especially during the construction stages of the project. This fact, as well as the inclination to keep the tunnel portal as distant as possible from Natura 2000 sites, prompted the consideration of the portal location for

Option 4 as the baseline portal on the Malta side. Taking into account such considerations, a new proposed tunnel alignment was drawn up (see Figure 2), which resulted by linking through the shortest route possible the portal at L-Imbordin with the portal west of Nadur.

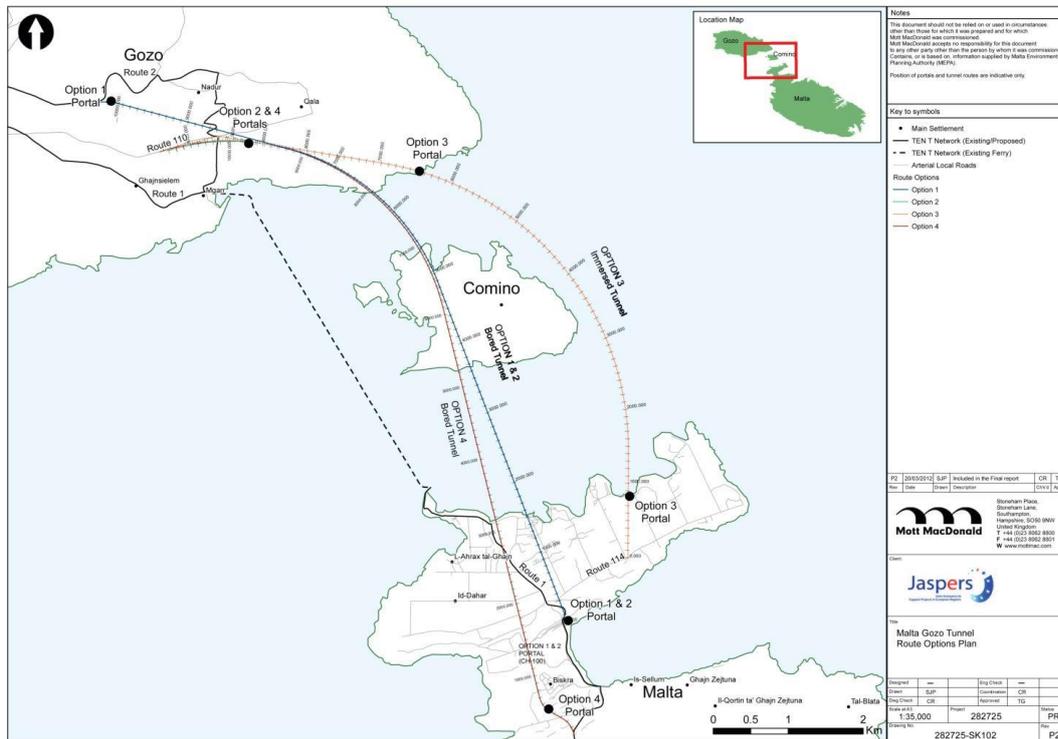


Figure 1 – Preliminary analysis route options



Figure 2 – Proposed tunnel alignment

1.2. Site history

No site history, relevant to this development application, is known of.

2. EIA-relevant history

2.1. Relevant EIA/screening criteria (citations refer to S.L. 549.46, except where otherwise specified):

The proposal qualifies for EIA screening following Schedule I, Category II, Section 2.1.2.1 (Construction, excavation or realignment of roads, tunnels, viaducts or bridges, not covered by Category I, if located ODZ or at the edge of the development zone).

2.2. Documents used for screening:

- 1) Project Description Statement (PDS), referred to ERA on 6th June 2018.

3. Screening Matrix Checklist

The following screening checklist is based on information in the Project Description Statement provided by the developer in accordance with Schedule II of the EIA Regulations (S.L. 549.46) and the European Commission Guidance on Screening (2017).

Question Number:	Questions to be Considered	Types and characteristics of identified potential impacts Briefly describe	Is this likely to result in a significant effect? Briefly justify	Document Reference
1	Will construction, operation, decommissioning or demolition works of the Project involve actions which will cause physical changes in the locality (topography, landuse, changes in water bodies, etc)?	The proposal involves the boring of a tunnel, with a Malta-side portal at L-Imbordin, between Manikata and the Pwales valley, and a Gozo-side portal on the ridge just below the Kenuna Tower, south of Nadur. The tunnel is intended to be a single-tube tunnel with two lanes, one in each direction, and each between 3.25m and 3.50m wide.	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Unclear <input type="checkbox"/> Even though the proposed tunnel will be located underground and therefore not directly affecting the topography of the area, the construction of the proposed tunnel portals and its ancillary connections to the existing or realigned road network, is likely to be significant in terms of topography and land use. Furthermore, the said excavation of the proposed tunnel may potentially affect the present water bodies (refer to Question 11).	PDS p6-11
2	Will construction or operation of the Project use natural resources such as land, water, materials or energy, especially any resources which are non-renewable or in short supply?	It is envisaged that the main material requirement will be concrete, however the exact details on such amounts are unknown at this stage. Nonetheless, extensive amounts of construction materials (e.g. concrete, metal for reinforcement, gravel, asphalt) may be expected in view of the scale of the works.	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Unclear <input type="checkbox"/> Yes. Notwithstanding the nature of the proposal, such expected resource use is likely to be significant.	PDS, p17
3	Will the Project involve the use, storage, transport, handling or production of substances or materials which could be harmful to human health to the environment or raise	Such details are currently not being provided through the project description statement.	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Unclear <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Based on the limited information provided, it is unclear whether the proposal will involve any products, substances or materials which could be harmful to human health or the environment, and in this regard further assessment is required.	PDS

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	concerns about actual or perceived risks to human health?			
4	Will the Project produce solid wastes during construction, operation or decommissioning?	<p>Yes. Given that the proposal entails tunnel boring, the main waste stream will be excavated rock material, accounting for an envisaged 1,000,000 m³ of rock. It is being opted to deal with such waste locally.</p> <p>In the eventuality that the tunnel boring technique would involve blasting, such works would generate additional waste types, due to the use of explosives.</p>	<p>Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Unclear <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>Yes. Even when considering the nature and scale of the proposal, the generation of such amounts of rock waste is considered very substantial and of significance. Furthermore, the short time frame in which the excavated material would need to be managed may aggravate the current situation with regard to the limited void space available locally for backfilling, thus exacerbating pressures for high-impact disposal on the seabed. In this regard, further assessment on such waste management and treatment would be required.</p>	PDS p16 and 21
5	Will the project release pollutants or any hazardous, toxic or noxious substances to air or lead to exceeding Ambient Air Quality standards in Directives 2008/50/EC and 2004/107/EC?	<p>During construction works, machinery are an envisaged source of exhaust emissions. The proposed temporary ventilation systems would discharge such emissions and dust from within the tunnel into the surrounding areas of the tunnel portals.</p> <p>During operations, an AADT of approximately 9000 vehicles is expected. Such vehicles are also expected to be a source of emissions of the afore-mentioned substances to air.</p>	<p>Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Unclear <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>Yes. Given the envisaged traffic flows during operations, significant emissions to air are envisaged which would require further assessment.</p>	PDS p5 and 21

Question Number:	Questions to be Considered	Types and characteristics of identified potential impacts Briefly describe	Is this likely to result in a significant effect? Briefly justify	Document Reference
6	Will the Project cause noise and vibration or the releasing of light, heat, energy or electromagnetic radiation?	<p>During the construction phase, the tunnel boring works (and to a lesser extent also the ventilation equipment) are envisaged to be a source of noise and vibrations, especially on the landsides of the tunnel at the proposed portal locations and the areas above the tunnel path.</p> <p>During operations, the envisaged traffic flows may potentially increase ambient noise levels at the tunnel portal locations.</p> <p>With regard to the marine environment, the project is expected to be a source of impulsive and continuous underwater noise, both during the construction and operational phase.</p>	<p>Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Unclear <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>During construction works, potentially significant impacts are envisaged from noise and vibration generation on the surrounding areas of the tunnel portals and the areas above the tunnel path.</p> <p>During operations, due to the high level of traffic flows envisaged to pass through the tunnel, potentially significant noise levels may occur at the tunnel portals.</p> <p>With regard to the marine environment, it is unclear whether such tunnel boring works and operational pressures may adversely affect the marine environment, in terms of underwater noise generation.</p>	PDS p22-23
7	Will the Project lead to risks of contamination of land or water from releases of pollutants onto the ground or into surface waters, groundwater, coastal waters or the sea?	<p>Groundwater is present within the mean sea level aquifer and the perched aquifer. Potential discharges of polluted material may occur during both the construction and operational phases.</p> <p>With regard to the construction phase, the potential disposal of excavated material at sea, may potentially release pollutants into the marine waterbody MTC 103.</p>	<p>Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Unclear <input checked="" type="checkbox"/></p> <p>It is unclear to what extent any potential discharges may affect land, surface water, ground water or other water bodies.</p> <p>The potential impacts on the marine water body MTC 103, due to potential release of pollutants from the disposal of excavation waste to sea, would require an assessment on the status of the said water body in relation to the Water Framework Directive (WFD).</p>	PDS p21-22
8	Will there be any risk of accidents during construction or operation of the Project which could affect human health or the environment?	The proposal entails the boring and construction of an underground tunnel, of which a large portion will be located under the seabed surface. Such projects are inherently linked to a certain risk to human health or the environment, in case of default, geotechnical	<p>Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Unclear <input checked="" type="checkbox"/></p> <p>Given the potential risk of default or accidents, and given that the greater part of the tunnel will be located underneath the seabed, it is unclear to what extent such impacts would imply potential risk to human</p>	PDS

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		problems, or abnormal (e.g. seismic) events both during the construction and operational phases.	health and the environment, during both construction and operation.	
9	Will the Project result in environmentally related social changes for example, in demography, traditional lifestyles, employment?	Yes. The proposal is envisaged to increase connectivity between Malta and Gozo and therefore open up direct vehicular traffic to the island of Gozo. Such increase may potentially pose pressures on the traditional lifestyle, demography and employment in Gozo.	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Unclear <input type="checkbox"/> Yes. Such envisaged changes by opening up vehicular traffic between Malta and Gozo may affect the traditional lifestyle, demography and employment.	PDS
10	Are there any such factors which should be considered such as the consequential development which could lead to environmental impacts or the potential for cumulative impacts with other existing or planned activities in the locality?	Yes - Reply to question 9 refers. The following consequential factors are being considered: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Direct consequential requirements (short/long-term) e.g. realignment or upgrading of existing roads that will be connected to the tunnel; • Shifting of vehicular traffic away from current routes and towards the new portals; • Pressures for upgrading of existing roads (or new roads) to cater for increases in direct traffic to Gozo; • Complex longer-term implications (including development pressures induced by increased accessibility and by demographic shifts, etc); and • Unclear implications vis-à-vis redundancy of current insularity-based services, and replacement with new/altered land/sea uses. 	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Unclear <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> It is unclear to what extent the proposed development may create pressures for such consequential factors which may lead to (cumulative) environmental impacts.	PDS
11	Is the project located within or close to any areas which	The site of the proposed development is located within the following protected areas:	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Unclear <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	PDS, p23

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	are protected under international, EU or national or local legislation for their ecological, landscape, cultural or other value, which could be affected by the Project?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MT0000112: Il-Bahar ta' madwar Ghawdex - Special Protection Area (SPA): hosting seabirds <i>Calonectris diomedea</i>, <i>Puffinus yelkouan</i>; and • MT0000105: Żona fil-Baħar bejn il-Ponta ta' San Dimitri – Special Area of Conservation (SAC) - hosting <i>Posidonia</i> beds, sandbanks, reefs and submerged seacaves, the loggerhead turtle, <i>Gibbula nivosa</i> and the bottlenose dolphin. <p>Furthermore, the marine portion of the site is located within the WFD marine water body MTC103. The proposed tunnel would be excavated underneath the L-Għadira reserve and inland water body MT402 and major road cuttings are envisaged to take place behind the hinterland of the Is-Simar reserve and inland water body (MT401) (S.L. 549.100).</p>	<p>Whilst no direct marine habitat loss due to the construction of the tunnel in the marine environment is envisaged, it is unclear whether the proposed tunnel may affect the present marine fauna, especially in terms of envisaged underwater noise, both during the construction and the operational phase.</p> <p>Furthermore, it is unclear whether disposal at sea is being considered. This may affect present habitats and the quality of the referred water bodies and potentially other water bodies away from the site. With regard to inland water bodies, it is unclear whether the excavation and construction of the tunnel may impact the protected inland water bodies at L-Għadira and Is-Simar, which in its turn may affect the protected habitats and species.</p> <p>The proposed construction of the tunnel portals may potentially affect the inland escarpment (and their rupestral, maquis and cave habitats) near the proposed locations, especially at L-Imbordin. Furthermore, depending on the actual tunnel levels and their required headroom, it is unclear whether there is a residual possibility of additional breaches away from the tunnel portals (especially where there are intervening valleys, such as on the Malta side between L-Arġentier and Mellieħa (also refer to Question 1).</p>	
12	Are there any areas on or around the location which are important or sensitive for reasons of their ecology	Reply to question 11 refers.	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Unclear <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <hr/> Reply to question 11 refers.	PDS, p23

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	e.g. marshlands, wetlands, watercourses or other water bodies, the coastal zone, mountains, forests or woodlands, which could be affected by the Project?			
13	Are there any areas on or around the location which are used by protected, important or sensitive species of fauna or flora e.g. for breeding, nesting, foraging, resting, overwintering, migration, which could be affected by the Project?	Reply to question 11 refers.	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Unclear <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Reply to question 11 refers.	PDS, p23
14	Are there any inland, coastal, marine or underground waters (or features of the marine environment on or around the location which could be affected by the Project?	Reply to questions 11 refers.	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Unclear <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Reply to question 11 refers.	PDS, p23
15	Are there any areas or features of high landscape or scenic value on or around the location which could be effected by the Project?	Even though the portal locations are not located in an area designated as Area of High Landscape Value (AHLV), these areas are considered having a relatively sensitive landscape.	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Unclear <input type="checkbox"/> The construction of the proposed tunnel portals and its ancillary connections to the existing or realigned road network, is likely to affect such sensitive landscapes, taking into consideration the topographic and geotechnical characteristics of the tunnel portal locations.	PDS

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16	Are there any routes or facilities on or around the location which are used by the public for access to recreation or other facilities, which could be affected by the Project?	The proposed tunnel will be linked to the existing Ten-T road network in Malta and Gozo. The proposed Gozo tunnel portal will be connected directly to the Ta' Xhajma main road, which is not considered to be used by the public for access to recreation. On the other hand, the Malta tunnel portal is in the vicinity of the area above L-Arġentier, which is popular for informal rural recreation.	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Unclear <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Whilst noting that such project will inherently be linked and designed in view of the plans of the Ten-T road network project, it is unclear whether the construction of the Malta tunnel portal and its ancillary connections to the existing or realigned road network may affect the said area above L-Arġentier, which is popular for informal rural recreation.	PDS p5
17	Are there any transport routes on or around the location which are susceptible to congestion or which cause environmental problems, which could be affected by the Project?	The proposed tunnel will be linked to the existing Ten-T road network in Malta and Gozo. The main objective of the proposal is to increase connectivity between Malta and Gozo. Currently the Mġarr, Għajn Tuffieha, and Manikata roads are subject to congestion on weekend days. Gozo-bound traffic is generating current pressures on the Xemxija, Għadira and Mellieha roads.	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Unclear <input type="checkbox"/> The proposed development is likely to generate increased traffic flows in Gozo and therefore increasing pressures on the present road network. Furthermore, the Gozo-bound traffic is likely to shift towards Mġarr, Għajn Tuffieha and Manikata roads, which are already subject to congestion on weekend. On the other hand, a reduction in traffic (especially Gozo-bound traffic) is likely, translating into a minimisation of existing impacts and pressures, at Xemxija, L-Imbordin, Mellieha and Għadira.	PDS p5
18	Is the Project in a location where it is likely to be highly visible to many people?	Reply to Question 15 refers. Whilst noting that the main portion of the proposed development entails the construction of an underground tunnel, which would not be visible, the proposed tunnel portals will be constructed in an area with a relatively sensitive landscape. It is unclear at this stage, whether any queuing areas or car parks for the operational phase, which would be highly visible within the sensitive surroundings, are likely to be	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Unclear <input type="checkbox"/> Yes. Reply to Question 15 refers. The proposed tunnel portals are likely to be highly visible and may affect the sensitive visual amenity of the area. During the construction phase, a highly visible construction site would be present including machinery for the extensive excavation and construction works. Furthermore, such unclear consequential requirements for queuing areas or car parks would require further assessment in terms of their visual impacts.	PDS p6-11

Question Number:	Questions to be Considered	Types and characteristics of identified potential impacts Briefly describe	Is this likely to result in a significant effect? Briefly justify	Document Reference
		consequential requirement for the proposed development.		
19	Are there any areas or features of historic or cultural importance on or around the location that could be affected by the Project?	Whilst noting that the proposed tunnel portals are not located near formal areas of archaeological importance or world heritage sites, there are various caves in the escarpment at L-Argentier some of which are of cultural heritage significance (former cave dwellings) both individually and as part of the wider rural-culture aspect of the landscape.	<p>Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Unclear <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>The proposal may potentially affect the said caves in the escarpment at L-Argentier, given their cultural heritage significance and the proposed extensive excavation works.</p> <p>With regard to the marine environment, the proposal is not envisaged to directly affect the seabed and any present deposits or artefacts of archaeological importance.</p> <p>Furthermore, there is always the risk of unexpected archaeological discoveries of features of historic or cultural importance during the construction works. Such impacts should be subject to the proper monitoring of any archaeological discoveries during the construction phase.</p>	PDS
20	Is the Project located in a previously undeveloped area where there will be loss of greenfield/ODZ land?	Yes. The proposed tunnel portals are located outside of development zones and the loss of natural land is envisaged, both at the Malta and Gozo sides.	<p>Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Unclear <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>Reply to Question 1 refers.</p>	PDS, p23
21	Are there existing land uses on or around the location e.g. homes, gardens, other private property, industry,	Yes. Reply to question 9 refers. The envisaged increase in connectivity between Malta and Gozo may potentially	<p>Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Unclear <input checked="" type="checkbox"/></p> <p>It is unclear to what extent such increase in connectivity between the Islands of Malta and Gozo</p>	PDS, p23

Question Number:	Questions to be Considered	Types and characteristics of identified potential impacts Briefly describe	Is this likely to result in a significant effect? Briefly justify	Document Reference
	commerce, recreation, public open space, community facilities, agriculture, forestry, tourism, mining or quarrying which could be affected by the project?	indirectly affect certain land uses due to increase or decrease in pressures. Furthermore, direct land take-up will occur due to the construction of the tunnel portals. Such locations are currently occupied by predominantly agricultural use.	may potentially put pressures on certain land uses, due to increases in visitors or users.	
22	Are there any plans for future land uses within or around the location which could be affected by the Project?	Reply to Question 21 refers.	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Unclear <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Reply to Question 21 refers.	PDS, p23
23	Are there any areas on or around the location which are densely populated or built-up, that could be affected by the project?	The only interventions on the surface, being the tunnel portals, will occur well outside densely populated urban areas. Nevertheless, increased traffic may potentially affect densely populated areas in the surrounding area (reply to Question 17 refers).	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Unclear <input type="checkbox"/> Reply to Question 17 refers.	PDS
24	Are there any areas on or around the location which are occupied by sensitive land uses e.g. hospitals, schools, places of worship, community facilities which could be affected by the project?	Reply to question 21 refers.	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Unclear <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Reply to question 21 refers.	PDS, p23
25	Are there any areas within or around the location which contain important, high quality or scarce	The locations of the tunnel portals are located in rural areas, occupied by predominantly agricultural use. On the Gozo side, such	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Unclear <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> It is unclear whether the proposal and its direct or indirect (including any cumulative) impacts may affect the present groundwater bodies.	PDS p6-11

Question Number:	Questions to be Considered	Types and characteristics of identified potential impacts Briefly describe	Is this likely to result in a significant effect? Briefly justify	Document Reference
	resources e.g. groundwater, surface waters, forestry, agriculture, fisheries, tourism, minerals, which could be affected by the project?	agriculture use has been identified to be of high value. Furthermore, the tunnel will pass through underground aquifers, which constitute important natural capital of the Maltese Islands. Reply to Question 7 refers.		
26	Are there any areas within or around the location which are already subject to pollution or environmental damage e.g. where existing legal environmental standards are exceeded that could be affected by the project?	Reply to Question 5 and 17 refers.	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Unclear <input type="checkbox"/> Yes. Certain existing latent traffic-generated hotspots of air pollution, may be affected by the envisaged increase traffic flows, and therefore lead to potential increase in pollution levels (whilst others may reduce)	PDS
27	Is the project location susceptible to earthquakes, or subsidence, landslides, erosion, flooding or extreme or adverse climatic conditions e.g. temperature inversions, fogs, severe winds, which could cause the project to present environmental problems?	There is the possibility of seismic activity in the area, which could pose potential risks on the tunnel which will be excavated underneath the seabed. Active faults in the channel between Gozo and Comino may be present which could cause difficulties for the tunnel construction.	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Unclear <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> It is unclear to what extent seismic activities and a present fault may affect the proposed tunnel. Such impacts require further assessment.	PDS

4. Screening Conclusion and recommended way forward

4.1. EIA Screening

The above EIA screening concludes that the proposed development qualifies for an EIA as per Schedule I, Category II, Section 2.1.2.1 of the EIA Regulations, 2017 (S.L. 549.46). The EIA Report would need to assess the following aspects:

- Potential impacts due to physical changes in terms of topography and land use (specifically at the locations of the proposed tunnel portals);
- Implication due to the generation and disposal of substantial amounts of excavation waste;
- Potential impacts on air quality due to emissions;
- Potential impacts due to generation of noise and vibrations;
- Potential impacts on the visual properties of the sensitive landscape at the locations of the proposed tunnel portals;
- Implications on the properties of the marine water body MTC103 (such potential impacts require an assessment of status and quality of the said water body, in terms of Article 4(7) of the Water Framework Directive);
- Implications on the properties of the inland water body MT402 (L-Għadira) and the hinterland of MT401 (Is-Simar), due to the proposed excavation and construction of the tunnel;
- Impacts on marine fauna (mobile species), especially due to generation of underwater noise;
- Potential implications on the present land uses, due to the envisaged increase in connectivity between Malta and Gozo;
- Potential impacts due to consequential pressures for additional development;
- Potential impacts on areas of cultural heritage value;
- Potential impacts on human health and environment due to potential accidents or default of the structures; and
- Potential impacts from seismic activity and present faults on the construction and stability of the tunnel.

4.2. Screening in terms of the Flora, Fauna and Natural Habitats Protection Regulations, (S.L. 549.44)

The proposed development will be constructed underneath or near the following Natura 2000 site:

- MT0000112: Il-Bahar ta' madwar Ghawdex - Special Protection Area (SPA);
- MT0000105: Żona fil-Baħar bejn il-Ponta ta' San Dimitri – Special Area of Conservation (SAC);
- MT0000017: Kemmuna, Kemmunett, il-Hagriet ta' Bejn il-Kmiemen u l-Iskoll ta' Taht il-Mazz – SAC and SPA; and
- MT0000015: L-Għadira – SAC and SPA.

In view of the above designations, this proposal has been screened in terms of Regulation 19 of S.L. 549.44. From the information submitted to the ERA, it cannot be ascertained upfront that the proposed development will not adversely affect the protected species, habitats and the overall integrity of the aforementioned protected sites, especially in terms of envisaged noise and vibrations (including underwater noise), potential alterations to the present water table of the protected site at L-Għadira, and potential waste management implications. In this regard, the proposal requires the submission of an Appropriate Assessment (AA) in terms of Regulation 19(1) of the Flora, Fauna and Natural Habitats Protection Regulations, 2006 (S.L. 549.44).

4.3. Screening Disclaimer

The above screening results, the ensuing conclusions and recommendations are without prejudice to any required changes or updates should the development proposal be eventually modified or should the information/assumptions provided turn out to be incorrect. Any deviations of the proposal from this submission would need to be re-assessed and the merits of this screening would need to be re-opened.