

Authority services

8 September 2023

SYKE/2023/1343

Swedish Environmental Protection Agency
registrator@naturvardsverket.se

Reference: : NV-05161-23, Sahavaara mine

Finland's response to the notification regarding the environmental impact assessment for the zoning plan of the Sahavaara mine, Pajala municipality, Sweden

The Finnish Environment Institute hereby acknowledges that Finland has received a notification, dated 1 August 2023, from Sweden in accordance with Article 9 of the Protocol on Strategic Environmental Assessment (Protocol on SEA) to the UN/ECE Convention on Environmental Impact Assessment in a Transboundary Context (Espoo Convention) regarding an environmental impact assessment for the zoning plan of the Sahavaara mine. Pajala municipality intends to draft a zoning plan for the properties Kaunisvaara 1:7 and others to create planning conditions for the development of Kaunis Iron AB's existing mining operations adjacent to the plan area located approximately 17 kilometres north of Pajala central town in Norrbotten County. The current plan area consists of approximately 909 ha in which Kaunis Iron AB means to mine iron ore deposits. The planning area for the current detailed plan has not yet been drawn up and includes the area for the new opencast mine and the transport route to the nearby processing plant in Kaunisvaara, also owned by Kaunis Iron AB.

The Swedish Environmental Protection Agency and Pajala municipality has assessed that the zoning plan confirms the plan document which has been processed in the EIA concerning Kaunis Iron AB's permit application and its associated transboundary EIA procedure. The current plan sets out to regulate the use of land for activities covered by Kaunis Iron AB's permit - which has been appealed - and does not include information that has not yet been covered by the permit application and information that emerged during the main hearing for the permit application. To be pointed out, the Centre for Economic Development, Transport and the Environment (ELY Centre) for Lapland has submitted the appeal regarding the EIA procedure and the permit with regard to the continuation and expansion of mining operations at the Tapuli, Palotieva and Sahavaara quarries and the Kaunisvaara enrichment plant.

According to the Act on Environmental Impact Assessment (252/2017) and the Act on Environmental Impact Assessment of Plans and Programmes of Public Authorities (200/2005), the Finnish Environment Institute is the competent authority in Finland for information and consultation tasks with regard to the Espoo Convention and the Protocol on SEA. The notification was requested as the assessment refers to the Torne River system and describes



how different substances are carried by the surface water from the mining site and the potential dilution on its way to the Muonio River and the Torne River. The Finnish Environment Institute distributed the documents and requested comments from the relevant authorities in Finland.

The Finnish Environment Institute states that Finland wishes to participate in the SEA procedure for the zoning plan of the Sahavaara mine and to continue the transboundary consultations. To ensure that the public and the authorities in Finland are given an opportunity to forward their comments and opinions, the relevant materials are requested in Finnish. The Torne-Muonio River holds significant ecological, economic and cultural importance. The consultation document does not sufficiently present transboundary environmental impacts from Finland's perspective which is wished for the documentation in the further procedure. The following mining areas have been designated in the regional land use plan (Fell Lapland) in Finland: Kalkkikangas, Mannakorpi and Hannukainen. The Hannukainen mine is currently in the permitting process, and as the supplemented permit application for the Hannukainen mine has not yet been sent to the authorities for assessment, it raises uncertainty for assessment of cumulative effects of mining projects in transboundary neighbouring areas.

The ecological status of the water body is high for the Muonio River and good for the Torne River. Mining activities must be planned in such a way that they do not cause significant emissions or hydrological impacts on the Natura 2000 network area of the Torne-Muonio River system or otherwise significantly damage the natural values, the current state of nature, local residents or the level of economic activities related to the Torne-Muonio River. The precautionary principle is pointed out. Chemical-physical, harmful or hazardous substances used or generated in the operation, or the concentration of substances in discharged waters must be taken into consideration. Effects of climate change, extreme weather events and other exceptional situations may threaten the natural values of the environment and pose a risk to ecological status of the water bodies. The impacts of extreme weather events, e.g., dam safety and discharges into the Torne-Muonio River, are not adequately addressed. The raised issues are expected to be addressed in the permitting process.

Head of authority services

Jorma Jantunen

Senior officer,
Point of Contact to the Espoo Convention
and the Protocol on SEA

Laura Aitala-Martesuo



Suomen ympäristökeskus
Finlands miljöcentral
Finnish Environment Institute

This document has been electronically signed. The electronic signatures can be verified from the register office of the Finnish Environment Institute.

For information Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland
Ministry of the Environment



Suomen ympäristökeskus
Finlands miljöcentral
Finnish Environment Institute

Suomen ympäristökeskus | Finlands miljöcentral | Finnish Environment Institute
Latokartanonkaari 11 | 00790 Helsinki | FINLAND
+358 295 251 000 | mailto: kirjaamo@syke.fi | Y-tunnus 0996189-5 | [syke.fi](https://www.syke.fi)