

The construction of the Via Salis D4 is in full swing, it has already employed over 1,000 people

The construction of the D4 highway, the first infrastructure PPP project in the Czech Republic, is proceeding according to plan, both in terms of time and cost. Over 60 percent of the financial resources have been invested on the Hájč-Mirotice route in more than two years since its launch. And this year, the financial volume of the construction process will exceed three quarters.

Significant progress in the work process is heading towards four-fifths of the completed project this year. In the third and most important construction season at the D4, the number of workers and equipment has significantly increased. While there were around 200 people at the D4 at the beginning of the construction season, this number gradually escalated to more than 1,000 workers and 600 machines. During the summer season, these numbers got bigger even more.

A rock massif had to go

During the first half of this year, the largest field work was completed at the D4. In the surroundings of Milín, the rock massif of the Kojetín Hill had to give way to the highway. During the blasting, a total of 43,000 cubic meters of rock were extracted, which are to be reused in earthworks on the D4. It is precisely in connection with the construction activity near Kojetín. The I/4 road is closed there from June 1st until the end of the construction season, and traffic is directed through Milín. This is the most extensive traffic restriction during construction, however it will only last until November this year.



40 bridges are being built

This whole year on the D4 is dedicated to bridges, of which there are a total of 40 on the route. With a length of 32 kilometres, the newly emerging highway has at least one bridge or culvert for every kilometre of the route. While the foundations for these structures were built last year, this year all bridges will be brought to the stage of a completed rough construction. Afterwards, they will be prepared



for insulation and pavement layers, ledges, guardrail installation, drainage and other finishing works.

Two modern rest areas are being created

At the end of summer, the construction of a large operation centre for highway control and maintenance (SSÚK – Operation and Maintenance Centre of the Concessionaire) began at the major Lety intersection, and it will also be the seat of the highway police. The construction of two opposite highway rest areas will soon start near Krsice. Both constructions will serve as an example of Via Salis' ambitious environmental strategy to build the D4 in compliance with strict environmental requirements. The SSÚK building is designed according to a low-energy standard. Electricity will be supplied by photovoltaics. In addition to classic petrol pumps, there will be 16 fast charging stations for electric cars at the rest areas.

Rehabilitation of older sections

In addition to the construction of the new 32 kilometres of D4, this year, Via Salis is also rehabilitating 16 kilometres of other sections put into service between 2004 and 2017. These upgrade construction activities include the removal of the entire asphalt layer in the slow lane, the necessary modifications of unbounded base layers, the patching of cracks in all layers and new filling of the median strip. All milled material will be reused and will become part of the newly produced asphalt mixes to the maximum extent possible. In total, over 150,000 m² of old roads will be repaired in this way.





The PPP D4 project is implemented by Via Salis, a consortium consisting of the French companies VINCI Highways, VINCI Concessions and Meridiam. The investment includes the design, financing, construction and maintenance of 32 km of the D4 highway from Písek

and the modernization and maintenance of another 16 km of connected sections already in operation. The construction of the new highway is divided into five so-called greenfield sections, but work is carried out in all of them at the same time. According to the Agreement with the state, construction will be completed in December 2024, and the consortium will maintain and operate the highway for the next 25 years. The construction work is carried out by DIVia stavební, which belongs to the VINCI Construction CS Group, and the operation and maintenance of the existing 16 kilometres is handled in a special regime from 1 July 2021 by Via Salis Operations, owned by VINCI Highways. The construction officially began in June 2021.



D4 Via Salis is part of an ambitious environmental strategy

The D4 Via Salis is being built as the only large infrastructure in the Czech Republic under the PPP regime, i.e. a partnership between the state and the private sector. However, this is not its only peculiarity. Its other specifics are described by VINCI Highways Executive Director for Central Europe and Via Salis CEO, Christian Biegert.

Did you come across anything unexpected during the last two years of construction? What parts are the most difficult to build?

I'm glad there have not been any big, unexpected surprises so far. It is also thanks to the very good way the state has prepared the project. Undoubtedly, bridge structures, of which there are around 40 on the entire route, represent demanding construction elements. The monolithic bridge over the Skalice river is particularly an interesting one, its length being over 400 meters, makes it one of the longest bridges on the entire route. Among other things, this bridge is unique as it will span a third-class road, a field road, the Skalice river valley as well as the regional railway line. It is also worth mentioning two precast arch bridges that will be used for the wildlife migration. The first one will span the future D4 in the rock cut between the Kojetín hill and Milín, at approximately the 50th kilometre, and the second one, the bypass near Rakovice and Čimelice at km 72. It is also certainly distinctive, that all bridges are being built at the same time, which requires a great mobilization of the bridge teams by the Group VINCI Construction CS. It is also uncommon for D4 to be built simultaneously on all five new "greenfield" sections. In addition, another 16 km of brownfield sections, which were already put into operation, are being rehabilitated.

Ecological aspects are often mentioned in connection with the completion of the D4. What is specific about the project from this point of view?

I think that one of the reasons our project stands out in the context of the Czech highway network, is also because we focus a lot on sustainability in many different forms and the ambitious sustainability action plan has been a part of it from the very beginning.

During the construction, we uphold the principles of circular economy and try to maximize the reuse of extracted materials. At the D4, almost 100% of milled asphalt is recycled. All the soil that had been removed from the future highway route will be used to cover embankments and cuts and ser-

ve as topsoil for farmers. For the construction of the highway base layers, aggregates are mainly used from local sources, reducing above all the emission loads which result from a long-distance transport.



About 15 projects are currently being prepared or implemented, with the aim to fulfil the main environmental goals of our shareholders, VINCI Highways and Meridiam, in the areas of decarbonisation, waste reduction, savings in water consumption, nature protection and the biodiversity enhancement. For instance, we want to replace the traditional monoculture grass along the highway with a special mixture that will create, the so-called, wild meadows. As part of a pilot project, we have already installed the first ten beehives.

Ecological aspects are also reflected in technologies. For example, we envisage the use of photovoltaic panels in our Operation Centre or an exceptional number of charging stations at rest areas.

The government also wants to use the PPP model for the construction of a section of the D35 highway, a high-speed railway, as well as the connection between Prague and the airport. Would you be looking at getting involved in these projects as well?

Yes, there is a lot of talk about these projects. The closest is probably the project to complete the D35 highway. Its construction might be more complicated and extensive than the one for D4. Feasibility studies are currently underway for the railway projects, and they would thus be the first PPP projects within Czech railways. Undoubtedly, we plan to apply for other PPP projects, and we are glad that our project of the D4 completion has become a positive reference.

