



The new international Lisbon airport will be located in Alcochete, instead of OTA, as initially planned. The change of location may delay the beginning of the construction and entail several amendments to the high-speed rail project. However, this major infrastructure, of around €4.9 million, should be completed in 2017, as scheduled.

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Government decides location of the New international Lisbon airport

1. The decision on the location

After several years studying alternative locations, the Portuguese Prime Minister, José Sócrates, announced yesterday that the new international Lisbon airport will be built in Alcochete, on the southern bank of the Tagus river.

The decision to change the location of the new Lisbon airport was taken following the presentation of a comparative study prepared by the National Laboratory of Civil Engineering (*Laboratório Nacional de Engenharia Civil – LNEC*), which concluded that the new location would be preferable to OTA, which was the location where the airport was to be built.

According to LNEC, the choice of Alcochete is preferable to OTA in four of seven criteria, namely, air safety, sustainability of the natural resources, social and economic growth and competitiveness and financial costs. OTA only overcame Alcochete in three categories: the preservation of natural environment and biodiversity, transportation facilities and existing accessibilities. According to the estimated made by LNEC, the construction of the new airport in Alcochete should cost €4.9 million, €200 million less than in the OTA project, which was estimated to cost €5.1 million.

2. Implications of the decision

The construction of the new Lisbon international airport in Alcochete will require changes to the route of the high-speed rail network, which had been planned on the assumption that the new infrastructure would be built on the northern bank of the Tagus.

The new location may also affect the European structural funds that had already been allocated to the original project. However, the Portuguese Government believes that the EU Commission will support the project.

The choice of Alcochete will also lead to the revision of the future location of the third crossing over the Tagus river, which is now expected to link Chelas and Barreiro. According to the Government's briefing of yesterday, this new bridge will include a motorway and a high speed rail track.

3. Future developments

The Minister for Transport and Public Works announced that, although the construction works might commence later, the timetable should not be reviewed so that new airport is operational in 2017.

Following this announcement, the Government will commission a final study on the environmental impact of the construction of the new airport in Alcochete as required under Portuguese and European law.

In any case, it is unlikely that the Government would go back on this decision, as, according to various reports on the issue, although the construction of the new airport in the south bank of the Tagus the environmental impact of the project should be acceptable and can be mitigated.

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