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Public

Environmental and Social Data Sheet

Overview

Project Name:	*EOLMED FLOATING OFFSHORE (PORT-LA-NOUVELLE)*
Project Number:	*2018-0688*
Country:	*FRANCE*
Project Description:	*The Project comprises the construction of a 30 MW floating offshore wind farm circa 15 km off the coast of Gruissan in the Aude region, Occitanie, in France, in 59m-90m water depth. The project will consist of three floating substructures, 10 MW wind turbines and the relevant balance of plant components (intra array cable, anchoring etc). The export cable to the shore and the land route will be installed by the national transmission system operator at the cost of the project company.*
EIA required:	yes
Project included in Carbon Footprint Exercise[1]:	no

Environmental and Social Assessment

Environmental Assessment

The Project is a small demonstration wind farm consisting of three wind turbines on floating semi-submersible foundations. The wind turbines individually have a capacity of 10 MW, a rotor diameter of 164 m and a tip height of 185 m. The floating foundations are each about 44 m wide, with 10 m height above water level and 6 m draft when in operation. The floaters are anchored to the seabed with three catenary mooring lines each. The grid connection facilities consist of a 66 kV cable of ca. 27 km in length – 22 km underwater and 3 km underground – connecting to an existing onshore transforming substation.

By virtue of their technical characteristics, wind farms fall under Annex II of Directive 2014/52/EU amending the EIA Directive 2011/92/EU. Under French law, an EIA including public consultation is mandatory and was duly conducted in 2018, for both the wind farm and the grid connection facilities offshore and onshore. Public consultation was carried out in 2019, with some concern raised by local fishermen that was positively addressed. The environmental permits were for the wind farm as well as its electrical connections were given on 4 December 2019 with a four-month appeal period. The permit has gained legal force without appeal.

[1] Only projects that meet the scope of the Carbon Footprint Exercise, as defined in the EIB Carbon Footprint Methodologies, are included, provided estimated emissions exceed the methodology thresholds: 20,000 tonnes CO2e/year absolute (gross) or 20,000 tonnes CO2e/year relative (net) – both increases and savings.

However, the EIA was conducted and permit given for a slightly different wind farm layout, i.e. for a wind farm of 4 turbines of 6 MW each, instead of 3 turbines of 10 MW each. Therefore, the promoter has sought an amendment of the permit including an assessment of the different environmental impact. The 10 MW wind turbines have a bigger swept area and total height but, at the same time, there are only three instead of four installations. The change in floater size is insignificant. Therefore, it is considered, as supported by the additional assessment, that the environmental impacts are adequately described, despite the change in design. This is to be confirmed by the competent authority with a new appeal period.

The EIA evaluated potential impacts of the project on climate, air and water quality, soil, noise (underwater and over water), safety, benthos and fish; sea mammals; avifauna; electromagnetic fields, socio-economic impacts, visual disturbance; cultural heritage and monitoring. Cumulative impacts are accounted for, as the impacts related to the connecting cable is assessed in the same study, and impacts for the neighbouring demonstration wind farm are accounted for.

The EIA identify some potential negative environmental impacts, for which they propose mitigating measures. The main project impacts relate to bird migration and avifauna and are mitigated by careful siting and wind farm design. For the landing of the sea-cable, sand dunes shall be restored after excavation works. The EIA was reviewed by the competent authorities, on the basis of which they considered that if the mitigating measures are put in place, the project will not have significant environmental impacts.

The EIA includes – following the integrated approach of EIA Directive 2014/52/EU – an Appropriate Assessment (AA) of the impacts on Natura 2000 sites in the light of their respective conservation objectives, as well as proposed measures in order to mitigate these impacts. The sites closest to the project are the FR 9112005: Complexe lagunaire de Salses-Leucate", FR 9102012: Prolongement en mer des caps et étangs de Leucate and FR 9101463: Complexe lagunaire de Salses, all on the shoreline that is being crossed by the electrical connection. All protected sites are inland, meaning they are more than 16 km from the windfarm itself. The AAs have been reviewed by the relevant Competent Authorities, which concluded that the project would not have significant effects with regard to the integrity of these sites, if the proposed mitigating measures are duly put in place.

Being a renewable wind energy power plant, there are no direct emissions of greenhouse gases related to the project. Given the forecasted generation of 100 GWh/yr the emissions saved elsewhere in the system amount to 15.000 tonnes of CO2 equivalent per year, following calculation methodology used by the Bank. Thereby the project falls just short of the threshold to be included in the Bank's Carbon Footprint Exercise.

Social Assessment, where applicable

Public consultation has further been carried out under the EIA process. While there was in general strong support for the project, some concern was raised by local fishermen regarding travel to and from fishing waters.

The promoter has liaised with the local fishing communities and tourism operators in the region to avoid mitigate and compensate for adverse effects. The final location of the wind farm has taken effects on fishing into account with an agreement on compensation.

Other Environmental and Social Aspects

Environmental management during the construction and operation phase will be carried out in conjunction with a Scientific Committee, composed of representatives of the State,

environmental protection associations and scientists. This monitoring programme will cover impacts on seawater quality, benthic species, fish stocks, marine mammals, avifauna, etc. during the periods relevant to each impact. This is undertaken in cooperation and coordination with another floating offshore demonstration farm located outside Port-la-Nouvelle. The monitoring programme will also feed in to the planning of the next phase tenders for large-scale (250-500 MW) floating offshore windfarms in the Mediterranean and the Strategic Impact Assessments (Directive 2001/42/EC) and Maritime Spatial Planning (Directive 2014/89/EU) to be undertaken.

The promoter has a sound environmental management capability, a good understanding of regulatory and environmental monitoring requirements, as well as adequate knowledge of the mitigating measures to be performed during construction, notably in light of the detailed studies undertaken on the subject. In light of this, the promoter's environmental capacity is considered adequate.

Conclusions and Recommendations

For its size, the project has undergone a thorough environmental assessment and has an ambitious monitoring programme that is also meant to provide information for future development of floating offshore wind in the French Mediterranean.

Final approval of the amended permit application with the final project design should be a condition for signing the Bank's finance contract. To this extent the project is acceptable for EIB financing in E&S terms.