

Environmental and Social Data Sheet

Overview

Project Name:	FRENCH 5G ROLLOUT
Project Number:	2020-0032
Country:	France
Project Description:	The project relates to the first phase of the deployment of a new 5G network in France, as well as the coverage expansion of 4G services in rural areas to mitigate the country's digital divide.
EIA required:	no
Project included in Carbon Footprint Exercise ¹ :	no

(details for projects included are provided in section: "EIB Carbon Footprint Exercise")

Environmental and Social Assessment

Environmental Assessment

The project consists of three main components:

- 1) Deployment of 5G radio access network (RAN) nodes and associated equipment, mostly in existing towers and rooftop sites in densely populated areas;
- 2) Deployment of new 4G sites in rural areas that currently do not have access to mobile broadband services; and
- 3) Upgrade of the promoter's core network to 5G, first on a non-standalone model and later in the project to 5G standalone operation.

Activities included in components 1 and 3 mainly involve installation of equipment in existing infrastructures (towers, rooftop sites and other radio access and core network buildings) that will not change their scope due to the project. These installations will typically be located in urban areas and might require minor refurbishment or adaptation works, which are not expected to have a significant negative environmental impact. These activities are not specifically mentioned in the EIA Directive 2011/92/EU as amended by 2014/52/EU on Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA), though the parts of the project might be covered by Annex II of the Directive in relation to urban development. However, the promoter confirmed that none of the sites exceeds the size threshold to qualify as an urban development project under the relevant national legislation (French Code de l'Environnement, which transposed the EIA Directive into national legislation).

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.

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Regarding component 2, the project may include the construction of a small number of new mobile sites (masts, etc.) in Natura 2000 or other environmentally sensitive areas (seaside, protected forestry). In this case, as part of the permitting process, the project is presented to the regional technical and environmental authorities (DDT - Direction Départementale Technique and DREAL - Direction Régionale de l'Environnement, de l'Aménagement et du Logement) that determine the conditions and mitigation measures required to approve or not the proposed site deployment.

During the operations phase, the main potential impact would be related to exposure to EMF (Electro Magnetic Field) emissions by RAN equipment. Studies continue to be conducted to further assess the potential long-term effects of exposure to EMF emissions on human health. So far, mitigation measures adopted are limits to the radiation of the mobile base stations and restrictions to their locations. France has adopted exposure limits aligned with the ones stipulated by the EU recommendation (1999/519/EC), which is based on the ICNIRP (International Commission on Non-Ionizing Radiation Protection) 1998 guidelines. ICNIRP has recently stated that in terms of the 5G exposure levels measured so far, its 1998 guidelines would also provide protection for the frequency bands that the promoter's network would use. To verify compliance with the exposure limits, the French National Frequency Agency (ANFR) performs audits at the request of citizens and city councils. During 2019, ANFR performed 3,020 measurements, which were below the regulatory thresholds. In addition, some specific measurement campaigns are done in schools and municipal squares and parks for the ministry of environment and sustainable development. From its part, the promoter also performs proactive audits on its radiofrequency stations. In particular, during 2019, the promoter did 2,258 measurements that confirmed compliance with the regulation. Finally, if relevant, visual nuisance due to towers and rooftops is mitigated by following the corresponding requirements of the ABF (Architectes de Bâtiments de France) that is consulted as part of the permitting process and may impose height restrictions, specific disguising site formations (tree shape, chimney, etc.) and other similar measures.

Other Environmental and Social Aspects

The promoter is strongly committed to reducing the environmental impact of its activities. Three major Bouygues Telecom sites currently have environmental certifications: the Montigny-le-Bretonneux data centre (ISO 50001), the company's headquarters in Meudon and the customer relations centre in Printania (both ISO 50001 and HQE – Haute Qualité Environnementale). Moreover, the promoter is a signatory, through Bouygues group, of the UN Global Compact since 2003.

Conclusions and Recommendations

The project consists mostly of the installation of telecommunications equipment in existing sites already approved for such purposes, including also a smaller component of newly built sites. Potential environmental impact during construction is expected to be limited and, where applicable, the relevant environmental authorities will determine the required mitigation measures as a condition to approve the project. The environmental impact of mobile networks during operations is mainly related to electromagnetic field (EMF) emissions that are mitigated by operation under the exposure limits determined by the regulation and based on the best science currently available.

Therefore, the project has been classified as acceptable in environmental and social terms for the Bank's financing.