

Environmental and Social Data Sheet

Overview

Project Name: Veneto Water Utilities ABS
Project Number: 20200219
Country: Italy
Project Description: Investments in water and wastewater infrastructure in the Veneto Region during the period 2020 - 2023.

EIA required: yes

Project included in Carbon Footprint Exercise¹: no

Environmental and Social Assessment

Environmental Assessment

The project concerns the 2020-2023 water and wastewater investment programme of a group of utilities, namely Azienda Gardesana Servizi, Acquevenete, Livenza Tagliamento Acque, Viacqua, Alto Trevigiano Servizi and Piave Servizi (i.e. ‘the Promoters’) providing Integrated Water Services (“IWS”) in various service areas of the Veneto Region. The utilities operate in the framework of in-house agreements lasting until between 2031 and 2039.

The activities of the Promoters are under the supervision of the local authorities and the national economic regulator (“ARERA”). In terms of environmental regulation, the Regional Agency for Environmental Protection and Prevention of Veneto (ARPA Veneto) is mainly responsible for monitoring the quality of water bodies. The Health Authority (“ASL”) is responsible for monitoring compliance with the drinking water quality standards and the requirements of the Drinking Water Directive 98/83/EC on the quality of water intended for human consumption.

The project consists of numerous small to medium size investments aimed at expanding and upgrading the existing water supply, wastewater collection and treatment systems. The purpose of the project is twofold: (i) increase the efficiency and reliability of the water systems, and (ii) enhance the performance of wastewater collection and treatment services to ensure compliance with European and regional environmental requirements.

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.

The 30-year master plans of the various service areas (*Piano d'Ambito* – “PdA”) are the planning frameworks of the underlying investment programmes. They comprise amongst others, the business plan (*Piano economico-finanziario*) and the three-year investment plan (*Programma di Interventi* – “PdI”) of the providers of IWS in the relevant service areas, updated and approved by the Local Authority on a regular basis. The revision of the PdI is not subject to a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) in accordance with the requirements of the SEA Directive 2014/52/EC. However, the project is designed to meet the requirements of the *Piano di Tutela delle Acque della Regione Veneto* (“PTA” - last revision in 2018), which is part of the national implementation of the Water Framework Directive 2000/60/EC, hence subjected to a SEA.

The project will deliver substantial environmental quality improvements in the form of a higher ecological quality of surface and groundwater resources and a more rational use of water resources that outweigh the negative impacts, which occur mainly during construction (e.g. noise, dust, traffic). None of the works will be implemented inside or near Natura 2000 or other protected sites. Some schemes might fall under Annex II of the Environmental Impact Assessment (“EIA”) Directive 2014/52/EU amending the EIA Directive 2011/92/EU. Therefore, the decision whether an EIA is required is left to the Competent Authority (the Region of Lombardy), on the basis of the criteria defined in Annex III of the EIA Directive.

Finally, the project will contribute to Climate Adaptation and Mitigation by supporting investments that increase resilience to climate related risks and reduced GHG emissions.

Social Assessment, where applicable

By increasing the quality and reliability of water and wastewater collection and treatment services, the project is expected to bring substantial health advantages and environmental quality improvements to the population in the project areas, thereby increasing the quality of life of the population. Negative social impacts are only temporary (e.g. occupation of public and private space, safety hazards during construction, traffic, noise) and will be addressed as part of the planning for the implementation of each scheme.

Public Consultation and Stakeholder Engagement

The Promoters will be requested to ensure compliance with national and European environmental legislation, notably to facilitate public access to environmental information and guarantee public consultation during the environmental decision process, where relevant, in accordance with the Aarhus Convention.

Other Environmental and Social Aspects

During the project’s due diligence, the Promoters have demonstrated sound practice with respect to environmental, health and safety management. In addition to procedures to meet regulatory requirements, the utilities have a comprehensive environmental management system, which is applied to new projects and monitors ongoing operations.

Conclusions and Recommendations

The project is driven by the requirement to ensure compliance with relevant EU environmental directives and it will also contribute towards improved climate resilience and emissions reductions. All schemes under the project will be subject to the Promoter's compliance with the following requirements:

1. The Promoter undertakes not to allocate Bank funds to project schemes that require a full EIA until the EIA and/or the necessary nature assessment have been finalised and approved by the relevant competent authority. Once any EIA is available, the promoter will provide the Bank with an electronic copy of its Non-Technical Summary (NTS) and full copy of the EIA, for publication on the EIB website.
2. The Promoter shall not commit any EIB funds against any scheme that impacts nature conservation sites, without receiving from the relevant competent authorities the declaration under Art. 6(3) of the Habitats Directive that there are no significant effects and informing the Bank of such declaration having been obtained.
3. The Promoter undertakes to provide to the Bank, if requested, any decision and subsequent justification that screen out project schemes from the requirement of a full EIA as well as the decisions issued by the competent authorities regarding the Habitats and Birds Directives.

Under these conditions, the operation is acceptable for EIB financing in environmental and social terms.