European Investment Bank

Luxembourg, 29 August 2023

Environmental and Social Data Sheet

Overview

Project Name:	LMT NETWORK DEVELOPMENT
Project Number:	2022-0072
Country:	LATVIA
Project Description:	The project concerns investments in the capacity expansion and technological upgrade of the promoter's mobile network towards a Very High Capacity Network (VHCN). It will result in the rollout of 150 5G sites in densely populated areas and 690 5G sites in rural areas, and the deployment of increasing capacity for the 4G network, as well as investments in the core network and fibre optic backhaul. Finally, the project also included investments in IT systems and cybersecurity.
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 in existing towers in rural areas and rooftop sites in densely populated areas, to increase coverage of 5G;
2) Deployment of additional 4G equipment to increase capacity in sites where 4G is already available;
3) Deployment of new 4G/5G sites, mostly rooftop, and just around 15 cell towers; and
4) Upgrade of the promoter’s core network to 5G standalone operation model as well as other investments in IT.

Activities included in components 1, 2 and 4 mainly involve installation of equipment in existing infrastructures (towers, rooftop sites and other radio access and core network buildings), so will not require material construction works, beyond minor refurbishment or adaptations, and are not expected to have a significant environmental impact. Project component number 3 will include construction of a small number of cell towers in rural areas to expand the coverage of 4G/5G mobile broadband services. The potential impacts of these construction activities are typically related to noise and dust generation, which are mitigated through the application of best building practices. According to the promoter’s project definition, none of these towers are planned to be located in Natura 2000 areas. Given the location of these activities, apart from the analysis of the EMF (Electro Magnetic Field) emissions by radio equipment, the Latvian authorities do not require a specific environmental study for their approval.

[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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During the operations phase, the main potential impact would be related to exposure to these EMF emissions. Studies continue to be conducted to further assess the potential long-term effects of exposure to EMF on human health. So far, mitigation measures adopted are limits to the radiation of the mobile base stations. In Latvia the assessment and limitation of exposure to EMF is regulated by the Cabinet Regulation No. 637 of 16 October 2018, which is based on the exposure limits stipulated by the EU recommendation (1999/519/EC). Before installation of new radio equipment, the operator has to calculate the expected EMF emission levels and ensure that they are under the defined thresholds. Upon commencing the operation of the equipment, the Health Inspectorate of Latvia requires operators to perform measurements and a specialist certification to confirm the compliance of the actual EMF emission levels with the specified limit values.

The GHG emissions of the project have been estimated at 3.72 (absolute) and 0 (relative) kt CO_2eq/year. Both values are under the threshold for the Carbon Footprint Exercise.

The project is fully aligned with the Paris Agreement on climate change according to the Bank's definition (Annex 2 Table H of EIB's climate bank roadmap - CBR).

As a corporate, the counterpart is in scope but screened out of the PATH Framework because it is neither a high emitting nor a highly vulnerable entity.

Other Environmental and Social Aspects

The promoter has developed an integrated quality, environmental and information security management system that has been certified according to requirements of international standards ISO 9001, ISO 14001 and ISO/IEC 27001. In addition, LMT's occupational health and safety policy is certified according to ISO 450001.

Conclusions and Recommendations

The project consists mainly of the installation of telecommunications equipment in existing sites already approved for such purposes, and a small component involving newly built sites. Potential environmental impact during construction is expected to be limited and mitigated through application of industry-standard practices. The environmental impact of mobile networks during operations is mainly related to electromagnetic field (EMF) emissions that are mitigated by operating under the exposure limits set by the Regulation and based on the best scientific evidence currently available.

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