

Environmental and Social Data Sheet

Overview

Project Name:	EUROPEAN COMMISSION TRAINING & CONFERENCE CENTRE		
Project Number:	2019-0188		
Country:	Belgium		
Project Description:	Financing of a new training and conference centre for the European Commission in Brussels to replace the current obsolete Borschette centre.		
EIA required:	yes		
Project included in Carbon Footprint Exercise ¹ :	no		

Environmental and Social Assessment

Environmental Assessment

The project comprises the construction of the new European Commission Training and Conference Centre. It will replace the Albert Borschette Centre, which will cease operation, and will allow the operational optimization of the European Commission's current facilities with similar use in Brussels.

Construction of buildings with training or conference centre use are not specifically mentioned in the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) Directive 2011/92/EU as amended by Directive 2014/52/EU, though the project is covered by Annex II of the Directive in relation to urban development. Based on the project's floor area and the number of parking spaces, an EIA is required. The Promoter confirms that an EIA has been carried out for the entire development, which comprises, besides the Conference Centre, an office development with commercial spaces, the demolition of a vacant office building, and the rehabilitation of a small-scale vacant building whose façade is included in the architectural heritage inventory. The EIA supersedes the assessment prepared for a previous version of the project that received an environmental permit. The Promoter adapted the project to follow the recommendations by the relevant authorities and submitted the updated urban planning and environmental permit applications in July 2023. EIB has received a copy of the EIA report, as well as the urban and environmental permit dossiers.

The new building will be highly energy efficient. In more detail, the Primary Energy Demand (PED), defining the energy performance of the building resulting from the construction, will be at least 10 % lower than the threshold set for the nearly zero-energy building (NZEB) requirements in the Brussels region measures implementing Directive 2010/31/EU. The energy savings and GHG emissions' reduction will be greater when comparing the new building with the energy intensive Albert Borschette Conference. A highly insulated building envelope along with the on-site renewable energy apparatus will reduce the energy demand and the resulting operational GHG emissions.

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.

Luxembourg, 23 November 2023

The EIA report outlines the climate-related hazards that are material to the project, such as floods and heatwaves, with emphasis on the urban heat island effect. The design includes measures to increase the resilience of the building, such as horizontal and vertical landscaped areas that enhance the microclimate around the building, and storm water management system that address the localised flooding risk.

The project is targeting the BREEAM Excellent green building certification, illustrating the Promoter's holistic approach to the building's environmental, social, and economic sustainability performance during its lifecycle.

The project meets the criteria set out in the Climate Bank Roadmap 2021-2025 for construction of new buildings, and as such is considered aligned to the goals of the Paris Agreement, both in terms of low-carbon and climate-resilient development pathways.

Public Consultation and Stakeholder Engagement

The public consultation process refers to both the urban and the environmental permits simultaneously. The first part of the process, the public inquiry ("enquête publique"), took place between August 30 and September 28, 2023. During those days the permit documents (urban and environmental) were made publicly available for consultation. For the second and last part of the process, the most recent consultation committee ("Commission de Concertation") took place on November 29, 2023. It is a meeting with members of the regional administrations (city of Brussels, urban, environmental and heritage administrations at a regional level), the Promoter and any other stakeholder, such as citizens or associations interested in the project.

Other Environmental and Social Aspects

The new European Commission Training and Conference Centre will be an enabler of the European Union's activities, supporting the decision-making process in the development and implementation of EU policies, including expert meetings, comitology meetings, and consultations with partners.

The development will take place in a currently underutilised plot and includes the removal of asbestos from a vacant office building that will be demolished. The new building will restore the currently broken continuity of the street façades along two parallel roads (rue de Loi and rue Jacques de Lalaing) in the European Quartier of the city. It also provides a landscaped public pedestrian link between these roads, thus enhancing the transversal pedestrian movement in the urban fabric.

Conclusions and Recommendations

The European Commission is responsible for, will own and operate, directly or indirectly, the future building foreseen in this financing. The project is subject to an environmental impact assessment procedure, as per Directive 2011/92/EU as amended by Council Directive 2014/52/EU. Before the disbursement of funds, the Bank shall receive a copy of the development consent, comprising a copy of the environmental and urban permits.

In addition to its high energy performance, the project is targeting the BREEAM Excellent certification, which assesses the environmental quality through a standardised measure of environmental impacts. The design phase assessment indicates high ambition in the environmental sections of energy, transportation, water, biodiversity and pollution. The Promoter shall provide a copy of the post construction review of the BREEAM rating and a copy of the certificate that will be awarded, along with a copy of the final energy performance certificate and the building envelope tests for the airtightness and thermal integrity.

With the proposed conditions in place, this project is acceptable for Bank financing from an environmental, climate and social perspective.