

Luxembourg, 14/07/2025

## Environmental and Social Data Sheet

### Overview

Project Name: SECOND INTERCONNECTOR MALTA SICILIA  
 Project Number: 2023-0582  
 Country: Malta-Italy  
 Project Description: Construction of a new 122km long HV electrical sub-sea cable interconnection between Magħtab in Malta and Ragusa in Sicilia

EIA required: yes

Project included in Carbon Footprint Exercise<sup>1</sup>: no  
 (details for projects included are provided in section: "EIB Carbon Footprint Exercise")

### Environmental and Social Assessment

The second interconnector between Malta and Sicily (IC2) is a 122 km alternating current cable link, operated at a nominal 220 kV, 50 Hz voltage between the existing Enemalta terminal station in Magħtab, Malta and the existing Terna's substation at Contrada Cimillà in Ragusa, Sicily. All the cables portions will be underground or undersea with a maximum depth of about 170 m.

#### Environmental Assessment

Given its technical characteristics, the Project does not fall under either Annex I or Annex II of the EIA Directive 2011/92/EU amended by directive 2014/52/EU. The Project was subject to different permitting procedures in Malta and Italy, as described in the below paragraphs.

All the main contracts for the works of the Project are signed and all the main permits are granted.

The Project qualifies as "Climate Action" in accordance with the criteria adopted for electricity transmission networks in the EU. Furthermore, the investments are expected to increase the RES ("Renewable Energy Sources") hosting capacity of the grid thereby contributing to CO<sub>2</sub> emissions reductions in the Project's carbon footprint.

The sources of CO<sub>2</sub> equivalent emissions for the Project are the ohmic losses in the substations and in the cables of the Project and the indirect emissions resulting from the losses in the rest of the network. The corresponding average absolute emissions are estimated at 7 kt CO<sub>2</sub> equivalent per year while the relative emissions savings are estimated at 6 kt CO<sub>2</sub> equivalent per year.

#### Malta

ERA (Malta Environment and Resources Authority) requires a screening for the project as per Environmental Impact Assessment Regulations (S.L. 549.46) and as a result an EIA study has been performed covering Malta portion of the project both onshore and offshore.

<sup>1</sup> 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 CO<sub>2</sub>e/year absolute (gross) or 20,000 tonnes CO<sub>2</sub>e/year relative (net) – both increases and savings.



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The project required also an Appropriate Assessment (AA) following screening in accordance with the Flora, Fauna and Natural Habitats Regulations (S.L. 549.44). The route has been purposely designed to steer away from a nearby terrestrial Natura 2000 site also known as I-Għadira is-Safra u l-Iskoll tal-Għallis (MT0000008) which is designated as a Special Area of Conservation (SAC). Other marine and bird protection areas are present within or in close proximity to the marine cable route, chiefly:

- Zona fil-Baħar bejn il-Ponta ta' San Dimiti (Għawdex) u il-Qaliet (MT0000105<sup>2</sup>) – Special Area of Conservation (SAC) of International Importance;
- Zona fil-Baħar tal-Grigal (MT0000107<sup>3</sup>) – Special Protection Area (SPA) of International Importance;
- Zona fil-Baħar ta' Madwar Għawdex (MT0000112<sup>4</sup>) – Special Protection Area (SPA) of International Importance.

ERA final assessment on EIA and AA studies was provided in August 2023, the development permit was issued in February 2024 by the Planning Authority.

The selected site and route of the cable were chosen following an extensive assessment of alternatives to ensure minimal environmental impact whilst also taking into account the technical aspects of the project.

The EIA Report has identified potential impacts relevant to loss of terrestrial habitats and species due to onshore works, loss of sandbank assemblages during cable laying and other benthic habitats during repairs and maintenance works due to malfunctions or accidental damage, sediment liquefaction and its effects on water bodies, suspended sediment, remobilisation of nutrients and pollutants sequestered within the benthic sediment and atmospheric fall-out/deposition of fine particulates on marine organisms and habitats, anthropogenic generation of submarine noise impacting cetaceans and marine reptiles and disturbance to seabird colonies caused by Artificial Light at Night (ALAN). Mitigation measures identified include the use of eco-mooring/low-impact anchors, designation of safe anchoring areas and use of vessels with Dynamic Positioning, dust mitigation techniques such as silt curtains, biodegradable chemicals and drilling fluids where possible, limited night-time activities hence reducing light pollution, avoiding reproductive season and sensitive periods and implementing habitat restoration.

The AA Report assessed that the project does not, in general, adversely affect the integrity of the said Natura 2000 sites, with the exception of the loss of *Posidonia oceanica* and maërl assemblages. The loss however is deemed insignificant from ERA since it will occur in a linear manner over a considerable stretch of seabed and affecting an area of 2,200 sq.m, that represents less than 0.1% of the *P. oceanica* meadows within the zone.

With reference to cable landing, the underground cable crossing will be carried out beneath the seabed using the Horizontal Directional Drilling (HDD) technique, which allows for the cable installation without the need for open-cut excavation. The entry and exit pits for the underground cables, along with the associated construction areas, will be located outside the boundaries of the protected area.

Potential impacts on the site are primarily related to noise emissions and dust dispersion during construction activities. This impact is entirely temporary, as all noise emissions in the area will cease upon completion of the HDD operations. During the construction phase, dust generation may occur in areas near the work sites due to excavation and the handling of fine-grained materials. The impact will be confined to the immediate surroundings of the construction areas and will be temporary and reversible.

#### Italy

No EIA was deemed necessary from Italian side in accordance with EIA Directive. The AA screening carried out for the Project resulted in no further assessments required, as confirmed

<sup>2</sup> Protected Species: Loggerhead Turtle – Habitats: sandbanks, posidonia, reefs and sea caves

<sup>3</sup> Protected Species: Storm Petrel and Levantine Shearwater

<sup>4</sup> Protected Species: Cory's Shearwater and Levantine Shearwater



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by the relevant competent authority (Regione Sicilia) via decision dated 1st August 2024. The application for the Italian permit was submitted in August 2023 and the Single Authorisation Decree process was officially launched by the Italian Ministry (MASE) in January 2024. Following conclusion of the process, the 'Autorizzazione Unica' was issued by MASE on 19th December 2024.

A study of the seabed was carried out for supporting the application for the permit to move the marine sediments for the laying of the cables and the ancillary works (Ministerial Decree 24/01/1996). The competent authority (MASE) granted the permit to move the marine sediments for the laying of the cables and the ancillary works of the Project with decision dated 28/03/2024 requiring conditions to be fulfilled during the final design and implementation phase: to provide biocenotic maps of the investigated areas, supplementing the analyses of the mobile backgrounds with ROV surveys and prepare the Environmental Monitoring Plan.

## **Public Consultation and Stakeholder Engagement**

### Malta

The EIA Report was submitted to ERA on 18th May 2023 and uploaded on the ERA website. On 21st May 2023, notifications were issued in local newspapers and on the Authority's website for a 30-day consultation period in accordance with the EIA Regulation.

Comments made by ERA and its consultees during the EIA review stage were forwarded to the EIA Coordinator and the applicant on 11th July 2023. These comments were addressed by the EIA Coordinator 27th July 2023 and responses were included in Section 8.2 ('Comments during consultation period on EIA Review') of the document.

The final EIA Report was submitted to ERA on 7th August 2023.

### Italy

Publication was issued on the Ragusa municipal notice board for 30 consecutive days from 19 April 2024 and, on the same date, on a national newspaper (Corriere della Sera) and on the Region of Sicily's website (pursuant to Law No 241/90, as amended and Presidential Decree No 327/2001).

## **Social Assessment**

The Project is designed to comply with the electromagnetic fields exposure limits set out in the corresponding national legislations and in Council Recommendation 1999/519/EC.

The project is likely to affect human populations during the construction due to dust generation, noise and vibration and limitation to the access in the areas interested from the construction, affecting also fishermen or other maritime traffic for the offshore works. Standard mitigations are to inform, sensitize, agree on schedule and in general promote an early engagement with owners / operators and to adopt best practices in the project implementation.

## **Other Environmental and Social Aspects**

The Promoter has already experience on the first interconnection cable between Malta and Sicily. The entity delegated to manage the implementation and operation of the new interconnection is structured with a management and governance systems suitable to fulfil the requirements for the project implementation, including Health, Safety and Environment experts. The project is essential to help Malta meeting its' environmental and energy targets coupled with its obligations to combat climate change.

## **Conclusions and Recommendations**

The Bank reviewed the screening procedure and surveys, the public consultation documents and the permits of the Project.

Based on this review the Project is acceptable to the Bank in environmental and social terms.