

Luxembourg, 4<sup>th</sup> March 2026

## Environmental and Social Data Sheet

### Overview

Project Name: SAND SOLAR  
 Project Number: 2025-0691  
 Country: ITALY  
 Project Description: Financing of the construction and operation of a solar PV plant for a total capacity of ca. 137 MWp in the Italian region of Sicily (the "Project")

EIA required: yes

E&S Risk categorisation *High risk*

Project included in Carbon Footprint Exercise<sup>1</sup>: yes

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

### Environmental and Social Assessment

The project consists of the construction and operation of a ground-mounted solar PV plant for a total capacity of ca. 137 MWp, including its interconnection to the grid. The plant is expected to start construction in first quarter of 2026 and commercial operation date is expected to be in the second quarter of 2027.

The solar plant is located in the municipality of Monreale while the interconnection substation is in the municipality of Gibellina, both in the region of Sicily (Italy). The Project scope includes:

- The solar PV photovoltaic (PV) generation plant, distributed in several plots of land grouped in two clusters with its internal underground lines in 30kV.
- Underground 30kV interconnection line (ca. 5 km in total) from the plant clusters to a step-up substation 30/220 kV. This transformer substation will be located beside a switching substation (which is under construction) included in the scope of the studies, but outside of the scope financed by the EIB. The switching substation will be connected to an existing 220kV overhead line beside and will be shared with other promoters.

The project has been categorised as High risk according to the EIBG's Environment and Social Policy (2022), as it was determined by the competent authorities that an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) was required.

### Environmental Assessment

Due to its technical characteristics, the solar PV plant falls under the Annex II of the EIA Directive (Directive 2014/52/EU amending the EIA Directive 2011/92/EU), therefore leaving it to the competent authority to determine according to Annex III of the said Directive whether an

<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 CO2e/year absolute (gross) or 20,000 tonnes CO2e/year relative (net) – both increases and savings.



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Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) is required, while the 30kV underground lines and the substation do not fall either under Annex I or Annex II. All the components of the Project scope, including the underground lines and the step-up substation, underwent a single EIA process and were assessed together by the competent authority.

The EIA report considers cumulative impacts with other neighbouring solar plants.

The environmental permit (“Giudizio positivo di compatibilità ambientale V.I.A.”) was obtained on September 27<sup>th</sup>, 2021, with conditions and technical measures to mitigate the potential environmental impacts. As required by the relevant process, the Promoter submitted final layout designs according to the conditions of the VIA (under the “Procedura di verifica di ottemperanza”) which were approved in May 2023.

The solar PV project is located in an area of gentle hills, without forested masses or mountainous terrain. Most of the land is currently dedicated to extensive agriculture activities. The potential environmental impacts of the projects during the construction and operation are typical of those of a large solar plant. The main ones are:

- Landscape alteration and land occupation, mitigated through a perimeter tree belt and landscaping measures, implementing ecological connectivity measures, buffer zones and wildlife corridors. An environmental plan on ecological restoration and landscape integration is required by the environmental permit, including measures to be agreed with local municipalities.
- Impacts on soil and water, mitigated applying only minor levelling, respecting distance to watercourses, implementing drainages and a small artificial lake to manage rainwater.
- Impact on flora and fauna, mitigated by planting native species, creating ecological corridors and including passages in the fences.
- Potential impacts on air during construction are expected to be mitigated mainly by dust suppression.
- Noise and electromagnetic fields generated by electrical installations are expected to remain below regulatory limits.

On the positive impacts, the project is expected to contribute to climate change mitigation through the reduction in CO<sub>2</sub> emissions from renewable energy generation.

The project is not near nor overlapping any Natura 2000 areas, with the closest being the Site of Community Interest ITA010022 (“Complesso Monti di Santa Ninfa-Gibellina e Grotta di Santa Ninfa”) at ca. 5km from the site and the Special Area of Conservation ITA020042 (“Rocche di Entella”) located ca. 14km from the site. The closest Important Bird Area (156 “Monte Cofano, Capo S. Vito e Monte Sparagio”) is 17km away from the site.

The underground interconnection line in 30kV between the PV plant and the step-up and interconnection substation, mostly runs under existing roads using also some private lands, thus limiting the related environmental impact.

### **EIB Carbon Footprint Exercise**

The direct CO<sub>2</sub> equivalent emissions of the project are negligible. In accordance with the Bank’s current “Carbon Footprint Methodology”, it is calculated that, based on the avoidance of electricity generation from a combination of existing and new power plants in Italy (combined margin for intermittent generation), the total relative effect of the Project is a net reduction in CO<sub>2</sub> equivalent emissions by ca. 85 kt CO<sub>2</sub>-eq/yr. For the annual accounting purposes of the “EIB Carbon Footprint”, the Project emissions will be prorated according to the EIB lending amount signed in that year, as a proportion of Project cost.

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## **Climate Assessment**

The project substantially contributes to the climate change mitigation objective. The project has been assessed for Paris alignment and is considered to be aligned both against low carbon and resilience goals against the policies set out in the Climate Bank Roadmap and the Bank's Energy Lending Policy. Residual risks from physical climate hazards are deemed low.

## **Social Assessment**

Most of the land required for the solar plant are private, while part of the underground cable goes through public roads. The land plots required for the solar plant, the underground interconnection and the substation have been secured via bilateral agreements. The implementation of the Project is not expected to resort on any expropriation or involuntary economic displacement and will not lead to involuntary physical displacement.

## **Public Consultation and Stakeholder Engagement**

The project's information disclosure process has taken place in line with the requirements of the permitting process in the country. Public consultation, as may be required, has been conducted by the competent authorities.

The promoter is actively engaging with the municipalities where the plant is located and has agreed a plan funding shared projects.

The Promoter has an open grievance channel in place under its Whistleblowing policy.

## **Other Environmental and Social Aspects**

The promoter is deemed to have the E&S capacity to implement the project in line with EIB's requirements.

Recent reports are pointing out the possibility of use of forced labour in the supply chain of solar PV panels. The Promoter has a "Supplier code of Conduct", a "Responsible Sourcing Policy" and a "Supplier's Code of Ethics", rejecting the use of any form of forced or compulsory labour.

The Promoter includes in their solar modules supply contracts the obligation of the supplier to adhere to the aforementioned codes and policies, including contractual conditions related to supply chain traceability and avoidance of force labour. The Promoter shall make reasonable efforts to assess and address the labour risks associated with the solar PV panels used in the Project, including throughout the supply chain, as required by the EIB E&S Standards.

## **Conclusions and Recommendations**

The Project shall comply with the relevant provisions of the Bank's labour standard, which foresees zero tolerance for the use of forced labour. The Promoter will be required to make reasonable efforts to carry out appropriate due diligence throughout its supply chains, with the aim of preventing the use of forced labour in the supply chains of the solar panels that will be used for this project. The outcome will be reported to and reviewed by the Bank.

The Promoter shall store and keep up to date all documents relevant for the Project supporting the compliance with the provisions of EU environmental legislation, permits and environmental approvals, and shall promptly upon request deliver such documents to the EIB.

Based on the information available and with these conditions in place and with monitoring, the Project is acceptable for EIB financing in environmental and social terms.