

## Environmental and Social Data Sheet

### Overview

Project Name:	GHENT CITY URBAN REGENERATION
Project Number:	2025-0591
Country:	Belgium
Project Description:	Framework Loan (FL) to support the multi-sector investment plan of the City of Ghent in Belgium, as well as the implementation of its urban regeneration and climate city strategies.
E&S Risk Categorisation:	High risk
Project included in Carbon Footprint Exercise <sup>1</sup> :	No

### Environmental and Social Assessment

This is a multi-scheme Framework Loan operation. Two of the schemes require an EIA under Annex I of the EIA Directive, several have been "screened out" under Annex II, however some schemes may still be "screened in" under Annex II of the EIA Directive.

#### Environmental Assessment

The Project encompasses the construction of new urban infrastructure as well as the upgrading of existing facilities. This includes the development of green areas and public open spaces, the greening of urban streets, and the new construction, extension or renovation of public buildings such as museums, nurseries, schools, youth facilities, social welfare centres and community centres. In addition, it involves cultural heritage interventions, including the rehabilitation of former industrial sites and historic buildings, the implementation of sustainable mobility schemes (such as urban infrastructure related to public urban transport and bicycle facilities), energy efficiency improvements in public buildings, investments in renewable energy, and the provision of social and affordable housing.

The investments financed by this operation reflect the key priorities of the City of Ghent as defined in its structural spatial plan *Room for Ghent*. Furthermore, the Project supports the implementation of the City's Mobility Plan, the Climate Plan 2020-2025 (including the city's climate change adaptation plan), the Rainwater and Drought Plan and the Green Structure Plan.

Several thematic municipal development plans or master plans have undergone a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) in accordance with the requirements of the SEA Directive as incorporated in the national legislation. Two (2) of the Project's underlying investments included in the pipeline of potential future projects fall under Annex I of the EIA Directive 2011/92/EU (as amended) and have been submitted to the Bank for publication; these have already been published on the relevant web portal. Some potential future projects, which are not yet fully defined, may fall under Annex II of the EIA Directive, potentially requiring an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) based on the competent authority screening. The environmental risks have been assessed for those investments for which an EIA has been completed. For those investments, adequate mitigation measures as well as

<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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recommendations are defined, hence the residual risk is deemed low and acceptable. To date, eight (8) investments have already been screened out by the competent authority, on the basis of the related Annex III criteria as per the applicable legislative procedures. As all underlying investment projects will be located in the urban territory of the city, it is expected that no protected sites, including Natura 2000 will be affected by any of the underlying projects in the operation. However, should a subproject have significant impact on a protected site, the Promoter will provide evidence of compliance with the Habitats and Birds Directives before Bank funds are allocated.

During construction and reconstruction activities, some impacts are anticipated to include disruptions due to traffic, noise, vibration, and dust. These effects are projected to be temporary and reversible upon completion of the works.

Finally, the Project contributes to the Bank's environmental sustainability objectives. It includes sustainable public green areas and parks, which contribute to climate adaptation as well as environmental sustainability, notably pollution prevention and protection of water resources. Therefore, during operation, the overall net environmental impact is expected to be positive, leading to an improvement of residents' quality of life.

## **Climate Assessment**

### ***Climate change mitigation:***

Ghent aspires to become a climate-neutral city by 2050. As an interim step towards this long-term objective, Ghent aims to reduce CO<sub>2</sub> emissions by 40% by 2030, using 2007 as the reference year. Consequently, Ghent adopts a *build better* approach in all investments involving construction, reconstruction, and renovation of public buildings, when this is feasible depending on the technical specificities of each investment scheme. This strategic decision is anticipated to yield significant positive outcomes, including energy savings in publicly owned buildings, owing to the implementation of various energy efficiency measures.

### ***Climate change adaptation:***

The Project will contribute to Climate Adaptation by supporting investments that increase resilience against flooding, as well as future droughts and water scarcity. Many of the schemes in this operation will address climate change aspects on a municipal level, such as the urban heat island effect, increased temperature levels, precipitation increase and heatwaves among others.

### ***Paris Alignment of projects:***

The Project will contribute to Climate Adaptation by supporting investments that increase resilience against flooding, as well as potential droughts and water scarcity. Many of the investments of this operation will address climate change aspects on a municipal level, such as the urban heat island effect, increased temperature levels, precipitation increase and heatwaves among others. The underlying investments will be eligible for EIB financing if they are aligned with the Paris Agreement. The Project has been assessed for Paris Alignment, and it is deemed aligned both against low carbon and resilience goals, as set out in the EIB Climate Bank Roadmap.

## **Carbon Footprint Calculation**

The carbon footprint exercise is not applicable for framework loan operations with small and medium underlying investments.

## **Social Assessment**

The underlying investments financed by this Project reflect Ghent's structural spatial plan, i.e. its urban development plan, which is based on integrated, sustainable, and inclusive planning principles. Supported urban investments aim to provide essential infrastructure and services for visitors and residents of the city, such as social care facilities, community and youth centres, accessible public buildings, cultural heritage sites, green spaces, social housing, and education and childcare facilities.

The Project's overall social benefit is expected to be positive. Furthermore, broader socio-economic benefits may be expected such as induced investment, positive employment effects and productivity gains resulting from improvements to public infrastructure and services.

## **Public Consultation and Stakeholder Engagement**

The individual investments are expected to form part of urban development strategies and plans for which public consultation is carried out. Whenever a full EIA is required, public consultation is ensured via the online EIA register, where all relevant documents are accessible, such as [MER Register PR3666 Departement Omgeving](#) or [MER Register PR2303 Departement Omgeving](#). Consultation moments may occur during the scoping phase and are mandatory during the public inquiry as part of the environmental permitting procedure.

## **Other Environmental and Social Aspects**

Based on the due diligence process, the institutional capacity of the Promoter to manage and monitor the environmental and social issues is deemed good.

## **Conclusions and Recommendations**

The City of Ghent is an experienced and capable Promoter deemed able to manage the environmental and social issues of investments included in the Project.

The overall environmental and social benefits of the Project are expected to be very good, with improved environment and quality of life for people living and visiting the city. Furthermore, the Project is expected to contribute to climate action through mitigation and adaptation measures, as well as environmental sustainability improvements that will be incorporated in the projects to be implemented.

## **Environmental and Social Conditions**

In projects where applicable, the Promoter will be requested to deliver to the Bank and before the Bank funds are allocated, the EIA report and the evidence of the compliance with the Habitats and Birds Directives.

For projects falling under the Water Framework Directive (WFD), if any, the Promoter will be requested to provide evidence of the compliance with the WFD before the Bank funds are allocated.

For projects falling under the Energy Performance of Buildings Directive (EPBD), upon Bank's request, the Promoter will be requested to provide selected energy performance certificates obtained during implementation or after completion of works, in line with the applicable national and EU legislation.

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