

## Environmental and Social Data Sheet

### Overview

Project Name: *ELIA – SECURITY OF SUPPLY*  
 Project Number: *2013-0005*  
 Country: *BELGIUM*  
 Project Description: *Upgrade and reinforcement of the high-voltage electricity transmission grid in Belgium. Investment programme 2013-2018.*

EIA required: yes, for the following sub-projects:

- Sub-project STEVIN
- 380 kV line from Zutendal to van Eyck
- 380 kV substation at Lixhe

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

### Summary of Environmental and Social Assessment, including key issues and overall conclusion and recommendation

The Programme is part of the promoter’s Grid Development plan that underwent Strategic Environmental Assessment in line with the requirements of the SEA Directive. According to the decisions made by the Flemish and Walloon competent authorities, elements for two of the sub-projects out of the planned four do require Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA).

The environmental impact study for Stevin has been carried out and the permit is in the process of being granted. However, following a ruling from the Belgian constitutional court invalidating the law enabling public consultation only by electronic documentation, the process for granting the environmental permit is unclear.

The 380 kV substation at Lixhe, part of the connection between Gramme and van Eyck, is in planning stage and the EIA will be carried out before start of implementation in 2015.

The remainder sub-project components involving mainly installations within the boundaries of existing substations, reconductoring of existing OHL and installation of underground cables were not subject to EIA. Environmental analyses carried out for some of these components are limited to landscape and habitat assessments.

The environmental impact analyses and the appropriate assessments carried out indicate that, with the planned mitigations in place, no significant impacts are expected to result from construction and operation of the sub-projects. Additionally, as the new installations will be offset by demolition/burial of existing transmission infrastructures, the Programme will enable substantial release of land and landscape improvements in various sites. Furthermore, by facilitating the dispatching of renewable generation across the grid and reducing network losses, the Programme will substantially contribute to reducing CO<sub>2</sub> emissions. The Programme is acceptable to the Bank in environmental terms, given that the environmental permits can be confirmed by the competent authority.

*The Finance Contract will require as a condition to disbursement that the competent authorities have approved of the EIA and the integrated biodiversity assessment for the sub-*

<sup>1</sup> Only projects that meet the scope of the Pilot Exercise, as defined in the EIB draft Carbon Footprint Methodologies, are included, provided estimated emissions exceed the methodology thresholds: above 100,000 tons CO<sub>2</sub>e/year absolute (gross) or 20,000 tons CO<sub>2</sub>e/year relative (net) – both increases and savings.

*project “STEVIN” and an undertaking by the promoter not to allocate Bank’s funds to the to the 380 kV substation at Lixhe until the corresponding EIA and the integrated biodiversity assessment have been approved by the competent authorities.*

## **Environmental and Social Assessment**

### **Environmental Assessment**

The EIA Directive 2011/92/EU has been transposed into regional law separately in Flemish and Walloon regions of Belgium. The screening of projects to undergo EIA is done properly with reference to the Directive and regional laws. In both regions the EIA procedure includes the appropriate assessment related to Natura 2000.

Environmental considerations have been incorporated in the design of the sub-projects from the earliest stages. Lines and cables routes and substations locations have been selected so to minimise proximity and crossing of human settlements, sensitive areas, and hydrogeological risk areas. Following EIA, some transmission lines are implemented as underground cables to minimise impact on bird habitats. All sub-projects have been designed to strictly comply with current regulations concerning electromagnetic fields.

Further to that, appropriate mitigating measures have been planned and will be implemented to minimise the impacts of the sub-projects during construction and operation. In densely populated areas particular attention will be paid to contain the effect of noise, vibrations and traffic disruption during the construction works.

A number of support measures will be implemented to improve the social acceptance of the sub-project. These include measures for landscape integration of new substations, reforestation, to reduce the magnetic field zone, land occupation and visual impact of overhead lines and burial of existing lines to compensate for the visual impact of new lines.

As regards the natural environment, flight diverters and silhouettes will be installed on ground wires and on top of pylons to avoid birds’ collision and mortality in sensitive areas.

The gross estimated annual emissions of the project are estimated to 21 kT CO<sub>2</sub>/year in a standard year of operation. The estimated emissions savings are 32 tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub>/year as the losses on the network would be likely to increase without the reinforcements, due to the substantial increase in renewable production.

### **Public Consultation and Stakeholder Engagement**

Public consultation has been conducted for the projects that have undergone EIA. A Flemish law from 2008<sup>2</sup> enabled public consultation by only electronic distribution of documents. However, a ruling from the Belgian constitutional court in July 2013<sup>3</sup> has overturned this law. For the sub-project Stevin, for which the public consultation was completed, it is unclear what procedure has to be followed by the competent authority to grant the environmental permit. A resolution is expected by the end of 2013, but there is a risk of significant delay, if the public consultation process needs to be repeated. However, to date, the project has not been subject to public opposition.

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<sup>2</sup> Decision of the Flemish Government of 18 April 2008 on the integration track for the environmental assessment of a spatial implementation plan

<sup>3</sup> Judgement No 114/2013 of July 31