

Environmental and Social Data Sheet

Overview

Project Name: Aquafin Waste Water Treatment IX
Project Number: 2014-0167
Country: BELGIUM
Project Description: The project comprises schemes for the construction of collector sewers, storm overflows and small and medium size wastewater treatment plants, plus some upgrading of existing waste water treatment plants for tertiary treatment in the Flemish Region.

EIA required: yes

None of the components included in the program is expected to be subject to a full EIA. However, standard environmental undertakings have been kept as two components still need to be officially screened out by the competent authority.

Project included in Carbon Footprint Exercise: no

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

Aquafin is the sole responsible for the collection and treatment of supra-municipal wastewater in the Flemish Region. The investment programme will support compliance with environmental standards set by the Water Framework Directive 2000/60/EC and the Urban Waste Water Directive 91/271/EEC. It will improve aquatic environmental conditions throughout the Flemish Region, which as a whole has been declared a sensitive area.

There are major positive environmental impacts expected, in particular there will be a reduction in the pollution of water bodies, thanks to the connection of new areas to the sewerage system and the rehabilitation of old combined sewerage systems

The Promoter shows a good environmental awareness, under the supervision of the environmental competent authority, the Flemish Environment Agency (*Vlaamse Milieumaatschappij* –VMM-), an independent body within the Flemish Ministry of Environment. The approval process of the investment programme is requested to comply with the requirements of the environmental directives and Flemish legislation, which is in some aspects more stringent than the EU water directives.

The Programme is consequently acceptable for Bank financing.

The Promoter undertakings are the following:

- The Promoter undertakes not to allocate the Bank funds to programme components that require an EIA until the necessary assessment has been finalised and approved by the competent authority. Once any EIS is available, the Promoter will provide the Bank with an electronic copy of its Non-Technical Summary (NTS) for publication on the EIB website.
- The Promoter shall not commit any EIB funds against any scheme that impacts nature conservation sites, without receiving the conclusion of the appropriate assessment under the Habitats and Birds Directives carried out from the competent Authority and informing the Bank that the confirmation that there are no significant impacts has been obtained.

Environmental and Social Assessment

Environmental Assessment

The Decree “*Algemene Bepalingen inzake milieubeleid*” of 5 April 1995, Chapter IV (added by a Decree of 18 December 2002, modified by a Decree of 27 April 2007) implements the SEA 2001/42/EC and EIA 2011/92/EU directives in the Flemish legislation. The list of projects that require an EIA study is included in Schedule I of the Flemish Decree dated 10 December 2004 (*Besluit van de Vlaamse Regering houdende vaststelling van de categorieën van projecten onderworpen aan milieueffectrapportage*).

The Flemish Statute Decree of 18 July 2003 on integrated water policy (*Decreet betreffende het integraal waterbeleid* or *Flemish Water Statute*) contains the main regulatory framework for water management in the Flemish Region. It establishes an integrated water policy aimed at managing and maintaining water systems through action plans or programmes and is the juridical implementation of all regulations of the European Water Framework Directive WFD 2000/60/EC.

The Flemish Government approved a Programme Decree in December 2004 to implement changes to the water sector in order to meet the EU Urban Waste Water Treatment Directive 91/271/EC. Since then, Flanders has made good progress and is currently in compliance with the mentioned directive. The current Flemish effluent standards are even stricter than those imposed by the European Directive.

The environmental authority, the Flemish Environment Agency -VMM-, decides whether or not a full EIA is required, in order to comply with the Directive. Most sewerage collector projects don't require environmental licences, only requiring a notification to the municipal authorities. A number of smaller works don't require a permit, being listed in the *Flemish Codex Spatial Planning*.

Any project that is likely to have a significant effect on a protected site under the EU Habitats Directive 92/43/EEC and the Birds Directive 2009/147/EC (Natura 2000) is subject to an appropriate assessment, to be approved by the Flemish Agency for Nature and Forests, also an independent body within the Flemish Ministry of Environment. This approval is an obligated annex of the application form to obtain the environmental license and the urban planning permission of a project.

The Flemish legislation is applicable to plans and programmes that are elaborated on the regional, provincial or local level as well as plans and programmes which are prepared by an administration for adoption by the Flemish Parliament or the Flemish Government, and which are required by legislative, regulatory or administrative provisions. The priority projects and interventions in Flanders follow the water management integrated approach, as set out in the river basin management plans of the Scheldt and the Meuse Rivers. The first plans for the period 2010-2015 were approved in October 2010 and were subject to a Strategic Environmental Assessment, in compliance with the SEA Directive 2001/42/EC. The Flemish Environmental Agency VMM sets up an investment programme on an annual basis in order to achieve the requirements of the WFD 2000/60/EC. This programme is discussed with all main stakeholders. Therefore the proposed investments are in compliance with the SEA Directive 2001/42/EC.

Flanders is affected by more extreme weather conditions, presumably a consequence of climate change. Statistics show an annual increase of 1-2% in precipitation, a change in heavy rainfall conditions of 5-40% as well as longer periods with no rainfall during the last years. This results in more frequent floods and sewer overflows, which has been taken into consideration by Aquafin within their updated design standards. The Flemish Government has adopted some climate adaptation measures through new legislation in place as the obligation for rain water separation on domestic level since 2008, the prioritization for rain water infiltration infrastructure from 2012 and the use of combined systems for the networks designs.

Aquafin has an energy reduction plan since 2010 which has set the objective of producing 13% green energy, 20% reduction of primary energy and 20% reduction in the transport of sludge by the year 2020.

Social Assessment, where applicable

Social impacts include the possible disruption of services, noise and temporary occupation of public or private space, traffic disruptions, and safety hazards. All these impacts will require strict management to minimize the negative disturbances, inconveniences and impacts common for this type of project and will be addressed in the planning permission.

Public Consultation and Stakeholder Engagement, where required

The Promoter will have to ensure compliance with national and European environmental and nature regulations and facilitate the access by the public to environmentally relevant information in accordance with the Bank's Transparency Policy.

Other Environmental and Social Aspects

None

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