

Environmental and Social Data Sheet

Overview

Project Name:	NORDHESSEN CLUSTER
Project Number:	2015-0073
Country:	Germany
Project Description:	This allocation under the Breitband Hessen framework (2014 0366) relates to the rollout of a passive fibre access infrastructure in the five northern districts of the German federal state of Hessen (District of Kassel, Waldeck-Frankenberg, Werra-Meißner, Schwalm-Eder and Hersfeld-Rotenburg), called the "Nordhessen Cluster". It will allow access to very high speed fixed broadband telecom services for more than 95% of residential and businesses in uncovered rural areas. The passive infrastructure will be built and owned by a joint unit of the related districts and operated by a private operator.
EIA required:	No
Project included in Carbon Footprint Exercise ¹ :	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

In general investments in fixed telecommunications networks (e.g. civil works investments for optical fibre access networks and transmission systems) do not fall under Annex I or II of the EIA Directive 2011/92/EC.

The passive underground broadband networks under this framework loan will have very limited residual environmental effects during operation, but might create some disturbances during the construction phase, which will be mitigated by appropriate measures.

The ministry developed guidelines to help improving the construction planning and to reduce the environmental impact during implementation by selecting suitable cable routes and installation methods.

Therefore this project can be classified in environmental terms as acceptable for the Bank.

¹ 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 CO₂e/year absolute (gross) or 20,000 tons CO₂e/year relative (net) – both increases and savings.

Environmental and Social Assessment

Environmental Assessment

Concerning the “Habitats” Directive 92/43/EEC and related Natura 2000 protection sites, the relevant legislation does not include any provision regarding telecoms infrastructures, since individual schemes are small and not expected to have any significant negative impact.

The relevant ministry in Hessen has developed for the districts a general guideline how to deal with environmental issues in the most appropriate manner from the network rollout planning to the construction phase. This will help already at an early stage to improve the network routing. Still the final network routing will depend on the winning bidder, which will be encouraged to make use of as much as possible existing ducting systems and cables.

In general cable installation works require an assessment and approval by the local competent authorities, including specific mitigation measures depending on the local situation and risks. Based on the experience with other similar projects there will be mainly a temporary impact during construction and a very limited direct impact during the operational phase due to the passive network structure and the small scale size.

Other Environmental and Social Aspects

The wide spread availability of broadband networks is one of the key pillars for the implementation of initiatives aiming at improving the sustainability of society, like smart grids or smart cities. The programme does therefore have a strong contribution to overall environmental and social sustainability.