

Environmental and Social Data Sheet

Overview

Project Name: *WINDFARMS PRINZENDORF AND POWI*
Project Number: *2018-0853*
Country: *Austria*
Project Description: *The project comprises the implementation and operation of three wind farms in Lower Austria, totalling up to 80 MW.*

EIA required: yes

Project included in Carbon Footprint Exercise¹: yes

Environmental and Social Assessment

Environmental Assessment

The project comprises the implementation and operation of three wind farms in Lower Austria with a grid connected capacity of 57 MW² in total:

- Wind farm Poysdorf-Wilfersdorf V (POWI): 4 turbines;
- Wind farm Prinzendorf III (Repowering): 10 turbines;
- Wind farm Dürnkrot III with 4 turbines.

The three parks are ca. 4-10 km distant to each other.

Scheme "Prinzendorf III" is replacing 9 old turbines of 2 MW each which will be decommissioned prior to the start of the project. The replaced wind turbines relate to wind farm "Steinberg-Prinzendorf I" that belongs to the project sponsors.

The 4 turbines of Dürnkrot III are part of a larger wind farm comprising 7 wind turbines. It is common in Austria, that wind farms are co-developed by different local entities. These do the permitting together, jointly implement shared infrastructure such as roads and grid connection, but own, implement and operate their turbines separately. This is also the case in the present project.

In 2014, a wind power development plan was developed by the government of Lower Austria.

¹ 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.

² The project's output capacity will be curtailed to 57 MW even if the sum of installed turbine capacities is higher.

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It identifies preferential zones for wind power development on the basis of a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA). The three wind farms are located inside preferential development zones as identified by this plan. This ensures compliance with minimum distance requirements to sensitive receptors and reduced visual impacts through clustering of wind turbines.

Wind farms fall under Annex II of Directive 2014/52/EU amending the EIA Directive 2011/92/EU. It is therefore up to the Member State's competent authority to judge whether an individual wind farm requires an EIA or not, based on criteria defined in Annex III of the EIA Directive. In line with national legislation (UVP Act, 2000), all three wind farms underwent an EIA process.

Comprehensive Environmental Impact studies were produced for each wind farm, incl. expert studies on key risk areas (biodiversity, noise, shadow flickering, visual impacts). Given the presence of protected species and habitats in the greater project areas, each site underwent an avifauna impact assessment. The studies conclude that the projects do not have significant negative environmental impacts post mitigation.

None of the schemes is located inside a protected site. However, they are located close to several protected sites:

- Scheme Dürnkrot III is located in the vicinity of several protected areas. Special Protection Area (SPA) and Site of Community Interest (SCI) "March Thaya Auen" (AT1202V00, AT1202000) is the closest one with ca. 3 km distance to the wind farm. It is, amongst others, relevant for several birds of prey species (imperial eagle, red kite, sea eagle etc.). Ramsar-site Donau-March-Thaya-Auen is at least 3 km distant to the project. Another Natura 2000 site is ca. 10 km away (SCI "Weinviertler Klippenzone" AT1206A00). It provides habitat to protected bat species (incl. barbastelle bat, greater mouse-eared bat).
- For scheme Poysdorf-Wifersdorf V, the closest Natura 2000 site is SCI "Weinviertler Klippenzone" at a distance ca. 8 km. The closest protected area under national legislation is ca. 4 km distant to the project.
- Scheme Prinzendorf III is adjacent to the Natura 2000 site SCI "Weinviertler Klippenzone" and the Steinbergwald that is protected under national law (minimum distance ca. 100m to both sites). The closest SPA is ca. 7.6 km away.

Appropriate Assessments were carried out in all three EIA processes, concluding that the projects have no significant impact on the integrity of Natura 2000 sites.

All three EIA processes were subject to public consultations. There were no appeals against wind farms Prinzendorf III and POWI. Wind farm Dürnkrot III raised the concern of two NGOs because regarding its potential impact on birds and bats. These concerns underwent an expert consultation and were addressed by permit conditions.

Environmental permits were granted by the competent authority of Lower Austria in May 2016 (Prinzendorf III), in November 2015 (POWI, as amended in February 2019 to allow for larger size wind turbines) and in December 2016 (Dürnkrot III), respectively. The permits are relating to a total installed capacity of up to 59 MW for the three wind farms combined, and are conditional to the implementation of obligatory mitigation and monitoring measures. Amongst others, 17.5 ha and 4.0 ha of fallow need to be established in the project area of wind farms Dürnkrot III and POWI, respectively, in order to improve available habitats for birds and bats.

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Additionally, turbines need to be taken out of operation at defined periods of time and weather to protect bats.

For Dürnkrot III, the permit is in addition conditional to a confirmation of the effectiveness of other wind farms' mitigation measures with particular focus on red kite and imperial eagle. The monitoring covers the period prior to and post implementation of such mitigation measures. It is carried out through ornithological experts on behalf of several wind farm developers. Corresponding monitoring activities are ongoing at the time of appraisal. Results are expected in the course of 2020.

There are permit amendment processes ongoing for two schemes at the time of appraisal (Poysdorf-Wilfersdorf V, Prinzenhof III). They predominantly relate to the use of turbines with greater dimensions, capacity and corresponding modifications of project layout. The promoter and its development partner provided expert studies as part of their applications for permit amendment which conclude that there are no significant negative environmental impacts resulting from these changes. The amendment approval processes also comprise consultations with public and authorised experts.

A similar permit amendment process may be envisaged for scheme Dürnkrot III. Here, however, an amendment process shall only be started once results from the ongoing bird impact monitoring exercise are available.

EIB Carbon Footprint Exercise

The direct CO₂ equivalent emissions of the two wind farms under this operation 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 Austria (75% operating margin and 25% build margin), the total relative effect of the project is a net reduction in CO₂ equivalent emissions by 48 kt CO₂e/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.

Other Environmental and Social Aspects

The promoter is experienced in implementing and operating wind farms in Austria. It is known to the Bank from operations WINDKRAFT SIMONSFELD WIND POWER (2013-0333, CA doc CA/475/14/368) and SIMONSFELD ONSHORE WIND (2017-0323, CA doc CA/506/17/652).

The promoter and its contractors are deemed to have a good environmental and social management capacity.

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Conclusions and Recommendations

Based upon the information available and subject to the below loan conditions, the project is acceptable for Bank financing under environmental aspects:

- Environmental permits, in-line with the final design of wind farms “Poysdorf Wilfersdorf V” and “Prinzendorf III”, must be provided to the Bank prior to financial close.
- Proposed conditions for a first disbursement to scheme Dürnkrot III: An environmental permit, in-line with the final design of the wind farm is in place. The promoter shall provide evidence that permit conditions relating to the effectiveness of bird impact mitigation measures with particular focus on red kite and imperial eagle are fulfilled.
- The promoter undertakes to provide to the Bank copies of (summary) monitoring reports analysing the effectiveness of bird impact mitigation measures for the “Dürnkrot III” scheme (reports that would be anyways required under the final permit).