

Environmental and Social Data Sheet

Overview

Project Name:	AQUAFIN X
Project Number:	20160398
Country:	Belgium
Project Description:	2017-2020 investment programme of Aquafin in wastewater collection and treatment infrastructure throughout Flanders.
EIA required:	yes
This is an investment programme made up of multiple schemes. Some of them might require an EIA under Annex II of the EIA directive 2011/92/EC as amended by Directive 2014 /52/EU.	
Project included in Carbon Footprint Exercise ¹ :	no

Environmental and Social Assessment

Environmental Assessment

The investment programme is geared towards upgrading and expanding the capacity of sewers and wastewater treatment plants (WWTP) throughout Flanders, to meet increasing wastewater flows resulting from higher connection rate to the sewerage network. The operation also concerns the replacement of combined sewers with separate sewers, the upgrade of storm water systems and the increase of the hydraulic capacity of pumping stations and WWTPs, to reduce discharges of untreated wastewater in receiving bodies during intense rain events, hence contributing to achieving the environmental objective of the Water Framework Directive 2000/60/EC (WFD) while reducing flood risks.

Schemes included in the programme are part of the 5-year rolling Investment and Optimization Programme (IOP) of Aquafin, which is reviewed and approved by the Flemish Region on an annual basis. The IOP is also subject to consultations of the Flemish river basin committees. The Promoter's activities are under the supervision of the environmental competent authority, the Flemish Environment Agency (*Vlaamse Milieu Maatschappij* i.e. VMM), an independent body within the Flemish Ministry of Environment.

The programme will ensure continued compliance with the Urban Waste Water Directive 91/270/EEC, and improve the quality of water bodies as required by the River Basin Management Plans (RBMPs) implementing the requirements of the WFD. Flanders is part of the international Scheldt and Meuse river basins districts. In December 2015, the Flemish Government approved the RBMPs for the 2016-2021 period, which also incorporate the Flood Risk Management Plans (FRMPs). The RBMPs and FRMPs were subject to a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) according to Directive 2001/42/EC.

Pressures related to demographics, urbanisation, industrialisation and agriculture, have affected the quantity and quality of available water bodies throughout the region. As a result, no Flemish water body has achieved the "good status" according to the WFD, by end of 2015. Pressures are expected to intensify with changing precipitation patterns and higher occurrence of extreme weather events. Regional authorities have thus identified three main

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.

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objectives in the 2016-2021 RBMPs: (i) achieve the “good status”, (ii) guarantee better protection against flooding, and (iii) counter the consequences of climate change.

The programme is deemed fully consistent with the objectives of the RBMPs, and is expected to bring about important substantial health advantages and lasting environmental benefits in the form of increased service coverage and quality, higher quality of surface and groundwater resources, and increased resilience of urban infrastructure. The benefits are expected to outweigh the negative impacts which occur mainly during construction (traffic, noise and dust) and can be easily mitigated.

Some schemes might fall under Annex II of the Environmental Impact Assessment Directive (2011/92/EC) as amended by Directive 2014/52/EC. Should an EIA be required, the Promoter will be obliged to make the Non-technical Summary (“NTS”) of the EIAs publicly available. None of the schemes is expected to have an impact on nature conservation sites. Due to its financial nature the programme is not subject to an SEA.

The programme’s area is mainly vulnerable to higher intensities of extreme rainfall events that are projected to increase due to climate change and have an impact on the sustainability and design of wastewater and drainage infrastructure. The programme, through investments in sewerage and drainage systems as well as pumping stations and WWTPS, includes elements of adaptation to climate change. The programme is also expected to contribute to energy savings through increased efficiency of wastewater systems and improved efficiency of the Promoter in managing the systems.

The Programme demonstrates appropriate context, intent and response through adaptation to climate change. Therefore the project contributes to the Bank’s objective of Climate Action (Adaptation and Mitigation).

Social Assessment, where applicable

Social impacts include the possible disruption of services and traffic, noise and temporary occupation of public and private space, and safety hazards during construction only, common for this type of projects in urban environments, and will be addressed as part of the planning for each component.

Public Consultation and Stakeholder Engagement

The Promoter has to ensure compliance with national and European environmental legislation and facilitate access by the public to environmentally relevant information in accordance with the Aarhus Convention.

Other Environmental and Social Aspects

N/A

Conclusions and Recommendations

This operation is fully driven by compliance with the EU relevant environmental directives and health considerations. All schemes covered by the programme will be subject to the Promoter complying with the following requirements:

1. The Promoter undertakes not to allocate Bank funds to programme components that require a full EIA until the EIA and/or the necessary biodiversity assessment have been finalised and approved by the relevant competent authorities, and the NTS of the EIA has been made available to the public. Once any EIA is available, the promoter will provide the Bank with an electronic copy of its NTS for publication on the EIB website.
2. The Promoter shall not commit any EIB funds against any scheme that impacts nature conservation sites, without receiving from the relevant competent authorities the



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declaration under Art. 6(3) of the Habitats Directive that there are no significant effects and informing the Bank of such declaration having been obtained.

3. The Promoter undertakes to provide to the Bank, if requested, any decisions and subsequent justification that screen out project components from the requirement of a full EIA, as well as the decisions issued by the competent authorities regarding the Habitats and Birds Directives.

Under these conditions the operation is acceptable to the Bank's financing.

PJ/SQM/ECSO 15.10.15