Early Warning System

EIB-20240167

PROJECT EMILI - IMERYS DEMO-PLANT

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Quick Facts

Countries	France
Specific Location	Allier region
Financial Institutions	European Investment Bank (EIB)
Status	Proposed
Bank Risk Rating	U
Borrower	Imerys SA
Sectors	Construction, Energy, Industry and Trade, Mining
Investment Type(s)	Loan
Investment Amount (USD)	$ 67.84 million
Loan Amount (USD)	$ 67.84 million
Project Cost (USD)	$ 136.80 million

Project Description

According to the EIB, the project concerns the construction of two demonstration plants located in central France for the production of battery grade lithium hydroxide monohydrate. The concentrator demonstration plant will be located at the mine site near Echassières and the conversion demonstration plant will be located in an industrial park near Montluçon. The project will not produce commercial quantities of material.

The demonstration plants are designed to prove the selected technology, allowing the promoter to de-risk the future commercial plants by identifying issues and reducing the time to ramp-up the technology. Additionally, the demonstration plants will provide the opportunity to train the operations teams leading to an acceleration in the ramp-up in production rate and reducing the time to bring the product to the market.

The project and subsequent commercial plants address the growing demand for lithium for battery applications in the EU and aligns with the goals of the green transition, particularly the decarbonisation of the transport sector.

Early Warning System Project Analysis

Environmentally, the project raises concerns about high water use and potential contamination of groundwater, as well as the generation of mining waste (tailings and residues) that pose long-term management challenges; it is also located near sensitive ecosystems, including Natura 2000 areas, increasing the risk of biodiversity loss (European Investment Bank, EJAtlas, Imerys). Socially, the project has triggered local opposition and public debate, with communities expressing concerns about water pollution, waste management, environmental degradation, and unequal distribution of economic benefits, alongside broader critiques around transparency and decision-making processes (EJAtlas, European Environmental Bureau).

People Affected By This Project

Local inhabitants and associations are worried about impacts on water—especially groundwater and river resources—soil contamination, biodiversity loss, noise, dust, and increased traffic. In Saint-Bonnet-de-Rochefort, for instance, municipal authorities have voted against hosting the mineral loading platform, citing conflict with local identity and environmental concerns. The project was also classified as a “project of major national interest,” prompting accusations from some citizens that the decision was a “passage en force,” overriding local voices before the public debate had fully played out. Source: Monde

Investment Description

- European Investment Bank (EIB)

Private Actors Description

As stated by Bloomberg, Imerys provides mineral-based specialty solutions. The Company offers ground calcium carbonate, roofing clay, ceramic minerals, graphite flakes, and other products. Imerys serves construction, automotive, consumer goods, animal care, cosmetics, pharmaceutical, and food industries worldwide.

Private Actor 1	Private Actor 1 Role	Private Actor 1 Sector	Relation	Private Actor 2	Private Actor 2 Role	Private Actor 2 Sector
-	-	-	-	Imerys SA	Client	Mining

Contact Information

No project contacts provided at the time of disclosure.

ACCESS TO INFORMATION

You can submit an information request for project information at: https://www.eib.org/en/infocentre/registers/request-form/request-form-default.htm

ACCOUNTABILITY MECHANISM OF EIB

The EIB Complaints Mechanism is designed to facilitate and handle complaints against the EIB by individuals, organizations or corporations affected by EIB activities. When exercising the right to lodge a complaint against the EIB, any member of the public has access to a two-tier procedure, one internal - the Complaints Mechanism Office - and one external - the European Ombudsman. A complaint can be lodged via a written communication addressed to the Secretary General of the EIB, via email to the dedicated email address: complaints@eib.org, by completing the online complaint form available at the following address: http://www.eib.org/complaints/form via fax or delivered directly to the EIB Complaints Mechanism Division, any EIB local representation office or any EIB staff. For further details, check: http://www.eib.org/attachments/strategies/complaints_mechanism_policy_en.pdf

When dissatisfied with a complaint to the EIB Complaints Mechanism, citizens can then turn towards the European Ombudsman. A memorandum of Understanding has been signed between the EIB and the European Ombudsman establishes that citizens (even outside of the EU if the Ombudsman finds their complaint justified) can turn towards the Ombudsman on issues related to 'maladministration' by the EIB. Note that before going to the Ombudsman, an attempt must be made to resolve the case by contacting the EIB. In addition, the complaint must be made within two years of the date when the facts on which your complaint is based became known to you. You can write to the Ombudsman in any of the languages of the European Union. Additional details, including filing requirements and complaint forms, are available at: http://www.ombudsman.europa.eu/atyourservice/interactiveguide.faces

Campaign Documents

- EJ Atlas: Imerys "major national interest" lithium mine project in Allier, France

Media

- Project EMILI: Imerys reaches new milestone with the selection of two key sites
- Un colossal projet de mine de lithium en Auvergne divise la population, qui craint un impact sur les