

Luxembourg, 25th July 2024

Environmental and Social Data Sheet

Overview

Project Name:	WINDPARK SPANNBERG IV
Project Number:	2024-0108
Country:	Austria
Project Description:	The project concerns the implementation and operation of an up to 62.8 MW wind farm in Spannberg / Lower Austria
EIA required:	yes
Project included in Carbon Footprint Exercise ¹ :	yes

(details for projects included are provided in section: “EIB Carbon Footprint Exercise”)

Environmental and Social Assessment

Environmental Assessment

The project comprises the implementation and operation of a wind farm in Lower Austria consisting of up to 11 wind turbines, including the civil infrastructure and the underground cable connections to substations owned and operated by the grid operator. The turbines’ rotor diameter is 162 m, two of the turbines have a hub height of 166 m, the other nine are installed at 148 m hub height. The project is implemented in two phases; in the first phase four wind turbines are installed and connected via a 22 km underground cable (30 kV) to an existing electricity substation. The start of the construction works of the first phase is scheduled for 2024. The second phase is expected to be connected via underground cables to a new substation that is scheduled to be completed in 2027. Final design of Phase 2 has not taken place yet.

The new substation is located at about 4 km to the nearest wind turbine. It will connect to an existing transmission line in its vicinity. The construction of the new substation (30kV/110kV) is part of the broader Lower Austrian grid enforcement program under the full responsibility of the grid operator and is not part of the project scope financed by the EIB. The grid operator is responsible for the permitting of the new substation and its connection to the existing grid, including the EIA if required.

The project site is located in a slightly undulating landscape, characterised by intensive agricultural use and scattered spots of forested area. Based on the findings of a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) conducted, the area was identified and dedicated as a zone suitable for wind power development (“Grünland Windkraftanlage”) in the spatial development plan of the federal state of Lower Austria. Further wind farms are already operating in the close surroundings; additionally, some oil and gas drilling installations are located near the area.

Wind farms fall under Annex II of the EIA Directive 2011/92/EU (as amended by Directive 2014/52/EU). It is, therefore, up to the Member State’s competent authority to judge whether

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.



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an individual wind farm requires an EIA or not, based on criteria defined in Annex III of the EIA Directive. The project was screened-in and underwent a full EIA process in line with national legislation (UVP Act 2000), including public consultation. (The electricity infrastructure for the connection of the wind farm to the substations does not fall neither under Annex I nor II of the EIA directive).

An environmental permit was initially issued in January 2022 for the whole project including its connection up to the new substation.

After the issuance of the aforementioned environmental permit, connection capacity became available at an existing substation. Therefore, the promoter decided to apply for a modification of the permit to allow for a modified grid connection concept and to advance with the implementation of the first four turbines. The promoter also applied for the use of different turbine model with a greater rotor diameter (162 m instead of 150 m), and an increase of the total capacity from 61.6 to 62.8 MW. The proposed changes required an update of the EIA Report. In November 2023 the Lower Austrian Government issued its permit amendment decision pursuant to section 18b UVP-G (Änderungsverfahren) concerning these modifications.

The promoter's EIA Report (as amended) addresses all relevant risks (including biodiversity, noise, shadow flickering, soil, hydrology, forest, ice fall, visual impacts) through specific expert studies. The studies were based upon site-specific monitoring campaigns and consider cumulative impacts with existing and planned wind farms in the vicinity.

The studies concludes that the project's negative impact is either negligible or low. Only for few aspects the negative impact was classified as medium and mitigation measures were proposed, mainly concerning, shadow flicker and noise emission of certain turbines as well as the impact on protected bat species.

The environmental permit (as amended) specifies various requirements and conditions, the project needs to comply with. They are mostly rather typical for this type of projects and relate - amongst others - to the safety and security during construction and operation, good workmanship, waste treatment, environmental and quality supervision, monitoring, and preconstruction screening. They also include specific measures to mitigate and compensate any potential negative environmental impact, including but not limited to:

- Provisional shut-down of the turbines during the critical bat migration conditions,
- Automated bat monitoring during the overall operation,
- Operation of individual turbines at noise reduced mode at night,
- Shadow monitoring and potential shut-down if the acceptable limits are exceeded,
- Warnings and protection against ice fall,
- Replantation of a deforested area (ratio 3:1),
- Establishment of fallow areas and enhancement of habitats for protected bird species.

The project is not located within a Natura 2000 site or other areas protected under national or international legislation. The closest Natura 2000 sites are the March-Thaya-Auen (wetlands) under the Habitats Directive as well as under the Birds Directive (SAC AT1202000 and SPA AT1202V00) at 6,1 km minimum distance from the WF. "Pannonische Sanddünen" (SAC AT1213000) is at 6,4 km from the closest turbine.

Due to the distance from the wind farm, the site characteristics of these Natura 2000 sites, and considering the conclusions of the biodiversity studies integrated into the EIA Report (as amended), the competent authority concluded in the environmental permit that the project is not likely to have a significant effect on any Natura 2000 site.



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The project has been assessed for Paris alignment and is considered to be aligned against low carbon and resilience goals against the policies set out in the Climate Bank Roadmap and in the Energy Lending Policy.

EIB Carbon Footprint Exercise

The direct CO₂ equivalent emissions of the plant 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 (combined margin for intermittent electricity generation), the total relative effect of the project is a net reduction in CO₂ equivalent emissions by 30 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.

EIB Paris Alignment for Counterparties (PATH) Framework

The borrower is expected to be a Special Purpose Vehicle (SPV) which is ultimately 100% owned by WEB Windenergie AG. This counterparty is in scope and was screened out of the PATH Framework for "decarbonisation", because it is not considered high emitting as a purely renewable energy producer. The counterparty was screened in for "high vulnerability", triggering a resilience assessment which concluded that the counterparty has sufficiently demonstrated their alignment with the PATH resilience requirements.

Public Consultation and Stakeholder Engagement

During the initial EIA process, a public consultation took place between February and March 2021 in line with national legislation. Comments and concerns were raised by the environmental agency of the federal state (Umweltanwaltschaft Niederösterreich), by an NGO and one private person, concerning noise and shadow, loss of habitat, risk of bird and bat collision, as well as impact on landscape and hydrology.

The issues identified were clarified within the expert studies of the EIA Report and addressed through the requirements and conditions of the permit.

During the public consultation for the revised planning, no further comment was received.

The promoter applies a pro-active communication and stakeholder engagement approach. Relevant stakeholders such as landowners and municipalities are informed and consulted early on in the project development process. The land is secured through voluntary land lease agreements with the owners.

Other Environmental and Social Aspects

The promoter is an SME, dedicated to developing and operating renewable energy projects in Austria and abroad. It is based and well established in the project region and already operates wind farms in the direct vicinity of the planned project. The promoter is deemed to have a good environmental and social management capacity.



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Conclusions and Recommendations

Based upon the information available, the project is acceptable for the Bank's financing in E&S terms under the following conditions:

- The promoter undertakes to provide to the Bank the approved EIA report and the EIA decision, if required and publicly available, for the new project-relevant substation including its interconnection to the existing grid.