

PRESS RELEASE | Brussels, 2 July 2020

Five Elia Group innovation competition finalists announced

- The Open Innovation Challenge is aimed at start-ups from all over the world
- The finalists are from Europe and the United States
- This year, the competition – which is taking place for the fourth time – focuses on digital solutions promoting more secure power grid and data management
- The winner will receive €20,000 and the opportunity to develop their project within Elia Group.

BRUSSELS | Five finalists are still in the running for the fourth Open Innovation Challenge. The contest is a joint initiative by Belgian system operator Elia and its German sister company 50Hertz. The Open Innovation Challenge helps Elia Group to innovate in highly specific areas of its work as a system operator by engaging in joint projects with start-ups. This year's competition focuses on the development of digital solutions promoting more secure grid and data management. The call for entries was launched in January, and the judging panel has now prepared a shortlist of five finalists from the 82 submissions. The winner will be announced at the grand final in Brussels in early September.

Grid and data security: a major challenge

Our electricity system is evolving rapidly to meet the needs of the energy transition, and its day-to-day management is becoming increasingly complex as time goes on. We therefore need new technologies to improve the way we work. However, if we are to keep pace with the dizzying speed of innovation, we must forge solid partnerships in a number of clearly defined areas of cooperation. Our fourth Open Innovation Challenge primarily concentrates on developing digital solutions to further limit the risks associated with grid management (including site access control and theft detection) and the safety of our data and IT systems (including fault detection, the reliability of information sources, and the protection of personal data). We have adopted a forward-looking approach to this issue and are now already planning for tomorrow's challenges.

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Five finalists, five innovative solutions

Of the 82 entrants, five finalists were shortlisted based on criteria including the feasibility, impact, relevance and innovative nature of their proposals.

- UK start-up CyberOwl's project aims to improve cybersecurity: its solution involves performing security analyses to detect unacceptable and anomalous behaviour in decentralised assets and their communications.
- Heptasense, from Portugal, has developed a software package for video analysis, which works with multiple cameras to issue alerts in real time and so enhance security.
- The product developed by France's KeoPass is an independent personal biometric identification tool, based on fingerprint recognition, that can be used for both physical access control (replacing keys and badges) and digital access control (replacing passwords).
- Physec, from Germany, has devised a system for monitoring the physical condition of certain objects. It uses cryptographic protocols and electromagnetic measurement techniques to assess the physical condition of the relevant object, ensuring that the hardware has not been tampered with.
- Finally, the software developed by US-based Swim.AI improves the collection, protection and analysis of data flows from decentralised peripherals (sensors, gateways and meters), using a form of artificial intelligence to analyse information locally and in real time so that operators can be alerted in a more targeted way.

The Challenge's grand final will be held in Brussels on 10 September, with the winner taking home €20,000 and getting the chance to implement its proposal in Elia Group in Belgium or Germany.

Last year's winner tests its acoustic sensors on Nemo Link

Danish start-up OKTO Acoustics triumphed in the 2019 Open Innovation Challenge, which concentrated on innovations to improve the day-to-day operation of Elia and 50Hertz's grids and the maintenance of their facilities. The Copenhagen company's project was awarded the highest score at the Challenge final in Berlin. OKTO Acoustics develops acoustic sensors that work in combination with artificial intelligence to identify and evaluate sounds. When installed in a high-voltage substation, for instance, these acoustic measuring devices can distinguish the sounds made by equipment that is working properly and those coming from equipment that needs to be checked, enabling them to predict when maintenance is required (predictive maintenance). An initial test project, when the sensors were fitted in the Bruges converter station for Nemo Link (the interconnector between Belgium and the UK), yielded positive results.

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About the Elia Group

One of Europe's top five players

The Elia Group is active in electricity transmission. We ensure that generation and consumption are balanced around the clock, supplying 30 million end users with electricity. With subsidiaries in Belgium (Elia) and north-east Germany (50Hertz), we operate 19,271 km of high-voltage connections. As such, our group is one of Europe's top 5. With a reliability level of 99.999%, we give society a robust power grid, which is important for socio-economic prosperity. We also aspire to be a catalyst for a successful energy transition towards a reliable, sustainable and affordable energy system.

We make the energy transition happen

By expanding international high-voltage connections and integrating ever-increasing amounts of renewable energy generation, the Elia Group promotes both the integration of the European energy market and the decarbonisation of our society. At the same time, the Elia Group is innovating its operational systems and developing market products so that new technologies and market parties can access our grid, thus making the energy transition happen.

In the interest of society

As a key player in the energy system, the Elia Group is committed to working in the interest of society. We respond to the rapidly changing energy mix, i.e. the increase in renewable energy, and constantly adapt our transmission grid. We also ensure that investments are made on time and within budget, with a maximum focus on safety. When we carry out our projects, we manage stakeholders proactively by establishing two-way communication with all affected parties very early on in the development process. We also offer our expertise to our sector and relevant authorities to build the energy system of the future.

International focus

In addition to its activities as a transmission system operator, the Elia Group provides various consulting services to international customers through its subsidiary Elia Grid International (EGI). Elia is also part of the Nemo Link consortium that operates the first subsea electrical interconnector between Belgium and the UK.

The Group is a listed company whose core shareholder is the municipal holding company Publi-T.

More information: [elia.be](https://www.elia.be)

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