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Elia commissions the Stevin high-voltage line: a key milestone in the expansion of offshore wind farms and the continued integration of the European grid

On 21 November 2017, the system operator Elia officially inaugurated the Stevin high-voltage line, together with Prime Minister Charles Michel and Marie Christine Marghem, the Federal Minister of Energy. The project shores up Belgium's high-voltage grid in West and East Flanders and is pioneering in a number of ways. The 47-km-long, 380-kV Stevin line between Zeebrugge and Zomergem will transport energy generated by the new offshore wind farms to the mainland, encourage green energy projects in the region, support the growth of the Zeebrugge port area, and facilitate the exchange of energy with the UK via the subsea Nemo cable. The new line will be able to transport up to 3,000 MW, a capacity equal to that of three major nuclear power plants.

What does the Stevin project involve?

The Stevin project between Zomergem and Zeebrugge comprises a double 380-kV connection that runs both above (37 km) and below (10 km) ground. In addition to the overhead lines and cables, three new high-voltage substations have been built: the Stevin substation in Zeebrugge, Gezelle in Bruges (close to Herdersbrug) and Van Maerlant in Vivenkapelle (Damme).

The Stevin project is extremely important:

- The Stevin line transports the wind energy generated offshore to the mainland via the connection to the Modular Offshore Grid (MOG). MOG is the offshore platform built by Elia 40 km off the Belgian coast; it bundles together the cables of future Belgian offshore installations.
- Other sustainable generation units (such as wind energy and CHP units) in the coastal region will be connected to the line.
- Thanks to the new line, from 2019 onwards electricity will be exchanged with the UK via the first ever subsea cable between the UK and Belgium (the Nemo Link project).
- It guarantees an enhanced electricity supply in West and East Flanders, particularly for the port of Zeebrugge.

The timeframe for obtaining the necessary permits has been set at seven years. Work on the Stevin line began in early 2015 and lasted almost three years. Now that the new line is operational, the system operator is moving on to the second phase of the project: demolishing 53 km of old lines (in Bruges, Damme, Maldegem and Eeklo), 35 km of which will be brought underground. This work will continue until 2020.

A project of superlatives

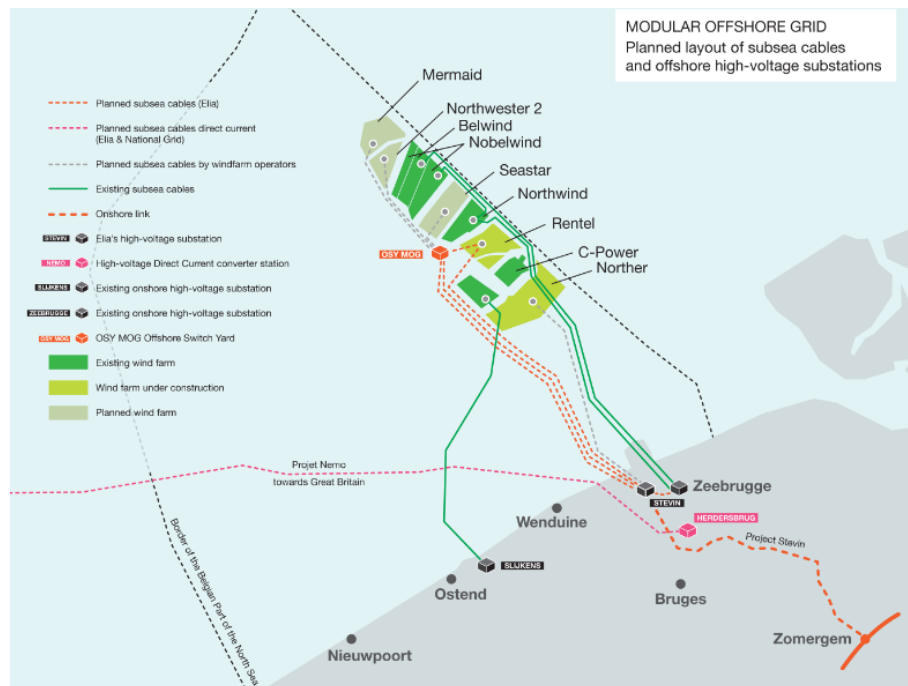
The Stevin line can transport up to 3,000 MW, a capacity equal to that of three major nuclear power plants. The 80 new pylons, constructed from 3,000 tonnes of steel, are connected to one another over a 47-km stretch, with conductors spanning nearly 700 km. 10 km of the 380-kV line are being brought underground - a first for Belgium and a rare achievement seen elsewhere in the world. On average, a 250-strong workforce, made up of Elia employees and staff from around 30 subcontractors, worked on the Stevin project every day. This is Elia's biggest project in Belgium in recent years.

When inaugurating the Stevin high-voltage substation in Zeebrugge, Elia CEO Chris Peeters emphasised the importance of the project for the Belgian energy system and addressed how the project came to fruition, saying "As a result of the Stevin project, we are forging the missing link between the mainland and the coast, with an energy hub in the North Sea. We were able to make this project a reality thanks to the support of our many partners in the field and close consultation with all stakeholders. I would like to sincerely thank all those involved, particularly the local authorities who provided constructive input on the best possible route for this vital high-voltage line."

Minister Marie Christine Marghem: "The Stevin project is a project that is pointing us toward the future. Not only will it enable us to bolster security of supply, but it will also allow us to further develop interconnections with neighbouring countries."

The total cost of the Stevin project, including all corresponding modifications to the existing high-voltage grid, amounts to approximately €340 million.

Layout of the MOG and connection with Nemo Link



About Elia

The Elia Group comprises two electricity transmission system operators (TSOs): Elia Transmission in Belgium and (in cooperation with Industry Funds Management IFM) 50Hertz Transmission, which is one of Germany's four TSOs and is active in the north and east of the country.

With more than 2,100 employees and a grid comprising around 18,300 km of high-voltage connections serving 30 million end users, the Elia Group is one of Europe's top five system operators.

It efficiently, reliably and securely transmits electricity from generators to distribution system operators and major industrial consumers, while also importing and exporting electricity from and to neighbouring countries. The Group is a driving force behind the development of the European electricity market and the integration of energy generated from renewable sources.

In addition to its transmission system operator activities in Belgium and Germany, the Elia Group offers businesses an extensive range of consultancy and engineering services via Elia Grid International (EGI).

The Group operates under the legal entity Elia System Operator, a listed company whose core shareholder is the municipal holding company Publi-T.