

Minister Bart Tommelein visits Elia's national control centre

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On Thursday, 8 February, the Flemish Minister of Energy visited Elia's national control centre – the nerve centre of Belgium's power grid – to see the facilities. This is where the system operator supervises the entire Belgian energy system, ensuring that the grid is balanced at all times so that the lights stay on.

The system operator monitors the Belgian power grid from the recently refurbished national control centre to keep the grid balanced 24/7. This is becoming more and more complicated due to the increase in cross-border trading and renewable energy generation. This development requires very precise forecasts and great flexibility to cope with the system's fluctuations. Elia's national control centre is equipped with the latest software and is ready for the energy transition.

Bart Tommelein: *"Elia has an important role to play in the energy transition. We are moving from a system supplied by large power stations to one in which citizens, companies and organisations increasingly generate their own energy. It is extremely important that our power grid is prepared for this flexibility so that our energy supply remains as reliable as it is today."*

Chris Peeters, Elia CEO: *"Due to the revolution in the energy sector, we, the system operator, are facing challenges like never before. Not just dozens but thousands of small players will help to balance the Belgian power grid. New technologies, smart forecasting models, and more flexibility and storage will help us to integrate renewable energy."*

Belgium highly interconnected with neighbouring countries

Belgium's high-voltage grid is now integrated into the European interconnected system that stretches across the entire continent. Energy exchanges at international level have increased exponentially in recent decades. Thanks to a growing number of interconnectors - cross-border electrical connections - interaction between the Belgian power grid and those of neighbouring countries is becoming increasingly intense. More and more renewable energy generation can be exchanged at international level too. As such, the power grid plays a crucial role in the energy transition.

Belgium now has a cross-border capacity of 4,500 MW, which is the equivalent of around 30 to 40% of Belgium's average consumption. This figure will reach 6,500 MW by 2020.

Successfully integrating renewable energy

Belgium already has an installed capacity of 3,000 MW of solar energy and 2,620 MW of wind energy, including 1,740 onshore and 880 MW offshore. On sunny, windy spring days, 40% of the energy consumed can be provided by photovoltaic and wind power generation but when there is no sun and little wind, this energy generation must come from conventional generation sources or imports.

The energy sector is in transition, which makes operating the power grid increasingly complex. The system is becoming more flexible, with regard to both energy consumers and generators. Successfully integrating renewable energy with innovative storage technology and sufficient flexibility is the challenge now facing Belgium's system operator. The renovated national control centre anticipates all these developments.

With a reliability rate of 99.999%, Belgium's high-voltage grid is one of the most efficient in Europe.

About Elia

The Elia Group is organised around two electricity transmission system operators: Elia Transmission in Belgium and (in cooperation with Industry Funds Management) 50Hertz Transmission, one of the four German transmission system operators, active in the north and east of Germany.

With 2,300 employees and a transmission grid comprising some 18,300 km of high-voltage connections serving 30 million consumers, the Elia Group is one of Europe's top 5 TSOs.

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 activities as a TSO in Belgium and Germany, the Elia Group offers companies a wide 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 reference shareholder is municipal holding company Publi-T.