



## Elia Group's fifth Open Innovation Challenge focuses on innovative solutions for offshore wind applications

- Challenge open to startups from around the world
- Five finalists will present their proposals at the grand finale in Berlin on 17 June 2021
- Winner will receive €20,000, mentoring and the chance to roll out their project within Elia Group

**BRUSSELS - Elia Group, a European Group of transmission system operators active in Belgium (Elia) and northeast Germany (50Hertz), is set to launch its fifth Open Innovation Challenge. The contest aims to connect the industry to the wider ecosystem of startups and small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in an effort to drive innovation and accelerate towards a common objective: a successful energy transition that contributes to a carbon-neutral society. Given the huge volume of electricity demand that needs to be covered by renewables, Europe will have to harvest its wind potential further offshore. Consequently, offshore grid operation is entering a new phase of development, with all the challenges and opportunities for innovation that brings.**

Under the European Green Deal, the aim is to be carbon-neutral by 2050. Offshore energy will play a key role in achieving this ambitious goal thanks to the available potential at sea, the higher number of full-load hours for wind turbines and the rapidly decreasing cost of offshore wind technology. However, offshore grid operation is entering a new phase of development and facing challenges in terms of both infrastructure and operation. These challenges provide multiple opportunities to apply innovations.

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Offshore wind energy, for example in the North and Baltic Seas, is essential for the decarbonisation of our society. There's a huge generation potential that we in Europe will have to develop as efficiently as possible in the coming years and decades. But whether it be how to technically improve network integration, organise maintenance or reduce construction costs, there are still many ideas to be developed and put into practice. That is why we're inviting the lively startup scene across Europe to surprise us and win us over with their proposals and to tackle these challenges together with us.



**Stefan Kapferer – CEO 50Hertz and sponsor of this year's Open Innovation Challenge**



For further information

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Startups and SMEs wishing to take part in Elia Group's Open Innovation Challenge can submit their ideas in four predefined categories: (1) sustainability, (2) remote operation and maintenance, (3) grid integration and (4) outside-the-box solutions.

### **Sustainability**

Solutions to protect and foster ecosystems while reducing the environmental footprint in the construction and operation of the offshore grid.

### **Remote operation and maintenance**

Technologies such as Internet of Things (IoT), robotics, artificial intelligence (AI), virtual reality (VR) and augmented reality (AR) could increase the efficiency and quality of fault detection and maintenance, decrease the need for physical access to enhance the safety of operations and provide greater flexibility.

### **Grid integration**

Solutions that tackle technical challenges such as integrating offshore cables with the grid, improving forecasting and facilitating sector coupling.

### **Outside-the-box solutions**

The offshore grid is a means for transmitting electricity from offshore wind turbines to the grid. There may be co-benefits in many areas, such as offshore data centres, energy generation (tidal power), fisheries, telecoms and scientific research. Surprise and challenge us!

## **Challenge kicks off on 14 January, with the grand finale set to take place in Berlin in June**

Contestants will have two months (until 11 March 2021) to submit their ideas. In late March, 10-15 of the proposed ideas will be shortlisted. The shortlisted candidates will be assigned to an expert and mentor to help them refine their projects in collaboration with Elia or 50Hertz. Eventually, five startups will make it to the grand finale in June where they can pitch their solution to a jury of experts. The winner will receive a €20,000 prize and a chance to develop a project with Elia Group, either at Elia in Belgium or at 50Hertz in Germany.

### **Last year's winner rolls out solution**

Last year, Elia Group's Open Innovation Challenge focused on digital solutions promoting more secure grid and data management. Of the 82 participants, the jury chose Portuguese startup Heptasense as the winner and awarded it the €20,000 prize. Heptasense has developed a software package that processes and analyses real-time images from multiple cameras to detect and send out warnings with a view to enhancing security. The Portuguese startup is now teaming up with Elia Group to roll out their project within the company.

Interested startups can register for the Open Innovation Challenge at <https://innovation.eliagroup.eu/challenges/>. To learn more, click here to watch the video: <https://youtu.be/xzizRbwhYq8>



## About Elia Group

### One of Europe's top five players

Elia Group is active in electricity transmission. We ensure that production and consumption are balanced around the clock, supplying 30 million end users with electricity. With subsidiaries in Belgium (Elia) and north and east of 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 production, Elia Group promotes both the integration of the European energy market and the decarbonisation of our society. Elia Group is also 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, 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, 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: [eliagroup.eu](http://eliagroup.eu)

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