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Solar eclipse has limited impact on Belgian grid

- On Thursday 10 June, a solar eclipse cast a shadow over Belgium between 11:16 a.m. and 1:25 p.m.
- The growing proportion of solar and wind power in the energy mix requires Elia to anticipate the impact of natural phenomena such as eclipses and storms on the power grid.
- The impact of the eclipse on the Belgian grid was minor and the management of the grid was kept perfectly under control.
- Federal Energy Minister Tinne Van der Straeten visited the Elia control centre to learn how it handles unusual situations such as Thursday's eclipse.

Brussels | A solar eclipse cast a shadow over large swathes of Europe on 10 June 2021. The generation of solar electricity in Belgium dropped by 15% during the eclipse. As the share of renewable energy in Belgium's energy mix continues to grow, natural phenomena such as solar eclipses and storms can impact Elia's power grid. Given our preparation in the lead-up to the eclipse (with stakeholders from across the electricity industry), its impact was well managed. Energy Minister Tinne Van der Straeten visited our National Control Centre in Brussels on the day in question to find out how we handle unusual situations of this nature.

Drop of 500 MW in solar generation

The share of solar and wind energy generation is growing in Europe, in line with its ambition to ensure its power grids are more sustainable and its goal to become carbon-neutral by 2050, as outlined in the European Green Deal. Over the past few years, solar power capacity has increased sharply in Belgium, reaching nearly 5 GW today. This amounts to a significant proportion of the electricity generated across the country. The loss of all or part of this solar generation capacity at times when consumption is high must be anticipated, because supply and demand for electricity must be kept in balance at all times. The impact of the solar eclipse on 10 June resulted in a 15% drop in solar generation capacity in Belgium, which is the equivalent of 500 MW.

Efficient coordination and advance preparation undertaken to anticipate the impact

As the date of the eclipse approached, Elia made all the necessary preparations to ensure continuity of supply in Belgium. The impact that the solar eclipse would have on the grid was precisely calculated and mitigating measures were discussed and implemented, including the deployment of additional reserves and extra staff in control rooms. In addition, relevant market players were informed of the eclipse, to ensure they were prepared to respond to it in any way necessary. The eclipse was a good practice run for the next eclipses, which are due to occur on 25 October 2022 and in 2026.

Ensuring a more flexible grid



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Tinne Van der Straeten was on hand at the Elia National Control Centre (NCC) this Thursday morning to more fully understand the work Elia's teams and other industry stakeholders carry out together to ensure balance on the grid and security of supply are maintained at all times. Coordination and advance preparation are key for meeting the challenges of the energy transition - although they are not sufficient. The continuous development and updating of infrastructure is also necessary. In the future, it will also be important to develop new tools to build a more flexible grid that can smoothly and efficiently integrate energy generated from intermittent renewable sources. Elia is working with industry players, businesses, start-ups, the public sector and academia to make this ambition a reality.

“Security of supply is monitored every second of every day, and the federal government has worked hard to ensure security of supply in the long term. Even a natural phenomenon such as an eclipse can be predicted, so ensuring that possible problems are avoided. The last time our country was faced with a big challenge was in 2018, when six out of seven nuclear power plants experienced unplanned outages. Thanks to the government's capacity mechanism, supply has now been secured for the long term and we can continue our transition towards 100% renewable energy and climate neutrality.”

Tinne Van der Straeten, Federal Minister of Energy



About Elia Group

One of Europe's top five players

Elia Group is active in electricity transmission, ensuring that generation and consumption are balanced at all times. We supply 30 million end users with electricity and manage 19,271 km of high-voltage power lines via our subsidiaries in Belgium (Elia) and north-east Germany (50Hertz). As such, our Group is one of Europe's top five system operators. 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, Elia Group promotes both the integration of the European energy market and the decarbonisation of our society. The Elia Group is also innovating its operational systems and developing market products so that new technologies and market parties can access our grid. In this way, Elia Group is 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 are constantly adapting our transmission grid to the rapidly changing energy mix, incorporating ever more renewable energy. We also ensure that investments are made on time and within budget and guarantee maximum safety. When we carry out our projects, we manage stakeholders proactively by establishing two-way communication with all affected parties from the outset. We also offer our expertise to our sector and relevant authorities to help 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 a member of the Nemo Link consortium, which operates the first subsea electricity interconnector between Belgium and Great Britain. The Elia Group operates under the legal entity Elia Group, a listed company whose core shareholder is the municipal holding company Publi-T.

For more information: [elia.be](https://www.elia.be) & [eliagroup.eu](https://www.eliagroup.eu)

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