



## Commemoration ceremony in Merksem also honours seven fallen Ukrenergo employees

**MERKSEM - KYIV | On 6 September 2024, a special commemoration ceremony was held in Merksem to honour the 22 power plant workers who were executed by German occupiers 80 years ago during the Second World War. This is a tragedy that we must never forget, and is one that is also sadly still relevant today. In Ukraine, seven employees of Ukrenergo, the Ukrainian system operator, have died over the past two years during the war with Russia. They were killed while working and were deliberately targeted. During times of war, electricity infrastructure is crucial and is therefore often targeted.**

A ceremony which honours the 22 employees of Merksem's power plant who died during the Second World War is held every year. The 22 men were executed by German occupiers 80 years ago while working in the plant. This past event is highly topical in countries which are currently in the middle of a war. For example, seven Ukrenergo employees have already died while at work since the war between Russia and Ukraine began. They were honoured during the ceremony in Merksem, which was attended by the Ukrainian chargée d'affaires to Belgium. Pupils from St Lutgardis primary school laid flowers by portraits of the victims. The youngest victim was barely 26, while the oldest was 59 and, at the time of his death, was three weeks from retirement. The victims also included a 55-year-old woman who died when the building she was working in was bombed.

*"Since the beginning of the Russian armed aggression against our country, the enemy has been mercilessly killing peaceful Ukrainians. Every day, Russia carries out large-scale missile attacks on civilians and critical infrastructure, including energy facilities, causing widespread destruction. Those who provide emergency aid to civilians, as well as first responders and teams working to restore our energy supply, often face Russian attacks and become victims of terror.*

*For more than two and a half years, Ukrainians have been living in blackout conditions, without electricity, hot water or heating. Now more than ever before, assistance from friends and partners is needed to resist this Russian terror. Military aid from our allies is a top priority. At the same time, it is vital that the energy infrastructure that was destroyed by Russia be rebuilt. I would like to express our sincere gratitude to Belgium and Elia Group for all the practical help they have provided to the Ukrainian energy sector."*

**Nataliia Anoshyna, Ukrainian Chargée d'Affaires to Belgium**

Electricity infrastructure is being deliberately targeted in the war between Russia and Ukraine. Between October 2022 and February 2023, Ukraine's grid infrastructure was hit by 15 large-scale missile and 18 drone attacks, impacting around 43% of the country's grid infrastructure. The attacks caused damage which exceeded €10 billion and left

12 million Ukrainians without power on a regular basis. Thanks to the efforts of Ukrenergo's repair teams and international support, most of the damage had been repaired by late 2023.

In early 2024, Russia again launched wide-scale attacks on Ukraine's energy infrastructure, deploying more than 120 missiles and 100 kamikaze drones. Electricity generation in particular is now being targeted. Approximately 50% of the generation capacity has been disconnected, forcing Ukrenergo to again reduce the electricity consumption of businesses and households.

The alderwoman of Merksem district, Dominique Kums, also attended the commemoration ceremony. She reflected on the events that took place 80 years ago in her city. After the liberation of Antwerp on 4 September 1944, it took another month for Merksem to be freed from German occupation. When some German soldiers were killed at the power plant next to the Albert Canal, SS troops took bloody revenge on locals. On 6 September, 21 of the plant's employees were sent outside one at a time through a hole in the wall and were shot in cold blood by SS soldiers. The following day, another victim was discovered and killed. A monument at Elia's high-voltage substation in Merksem keeps their memory alive.

*"To me, this monument at Elia's substation which honours these people symbolises all those who put their lives on the line while doing their jobs - both people from the past and in the present. Although they are not on the frontlines of war, the crucial sector in which they work suddenly makes them part of the battle. We should never take our electricity supply for granted."*

**Dominique Kums, Merksem district alderwoman**

*"'In the interest of society' is not just our slogan. In peacetime, it's about focusing on the welfare and prosperity of our country. In times of war, it's about keeping a nation afloat and surviving. Our sector and the people working in it play a crucial role in keeping the lights on at all times."*

**David Zenner, Chief Assets Officer**

## About Elia Group

### One of Europe's top five TSOs

Elia Group is a key player in electricity transmission. We ensure that production and consumption are balanced around the clock, supplying 30 million end users with electricity. Through our subsidiaries in Belgium (Elia) and the north and east of Germany (50Hertz), we operate 19,460.5 km of high-voltage connections, meaning that we are one of Europe's top 5 transmission system operators. With a reliability level of 99.99%, we provide society with a robust power grid, which is important for socioeconomic prosperity. We also aspire to be a catalyst for a successful energy transition, helping to establish a reliable, sustainable and affordable energy system.

### We are making the energy transition happen

By expanding international high-voltage connections and incorporating ever-increasing amounts of renewable energy into our grid, we are promoting both the integration of the European energy market and the decarbonisation of society. We also continuously optimise our operational systems and develop new market products so that new technologies and market parties can access our grid, thus further facilitating the energy transition.

### 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 responding to the rapid increase in renewable energy by constantly adapting our transmission grid. We also ensure that investments are made on time and within budget, with a maximum focus on safety. In carrying out our projects, we manage stakeholders proactively by establishing two-way communication channels between all relevant parties very early on in the development process. We also offer our expertise to different players across the sector in order to build the energy system of the future.

### International focus

In addition to its activities as a transmission system operator, Elia Group provides consulting services to international customers through its subsidiary Elia Grid International. In recent years, the Group has launched new non-regulated activities such as re.alto - the first European marketplace for the exchange of energy data via standardised energy APIs - and WindGrid, a subsidiary which will continue to expand the Group's overseas activities, contributing to the development of offshore electricity grids in Europe and beyond.

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

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