



2020 Open Innovation Challenge focuses on digitalisation for enhanced security

- Challenge open to start-ups from around the world
- Winner will receive €20,000 and a chance to develop its project in collaboration with the Elia Group in Belgium and Germany

BRUSSELS - Elia Group, a transmission system operator active in Belgium and northeast Germany, is set to launch its fourth Open Innovation Challenge this month. The competition invites start-ups from around the world to present solutions to any of the many challenges system operators face. The 2020 Challenge will focus on developing innovative digital solutions designed to enhance security. Every year, the competition allows Elia Group to innovate faster in specific sectors by creating synergies with start-ups and SMEs (small and medium-sized companies).

Safety and security are key

Our energy system is evolving rapidly to meet the requirements of the energy transition. While the everyday management of the electricity system is becoming increasingly complex, the advent of new technologies enables us to constantly improve what we do and how we operate. That said, to keep pace with innovations, it is important to establish solid partnerships and well-defined areas of collaboration. For this year's Challenge, collaboration will focus on developing digital solutions that further mitigate the risks associated with the security of infrastructure, data and IT systems (e.g. fault detection, data source reliability, privacy, and so on). This is an area requiring a forward-looking approach that already anticipates tomorrow's threats today.

“ Elia Group has extensive know-how in its traditional businesses, but we are also gaining expertise in digital technologies, though this is a domain that cannot be explored in isolation. I am certain that working in a broader ecosystem will yield the best results, which is why Elia Group's Open Innovation Challenge was launched in the first place. We are counting on start-ups to test, evaluate and manipulate the reliable data we give them to open up new vistas of work and thought. I am convinced that the solutions they come up with will enable us to further enhance our data security as well as the security of our infrastructure in future.”

Michael von Roeder, Chief Digital Officer, Elia Group



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The Challenge kicks off on 27 January, with the final set to take place in Brussels on 11 June.

Last year, 83 start-ups and SMEs took part in the competition. Contestants will have two months to submit their ideas. In late March, twenty of the proposed ideas will be shortlisted. Those twenty start-ups will then be given an opportunity to refine their projects in collaboration with an expert from Elia or 50Hertz. Only five of these twenty entries will make it through to the final. These five top pitches will be presented to a jury at the final in June. The winner will receive a cheque for €20,000 and a chance to implement their idea in collaboration with the Elia Group, either at Elia in Belgium or at 50Hertz in Germany.

OKTO ACOUSTICS tests its acoustic sensors on Nemo Link

Danish start-up OKTO ACOUSTICS won last year's Elia Group Open Innovation Challenge. In 2019, the competition aimed to improve the daily asset management and maintenance operations of system operators Elia and 50Hertz by deploying innovative concepts. At the final, held in Berlin, the jury praised the Copenhagen-based company for its development of sensors combined with software that used artificial intelligence to identify and assess a whole range of sounds and noises. One thing its solution can do when used in or on an electrical installation is distinguish between the noises or sounds of normal operation and anomalies. That solution is currently being tested at the new Nemo Link converter station in Bruges.

Interested start-ups can register for the Open Innovation Challenge at:
<https://innovation.eliagroup.eu/challenges/oic-2020/>

To find out more, click here to watch the video: <https://youtu.be/5DeuHIIvNE>



About the Elia Group

One of Europe's top five players

The 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 18,990 km of HV 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.

Achieving the energy transition

By expanding international high-voltage connections and integrating ever-increasing amounts of renewable energy, the Elia Group promotes both the integration of the European energy market and the decarbonisation of our society. At the same time, innovation is reshaping the Group's operational systems and we are developing new market products to enable the latest technologies and new market players to access our system. In this way, the Elia Group is making the energy transition happen.

In the interests of society

As a key player in the energy system, the Elia Group is committed to working in the interests 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 very early on in the development process. 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 serving as a transmission system operator in Belgium and Germany, the Elia Group provides consultancy services to international customers via 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 System Operator, a listed company whose core shareholder is the municipal holding company Publi-T.

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