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## Elia Group's sixth Open Innovation Challenge is focused on sustainability

- The challenge is open to start-ups from around the world
- Elia Group seeks solutions to the sustainability challenge it faces
- The winning team will be announced on Friday 10 June
- The winning team will receive €20,000 to develop their project with Elia Group; benefit from mentoring from Elia Group staff; and will raise the visibility of their start-up

**BRUSSELS - The annual Open Innovation Challenge (OIC) allows Elia Group to maintain close ties with a broad ecosystem of start-ups and small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs). The OIC aims is to stimulate and accelerate innovation as society moves towards net zero. Elia Group is committed to taking the lead in decarbonising the electricity sector and also making its own activities more sustainable. Through its ActNow programme, the Group has set itself ambitious and concrete objectives that contribute to the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The Open Innovation Challenge is one of the ways that the Group is aiming to contribute to these goals.**

The European Green Deal is Elia Group's compass. The former includes goals such as reaching climate neutrality by 2050, protecting biodiversity, encouraging the use of sustainable products and technologies and ensuring that all of these are carried out in a fair and inclusive way.



*As a key player in the energy sector, we are preparing the electricity system for increases in renewable energy production and decreases in our environmental impact. Sustainability is embedded in our DNA and, in line with our ActNow programme, we want to make all of our value chain processes more sustainable. To find new cutting-edge solutions that will help us achieve our mission, we need inspiration and innovation. We cannot do this alone. That's why we are fostering an open innovation ecosystem. We believe that start-ups can help us to embed innovation across our operations and processes, in the name of sustainability.*



**Catherine Vandendorre, Elia Group CFO – sponsor of this year's Open Innovation Challenge**

This year's Open Innovation Challenge is focused on sustainability. This topic has been divided into four categories (efficiency; circularity; resilience; and 'out of the box'), each of which has been matched to possible questions that



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submissions can address (see below). These topics and questions are not exhaustive - instead, they are intended to be a starting point for ideas and solutions that Elia Group and our judges are looking for.

**Efficiency: reducing emissions generated by our own assets or network**

- How can we make our battery cooling systems more efficient in substations?
- How can we reduce energy demand for heating, ventilation and lighting in our substations?
- How can we reduce grid losses from overhead lines?

**Circularity: increasing the use of circular materials**

- How can we sustainably design or recycle underground cables?
- Which circular materials can be used instead of copper, steel, etc.?
- How can we ensure that we use 100% recycled steel or copper?
- What other materials which have positive effects on marine environments (such as our offshore installations) could be used?

**Resilience: dealing with local climate change impacts and events**

- How can we protect batteries or assets from heat waves?
- How can we quickly recover from flooding in our substations?

**Outside the box**

Any good idea that does not immediately fit into one of the three categories above: surprise and challenge us!

**This year's challenge will be officially launched on 11 February, with the winning team being announced on 10 June**

Teams interested in taking part in this year's challenge will have two months in which to refine and submit their projects for consideration (deadline: 31 March 2022). At the end of March, 10 to 5 of the ideas received will be shortlisted by the OIC judges. These teams will receive support from an expert and a mentor to help them refine their project further. In June, five teams will then be invited to the final to pitch their improved solutions to the judges. The winner will receive €20,000 and the opportunity to develop their project with support from Elia Group staff (either based at Elia in Belgium or 50Hertz in Germany).

Interested? Start-ups can register for the Open Innovation Challenge 2022 via the following link:

<https://innovation.eliagroup.eu/challenges/>

## 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 northeastern Germany (50Hertz), we operate 19,276 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 our activities as a transmission system operator, we provide various consulting services to international customers through our third subsidiary, Elia Grid International (EGI). Elia (in Belgium) is also part of the Nemo Link consortium, which operates the first subsea electrical interconnector between Belgium and the UK.

The legal entity Elia 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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