



Elia hangs 'Firefly's' on high-voltage lines to make these more visible to birds

At the request of Flemish nature conservation NGO Natuurpunt, system operator Elia is attaching Firefly's to its high-voltage lines for the first time, making these more visible to birds. In Belgium, an estimated 170,000 to 500,000 birds die each year from colliding with a high-voltage line. The Firefly markers will be installed along a 3-km stretch of the high-voltage line in Noordschote (West Flanders), one of the country's most dangerous high-voltage lines for birds, according to Natuurpunt.

Context

"Natuurpunt and Elia have been working to prevent birds colliding with high-voltage lines since 2012", says Dominique Verbelen from Natuurpunt. At that time, Elia [asked](#) Natuurpunt to map all the dangerous 'black' lines on the Elia grid. Natuurpunt found that a high collision risk is posed by some 200 km of Elia's 5,700-km high-voltage grid in Belgium. One of the most dangerous lines, in Noordschote, runs through the Yser valley, a special protection zone under the Birds Directive. "We are delighted that markers are being fitted on this line."

From 4 March to 7 April 2018, Natuurpunt recorded the number of bird collisions along a 3,100-metre stretch of the Noordschote line. They found 136 dead birds from 27 species there. These were mainly lapwings (24) and starlings (10) but also some rarer species, such as pink-footed geese, tundra bean geese, water rails, golden plovers, ruffs, redshanks and jack snipes.

Firefly's make overhead lines more visible to birds

"Firefly's are small cards, 11 by 15 cm in size, with two reflectors on each side. We are using aerial platforms to attach the markers to the Noordschote overhead line at 30-metre intervals", says Elia's Carolien Pouleyn. "In total, over 500 Firefly's will be installed. They are intended to significantly reduce the number of birds colliding with these high-voltage lines." For reasons of safety and security of supply, the markers can only be installed on an HV line when it is out of service for maintenance or other work.

The Firefly's are attached to the cables with a clip and move in the wind. The reflectors reflect the light, making the lines more visible to birds. This is especially important at dusk and at dawn, when birds are most active. Natuurpunt plans to survey the ground under the Noordschote line again in 2020 for birds that have collided with the line. At that time they are hoping to report a drop in bird fatalities, as they are expecting.

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About the Elia Group

One of Europe's top five players

Elia is Belgium's high-voltage transmission system operator (30 kV to 380 kV) and is responsible for electricity transmission there. We ensure that generation and consumption are balanced around the clock, supplying the Belgian grid with electricity and operating 8,495 km of high-voltage connections. As such, our group (bringing together Elia in Belgium and 50Hertz in Germany) 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 generation, the Elia Group promotes both the integration of the European energy market and the decarbonisation of our society. At the same time, the Elia Group is 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, the 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, the 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 has built the first subsea electrical interconnector between Belgium and the UK.

The Group operates under the legal entity Elia System Operator, a listed company whose core shareholder is the municipal holding company Publi-T.

More information: [elia.be](https://www.elia.be)

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