

Haucourt-Moulaine, 25 June 2010

RTE and Elia upgrade interconnection for electricity flows between France and Belgium

Chairman of the RTE Executive Board Dominique Maillard and Chairman of the Elia Executive Committee Daniel Dobbeni today officially opened the upgraded interconnection for electricity flows between the high-voltage substations at Moulaine (Meurthe-et-Moselle) and Aubange (Belgian Ardennes). By investing a total of €13.2 million in the project, RTE and Elia have increased exchange capacity between France and Belgium by between 10% and 15% while avoiding the need to construct a new power line.

The increase in exchange capacity will not only ensure that the two countries can provide each other with more backup in the event of a major incident, but will also contribute to the development of the integrated European electricity market.

The French transmission system operator RTE and its Belgian counterpart Elia have installed a second 225 kV three-phase circuit on an existing 15 km power line linking Moulaine (France) and Aubange (Belgium). A new breed of high-performance conductors means that the transmission capacity of the circuit has been increased by 20%. The conductors have been incorporated into both the new and the existing circuits.

RTE and Elia have invested a total of €13.2 million in the project. Given that the majority of the line is in France, RTE has provided €11 million of the funds (€6 million for power lines and €5 million for the Moulaine and Mont-Saint-Martin substations), while Elia has contributed the remaining €2.2 million for the Aubange substation and power lines in Belgium.

RTE and Elia began collaborating in 2005 with a view to successfully implementing the interconnection project, and this cooperation culminated in the commissioning of the new power line on 28 May 2010.

The modernisation works carried out on the transmission system in the Longwy basin and southern Belgium will also help to ensure security of supply in the border region. On the technical side, two 63 kV/20 kV transformers at the Mont-Saint-Martin transformer substation have been replaced by a 225 kV/20 kV transformer. At the Aubange substation, expansion works have been carried out and new digital telecommunication tools have been installed.

Furthermore, the upgrading of transmission capacity between Moulaine and Aubange has enabled RTE to disassemble 15 km of older 63 kV lines, in particular between Moulaine and Herserange.

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RTE is the operator of the French electricity transmission grid. As a public service company, RTE is responsible for the operation, maintenance, and development of the high and very-high-voltage grid. It also ensures the electricity system is both correctly operated and reliable.

RTE transports electricity between electricity suppliers (from France and elsewhere in Europe) and consumers, whether electricity distribution operators (ERDF and local distribution companies) or industrial consumers connected directly to the transmission grid. RTE operates the largest network in Europe, with 100,000 km of lines (including 45 cross-border lines) transporting electricity at between 63,000 and 400,000 volts. In 2009, RTE achieved a turnover of €4,130 million. The company employs around 8,500 people.

Elia is the Belgian transmission system operator, transmitting electricity from producers to distribution system operators and major industrial users, as well as importing and exporting electrical energy to and from Belgium's neighbouring countries. Elia owns the entire Belgian very-high-voltage grid (150 to 380 kV) and some 94% (ownership and user rights) of Belgium's high-voltage grid infrastructure (30 to 70 kV). Elia's grid consists of 5,614 kilometres of overhead lines and 2,765 kilometres of underground connections and is a key link between electricity markets in northern and southern Europe. The company also controls the German transmission system operator 50Hertz Transmission, in which it holds a 60% stake. Belgium's recent investments in interconnection capacity with its neighbours make it one of the most open and interconnected countries in Europe.

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