

Press release: Launch of LIFE SafeLines4Birds project to reduce mortality of birds along power lines

From 13 to 15 March 2023, the consortium of the LIFE SafeLines4Birds project met in Paris to kick off this 6-year project, which aims to reduce non-natural mortality of 13 representative bird species around power lines.

The success of this project relies on the extensive collaboration of 15 consortium partners and relevant stakeholders, which include Transmission System Operators (TSO), Distribution System Operators (DSO), NGOs and scientific experts from France, Belgium, Portugal, Germany and the United States. The project is co-financed by the European Union's LIFE Programme, has a budget of nearly €14.2 million and will run until 31 December 2028.

About the project

Collision with power lines, electrocution while perching and disturbance during their breeding season are major threats for some birds, causing the death of millions of individuals world-wide each year, and in some cases posing a real threat to population viability. Thus, SafeLines4Birds targets 13 species, most impacted by power lines in France, Belgium and Portugal: Little Bustard, Bearded Vulture, Bonelli's Eagle, Cinereous Vulture, Egyptian Vulture, Lesser Kestrel, Common Crane, Osprey, White Stork, Black Stork, Eurasian Woodcock, Eurasian Curlew, Northern Lapwing. In addition, the project aims to improve and share knowledge across Europe and among relevant stakeholders.

To reduce mortality caused by collisions, innovative approaches will be adopted including the test of new flight diverter devices such as the American ultra-violet Avian Collision Avoidance System ([ACAS](#)), as well as the installation of existing anti-collision bird flight diverters. In some cases, lines will also be replaced by underground cables to eliminate the risk for birds in high-risk areas.

In order to reduce electrocution, dangerous power poles will be retrofitted and insulated, and bird deterrence devices installed at the higher risk sites. Platforms and perches will also be set up to protect birds that roost or nest.

Finally, to avoid disturbance, grid maintenance and surveillance methodologies will be adapted – where possible in line with the breeding periods of the target species – to improve their breeding success.

All results gathered will be shared in an open and standardised way, benefiting the understanding about bird-grid interactions and the effectiveness of the tested mitigation measures.

About the consortium

The project is coordinated by the Ligue Pour La Protection des Oiseaux ([LPO France](#)), the French branch of BirdLife. The other French partners are [Enedis](#) (French DSO), Réseau De Transport D'électricité – [RTE](#) (French TSO), [LPO Pays De La Loire](#), [LPO Auvergne-Rhone-Alpes](#), [LPO Occitanie](#) and [LPO Provence Alpes Côte d'Azur](#) (local NGOs). Those partners created in 2004 the Avifauna National Committee that aims to reduce the impacts of energy infrastructure on biodiversity and initiated the project SafeLines4Birds. Similar relations exist in Portugal between project partners Sociedade Portuguesa Para O Estudadas Aves - [SPEA](#) (NGO) and [E-Redes](#) (Portuguese DSO), as well as in Belgium with [Natuurpunt](#), [Natagora](#) (NGOs) and [Elia](#) (Belgian TSO).

Joining those partners, the Renewables Grid Initiative ([RGI](#)) is a Berlin-based NGO and a unique collaboration of environmental NGOs and TSOs from across Europe. [EDM International](#), a US-based corporation, brings a team of wildlife biologists and avian specialists to the consortium. Finally, [BIOPOLIS-CIBIO](#) is a Portuguese research centre associated to the University of Porto that has acquired expertise on the biodiversity impacts of energy infrastructure through long-lasting collaborations with TSOs and DSOs in Portugal and across Europe.

About RGI's Role

For the SafeLines4Birds project, RGI – building on extensive experience – is in charge of communicating and disseminating project results as well as of networking and facilitating multi-stakeholder exchanges. In the case of this project, this is crucial for finding agreements between all stakeholders in the target countries.

Amongst others, RGI will be in charge of the development of a SafeLines4Birds digital platform. This open access platform seeks to centralise all technical information gathered during the project. This will facilitate the dissemination of knowledge regarding technical innovations and equipment across Europe and, through this, support the replication of actions in other countries. The platform will target all stakeholders concerned by the issue, including NGOs, TSOs, DSOs and suppliers of devices.