

# SLOVAKIA

How building trust and overcoming difference can ensure successful bird protection around power lines

A history of direct communication and collaborative projects have taken Slovakian grid operators and NGOs from 'difference to cohesion' to bring mutual understanding, strong relationships and highly successful bird protection around power lines in the field.

In the 1990s, Raptor Protection of Slovakia (RPS) began raising public awareness on bird-grid mortality. New laws were created, which obliged grid operators to tackle mortality.

This paved the way for several joint LIFE projects and regular, effective collaboration which now works seamlessly through direct contact between RPS and grid operators, including all three national DSOs and the TSO.



**Successful action to boost populations. Slovakia's Saker Falcon (*Falco cherrug*) population only breeds in nest boxes on pylons of the TSO (majority of pairs) and DSOs.**



**RPS's advice directly informs bird-safe planning of power lines and mitigation.**



**Success and enduring connection between NGOs and grid operators have created trust, pride and importance for the topic.**

## ENGAGEMENT

- RPS raised public and political awareness to bird mortality through campaigns in the 1990s/2000s.
- Communication is now positive. The comms teams at RPS & the DSOs and TSO run joint good news campaigns.
- High trust and familiarity mean no formal agreement or MoU is needed.

## DATA & MONITORING

- NGO database: An open-source database, 'Aves' managed by BirdLife Slovakia and RPS, records key bird mortality data.
- Grid operator database: At least one DSO tracks mortality through an app for technicians on the ground. Data is reported to the parent company, the conservation authority and RPS.

## FINANCIAL

- Grid operators now (co-) finance mitigation and ecological measures projects as standard practice.
- Planning of new lines & mitigation measures informed by RPS' advice is targeted & more effective, meaning fewer outages and fines for grid operators.

## LAW & POLICY

- The 2002 'Law on Nature and Landscape Protection' obliges operators to prevent risk, retrofit where danger is proven, and stipulates fines for loss of each species.
- RPS is consulted in official processes related to bird safety on power lines.

# KEYS TO SUCCESS

## ENGAGEMENT

- **LIFE for life:** Joint LIFE projects lay the foundation for long-term grid operator-NGO relationship, even after LIFE funding ends.
- **First-hand experiences create motivation and pride:** During installations in the field, RPS & environmental colleagues from the grid operators point out the birds “whose lives they save.”

## DATA & MONITORING

- The LIFE Energy project developed a methodology for risk assessment and monitoring of wire marker efficiency, which is being implemented on national and international level (currently through the LIFE Danube Free Sky project).
- Grid operators install wire markers to reduce collision risk and RPS does monitoring through contracts or voluntarily, including of new devices being tested.

## LAW & POLICY

- Action influences law: Public pressure and active involvement of all stakeholders in consultation processes can influence the creation of new laws to mandate and scale-up action.
- Law influences action: After the 2002 law, grid operators had an incentive to address the issue of mortality, and a cascade of collaboration followed.

## FINANCIAL

- Economic incentive: Financial benefits from bird mortality reduction (fewer outages and fines) encourage further investment.
- The risk assessment methodology identifies the riskiest lines where action should be taken to increase safety. This optimises the resources of grid operators.

## Fun fact

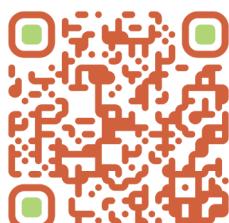
As part of a LIFE project tagging birds with transmitters, RPS names some of the Eastern Imperial Eagles and Saker Falcons after colleagues from the grid operator staff.

## Did you know?

The collaboration in Slovakia influenced the development of the first drones to install wire markers on live power lines without the need to shut them down.

RPS and DSOs worked together with technical partners to specify their needs and test initial products.

The drones are now in action at scale across the grid, in Slovakia and beyond.



Learn more about  
bird protection

Renewables Grid Initiative



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