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RGI's 'Good Practice of the Year' award 2020 celebrates winners at the Energy Infrastructure Forum

This year's prizes were taken home by EirGrid, for their engagement process around the Celtic Interconnector project; a smart grid research approach by Horizon 2020 consortium ERIGrid; and the Jordanian Royal Society for the Conservation of Nature (RSCN), for their comprehensive soaring bird protection programme.

The Renewables Grid Initiative (RGI) is proud to announce the winners of this year's 'Good Practice of the Year' award. Three outstanding practices were crowned at the European Commission's 'Energy Infrastructure Forum' today. Prizes were awarded in three categories: 'Communication & Engagement', 'Technological Innovation & System Integration' and 'Environmental Protection' – all of them meant to inspire and show that if we all work on constantly improving our practices, we can make giant steps forward on the way to a renewables-based energy system, while protecting nature and bringing along people.

Communication & Engagement: EirGrid's "Stakeholder consultation around the Celtic Interconnector"

Our jury of experts chose EirGrid's "Stakeholder consultation around the Celtic Interconnector" as the winner in this category because EirGrid continuously evaluate and improve their engagement practices. For the engagement around their Celtic Interconnector they started at a very early point in time and designed an extremely holistic approach that includes a diverse set of high-quality measures. The approach is based on up-to-date research and techniques, includes a 3D visualisation tool and dedicated liaison officers, and does not shy away from pre-emptively talking about difficult topics like EMF.

"EirGrid recognise the benefits of meaningful and innovative engagement in the delivery of electricity grid projects. Over recent years, we have made significant efforts to ensure that we are more open, transparent and accessible to the communities where we are developing projects", says EirGrid CEO Mark Foley. "The engagement on our signature Celtic Interconnector Project in Cork has allowed us to be more innovative and creative in the use of many new tools and approaches. The recognition by the award jury is a great honour and a source of real encouragement and will ensure that we redouble our efforts to engage with local communities over the coming years as this key project is advanced. "Winning Hearts and Minds" is at the centre of the energy transition and it starts in communities where we seek to develop new infrastructure."

Environmental Protection: "Mainstreaming soaring bird conservation in energy sectors in Jordan" by The Royal Society for the Conservation of Nature (RSCN)

RSCN's bird conservation approach was chosen as the top submission in the environmental category because it is a hugely impactful project that is ground-breaking for the region, which is home to vitally important migratory bird corridors. It involves the protection of birds from both power lines and wind turbines and is realised through cooperation with multiple private and public stakeholders. It has already led to the development and adoption of national bird protection plans in Jordan, which provide a framework with regard to planning and mitigation measures for the wind industry and power lines located on migratory birds' flyways.

"This award demonstrates to the globe the unique and fruitful cooperation between RSCN as a leading national NGO and the Ministry of Environment in synchronising the interests of

renewable energy and sustainable management of natural resources”, says Chairman of the Board of RSCN, HE Mr. Khaled Irani, thanking the jury.

Technological Innovation & System Integration: “Holistic Approach for Evaluating Complex Smart Grid Systems” by the ERIGrid consortium

The jury picked this “Holistic Approach for Evaluating Complex Smart Grid Systems” in the technical category because it addresses the great need for systematic testing of smart grid solutions. The work of the ERIGrid Horizon 2020 consortium allows for tangible and measurable results as new solutions are being put to the test in a number of different laboratories, already now involving 73 real projects and 175 users. Given that smart grid solutions are one of the most important factors in the system transformation, we believe to have found a very worthy winner.

“Research Infrastructures – like ERIGrid and ERIGrid 2.0 in the domain of power and energy systems – are an important backbone for the European Research Area. ERIGrid has supported a lot of external user groups, especially also from industry/SMEs, in their experimental research, developments, and validation leading to new developments and innovations for a sustainable energy supply and infrastructure of the future. Therefore, it is an honour for us to be awarded with the ‘Good Practice of the Year’ award“, says Thomas Strasser, Senior Scientist at the Austrian Institute of Technology and Coordinator of H2020 ERIGrid.

RGI would like to extend our sincere congratulations to the winners and thank everyone who submitted the diverse and innovative practices that were part of the competition this year. You can find out all about the jury’s favourite practices in our award brochure.

Our thanks also go to the international auditing and advisory company MAZARS for accompanying the evaluation process for the seventh year in a row, the European Commission’s DG Energy for hosting the award ceremony at the ‘Energy Infrastructure Forum’ and to our outstanding jury, for their ongoing commitment to helping to identify the most outstanding practices in grid development and integration.