Sibelga

Highlights 2023

Annual report

Welcome to this paper version of Sibelga's Annual Report, highlighting all the projects that marked 2023.

From 19 June 2024, you will be able to download a digital version of the report at https://2023.sibelga.be.

Other topics such as the Annual Accounts, the Governance Report and Statistics are also included.

Happy reading!

Sibelga

For more information, visit the website
2023.sibelga.be

2023: The energy transition gathers pace

As we take stock of 2023, we are already looking ahead to 2030 and the target set by the Brussels-Capital Region: to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by at least 55% compared to 2008. This will be the first step towards Europe's goal of achieving carbon neutrality by 2050.

At Sibelga, our mission is clear: to ensure reliable and quality access to energy for all Brussels customers. When it comes to the energy transition, the challenge is not just technological and operational. We also need to ensure that everyone has access to low-carbon energy at an affordable cost, whatever their level of income. As a key player in the energy market in Brussels, Sibelga strives to be a partner in an energy transition that is accessible and affordable for everyone.

Now, more than ever, it is time to work together. Sibelga has reiterated this on numerous occasions over the past year, notably at its Stakeholders Event last November entitled "Connecting for an energizing future". Making a success of an affordable, inclusive and diversified energy transition requires the support of many public and private players, well beyond the energy world alone: local and regional authorities, companies active in mobility or construction, public bodies responsible for employment, training, regional development, innovation and so on. The public will also need to play their part.

3 major challenges await us in Brussels in the short term:

1. Maximise the simultaneous production and local consumption of renewable energy;
2. Ease the transition to sustainable, low-carbon mobility;
3. Prepare the future of heating.

We will meet these challenges through our 3 roles: as the operator of the gas, electricity and public lighting networks in Brussels, as a market facilitator and as a partner to the authorities.

Since 2023, we have been stepping up the pace: 25,000 new smart meters have been installed on our customers' premises this year, with the aim of installing 52,000 by 2024 and then of increasing this number to cover 80% of the customer base by 2030. By the end of 2023, Sibelga's public lighting network will already include 20% smart LED lighting. What's more, Brussels residents already have an electric vehicle charging point within 150 metres, while the roll-out of this charging network continues.

At the same time, as you will read in these pages, we are strengthening our links with all the stakeholders involved by increasing the number of consultations, proactive meetings, exchanges, participation in working groups, etc. We are convinced that dialogue and collaboration are key to continuing this acceleration and achieving our common objectives.

To conclude, in 2023 Sibelga also passed a symbolic milestone: last year we celebrated our 20th anniversary. Over the past 20 years, our company, like the energy sector, has undergone many changes. Many more are on the horizon for the next 20 years. We're proud of what we've achieved so far, and look forward to working with you to build the future!

Inne Mertens,
CEO Sibelga

Faouzia Hariche,
Chairwoman of the Board of Directors

Three challenges for Brussels

Sibelga has identified 3 challenges to be met in the short term, in close collaboration with all stakeholders, to ensure an accessible and affordable energy transition for all.

In practice, we meet these challenges through our 3 roles: as the operator of the gas, electricity and public lighting networks in Brussels, as a market facilitator and as a partner to the authorities. Pictograms will help you identify at a glance the concrete achievements of 2023 in relation to these challenges.

1. MAXIMISE THE SIMULTANEOUS PRODUCTION AND LOCAL CONSUMPTION OF RENEWABLE ENERGY

It's not just a question of increasing the proportion of renewable energy, but also of optimising its use. Consuming locally produced energy is not only good for the consumer (energy independence, lower energy bills, etc.), but also for grid management, as the energy produced and consumed instantaneously on site draws little or no energy from the grid.

2. EASE THE TRANSITION TO SUSTAINABLE, LOW-CARBON MOBILITY

At the request of the Region, Sibelga is responsible for facilitating and coordinating the deployment of a public network of charging stations for electric vehicles, with the aim of installing 22,000 publicly accessible charge points by 2035.

3. PREPARE THE FUTURE OF HEATING

As reliance on fossil fuels nears its end, the question arises of how to replace natural gas as a heating source in Brussels. In terms of networks, this challenge is particularly complex because everyone is heating at the same time. As things stand, we seem to be moving towards an energy mix, a marriage of electrons and green molecules. In other words, some of our energy needs could be supplied by green electricity and the rest by decarbonated heating and gas networks.

How the energy transition is gathering pace: the figures

From renewable energy production to electric vehicles, the roll-out of smart meters and a public lighting network incorporating intelligent technologies, the energy transition is gathering pace. The figures for the last three years are proof of this.

Decentralised production

Year	Type	Installations	Installed renewable power (kW)
2023	Photovoltaic	18,816	240,636
	Cogeneration	546	55,771
2022	Photovoltaic	14,941	202,905
	Cogeneration	488	52,237

Public lighting

90.982

Light points on the public lighting network in the Brussels-Capital Region (excluding regional public lighting)

LED light points

2023	18,634
2022	11,425
2021	6,700

Energy sharing (number of EAN meters)

2023	465 EAN
2022	169 EAN
2021	25 EAN

Public network of on-street charging points (number of charging points)

2023	2,440
2022	1,380
2021	500

Network evolution towards a smart grid

2023	1,289
2022	1,226
2021	1,163

2023 at a glance

JANUARY

Sibelga celebrates 20 years of service to Brussels customers as the operator of the gas and electricity distribution networks and public lighting.

FEBRUARY

In association with Les Petits Riens, Sibelga offers visitors to the Bright Festival the chance to give their faulty lamps a second life.

MARCH

Detailed information on construction sites in the capital is now just a click away on the Sibelga website.

JUNE

Sibelga shares its expertise at CIRED, one of the largest technical conferences on electricity distribution networks.

JULY–AUGUST

Test illuminations of iconic Art Nouveau buildings in Brussels are organised in collaboration with urban.brussels.

SEPTEMBER

For its series of reports entitled "Beaux boulots", RTBF captures the daily life of Benjamin, a technician who has worked for Sibelga for 10 years.

APRIL

Sibelga starts work on the Place Schuman renewal project in the heart of the European Quarter.

MAY

Sibelga submits its 2024–2028 development plan for public consultation, describing in particular its challenges for the energy transition in Brussels.

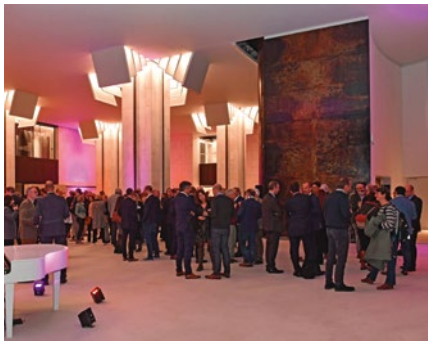
JUNE

For one day, Manneken Pis is dressed like a Sibelga technician: a great way of highlighting our role as an employer in Brussels!

OCTOBER

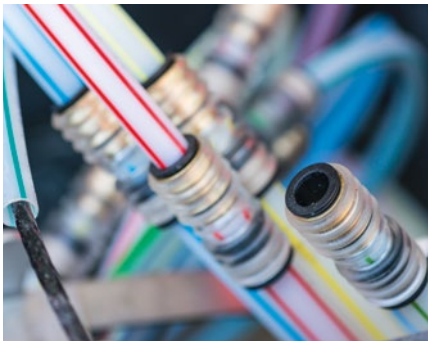
2,440 charge points for electric vehicles are now available to Brussels residents within a radius of 150 metres.

NOVEMBER



Stakeholders Event: Sibelga invites its stakeholders to reflect on and discuss the energy transition.

DECEMBER



The Brussels Region officially announces that Fibru, the fibre-optic network in which Sibelga is participating, will be marketed from 2024.

Introduction

THIS ANNUAL REPORT IS DIVIDED INTO 4 CHAPTERS. THEY COVER OUR 3 ROLES, AS WELL AS OUR COMMITMENTS TO CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY.

1. MANAGING YOUR ELECTRICITY, NATURAL GAS AND PUBLIC LIGHTING

We're readying our infrastructure to meet the energy needs of tomorrow for all our customers in Brussels. On the one hand, we want to improve the quality of our services to our customers by limiting the impact of roadworks, as well as breakdowns and energy interruptions, thanks to an (increasingly) smart network.

On the other hand, as the world moves towards a decentralised and decarbonised model, it is crucial to prepare our infrastructures for the needs of tomorrow. To meet these needs, it is vital that we listen to our customers and support them through change. That's why we are focusing on information and awareness-raising, public consultations and dialogue with all stakeholders.

2. MARKET FACILITATOR

Since the liberalisation of the energy market and the start of the energy transition, new players have arrived on the energy market. All these actors need reliable, high-quality data. As a "neutral" data manager, Sibelga's role is to collect, validate and transmit the data securely and in compliance with data protection regulations, while sharing its expertise.

In this respect, smart meters represent the cornerstone of the energy transition: the data they supply will be key to operating the smart grids of the future, and to the new energy services offered on the market.

3. A PARTNER OF PUBLIC AUTHORITIES

As a public service company, we support the public authorities in their actions and their duty to set an example in terms of energy renovation and green mobility. We have set up specific programmes financed by the Region, such as RenoClick, ChargyClick and MobiClick, to organise, support and boost public authority projects to achieve regional objectives in these areas.

In addition, we are driving the implementation of Brussels' energy policies in the field of social protection through our role as a social supplier.

4. SIBELGA, A COMMITTED COMPANY

As a public service, social responsibility has been at the heart of our day-to-day activities for many years. We are taking concrete action on sustainable development and reducing our carbon footprint, as well as on the circular economy, the well-being of our teams, our commitment to society and cybersecurity.

Grid operator

INFRASTRUCTURE READY TO MEET THE ENERGY NEEDS OF TOMORROW FOR EVERYONE.

INVESTING IN TOMORROW, TODAY

We're building tomorrow's network today. Similarly, the first milestones of Sibelga's next 5-year development plan, which describes all the network investments planned for the years 2025 to 2029, were laid in 2023.

Written in a more dynamic and accessible form, the next development plan will also break new ground by including the results of studies on the development of the network and simulations carried out using forecasting tools. Faced with an energy landscape that is changing ever more rapidly, Sibelga is ensuring that it has the right tools to help it anticipate the impact of the energy transition on the network and plan appropriate investments.

In particular, Sibelga is testing the use of a "digital twin" of its network on which various load development hypotheses can be simulated. "In particular, we used data from a study commissioned by Synergrid, the federation of Belgian grid operators, on the effects of the expected development of electromobility, to visualise the impact on the grid of different hypotheses," explains Alexandru Ofrim, Head of Electricity Investment & Maintenance.

At the same time, the regulatory framework for Sibelga's tariffs for the period 2025–2029 was established at the end of 2023 and start of 2024 by the regulator, Brugel, after a phase of exchange and consultation with Sibelga and a public consultation. This framework lays down the rules for determining the authorised cost base, possible changes in costs, incentives for achieving objectives (particularly in terms of implementing the smart grid, quality of service, etc.) and Sibelga's remuneration. It will serve as a basis for Sibelga to draw up a tariff proposal that should be validated by Brugel before the end of 2024.

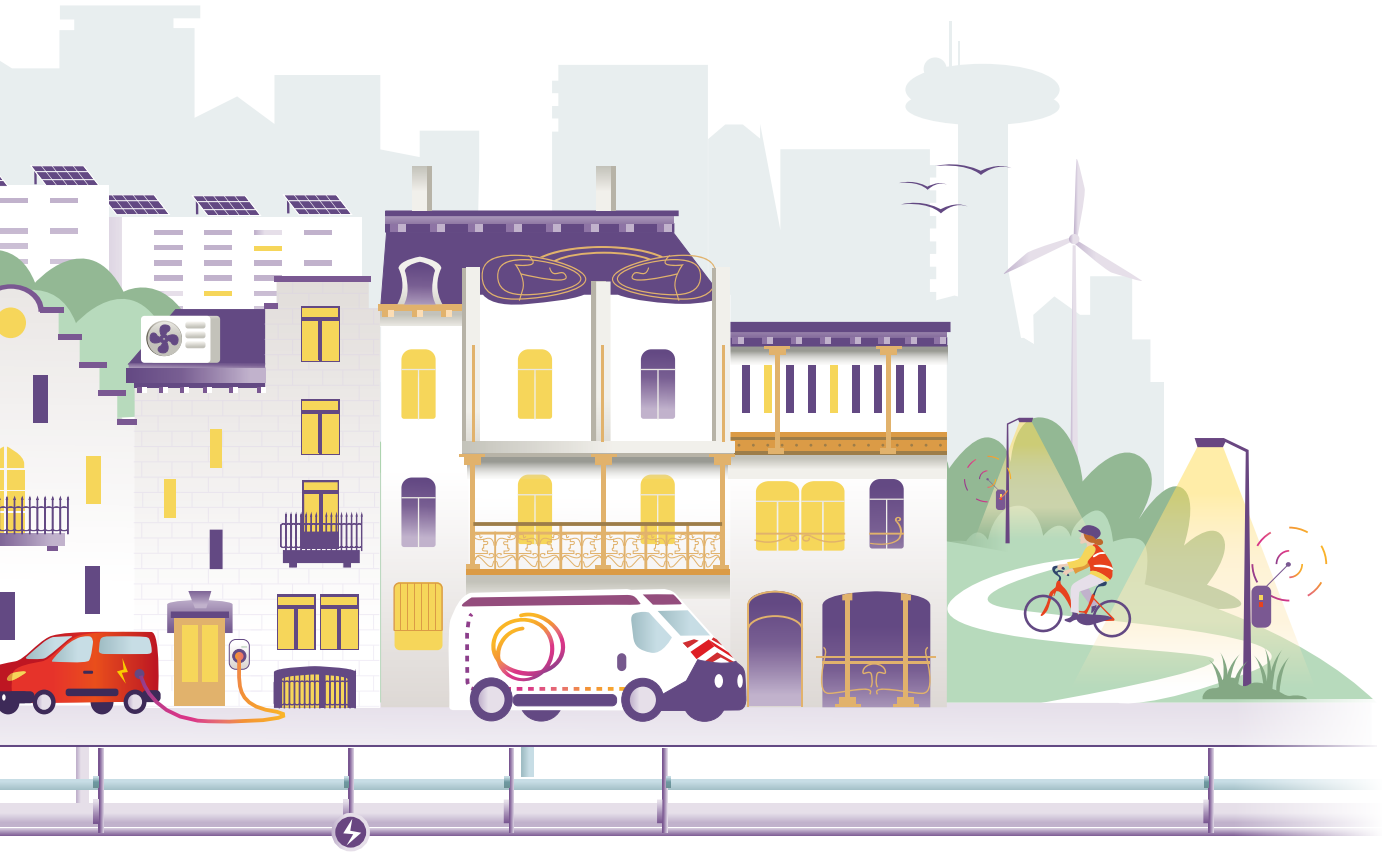
BUILDING FOR THE FUTURE

In 2023, Sibelga carried out a total of 375 roadworks in the capital. These works, which vary in scale, are not just for regular maintenance, replacing installations and reinforcing our infrastructure. They are also part of the urban development of Brussels, and often form part of large-scale projects, such as the transformation of the Schuman roundabout into a meeting place in the heart of the European Quarter, with its emphasis on soft mobility.

The intervention of the site mediator, who ensures dialogue between Sibelga, contractors, local authorities and shops and buildings open to the public, makes it easier to carry out complex work in shopping streets. One example is the rue de Namur work-

site, carried out as part of the modernisation of our networks, which started at the beginning of February 2023 at the very top of the Porte de Namur and will finish in Place Royale at the end of May 2023. In order to make the most of opening up the pavements, this project was carried out in coordination with other contractors such as Proximus, which took advantage of the opportunity to extend its fibre optic network.

Alongside these highly visible worksites in the public space, Sibelga is carrying out complex projects on its technical installations. In February 2023, work began on the Vandenbranden supply substation, at the junction of Elia's high-voltage network and Sibelga's high-voltage distribution network. The aim was to convert this substation, and the associated high-voltage network, from a voltage of 5 kV to 11 kV. This work required us to coordinate with the transmission system operator, Elia, and with professional customers who have their own high-voltage cabins on the network. "This project is part of our drive to standardise and rationalise the voltage levels at our facilities. This makes it easier for us and for the transmission system operator Elia to operate the electricity grid. What's more, we can transport more power at this voltage level, which means that we are increasing capacity with a view to the growing electrification of uses," explains Dirk Willems, Head of Electricity Operations.



A TECHNICAL FRAMEWORK TO PREPARE FOR THE FUTURE

One of the highlights of 2023 is the revision of the Technical Regulations for the management of the electricity distribution network in the Brussels-Capital Region. This text sets out the rights and obligations of Sibelga and network users – our customers – for all activities relating to network management: from connection requests to the installation of smart meters, including billing and data management.

This text has been thoroughly revised. In particular, the aim was to make it more customer oriented and future proof, i.e. to incorporate the new features arriving on the electricity market: energy sharing, smart meters, charging points for electric vehicles, the flexibility market, etc.

To carry out this update, Sibelga worked closely with the regulator Brugel and also organised thematic workshops with its stakeholders in early 2023. "The energy transition involves not only technological change, but also adapting to our customers' processes and behaviour. It is therefore essential that we check in with our stakeholders and get their feedback on our proposals," explains Quentin Peiffer, Head of the Legal Department.

Changes include formalising the rules on energy sharing, which are essential to the development of energy communities, and the data code, which describes Sibelga's obligations with regard to making the data collected by smart meters available to customers and third parties. "As far as the market is concerned, the big news is that this regulation now establishes the possibility of having multiple contracts at a single access point. In practical terms, this means that a customer can have a separate contract for the household energy supply, another contract for the sharing of renewable energy by a neighbour, and a flexibility contract for their electric vehicle charging point, for example," explains Daphné Benzennou, Flex/Market Evolution Manager.

PREPARING THE FUTURE OF HEATING

Due to its fossil origin, natural gas will be phased out in Europe by 2050. This prospect raises many questions: how will we heat our homes in Brussels in the future? What are the most promising and useful technologies? To answer these questions, we need to master the topic. For this reason, in 2023 Sibelga hired an expert in green gas and heating solutions (heat networks, heat pumps, electricity storage, etc.). Their duties will include investigating and studying solutions on the market, leading pilot projects as technical lead and answering technical questions from Sibelga and its partners.

In addition, in 2023 Sibelga continued to be involved in the Energy 2050 task force, led by Bruxelles Environnement in collaboration with the office of the Brussels Minister for Energy and the regulator Brugel. The aim is to advise the regional government on the technical and economic factors associated with the options for decarbonising heat and cooling supply by 2050. In particular, the task force's work should enable the authorities and Sibelga to work together to develop a vision of how the gas, electricity and heating networks will develop over the next 25 years.

THE FAST TRACK TO SUSTAINABLE MOBILITY

In order to organise the connection of charging stations to its network, Sibelga published specific technical specifications in 2023. This document advises Brussels customers wishing to install a charge point on the kind of technology they would need in this case, and stipulates the requirements to be met so as not to endanger the safety of the distribution network.

Submitted for public consultation in June 2023, these guidelines were then presented to the regulator, Brugel, and published in September. "By clarifying the technical framework, this note will speed up the development of new electric recharging solutions in Brussels. Market players may be reluctant to make connections if there is a risk that they will be deemed non-compliant at a later date," comments Marie Hermanns, Market Evolution Analyst.

Sibelga is also seeing a significant increase in requests for extra power or new connections for new charging stations. In 2023, the design office will have processed no fewer than 244 requests for the installation of charging stations, compared with 190 in 2022 and 140 in 2021. "These figures clearly show that there is an increase in this type of request; however, they only reflect part of the reality, since requests for lower wattage, in particular for public roadside bollards, do not require a prior study," explains Hadrien Nimal, head of the Research Department.

THE TRANSFORMATION OF PUBLIC LIGHTING IS GATHERING PACE

Switching to LEDs, installing intelligent lighting systems capable of sending and receiving information in real time: the almost 90,000 luminaires in the public lighting network managed by Sibelga will gradually be replaced or adapted to incorporate all the advantages of the new technologies. Reduced power consumption, the option of dimming or varying light intensity at opportune moments, real-time remote control, alerts in the event of malfunctions... The street lighting network of tomorrow is already appearing on the streets of Brussels.

2023 marked a clear acceleration in the deployment of these technologies, with the aim of achieving energy savings of 35% by 2030 and therefore also a reduction in CO_2 emissions compared with 2020. While the average replacement rate for LEDs was around 3,500 per year, 6,502 LED light points were installed in 2023.

"This acceleration has been a real challenge, as it has required us to review our working methods," explains Serge Lamborelle, Head of Street Lighting. As a result, intelligent lighting systems are automatically installed each time a luminaire switches to LED. Streamlining and harmonising the range of equipment is also underway. Finally, the poles are no longer replaced systematically. Where possible, we only work on the "head" of the luminaire.

In the future, this method could be taken a step further to allow actual "retrofitting": only a few specific elements would be replaced, which would make it possible to preserve the appearance of the emblematic luminaires in certain Brussels districts and be part of a circular economy. 10,000 luminaires have been identified as potential candidates.

AN INCREASINGLY RELIABLE AND SAFE NETWORK

In 2023, Sibelga achieved its best unavailability score for high voltage in more than 12 years. This indicator measures the frequency and duration of power cuts experienced by Sibelga's professional customers who have a high-voltage cabin. On average, these customers lost power for 7 minutes and 56 seconds, of which Sibelga was responsible for 5 minutes and 46 seconds. "It's important to distinguish between incidents that are within Sibelga's control, such as a fault in our installations, and outages that are beyond our control. For example, when a cable is damaged by a third party or when a problem occurs on Elia's transmission network or in a customer's high-voltage cabin," explains Dirk Willems, Head of Electricity Operations. For residential customers connected to low voltage, Sibelga's performance is again commendable, with an average unavailability of 8 minutes and 39 seconds, a continuous improvement since 2020.

Well-considered investments, optimum and regular maintenance of equipment and timely replacement of *assets* are all ways in which Sibelga minimises the risk of faults on its network. In addition, clear and effective procedures, remote display and control tools and good training enable dispatchers and technicians to intervene quickly and safely in the event of a fault.

With regard to incidents caused by third parties, which occur for example when a pipe or cable is damaged by contractors during works, in 2023 Sibelga developed a digital training module using an innovative tool. Resembling a video game, this training educated contractors on the risks of touching an electrical cable or a gas pipe while at work, and reminds them of the safety precautions to be taken. It was developed at Vivaqua's request to train its teams and subcontractors in this area. "Students take on the role of a technician who arrives on site and has to make decisions about the work. In particular, they have to identify the water pipes, decide what to do if

something unexpected happens, etc. Throughout the training, they are given instructions, safety guidelines and technical and theoretical reminders. In short, a real-life situation," explains Bastien De Spiegelaere, Head of the Technology Centre.

Developed on a serious game platform, this innovative digital medium uses artificial intelligence to translate content into different languages. In the future, this type of module could be developed and used for the ongoing training of Sibelga technicians and their subcontractors.

PREVENTING GAS-RELATED INCIDENTS

Sibelga technicians are regularly called in to deal with suspected risks associated with a gas installation. These calls can come from the occupants of a building themselves, but also from the fire brigade or the police. For example, following carbon poisoning in a flat, the emergency services can call on Sibelga to determine whether there is a structural risk in the building. If necessary, it may be decided to shut off the meters as a precautionary measure.

Until 2023, Sibelga was not legally allowed to require customers to take measures to ensure their own security. The distribution network operator's liability extends up to the meter and does not cover customer installations. Following incidents that led to the precautionary closure of several hundred meters, a set of rules governing the disconnection and opening of internal gas installations for safety reasons has been adopted. It clearly defines the conditions under which Sibelga can preventively shut off a meter and reopen it.

At the same time, geopolitical tensions, particularly the conflict in Ukraine, are also being taken into account because of their potential to disrupt the gas network and cause supply problems on the markets. Sibelga participates in the "Gas Security of Supply" working group within the Synergrid federation of Belgian grid operators. The aim of this group is to define emergency plans in the event of a disruption to the gas supply following a major incident on the network or on the market. On 22 November 2023, gas transmission system operator Fluxys organised a crisis exercise to prepare for the activation of the emergency plan. "The exercise focused in particular on the phase when large business customers are called upon to reduce their consumption in order to relieve the network," explains Quentin De Clerck, Customer Account Manager.

PREPARING THE GROUND FOR THE SMART GRID

The increase in the proportion of renewable generation and new energy uses are making network management more complex. For better management and to prevent the risks of congestion, the grid must incorporate so-called intelligent technologies to become a true "smart grid". This intelligent network is based on a number of elements, such as remotely controllable equipment, data transmitted in real time in electricity cabins and data from smart meters.
One of Sibelga's priorities in this area is to improve the observability of the network. In other words, having optimum visibility of real-time energy flows on the network via measurements and production estimates. To achieve this, a large number of measuring devices has been deployed throughout the network in recent years, and this policy will continue until around 2030. Eventually, all transformers will be equipped with telemetry to send power data to the control centre in real time. In addition, all the production units are being modelled and a production estimate will be drawn up for each of them.

This increased observability will make it possible to reduce the margin of error so that any risk of congestion can be anticipated and appropriate measures taken, either at network level or at market level, for example by encouraging consumers to adjust their consumption times. "In 2023, we worked in particular on directional measurements to determine the direction in which energy flows. Previously, energy flowed from production units to consumers. Today, consumers can produce their own energy. So it's not so clear cut any more," explains François Chevalier, Head of Network Management.

At the request of the regulator, Sibelga is also preparing a roadmap setting out all the actions planned to

make the network smart. This obligation is included in the Technical Regulations published at the end of 2023.

EVER CLOSER TO OUR CUSTOMERS

Both end consumers and businesses have a critical role to play in the energy transition. More than ever, Sibelga is proactively seeking to inform, raise awareness and facilitate access for all to the energy transition.

For private customers, Sibelga is stepping up its initiatives. In 2023, we went out to meet the people of Brussels at the Bright Brussels festival and took part in the energy days organised by the local authorities and the CPAS. 1,502 5th & 6th grade primary children took part in the Enerkids cooperative game, developed in collaboration with the ASBL Good Planet, which raises awareness of the rational use of energy and the challenges of the energy transition.

Dialogue with our business customers and stakeholders is also essential. Hence the organisation of a Stakeholders Event in November 2023 dedicated to the energy transition and, for the first time, a Key Account Day for Sibelga's professional customers. "Some 150 people took part in this day specifically designed to meet their needs," comments Quentin De Clerck, Customer Account Manager. "We informed them about key subjects such as managing and maintaining their high-voltage cabins, installing charging points in their car parks and the future of heating in Brussels." In addition to these one-off events, proactive meetings are planned at Sibelga's initiative. Around fifty targeted professional customers received information and personalised advice at these meetings.

Sibelga is also strengthening its links with very specific segments, such as co-ownership associations and federations in the property sector. "Many Brussels residents live in blocks of flats. By installing charging stations, green electricity production units and energy sharing, condominiums are playing an active role in the energy transition. It is therefore essential to be in contact with property managers and intermediaries such as property developer federations," says Sandrine Wanet, Head of Customer Experience. In 2023, interviews and meetings were organised and Sibelga once again took part in the Salon de la Copropriété at Brussels Expo in November. We are also in the process of recruiting an Account Manager dedicated to this customer segment.

Market facilitator

KEY DATA AND EXPERTISE AVAILABLE TO NEW MARKET PLAYERS.

ENERGY SHARING MOVES UP A GEAR

After the first pilot projects made possible by a derogation framework, 2023 marked the official launch of energy sharing in Brussels following the publication of the 2022 Electricity Ordinance. The idea is to enable one or more local producers of green electricity to share their energy with one or more consumers. In 2023, Brussels counted 27 peer-to-peer sharing schemes (between neighbours or family members, for example) and 23 energy sharing schemes within buildings.

Alongside peer-to-peer sharing and energy sharing within buildings, energy communities between producers and consumers in the same neighbourhood are continuing to develop. Two energy communities were active in 2023.

"The emergence of these communities opens up new opportunities for sharing facilities. We could, for example, imagine these communities sharing collective recharging solutions for electric vehicles in the future, in addition to electricity," notes Odile Macé, Market Evolution Analyst.

To support the development of these new modes of consumption, a working group has been set up comprising Bruxelles Environnement, Energie commune (the designated energy sharing and energy community facilitator), the Office of the Brussels Minister for Energy, the regulator Brugel and Sibelga. It met five times in 2023 to discuss changes to energy sharing and customer processes, to align certain specific points such as the terminology and vocabulary used in communications, and to provide feedback from participants collected by the facilitator.

THE ROLLOUT OF SMART METERS ACCELERATES

Smart meters are one of the cornerstones of the energy transition. They are of interest to customers (monitoring and optimisation of consumption, energy sharing, energy services, etc.), to market players (emergence of new products/services, billing based on actual consumption rather than estimates, etc.) and to the electricity network operator (better visibility of the network's state of load, the impact of behaviour, etc.).

Sibelga is speeding up the deployment of these meters on the network, with the aim of equipping 80% of customers by 2030. 25,000 smart meters were installed in 2023, and the aim is to increase this rapidly to 52,000 in 2024, rising to 65,000 in 2025 and 78,000 in 2028, 2029 and 2030.

"Since 2023, replacing the electro-mechanical meter with a smart meter has been free for all Brussels customers," explains Johan Crols, Smart Program Manager. "Every time the Construction department converts to the 400V network, we replace the existing meters with smart meters," adds Thomas Defawe, Metering Infrastructure Expert. "This not only saves time by grouping the work together, but also means we can work as far as possible off-line to ensure the safety of our technicians."

PREPARING TO SHARE SMART DATA

What distinguishes the smart meter from the traditional electro-mechanical meter is its ability to electronically record daily electricity consumption and injection, store this data and transmit it remotely to the distribution network operator.

Deploying smart meters on the grid is just the first step. Secondly, it is essential to be able to offer new services and, in particular, to organise the sharing of

the data collected, in a secure manner and in strict compliance with privacy protection rules.

Among the first initiatives in this direction, Sibelga is preparing to launch a mobile app for monitoring consumption: MySibelga. This digital tool will enable all customers in Brussels to view the data from their electricity meter, so they can better monitor and optimise their consumption. After an initial pilot test carried out in collaboration with the CPAS of the City of Brussels, Sibelga improved the app in 2023 on the basis of user feedback to enable a 2024 rollout.

At the same time, Sibelga is preparing to make data from smart meters available to energy suppliers. "This step will open up new possibilities in terms of billing management, as it will no longer be dependent on an annual statement. It will also provide greater visibility for customers involved in energy sharing," comments Daniel Raes, Manager Market & Access.

FLEXIBILITY IS VITAL TO THE SMART GRID

The smart grid of the future will have to manage increasingly diverse and intermittent energy flows, and will rely on carefully considered and targeted investment based on observations and forecasts of demand and technical elements enabling dynamic management and real-time monitoring.

But this technical layer alone cannot ensure a constant balance between electricity production and consumption. The market is also set to play a crucial role through the flexibility of its customers.

How? Firstly, through tariffs, by introducing what is known as implicit flexibility. "Through their electricity tariffs, customers will be encouraged, through lower prices, to consume at times when energy is available in large quantities and at times when there are no constraints on the network," explains Laurent De Wolf, Strategy Advisor & Controlling Manager. Sibelga and Brugel have entered into discussions regarding electricity tariffs that cover distribution costs for the 2025–2029 tariff period, including the possibility of applying different tariffs for different time slots compared with the current time slots, based in particular on consumption peaks and distribution network constraints.

On the other hand, some network users can voluntarily participate in global balancing through flexibility services, in exchange for financial compensation. For example, a factory may temporarily shut down certain production lines to reduce the load on the network. This is "explicit flexibility".

Until now, this flexibility market has not been open to low-voltage network users. But Synergrid, the federation of Belgian grid operators, is working on it. "In 2023, we prepared to open up the Automatic Frequency Restoration Reserve (aFRR) to low-voltage network users," explains Odile Macé, Market Evolution Analyst at Sibelga. In particular, the relevant technical regulations have been adapted and submitted to the regulator, Brugel, for approval. At the same time, the systems are being adapted so that this new product can be rolled out smoothly throughout Belgium.


GEORGES MATHEUS

A partner of public authorities

DEDICATED SERVICES TO HELP PUBLIC AUTHORITIES ACHIEVE THEIR CLIMATE OBJECTIVES.

RENOCLICK CELEBRATES ITS FIRST ANNIVERSARY

Since 2022, regional, local and community authorities in Brussels have been able to request support from Sibelga for all their sustainable building renovation projects via a one-stop shop that forms part of the RENOLUTION regional strategy with the financial support of the Region and NextGenerationEU: RenoClick. In practical terms, five complementary services are available to help them transform public buildings in a sustainable way: comprehensive renovation, roof restoration and insulation and installation of solar panels, HVAC work (heating systems, domestic hot water, ventilation, air conditioning, etc.), monitoring consumption using a monitoring tool and energy purchases.

"After this first year of operation, we are delighted to see that the synergy between the various services on offer is growing all the time. The new projects we support are part of a genuine long-term vision. It's not just a question of carrying out one-off work on a boiler room, for example, but of thinking more broadly about all the work needed on a building to achieve far greater and lasting reductions in the carbon footprint," says Thomas Raes, Head of Customer Account & Energy Transition Solutions.

THE FIRST COMPREHENSIVE RENOVATION PROJECTS IN SIGHT

After several months of preparation and the launch of the necessary public procurement contracts, the very first RenoClick comprehensive renovation project will begin in the first half of 2024.

"Once this first project has been launched, the work will accelerate, with more than 56 visits already having been made to assess the renovation potential of all kinds of public buildings: schools, crèches, offices, sports and cultural centres, libraries, police stations, nursing homes, etc.," explains Nikolaas Bogaerts, Low Carbon Solutions Manager. A dozen or so specific studies have been initiated for 2023 and the first works contract has been launched.

SOLAR & ROOF, A WINNING COMBINATION

2023 saw the launch of RenoClick's first "Solar & Roof" project, combining roof renovation and insulation with the installation of solar panels. This is a major project for a building of over 7,000 m² owned by CityDev. These works will directly benefit the occupants of the buildings: SMEs, craftsmen, shopkeepers... In the near future, they will all have access to sustainable energy to power their businesses or recharge their electric vehicles.

Another major collaboration involves the STIB's depots and buildings, which are gradually being fitted with solar panels. This partnership alone represents considerable energy savings for the Region. Three depots have already been fitted with panels, two other projects are underway and the STIB has the potential to equip a further ten or so sites, making it possible to install more than 13,000 solar panels throughout the Brussels region, covering a total surface area of around 27,000 m². For this project, STIB is bearing the financial investment alone, but is benefiting from preferential tariffs that are 20 to 30% cheaper thanks to the central purchasing group set up by Sibelga. What's more, it will benefit from green certificates in addition to the green electricity produced by the panels.

In all, more than 1,500 solar panels with a total potential of almost 650 kWp have been deployed by public authorities who are RenoClick members, and will save 225 tonnes of carbon dioxide every year.

FOCUS ON THE HVAC DEPARTMENT

Heating systems, domestic hot water production, ventilation and air conditioning (HVAC): these are all areas where there is great potential for improving the energy performance of buildings. For several years now, Sibelga has been helping public authorities to modernise, replace, regulate or optimise the use of this equipment.

The 80 or so projects carried out since the start of the programme saved 2,300 tonnes of carbon dioxide in 2023.

One of the highlights of 2023 was renovating the boiler room at the Les Heures Douces nursing home, managed by the Ixelles CPAS. "The work was carried out in such a way as to ensure the comfort of the elderly occupants, in particular by maintaining the production of domestic hot water throughout the works," explains Nikolaas Bogaerts, Low Carbon Solutions Manager.

At the Théâtre Balsamine, the installation of a thermodynamic hot water tank will optimise the heating of domestic water in the artists' dressing rooms by maximising use of the electricity generated by the solar panels on the building's roof.

SIBELGA HIGHLIGHTS BRUSSELS' HERITAGE

The Victor Horta Museum, the Hôtel Solvay, the Hôtel Hannon, the Hôtel Van Eetvelde and the Maison Cauchie: these five listed buildings represent the very best of Brussels Art Nouveau. This exceptional heritage will soon be enhanced by a rigorously studied lighting scheme.

For this project, the Brussels Region and urban.brussels, the Brussels administration responsible for the city's heritage, called on the expertise of Sibelga. After a public contract was awarded in 2022, 2023 was spent drawing up studies and developing projects by lighting designers. "Tests were carried out this summer," explains Madjid Teklal, Project Manager, Street Lighting/Enlightenment & Special Projects. "It's a job for a master craftsman, because the light has to enhance the building without detracting from it. The spirit of the building must be respected, taking into account its history, the architect's wishes and its function."

Permit applications have been submitted for four of the five buildings. The project is expected to go ahead in the coming months.

THE ROLLOUT OF CHARGING POINTS GATHERS PACE

With its sights set on moving away from thermal mobility, the Brussels Region wants to install 22,000 publicly accessible charging points for electric vehicles by 2035. Sibelga, in partnership with Bruxelles Environnement, Brussels Mobility and local authorities, is responsible for coordinating the deployment of on-street charging points.

Following the deployment of almost 500 charging points in 2022, a concession was awarded to Energydrive in March 2023 under a public procurement contract for the installation of a further 1,250 charging points. The location of these charging points is determined on the basis of a plan drawn up in collaboration with Bruxelles Environnement, Brussels Mobility and Brugel, to ensure that every inhabitant of Brussels has access to a charging point within 150 metres.

In addition, through the MobiClick programme, Sibelga supports public authorities in the greening of their own fleet. In concrete terms, a dedicated central purchasing unit enables them to acquire electric or CNG vehicles and charging stations for their sites (including installation, connection and maintenance). "12 projects and 11 commissionings were completed in 2023, and our ambition is to double these figures in 2024," says Nicolas Spilleboudt, Green Mobility Project Manager

GREATER DIALOGUE WITH CUSTOMERS FACING HARDSHIP

The 2022 ordinance modifying the ordinances organising the gas and electricity markets in the Brussels-Capital Region introduced extended protection measures for Brussels customers affected by fuel poverty. The Technical Regulations for the management of the electricity and gas distribution network in the Brussels-Capital Region, updated in 2023 and applicable from 2024, are also along these lines.

As a result, customers in critical situations who do not have a contract with a supplier can now benefit from a guaranteed supply activated by the CPAS, at no additional cost. In addition, the ordinance will see the end of power limiters, previously installed at the request of a supplier for customers in payment difficulties. "The withdrawal of this scheme continued at full speed in 2023. Since 2022, instead of installing power limiters, Sibelga has been contacting the cus-

tomers concerned to advise them and inform them of the support measures available to them. Nearly 29,000 such calls were made in 2023. By way of comparison, we made just over 20,000 in 2022," explains Olivier Demanet, Head of Customer Management.

SIBELGA'S SHARED FIBRE OPTIC NETWORK

In December 2023, the Brussels-Capital Region announced the commercialisation from 2024 of a shared network of 960 km of optical fibre and ducts owned by various Brussels institutions and public companies, including Sibelga.

This network, called Fibru, is a project initiated by the Minister for Digital Transition in 2022 and managed by IRISnet. It will enable fibre optic management and installation in Brussels to be more efficient and harmonious, since the respective networks of the various participants were not being used to their full capacity.

Sibelga has been investing in fibre optics for 10 years. This technology enhances network reliability and security by enabling high-speed transmission of data and remote commands. The deployment of fibre optics is therefore essential to the development of the smart grid and its real-time management, and ensures rapid intervention in the event of an incident.

Sibelga, a committed company

**CONCRETE ACTIONS FOR THE ENVIRONMENT,
THE COMMUNITY AND THE WELL-BEING OF OUR TEAMS.**

SOLIDIFYING OUR ESG COMMITMENT

For several years now, Sibelga has adopted an Environmental, Social and Governance (ESG) policy that covers all our activities and projects. While these topics are already the subject of communications on its website and in its publications, from 2026, the European CSRD (Corporate Social Responsibility Directive) will require it to go further by publishing a structured annual sustainability report subject to the same audit obligations as financial reports.

In 2023, Sibelga therefore embarked on work to prepare for compliance with the requirements of this directive. This involved carrying out a dual materiality analysis, i.e. identifying the environmental, social and governance issues of importance to Sibelga and its stakeholders. "We gained in-depth insight into our company by conducting workshops, interviews and questionnaires. We also involved our stakeholders via interviews with a view to ranking in order of importance for Sibelga the ESG themes on which the CSRD requires transparency and selecting the themes on which our reporting will be based," explains Laurent De Wolf, Strategy Advisor & Controlling Manager.

Following this, a gap analysis was carried out. It identified the ESG topics on which Sibelga already has policies, objectives and indicators, and those that still require work. "This pre-analysis will enable us to examine how these issues can be integrated into our overall corporate strategy," he adds.

At the same time, after a long period of preparation and gathering of indicators, Sibelga is calculating its carbon footprint for 2023 in order to check its progress in relation to its reduction targets for 2030. At the time of writing this annual report, the results were still being calculated.

Finally, on 24 October, Sibelga once again obtained the maximum score for the Ecodynamic Company label. Based on an assessment of legal requirements and good practices in 9 environmental areas, an organisation is awarded 1, 2 or 3 stars. The 3-star score, which Sibelga has achieved every year since 2015, represents the highest recognition. Renewal of the label confirms that Sibelga is one of the most environmentally friendly companies in Brussels.

CYBERSECURITY IS MORE IMPORTANT THAN EVER

At the end of 2022, Sibelga was designated as an essential service operator within the meaning of the European NIS (Network and Information Security) Directive by the FPS Economy. This directive provides for measures to strengthen the overall level of cybersecurity in the EU, with particular emphasis on sectors vital to the economy and society that are heavily dependent on IT and telecommunications systems. Energy sector players (including distribution network operators) are therefore directly concerned.

Sibelga did not wait for this designation to deploy an information security management system throughout the organisation. Nevertheless, in 2023, a certification process to comply with the requirements of the directive was initiated. "In concrete terms, this means putting in place a policy on the subject, as well as reinforcing a whole series of practical measures that we have already been implementing within the company for several years, such as strengthening passwords and internal staff awareness campaigns," explains Benjamin Domange, Head of Corporate Transformation & Information Security.

In addition, the development of new technologies linked to Artificial Intelligence is opening up new opportunities, but also new risks for Sibelga to manage. For example, the use of chatbots enables users to ask a question and get a quick answer without having to wade through multiple sources of information. In particular, Sibelga is testing the possibility of making this type of virtual assistant available to customers on its website in order to provide quick answers to their questions and limit the influx of questions to the contact centre that could result from the deployment of smart meters and charging stations as part of the energy transition.

"The risks include data leakage, which is a concern when working with such tools. It is important not to introduce confidential personal or company data, such as customer data, into this type of tool. These tools should be used with caution, bearing in mind that we are all responsible for what we do with them," says Alexandra Marlier, Sibelga's Data Protection Officer.

SIBELGA RAISES ITS PROFILE AS AN EMPLOYER

At the heart of a highly competitive Belgian employment market, Sibelga, like other companies, must stand out from the crowd if it wants to attract new talent.

Several publicity stunts were organised in 2023, the most notable probably being the dressing up of the

iconic Manneken Pis in a Sibelga technician's uniform on 21 June. Other highlights include the installation of a giant tarpaulin on Sibelga's facade in September 2023, the placing of highly visible stickers on all the technicians' vans, and the broadcasting by RTBF of a video following the day of a technician as part of the "Beaux boulots" series of reports on understaffed jobs.

In addition, on Saturday 25 November 2023, Sibelga organised a job day on its own site for the first time. The participants, selected from 275 applicants, underwent a selection process which resulted in immediate recruitment. "For this event, we communicated extensively on social networks, as well as in several strategic locations in Brussels," explains Alice Salerno, External Communication Officer.

In total, Sibelga recruited 188 staff in 2023. The company has also been named Top Employer for the 12th year running in 2023.

EVERYONE'S A LEADER

To achieve its strategic ambitions across the board, Sibelga must be able to rely on the leadership skills of its employees at all levels of the company. "By leadership, we mean our ability to act together to ensure that every employee contributes directly to our collective corporate vision," explains Benjamin Alen, Corporate Change Manager in charge of the project.

Through the "Go to be" project, launched in 2021, Sibelga is seeking to develop its internal culture so as to integrate leadership at all levels of its organisation. In 2022 and 2023, all line managers were able to take part in seminars, during which they were able to develop their awareness and skills in this area. Subsequently, all employees were involved through more than 115 team coaching sessions. This is an opportunity for each department to take a step back and look at the way it behaves as a team, and the changes that need to be made to improve the way it works.

PRIORITISING STAFF SAFETY AND WELL-BEING

In 2023, as in previous years, Sibelga stepped up its initiatives to prevent accidents in the workplace and promote the well-being of its employees.

2023 saw a record 188 consecutive days without an accident at work resulting in incapacity. "This is rare enough to be highlighted and celebrated, although we must not get complacent," comments Magali Rosselle, Manager Safety Experts & Administration.

This year, particular emphasis was placed on the risk of accidents when travelling. "Too many accidents occur on the way to and from work or when travelling between two sites. What's more, new vehicles are being made available to our staff: cargo bikes, electric vehicles, etc. It was the right time to raise awareness of this issue," says Magali Rosselle.

With the help of the Vias Institute, practical workshops have been set up. The nearly 900 participants were able to experience the physical effects of an accident in a rollover car, see the impact of alcohol on the precision of their movements using goggles that simulate its effects, and take a test drive using a driving simulator to see how distracting it is to use a smartphone.

In addition to these awareness-raising initiatives, targeted mobility training courses are organised for members of staff: "All cargo bike users have to undergo training before they can take to the streets of Brussels," explains Grégory Navet, Mobility Manager. In addition, since 2023, eco-safe driving modules must be taken by certain categories of staff. "Technicians learn how to drive a van safely, the rules for securing it and distributing its weight, etc. One module focuses specifically on electric commercial vehicles and another on priority vehicles," he adds.

EVER GREENER MOBILITY

Sibelga is continuing its efforts to green its fleet and make new soft mobility solutions available to its teams, in line with the objectives of the Brussels-Capital Region. Of the 440 or so commercial vehicles used by technicians in Brussels, more than half already run on electricity or alternative fuels.

By the end of 2023, Sibelga's car park had more than 80 charging points for electric vehicles. This number is set to rise as the number of electric vehicles in Sibelga's fleet increases. "In 2024, around twenty small electric vehicles will be delivered for our meter readers and site supervisors. To this will be added 24 ID. Buzz for our technicians," explains Grégory Navet, Mobility Manager.

In addition, since the end of May 2023, Sibelga has made five shared electric bicycles available to its staff. "These bikes can be used by employees during their lunch break or when travelling around Brussels to attend a meeting, for example," explains Grégory Navet. By the end of 2023, these bikes had already covered more than 1,600 km!

In addition to these "classic" electric bikes, Sibelga's fleet includes four cargo bikes. In particular, they enable some technicians to swap their van for a soft mobility solution. They have covered more than 7,500 km since August 2023.

SIBELGA'S TEAMS ARE ON BOARD

Every year, our employees give their time and energy to support a good cause through various initiatives: participation in the Brussels 20K, this year in aid of the non-profit association ATD Quart Monde, which helps people in extreme poverty and fights social exclusion, a blood drive with the Red Cross, preparing and distributing 170 meals to the most needy in collaboration with the non-profit association Thermos, etc.

This year, the theme of the circular economy also gave rise to some great sharing initiatives within the company, notably through a major collection of glasses, school supplies and IT equipment.

2023 perspectives

OLIVIER LAGNEAU

Network Operations Director at Vivaqua

For both Vivaqua and Sibelga, safety is a priority. Most accidents can be avoided by paying closer attention and training your teams. Having resources that strike a chord and encourage interaction, and therefore reflection, such as the digital module proposed by Sibelga, is invaluable. The stunning video inlays showing the explosion of an electric cable and a gas leak are a real wake-up call.

PIERRE-YVES LAMY

Attaché at urban.brussels

Since February 2023, we've been working with Sibelga to illuminate 5 buildings that are emblematic of Brussels' Art Nouveau heritage. It's a long-term process, with every detail carefully thought through and tested. The aim is to give life to these buildings, which were originally houses or private mansions, by giving the impression that they are inhabited, without overdoing it. It's a project that serves the people of Brussels, because the result will be visible to everyone in the public space!

STÉPHANIE VERBEKE

Consumer benefiting from energy sharing

The energy-sharing mechanism allows me to benefit from the green electricity generated by the panels on my private home to power my company's offices, located in the same building. As this was a new build already fitted with a smart meter, the procedure with Sibelga was very quick: all I had to do was fill in a few documents online. Everything was taken care of in just a few weeks! Setting up the invoicing is easy too: Sibelga provides us with a platform for monitoring shared volumes, with detailed reports on consumption.

LOUIS-CHARLES MOSSERAY

General Manager Electra BeNeLux

The electrification of mobility is essential to the transition to a low-carbon world. With the help of Sibelga, Electra deployed three fast-charging stations for electric vehicles in the Brussels region in 2023. There are around ten 150–300 kW charging points in Uccle, Jette and Berchem Sainte Agathe, enabling electromobilists to recharge in 20 minutes. In 2024, more than fifteen fast-charging stations, totalling some sixty charging points, will also be rolled out in collaboration with Sibelga.

URBAIN ULLMANN

Coordinator of the Environment Unit at CityDev

We've been working with Sibelga for almost 5 years to install solar panels on our buildings in Brussels. In particular, the RenoClick Solar&Roof programme allows us to relieve our teams and shorten administrative procedures, since we don't have to manage public procurement ourselves. We also benefit from Sibelga's technical expertise, which contributes to the solar development of CityDev and the Brussels region in general.

CHARLOTTE DE THAYE

Director General of Federia

As the federation of French-speaking real estate agents, we represent property managers active in Brussels. Thanks to our interactions with Sibelga, we can pass on essential information that is relevant to their day-to-day work as managers of co-owned properties. We were also able to count on Sibelga's presence at a Round Table dedicated to charging stations. These key events enable our members not only to become more skilled, but also to share their experiences in the field.

2023 in 12 key figures

1,400
remotely controllable network cabins

2,440
public charging points for electric vehicles

150 m
max. distance to a public EV charging point

25,116
smart meters installed in Brussels in 2023

2,300
tonnes of CO_2 equivalent carbon less, thanks to RenoClick

465
Brussels customers take part in a green energy sharing scheme

188
new talents recruited

over 7,500 km

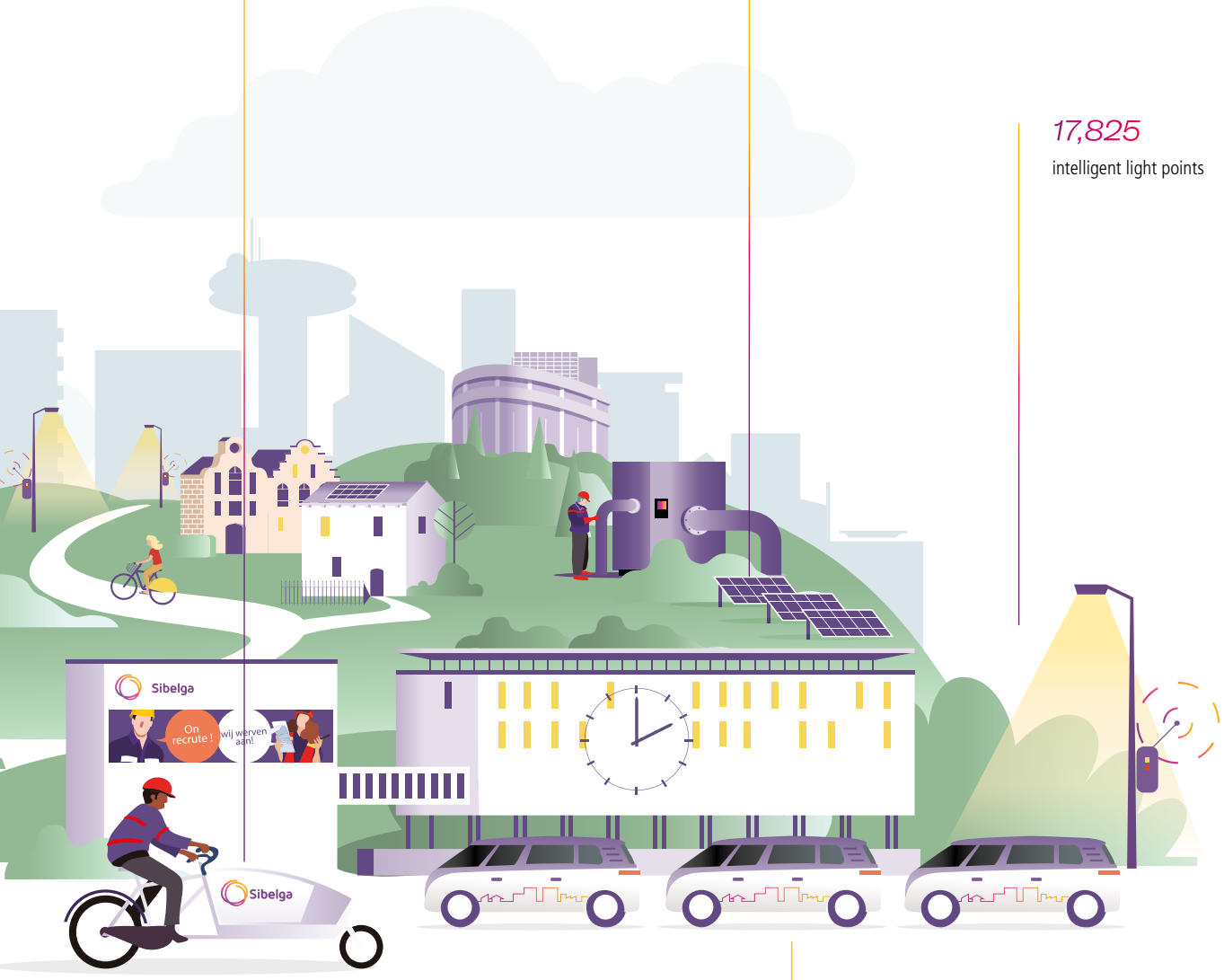
travelled by our technicians on cargo bikes

18,816

photovoltaic installations for Brussels customers

17,825

intelligent light points



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€ 105 M

invested in network development in 2023

over 50%

of our fleet electric or CNG

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