

Electricity, health and food safety

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The electricity agreement would integrate Switzerland into the Union's internal electricity market. Switzerland is physically integrated already: its transmission network is linked to Germany, France, Italy and Austria through dozens of cross-border lines, and the "Star of Laufenburg", a few kilometres upstream from Basel, became in 1958 the first point at which the Swiss, German and French grids were interconnected.¹ Without an agreement, however, Switzerland has been excluded from the market coupling mechanisms and balancing platforms through which the Union manages cross-border flows. Swissgrid has repeatedly warned of unplanned flows through the Swiss network and of risks for security of supply in winter.²

The agreement provides for participation in the internal market, together with a full opening of the Swiss retail market, in which small consumers could choose to remain in a regulated basic supply. The electricity agreement matters for Basel in two ways. The cantonal utility, Industrielle Werke Basel, operates in a market whose rules would change, while the Rhine power stations of the region, such as the Birsfelden plant on the border between the two Basel half-cantons, belong to the infrastructure of cross-border energy cooperation.³ For the energy-intensive chemical and pharmaceutical production sites in Schweizerhalle and the Fricktal, reliable supply at competitive prices is a location factor.

The health agreement would give Switzerland access to the European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control and to the Early Warning and Response System for cross-border health threats. The pandemic showed the value of such participation, since Switzerland had to negotiate ad hoc access to Union coordination mechanisms in 2020.⁴ The food safety agreement, finally, would create a common food safety area covering the entire food chain, which would facilitate trade in agricultural and food products and reduce border controls on them, while Swiss agricultural

protection in the form of tariffs remains outside the scope.⁵ For the Rhine ports and logistics companies described in Part H, Chapter I, fewer veterinary and phytosanitary controls would mean simpler procedures.

1 Notes

1. On the "Stern von Laufenburg", the interconnection of the Swiss, German and French transmission grids established in 1958 near Laufenburg on the Rhine, see the publications of Swissgrid. Date to be verified. ↩
2. On the exclusion of Switzerland from EU market coupling and the 70 per cent cross-border capacity requirement of Regulation (EU) 2019/943 and its consequences for the Swiss network, see the publications of Swissgrid and the Swiss Federal Electricity Commission (ElCom). To be verified. ↩
3. On the retail market opening with the option of a regulated basic supply for small consumers under the electricity agreement, see the dispatch of 13 March 2026; on the Kraftwerk Birsfelden and the IWB, see their publications. To be verified. ↩
4. On the health agreement (participation in the ECDC and the EWRS under Regulation (EU) 2022/2371 on serious cross-border threats to health), see the dispatch of 13 March 2026. To be verified. ↩
5. On the common food safety area integrated into the Agricultural Agreement of 1999, covering the food chain from production to consumption, see the dispatch of 13 March 2026. To be verified. ↩

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