

## Electricity, water and the municipal enterprises

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The industrial city needed new infrastructure: gas for lighting and heating, clean water, sewerage, electricity and public transport. In the second half of the nineteenth century, these services were initially provided by private companies, but the canton of Basel-Stadt soon took them over and organised them as municipal enterprises. The gas works, the water supply and later the electricity works and the tramways became public enterprises of the canton.<sup>1</sup>

The municipal enterprises were financed partly by the canton and partly by borrowing through bonds that the Basel banks placed. They gave the canton a significant role in the local economy and generated revenues that contributed to the public budget. Their successors, the Industrial Works of Basel, IWB, which supply energy, water and telecommunications, and the Basel Transport Company, BVB, remain public enterprises of the canton.

The construction of hydroelectric power stations on the Rhine near Basel at the end of the nineteenth and in the early twentieth century provided electricity for industry and the city. The power station at Rheinfelden, opened in 1898, was one of the first large river power stations in Europe. The power station at Augst-Wyhlen followed in the early twentieth century, close to the ruins of Augusta Raurica.<sup>2</sup> The availability of electricity, together with the water of the Rhine and the coal from the German mines, supported the growth of the chemical industry in the region.

### 1 Notes

1. On the municipalisation of gas, water, electricity and tramways in Basel-Stadt in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries (Industrielle Werke Basel; Basler Verkehrs-Betriebe), see HLS, article "Basel-Stadt"; the histories of the IWB and BVB. To be verified. ↩

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2. On the hydroelectric power stations on the Upper Rhine near Basel (Rheinfelden, 1898; Augst-Wyhlen, 1912; Birsfelden, 1954), see the histories of the operating companies. Dates to be verified. ↩

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