

Energy security and the Swiss gas supply

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In 2021, Switzerland depended on imported gas for about 15 per cent of its final energy consumption, having no domestic production and no large storage facilities of its own.¹ Before 2022, a substantial part of that gas came indirectly from Russia through the German and Italian networks. The interruption of Russian flows in 2022 therefore affected Switzerland as well. The Federal Council prepared for possible shortages in the winter of 2022 to 2023, requiring the gas industry to secure storage capacity in neighbouring countries and options for additional deliveries. It also prepared plans for voluntary savings and, if necessary, for rationing.² The crisis showed that the canton that hosted the pipeline companies belonged to a country whose own energy supply depended on the same flows. Switzerland negotiated solidarity arrangements with Germany and Italy for gas supply in emergencies. These negotiations, which took place outside the framework of the European Union, of which Switzerland is not a member, progressed slowly.³ The episode added a practical dimension to the debate about Switzerland's relationship with the European energy market, which the Nord Stream companies had symbolised for years.

1 Notes

1. Swiss Federal Office of Energy, "Schweizerische Gesamtenergiestatistik 2022", pubdb.bfe.admin.ch: gas 15.4 per cent of final energy consumption in 2021 and 13.3 per cent in 2022, domestic finds too small for economic production (only Finsterwald, 1985–1994); "Schweizerische Gesamtenergiestatistik 2024": 12.3 per cent in 2024. The absence of large storage facilities is reflected in the Federal Council's requirement to secure storage in neighbouring countries (see the following footnote). ↩
2. Federal Council, press release "Energie: Bundesrat und Branche stärken Gas-Beschaffung und bereiten sich auf mögliche Mangellagen vor", 29 June 2022, admin.ch: securing storage capacity in

neighbouring countries, options for additional gas deliveries and preparation for a possible shortage; Federal Council, press release of 24 August 2022, admin.ch: voluntary savings target of 15 per cent for gas in the winter half-year. ↩

3. SRF, "Albert Rösti hat trilaterales Gasabkommen unterschrieben", 19 March 2024, srf.ch: agreement signed in Berlin on 19 March 2024 by Albert Rösti, Robert Habeck and Gilberto Pichetto Fratin, subject to parliamentary approval; Federal Council, press release "Gas-Solidaritätsabkommen mit Deutschland und Italien geht in die Vernehmlassung", 15 May 2024, admin.ch. ↩

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