

Media release
15 December 2023

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Swissgrid welcomes the Federal Council's decision to adopt a draft negotiating mandate with the European Union

Today, the Federal Council adopted a draft negotiating mandate with the European Union (EU). Swissgrid welcomes this important step towards reaching an electricity agreement with the EU. An agreement in the electricity sector is essential for the secure and stable operation of the transmission system.

A well-functioning electricity grid is needed to ensure that electricity reaches consumers safely. The Swiss extra-high-voltage grid is the backbone of a secure supply of electricity in Switzerland and is closely linked to the continental European interconnected grid. However, Switzerland is increasingly excluded from European platforms and processes due to the lack of an electricity agreement. An electricity agreement would govern Switzerland's participation in the EU electricity system, thereby strengthening the secure and stable operation of the transmission system and protecting Switzerland's import capability.

Increasing grid stability and import capability

An electricity agreement would allow Swissgrid to be fully integrated into the EU's coordination processes. This would minimise unplanned electricity flows through Switzerland and enable Swissgrid to guarantee grid stability more reliably and with less effort.

The full inclusion of Switzerland would also ensure the greatest possible import capacities. This is particularly important in winter, when Switzerland is dependent on imports, in order to reduce the risk of power supply shortages. Self-sufficiency is an illusion and makes no sense with regard to the grid or the economy.

Helping to shape electricity market developments in Europe

The EU is rapidly developing its internal electricity market. Switzerland and the EU are pursuing the same goal, albeit not currently in a coordinated manner: the decarbonisation of the energy system. Due to the increasing exclusion of Switzerland, Swissgrid cannot participate in the further development of the EU's internal electricity market, and in particular in the elaboration of rules for the operation of the extra-high-voltage grid. An electricity agreement would remedy this situation by allowing Swissgrid to contribute its expertise and ensuring that the strengths of the Swiss electricity system can support the energy transition in Europe.

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An electricity agreement has been under discussion for some time

Switzerland and the EU began negotiations on an electricity agreement in 2007. Since 2012, the EU has made its conclusion dependent on the resolution of institutional issues. The last round of negotiations on a potential electricity agreement took place in July 2018, still on the basis of the EU's Third Energy Package. In May 2021, Switzerland broke off negotiations with the EU regarding an institutional agreement. As a result, an electricity agreement became a distant prospect as well. This changed when the exploratory talks between Switzerland and the EU on a broad package approach, which had been ongoing since April 2022, were concluded at the end of October 2023. On 8 November 2023, the Federal Council announced its decision to prepare a negotiating mandate with the EU.

For more information, visit media@swissgrid.ch or call +41 58 580 31 00.

Powering the future

Swissgrid is the national grid company. As the owner of Switzerland's extra-high-voltage grid, it is responsible for operating the grid safely and without discrimination and for maintaining, modernising and expanding the grid efficiently and with respect for the environment. Swissgrid has around 700 highly qualified people from 33 countries at its sites in Aarau, Prilly, Castione, Landquart, Laufenburg, Ostermundigen and Uznach. As a member of the European Network of Transmission System Operators for Electricity (ENTSO-E), it is also responsible for grid planning, system management and market design in the European exchange of electricity. The majority of Swissgrid's share capital is jointly held by various Swiss electricity companies.