

Media release

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«Grid express»: the basis for a secure energy future

Swissgrid welcomes the idea of faster approval processes for grid projects

- The «Grid express» bill is vital to ensure that the grid can keep pace with the expansion of renewable production.
- Given the current approval processes, grid expansion is falling behind schedule compared to the expansion of power plants.
- Dispensing with the sectoral plan procedure when replacing lines in existing locations could speed up grid projects by up to four years.
- Swissgrid regrets that the overhead line principle is not part of the bill – and warns of the consequences of a transmission grid with a high proportion of underground cables.

Swissgrid welcomes the «Grid express» bill (legislation on the conversion and expansion of the electricity grid), which the Federal Council referred to Parliament today. It contains important legislative changes to ensure that the grid can keep pace with the restructuring of the energy system.

Up to four years gained by dispensing with the sectoral plan procedure

Dispensing with the sectoral plan procedure for line replacement projects is the key provision of the bill with a view to speeding up approval processes. Around two thirds of the transmission system is now between 50 and 80 years old and will reach the end of its technical service life within the next few decades. It therefore needs to be modernised. This will significantly increase the number of grid projects required. Eliminating the time-consuming sectoral plan procedure when replacing existing lines in the same location can speed up a project by two to four years.

Overhead line principle: higher grid stability, lower costs

Swissgrid regrets that the overhead line principle is no longer part of the bill. Underground cables pose considerable technical and operational challenges in the extra-high-voltage grid – as shown by the [Swiss cable study](#). From a technical point of view, it is therefore crucial to limit the proportion of underground cables in the transmission grid. In the event of a disturbance, it can take weeks to months for an underground cable to be repaired. In addition, underground cables are between two and ten times more expensive than overhead lines.

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Continuing to lay underground cables according to the current «first come, first served» principle could have a negative impact on grid stability and security of supply in Switzerland in the long term. In the future, it should therefore be weighed up from a general perspective at which points in the transmission grid underground cabling is an acceptable and essential option.

Further information on the «Grid express»: www.swissgrid.ch/grid-express

Contact: 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 900 highly qualified people from 40 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.