



**Pekka Kallioniemi** @P\_Kallioniemi

Jan 24, 2025 · 25 tweets · [P\\_Kallioniemi/status/1882775279137087600](https://twitter.com/P_Kallioniemi/status/1882775279137087600)

In today's vatnik soup, I'll discuss how Estonia, Latvia & Lithuania cut the cord on Russian energy, further reducing their reliance on the Kremlin.

At the same time, the Baltics set an example for EU countries like Slovakia & Hungary whose leadership still worships Putin.


1/24



Moscow has long used its vast natural gas reserves as a geopolitical weapon, manipulating energy supplies to keep neighbors obedient. They've used the "energy weapon" several times, with the most blatant cases of Kremlin blackmail coming of course from Ukraine.

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## *Gazprom Cuts Russia's Natural Gas Supply to Ukraine*

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Prime Minister Dmitri A. Medvedev of Russia, center, meeting on Monday with Gazprom's chief executive, Alexei Miller, left, and Russia's energy minister, Alexander Novak. Pool photo by Dmitry Astakhov

By **Neil MacFarquhar**

June 16, 2014

Let's rewind back to the 1990s: The USSR dissolved, but Russia inherited the gas reserves, pipelines, and Gazprom — its political weapon. Meanwhile, the Baltic states were politically free but economically tied to Russia, heavily reliant on Russian gas.

## How 'shock therapy' created Russian oligarchs and paved the path for Putin

MARCH 22, 2022 · 6:30 AM ET



Greg Rosalsky



Russian Prime Minister Vladimir Putin in a meeting with Russian oligarch Roman Abramovich (on the left, in the center) in 2010.

Alexei Nikolsky/AP

And Moscow was not afraid to use this weapon. A turn of the valve in Moscow could plunge Riga, Tallinn, or Vilnius into cold and darkness. In 2004, after Lithuania joined NATO and the EU, Gazprom quickly punished the country by raising gas prices by 40%.

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Lithuania has been at the forefront of fighting hybrid threats since gaining independence in 1990. Efforts to reduce Russian influence and potential threats began in the 1990s when Lithuania actively sought to join the EU and NATO, eventually becoming a full member in 2004. Lithuania was also one of the first European countries to recognize the dangers of relying too heavily on authoritarian regimes, as evidenced by Gazprom's sudden gas price hike in 2008.

Russian threats have helped Lithuania strengthen its resilience. The Russian aggression faced by Lithuania has driven the government to adopt a "total or comprehensive defense" approach to national security, which utilizes a variety of military and non-military measures implemented by the government in partnership with the local population to deter and resist foreign aggression.

This strategy was straight out of the Kremlin's playbook: use gas to intimidate, pressure and punish its neighbors. Ukraine felt it in 2006 & 2009 when Russia cut off their gas supply during disputes. But for the Baltic states, the tipping point came in 2014.

5/24

# Russia cuts off gas supply to Ukraine

Published: SUNDAY, JANUARY 1, 2006

**MOSCOW:** Russia began cutting off gas to Ukraine in a dispute that could hit deliveries to a wintry Europe on the very day that Moscow debuted as chairman of the Group of Eight industrialised nations.

Russian Gazprom said it had begun reducing pressure in the pipeline supplying Ukraine on Sunday after Kiev refused to pay the increased amount Moscow was demanding for its gas and last-ditch efforts failed to resolve the price row.

"In this situation, which is the fault of the Ukrainian side, we have been forced to start reducing pressure in the pipeline to Ukraine," Gazprom spokesman Sergei Kupriyanov told a news briefing.

Gazprom supplies 25 percent of western Europe's gas -- most of it via Ukraine. It insisted deliveries to western Europe would not be affected but Italy's gas importer said Gazprom had warned it disruption was possible.

Though Russia says it is purely a business dispute, the gas cut-off has fed concern from Washington to Berlin that the Kremlin is prepared to use its control over its massive energy resources as a political weapon.

In 2014, Russia annexed Crimea and invaded eastern Ukraine. Suddenly, Russian gas wasn't just a commodity — it was a weapon. The Baltics realized they needed energy independence, and over the next decade, they made the impossible possible.

6/24

**Russia**

This article is more than 10 years old

## Russian 'invasion' of Crimea fuels fear of Ukraine conflict

White House issues warning to Kremlin, as Ukrainian official claims 2,000 Russian troops have arrived in peninsula

Shaun Walker in Kiev, Harriet Salem in Sevastopol and Ewen MacAskill

Sat 1 Mar 2014 01:27 CET

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Russia and the west are on a collision course over Crimea after Moscow was accused of orchestrating a "military invasion and occupation" of the peninsula, as groups of apparently pro-Russian armed men seized control of two airports. Russian troop movements were reported across the territory.

Lithuania was the first to act. In 2014, they opened a floating LNG terminal aptly named "Independence". It allowed the country to import gas globally, breaking Gazprom's monopoly. Lithuania's dependence on Russian gas quickly dropped from 100% to nearly 0%.

## Klaipėda LNG Terminal one year on – independence or responsibility?

DE DELFI EN | The Lithuania Tribune  
2015.11.11 09:14



On 27 October 2014, the port of Klaipėda on the sea coast of Lithuania was crowded with people and heads of the Baltic States. The day marked a new era in the energy security sector for Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia, as an LNG ship called “Independence” was met with Lithuanian flags waving high. Even higher were the expectations of this floating LNG terminal which at the time analysts called “a game changer” in the Baltic gas sector. However, one year on, Lithuanian government is struggling to find ways to lower the FSRU costs and expand their gas market – “Independence” has become an expensive burden.

aA

Following this, Estonia partnered with Finland to build an LNG terminal in Paldiski and heavily invested in wind power, diversifying its energy sources. Not only did Estonia reduce its reliance on Russian gas, but it also became an EU leader in green energy.

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## Finnish-Estonian cooperation on LNG terminal ship lease advances with ministerial MOU and progress in transmission operator cooperation

Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment  
29.4.2022 15:37 PRESS RELEASE



On 29 April 2022, Finland and Estonia published a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) regarding cooperation on leasing a LNG terminal ship. The MOU was signed by Minister of Economic Affairs Mika Lintilä and Estonia's Minister of Economic Affairs and Infrastructure Taavi Aas.

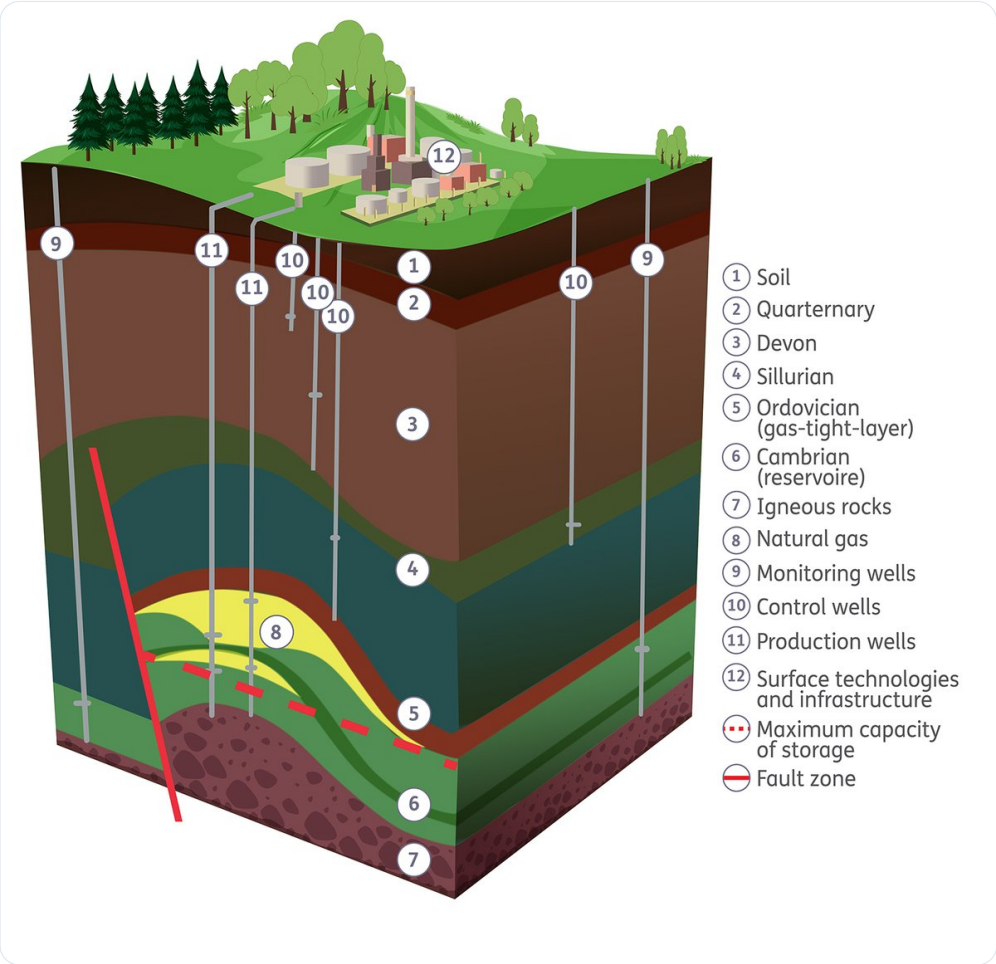
Leasing a floating storage regasification unit for liquefied natural gas (LNG) is the fastest way to phase out dependency on Russian pipeline gas. The aim is to have the terminal ship available for use next winter. Leasing the ship enables Finland to reduce its dependency on Russian pipeline gas.

At the meeting on 7 April 2022, the Government's Ministerial Committee on Economic Policy recommended that Finland lease a large LNG terminal ship in cooperation with Estonia.

## Estonia sets its sights on 100% renewable energy by 2030

Estonia, known for its ambition and innovation, has charted an audacious path towards sustainability, aiming to power its future entirely with renewable energy sources by 2030. Bolstered by impressive strides in wind and solar power, the country is poised to become a beacon of clean energy within the European Union.

Latvia played a key role with their massive underground gas storage facility in Inčukalns, which became a regional hub. By 2021, the Baltics synchronized their electricity grids with Europe's, cutting ties with Russia entirely.



# Information about the storage

## INČUKALNS UNDERGROUND GAS STORAGE CHARACTERISTICS AND HISTORY

### Gas storage

„Conexus Baltic Grid” AS structure includes Inčukalns underground gas storage (UGS), which is the only functional storage in the Baltic countries, which ensures the stability of regional gas supply.

During the summer season, when consumption of gas in the region is several times lower than in the cold season, gas is pumped to the storage, so that in heating season it could be supplied to customers in Latvia, Estonia, Lithuania and Finland.

Thanks to the storage, gas supply stability and power for Latvian customers are independent from other countries demands, because in heating season, they fully receive gas from Inčukalns UGS.

### Capacity

The largest capacity Inčukalns UGS had was 4.47 billion cubic meters, from which 2.32 billion cubic meters were active or constantly pumped gas.

In case of rising consumption of gas in the region, Inčukalns UGS capacity can be increased up to 3.2 billion cubic meters of active gas, which will fully ensure Latvia's and the nearby region needs for fuel.

### Geological structure

Latvia has a unique, concentrated geological structure, which allows to create gas storages at least in 11 locations, with a total capacity of up to 50 billion cubic meters. That is about 10% of the annual consumption of the European Union and about the same as the total storage capacity across the European Union. Storage is possible because, in the deeps of Latvian soil there is a layer of porous sandstone, which has good storage properties and which is coated with gas-tight rock layers, also these geological structures are placed at optimal level of 700-800 meters deep, allowing safe and cost-efficient storage of gas.

In 2008, the EU launched the Baltic Energy Market Interconnection Plan (BEMIP) to integrate the Baltics into Europe's energy market. With EU funding, they built infrastructure like LNG terminals. If the Baltics could break free, so could the rest of Europe.

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## Baltic Energy Market Interconnection Plan

The Baltic Energy Market Interconnection Plan (BEMIP) High-Level Group supports the energy transition of the Baltic Sea region and aims to achieve an open and integrated energy market amongst in the EU countries of the Baltic region.

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BEMIP priorities

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Structure

BEMIP Memorandum of Understanding

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The members of the BEMIP High-Level Group are Denmark, Germany, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Finland and Sweden. Norway also participates as an observer.

### BEMIP priorities

The BEMIP High-Level Group priorities are implemented in a coordinated approach through a comprehensive set of measures captured in dedicated Action Plans.

The first Action Plan was agreed in June 2009 and amended in March 2011 (West Baltic Task Force Action Plan) and in March 2013 (Roadmap for the Implementation of Natural Gas Projects in the Eastern Baltic Sea).

Following the adoption of the [new Memorandum of Understanding in June 2015](#), a second Action Plan was adopted to reflect the political guidelines of the MoU.

Achievements under BEMIP, as well as developments in the energy sector, including the revision of the European macro-regional strategies, the new EU Multi-Annual Financial Framework and the updated energy and climate targets for 2030, in accordance with the Climate Target Plan, called for a the adoption of a third [revised action plan](#) in 2021.



Of course, the Kremlin didn't take this very well. They retaliated with propaganda, cyberattacks and economic pressure. When Lithuania opened its LNG terminal, Russian media mocked it.



When Estonia diversified its grid, Russian hackers attacked their whole infrastructure.

11/24

**World news**

This article is more than **17 years old**

## Russia accused of unleashing cyberwar to disable Estonia

- Parliament, ministries, banks, media targeted
- Nato experts sent in to strengthen defences

**Ian Traynor in Brussels**  
Thu 17 May 2007 03.32 CEST

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Russia tried to undercut the Baltics economically, offering discounted gas to isolate them, but the Baltics had already moved on. This independence came just in time, as Europe's broader gas problem became glaringly obvious.

12/24

# 'Gas blackmail': how Putin's weaponised energy supplies are hurting Europe

After gas supplies through Nord Stream 1 stopped on Monday, European leaders plan for a future without Russian energy



Alex Lawson Energy correspondent

Fri 15 Jul 2022 17:37 CEST

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Despite EU leaders agreeing a partial embargo on Russian oil, any outright ban on its gas appears unlikely. Photograph: Michael Probst/AP

One question is dominating the energy industry: will Vladimir Putin turn the tap back on? This week the Kremlin-controlled energy firm Gazprom shut off gas supplies through the Nord Stream 1 pipeline for maintenance until 21 July, having already cut its output to less than 40% of capacity. Now there are growing concerns that the Russian president may simply refuse to reactivate it.

For decades, the EU relied on Russian gas, deepening its vulnerability. Every new pipeline deal with Gazprom gave the Kremlin more leverage. Their flagship project was of course the Nord Stream pipelines.

13/24



## Russia's Use of Gas Blackmail Against the EU

35

23.02.2022

Russia has cut gas supplies to the EU to force concessions on the status of Donbas and the security architecture in Europe, leading to a deeper energy crisis in the EU. If these supplies are stopped, which is unlikely, LNG imports probably would be insufficient to meet the demand. With Germany halting certification of the Nord Stream 2 (NS2) gas pipeline, Russia is likely to keep supply levels low, risking a more serious energy crisis in winter 2022/23 due to difficulties in building up sufficient gas stocks over the summer.

Maciej Zaniewicz

# Energy as a weapon - decoding blackmail tactics in Europe

'Energy blackmail' became a buzzword following the Russian invasion of Ukraine in 2022 and the subsequent energy crisis, but the phenomenon is not new. Energy blackmail has been employed by states to leverage their strategic energy resources for decades. In Europe, the weaponisation of energy predates Vladimir Putin's time in Kremlin. Despite EU efforts to diversify its energy supply, the threat of energy blackmail persists, posing challenges not only to traditional energy dependencies but also to the increasingly digitalised energy sector.

Veronika Slakaityte & Izabela Surwillo



Nord Stream 1 and 2 ran under the Baltic Sea between Russia and Germany. Critics rightly called Nord Stream 2 a geopolitical Trojan horse bypassing Eastern Europe, deepening Germany's reliance on Gazprom, and enabling the Kremlin to punish Ukraine.

Controversial Project Launched

## Merkel and Medvedev Open Baltic Gas Pipeline

The leaders of Germany and Russia on Tuesday formally opened the Nord Stream pipeline running 760 miles under the Baltic to pump gas from Siberia to the European Union. The project is aimed at ensuring the long-term security of Europe's energy supplies, but it remains controversial.

08.11.2011, 17:44 Uhr



The 7.3 billion Nord Stream pipeline was officially launched by Chancellor Merkel and President Medvedev. Foto: JOHN MACDOUGALL/ AFP

Interesting people were lobbying and consulting on the project: the former Finnish PM, Paavo Lipponen, former Chancellor of Germany, Gerhard Schröder & former East German Stasi officer Matthias Warnig were all making good bank on the pipeline:



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In today's #vatniksoup, I'll introduce a German lobbyist, lawyer(!) and former politician, Gerhard Schröder. He's best-known for being the chancellor of Germany, for being BFF's with Putin, and for lobbying for Nord Stream AG, Rosneft and Gazprom.

1/22



10:29 AM · Apr 3, 2023



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Despite warnings from the Baltics, Poland and the US, Germany insisted Nord Stream 2 was a “commercial” venture. Spoiler: it wasn't. The pipeline symbolized Europe's inability to see the bigger geopolitical picture and the rising threat from the Kremlin.

16/24

## *Did Germany Learn From Its Russia Trouble? The Test May Come in China.*

On the eve of Chancellor Olaf Scholz's first trip to Beijing, concerns are growing that economic dependence on China is leaving his country vulnerable — again.

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Russia's gas blackmail was clear as early as 2006 and 2009, when Gazprom cut supplies to Ukraine over disputes, plunging parts of Europe into freezing winters. The Baltic countries quickly realized what's up, but the others clearly didn't. I mean, it was VERY cheap energy.

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ARTICLE

**WRAPUP 3-Ukraine says repaid gas debt, Russia says not yet**

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Tue Dec 30, 2008 9:02pm GMT

\* Naftogaz says pays up debt of \$1.52 bln for gas supplies

\* Ukrainian state banks loan money, c.bank gives guarantee

\* Gazprom says not seen money yet

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By Tanya Mosolova and Pavel Polityuk

MOSCOW/KIEV, Dec 30 (Reuters) - Ukraine said on Tuesday it had fully paid its gas debt to Russia, but Russia said it did not yet have the money and talks continued to avoid a threatened Jan. 1 gas cut-off that could disrupt supplies to Europe.

Russia has said it will turn off the taps to Ukraine if it does not receive \$2 billion in arrears and conclude a new supply deal, a threat that has alarmed European states which receive their Russian gas via pipelines passing through Ukraine.

State energy firm Naftogaz said late in the evening that \$1.52 billion had reached the accounts of RosUkrEnergo, a supply intermediary.

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15:33:00 BST

Countries like Germany doubled down on Russian gas. Hungary cozied up to Putin under Orbán. Italy remained reliant on Gazprom. Meanwhile, Gazprom continued funding Russia's military aggression against Ukraine. But, again, it was VERY cheap energy.



**Pekka Kallioniemi** ✓  
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In today's #vatniksoup REBREW, I'll introduce a Hungarian lawyer and politician, Viktor Orbán (@PM\_ViktorOrban). He's best-known for turning Hungary into an authoritarian state, and for cooperating with other authoritarian regimes like the Kremlin, the CCP and Iran.

1/24



11:00 AM · May 6, 2024



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Fast forward to October 2023: Robert Fico, a populist with pro-Moscow leanings, returned to power in Slovakia. He criticized EU sanctions on Russia, blamed Brussels for economic woes, and threatened to end military aid to Ukraine.

19/24





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In today's #vatnik soup we'll make our first trip to beautiful Slovakia to meet a Slovak politician and ex-Prime Minister, Robert Fico. Fico is best-known for leading the SMER-SD party and for his pro-Russian politics and views.

1/19



12:17 PM · Feb 21, 2023



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Fico's rhetoric highlights Europe's divided stance on Russian gas. While the Baltics broke free, countries like Slovakia and Hungary still play into the Kremlin's hands. This division weakens the EU and funds the Kremlin's war chest.

20/24

Politics

## Orbán and Fico find common ground ahead of Davos

While both expressed support for Russian gas supplies, they diverged on Ukraine's EU bid.



The two leaders did, however, find common ground in opposing Ukraine's accession to NATO. (Photo by Zuzana Gogova/Getty Images)

Natália Silenská | EURACTIV Slovakia | Jan 21, 2025 | 18:24 | 3 min. read  
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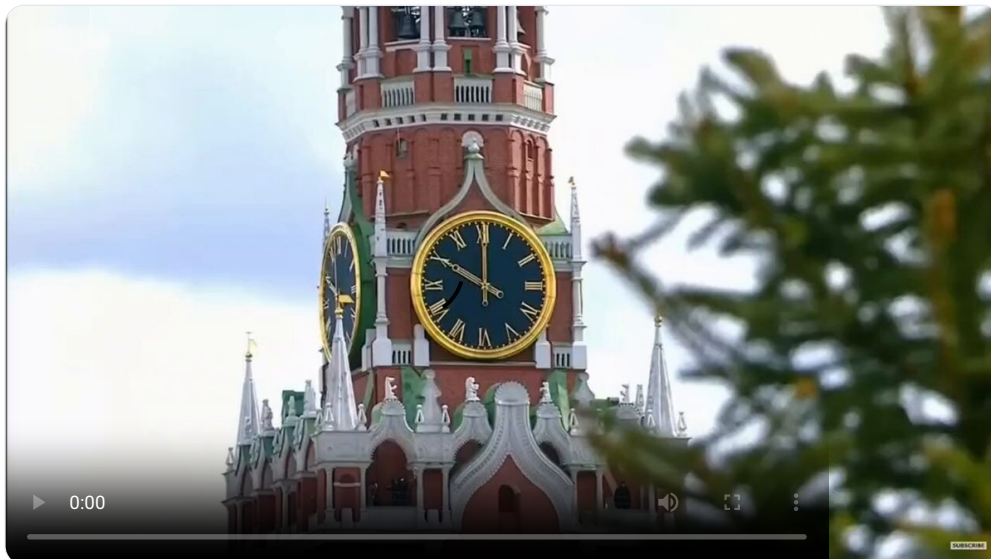
### Most recent

8:04  
 Poland on track to cut benefits for Ukrainian refugees

In 2021 alone, the EU paid Russia 99 billion EUR for fossil fuels, helping bankroll its military aggression — from Crimea in 2014 to the full-scale invasion of Ukraine in 2022. As we can now see, dependency on Russian gas has devastating consequences.

But it's so CHEAP!

21/24



The full-scale invasion of Ukraine was a wake-up call for Europe. The EU has made strides to reduce Russian energy dependency, but progress has been slow. Countries like Germany, deeply dependent on Russian energy (and Chinese exports/imports), are scrambling to catch up.

22/24



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## Germany's Energy Crisis: Europe's Leading Economy is Falling Behind

30.MAY.2024 · 7 MIN READ



**Oliver Lontay**

Oliver Lontay is a staff writer at the HIR. He is interested in economics and public policy in fields such as development, energy, and real estate.

Just a few years ago, the German economy was the envy of the world. With strong growth, leading exports, and a balanced budget, the European Union's largest economy was doing incredibly well, growing faster than the neighboring United Kingdom and France. However, Germany is becoming a European laggard, experiencing a recession in 2023 and poised to grow more slowly than all OECD member states in 2024, excluding the similarly sluggish United Kingdom. Three key energy factors help explain this economic slump: disruptions to Russian natural gas imports since the invasion of Ukraine, the closing of existing nuclear power plants, and the slow transition to renewable energies.

But the Baltics proved energy independence is possible. By investing in LNG terminals, diversifying energy sources, and integrating with Europe, they broke free from Russian blackmail. Their story is a call to action for the rest of the world - do it now or suffer later.

23/24

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## Baltics want to pursue closer cooperation in energy

NEWS  
Epp Ehand  
19.01.2025 08:40



An Enefit Power power plant. Source: Ken Mürk/ERR

The Baltic states aim to enhance collaboration in developing energy production capacities. This will also be one of the topics at next week's meeting of Baltic ministers.

At the beginning of the year, Lithuania's energy minister surprised his counterparts with a proposal to jointly produce electricity in the Baltic states.

"We are currently in the conceptual phase," said Lithuanian Energy Minister Žygimantas Vaičiūnas. "We have discussed with our Latvian and Estonian colleagues the general need for adequate reserves. Such additional capacities could be part of the solution. However, it is still too early to talk about specific technologies or timelines. We believe that such reserves would be beneficial."

To conclude: energy independence isn't just about economics — it's about sovereignty, security, and geopolitics. The Baltics made their choice. It's time for the rest of Europe, and the world, to follow suit. Independence is a choice worth making.

ANALYSIS

# Europe Somehow Still Depends on Russia's Energy

After years of war and promises to change course, the continent maintains ties to Russian fossil fuels.

By [Paul Hockenos](#), a Berlin-based journalist.




The PCK oil refinery, which is majority owned by Russian energy company Rosneft and processes oil coming from Russia via the Druzhba pipeline, on May 3, 2022 in Schwedt, Germany. HANNIBAL HANSCHKE/GETTY IMAGES

JANUARY 3, 2025, 5:23 AM

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