

Turn down your thermostat to defeat Russia's gas dominance, says energy watchdog

Brits could help to reduce Europe's reliance on Russian energy by temporarily reducing their thermostat by 1 degrees Celsius, according to new analysis from the International Energy Agency (IEA).

The group has released a 10 point plan that it says could bring down gas imports from Russia by over one-third, with additional temporary options to deepen these cuts to well over half while still lowering emissions.

Europe is heavily reliant on Russian natural gas – Germany and Austria depend on Russia for more than 50% of their gas. Both countries have vowed to end that dependence this week in response to Russia's invasion of neighbouring Ukraine last week.

The IEA's suggestions are:

1. Do not sign any new gas supply contracts with Russia. [Impact: Enables greater diversification of supply this year and beyond]
2. Replace Russian supplies with gas from alternative sources [Impact: Increases non-Russian gas supply by around 30 billion cubic metres within a year]
3. Introduce minimum gas storage obligations [Impact: Enhances resilience of the gas system by next winter]
4. Accelerate the deployment of new wind and solar projects [Impact: Reduces gas use by 6 billion cubic metres within a year]
5. Maximise power generation from bioenergy and nuclear

[**Impact:** Reduces gas use by 13 billion cubic metres within a year]

6. Enact short-term tax measures on windfall profits to shelter vulnerable electricity consumers from high prices [**Impact:** Cuts energy bills even when gas prices remain high]
7. Speed up the replacement of gas boilers with heat pumps [**Impact:** Reduces gas use by an additional 2 billion cubic metres within a year]
8. Accelerate energy efficiency improvements in buildings and industry [**Impact:** Reduces gas use by close to 2 billion cubic metres within a year]
9. Encourage a temporary thermostat reduction of 1 °C by consumers [**Impact:** Reduces gas use by some 10 billion cubic metres within a year]
10. Step up efforts to diversify and decarbonise sources of power system flexibility [**Impact:** Loosens the strong links between gas supply and Europe's electricity security]

The head of the IEA said that Europe needed to increase alternatives to Russian energy as soon as possible.

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"Nobody is under any illusions anymore. Russia's use of its natural gas resources as an economic and political weapon show Europe needs to act quickly to be ready to face considerable uncertainty over Russian gas supplies next winter," said IEA Executive Director Fatih Birol. "The IEA's 10-Point Plan provides practical steps to cut Europe's reliance on Russian gas imports by over a third within a year while supporting the shift to clean energy in a secure and affordable way. Europe needs to rapidly reduce the dominant role of Russia in its energy markets and ramp up the alternatives as quickly as possible."

In 2021, the European Union imported an average of over 380 million cubic metres (mcm) per day of gas by pipeline from

Russia, or around 140 billion cubic metres (bcm) for the year as a whole.

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As well as that, around 15 bcm was delivered in the form of liquefied natural gas (LNG). The total 155 bcm imported from Russia accounted for around 45% of the EU's gas imports in 2021 and almost 40% of its total gas consumption.

The UK [uses relatively little Russian gas](#), but it still accounts for about 6% of total imports, and about 4% of UK gas demand, having risen from almost none in 2017, according to analysis of government data by the Energy and Climate Intelligence Unit (ECIU).

Much of Britain's gas comes from the North Sea and Norway.