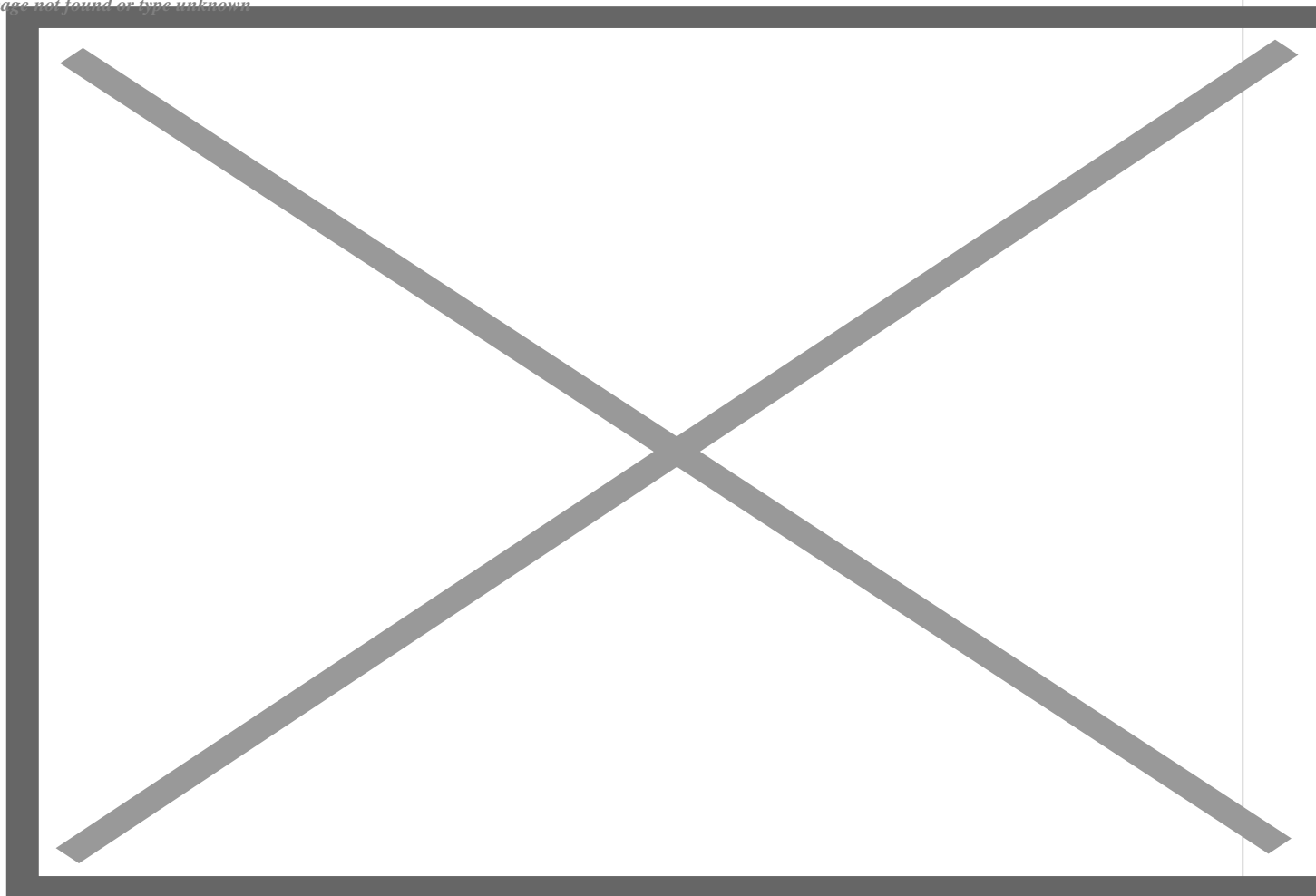


Brussels asks EU member states to slash gas use by 15 percent

Image not found or type unknown



Brussels asks EU member states to slash gas use by 15 percent

Brussels, July 21 (RHC)-- In Brussels, the European Commission has asked European Union member states to slash their gas use by 15 percent over the coming months to ensure that any full Russian cutoff of natural gas supplies to the 27-nation bloc will not fundamentally disrupt industries next winter.

In a plan outlined on Wednesday, the Commission proposed that that the period of reduced gas consumption last between August 1 and end of March 2023. It also asked for the power to impose mandatory reductions across the bloc in the event of an EU-wide alert “when there is a substantial risk of

a severe gas shortage or an exceptionally high demand of gas occurs, which results in a significant deterioration of the gas supply situation”.

The need is high, said EU Commission President Ursula von der Leyen. “Russia is blackmailing us. Russia is using energy as a weapon. And therefore, in any event, whether it’s a partial major cutoff of Russian gas or total cutoff of Russian gas, Europe needs to be ready,” von der Leyen said, describing a full cut-off of Russian gas flows to Europe as “a likely scenario”.

“We have to be proactive. We have to prepare for a potential full disruption of Russian gas,” she added. “That’s what we’ve seen in the past.”

EU member states will discuss the proposed measures at an emergency meeting of energy ministers next Tuesday. For them to be approved, national capitals would have to consider yielding their powers over energy policy to Brussels.

Wednesday’s proposal comes at a time when a blog post from the International Monetary Fund (IMF) has warned about the power Russian President Vladimir Putin could wield by weaponising energy exports and choking off the bloc.

“The partial shutoff of gas deliveries is already affecting European growth, and a full shutdown could be substantially more severe,” the IMF Blog warned. It added that gross domestic product in member states such as Hungary, Slovakia and the Czech Republic could shrink by up to 6 percent. Italy, a country already facing serious economic problems, “would also face significant impacts.”

EU economic forecasts last week showed that Russia’s war in Ukraine is expected to wreak havoc with economic recovery for the foreseeable future, with lower annual growth and record-high inflation. The disruptions in Russian energy trade threaten to trigger a recession in the bloc just as it is recovering from a pandemic-induced slump.

Since Russia invaded Ukraine, the EU has approved bans on Russian coal and most oil to take effect later this year, but it did not include natural gas because the bloc depends on gas to power factories, generate electricity and heat homes. Now, it fears that Putin will cut off gas supplies.

Such threats have forced the bloc’s head office to make a plan centred on energy cuts and savings that might make for a much colder winter, but one without massive disruptions. The aim is to ensure essential industries and services like hospitals functioning, while others would have to cut back. That could include lowering heat in public buildings and enticing families to use less energy at home.

“Assuming there is a full disruption of Russian gas, we need to save gas, to fill our gas storage faster, and to do so we have to reduce our gas consumption. I know this is a big ask,” von der Leyen said. EU nations and the Commission have gone on a buying spree to diversify its natural gas sources away from Russia, but they are still expected to fall far short of providing businesses and homes with enough energy in the cold months.

Even if the EU has enough gas to keep the lights on and factories running right now, it does so at painfully high prices that have fueled runaway inflation and caused public uproar.

Russia has cut off or reduced gas to some EU countries, and there are fears the energy crisis will get worse if Moscow does not restart a key pipeline to Germany after scheduled maintenance ends on Thursday. Already a dozen nations from one day to the next have experienced supply disruptions from Gazprom.

The energy squeeze is also reviving decades-old political challenges for Europe. While the EU has gained centralized authority over monetary, trade, antitrust and farm policies, national capitals have

jealously guarded their powers over energy matters.

<https://www.radiohc.cu/index.php/en/noticias/internacionales/294114-brussels-asks-eu-member-states-to-slash-gas-use-by-15-percent>



Radio Habana Cuba