



Written by [Angeline Tan](#) on December 12, 2023

## The Netherlands Resumes Buying Russian Gas

The Netherlands continues to import Russian gas notwithstanding previous pledges to stop doing so, news outlet RIA Novosti reported on December 9, quoting Dutch trade data.

Based on the report, the country in September imported around 211.5 million cubic meters of liquefied natural gas (LNG) from Moscow worth €109 million (\$117 million). This followed a three-month pause in Dutch imports of Russian LNG, which came after the country's climate and energy minister, Rob Jetten, declared that the government was hoping to stop importing hydrocarbons from Russia.



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In his announcement in April, Jetten promised that the Netherlands would stop signing new contracts for Russian LNG supplies and cease pre-existing agreements, which prompted imports to fall drastically in May and stop altogether during the summer months.

Although the EU enforced numerous sanctions on Russia amid the Ukraine conflict over the past 22 months, Western restrictions have thus far not targeted Russian gas. However, EU imports of pipeline gas from Russia have mostly been stopped amid the bloc's general push to end its dependence on Russian energy. Nonetheless, the EU continued to buy record volumes of LNG from Moscow this year, with shipments attaining an all-time high of 1.75 million tons in November, as per data by Kpler.

Meanwhile, based on the latest media reports, the EU is working on legislation permitting member states to stop gas imports from Russia unilaterally. The document, which has been seen by the *Financial Times*, stated that the measure would empower any member state to "partially or, where justified, completely limit" or block Russian and Belarusian companies from buying capacity in European pipelines and LNG terminals.

Emergency supplies of natural gas in European underground storage facilities are dwindling as cold weather has led the bloc to consume more fuel, Vedomosti outlet reported on December 7.

The EU used up four times more fuel from its stocks in December compared to the November average, as per the outlet's calculations using data from Gas Infrastructure Europe (GIE).

In early December, net gas withdrawal from the bloc's underground storage facilities averaged 563 million cubic meters daily, while in November this figure stood at just 157 million cubic meters daily, according to GIE.

Gas inventories in the EU dropped by 6.3 percent of capacity to 93.3 percent, after the EU reported that the volume of natural gas had skyrocketed to an all-time high of almost 98 percent in October.

Renewable energy generation such as wind turbines fell in December, covering about 15 percent of the bloc's energy needs, data disclosed.



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Moreover, Russian energy major Gazprom continues to provide gas for transit to Western and Central Europe through Ukraine via the only remaining gas-pumping station, Sudzha. Some 42.4 million cubic meters daily had been supplied as of early December.

Although gas inventories in the EU are currently sufficient, analysts have cautioned that the situation may change during winter. Industry watchers also say the EU market will be highly impacted by gas consumption in Asia, as countries in South Asia are scheduled to become the main demand drivers for the LNG market.

Additionally, an analysis published on December 10 by RIA Novosti using official statistics reported that Germany has halved imports of natural gas since 2021 but is essentially paying the same costs for supplies.

Germany, the EU's largest economy, decreased overall gas imports by 2.5 times between January and September this year compared to the same period two years ago. Nonetheless, fuel costs remained the same for Germany, owing to a 2.5-fold increase in prices, the analysis divulged.

Overall, Germany's gas purchases plummeted by 1.8 times to 65.9 billion cubic meters in January-September 2022 from 121.7 billion cubic meters during the same period last year. Besides, RIA Novosti found that imports from Russia decreased to only 47.9 billion cubic meters this year.

Germany, which depended on Russia for 40 percent of its gas demand before 2022, was among the hardest affected by the drop in Russian energy supplies last year. Deliveries were either dramatically limited or entirely halted after the EU, of which Germany is a part, enforced sanctions on Moscow in response to the Ukraine conflict.

In the first three quarters of this year, Berlin paid 21.3 billion euros (\$23 billion) for gas supplies compared to 22.2 billion euros in the same period in 2021 despite a steep drop in imports, as the average annual price per one cubic meter of gas has more than doubled from 0.18 euros in 2021 to 0.45 euros this year.

A prolonged energy crisis, owing to a gas supply shortfall, has significantly affected German manufacturing. The rise in prices for raw materials and energy has adversely affected most of the country's industries. Also, numerous households in Germany have faced mounting energy bills over the past year, with power and gas suppliers struggling with higher wholesale market prices and snowballing grid fees.

Dmitry Medvedev, the deputy head of the Russian Security Council and the country's ex-president, lambasted German Chancellor Olaf Scholz on December 9 for "lying" after the latter shared his opinions regarding the origins of the energy crisis in Europe.

Speaking at a meeting of the ruling Social Democratic Party (SPD) in Berlin, Scholz denounced Russia and Russian President Vladimir Putin for halting the gas supply to the EU.

"It was the Russian president who stopped gas supplies through undamaged gas pipelines. Thus, 50% of Germany's gas supply was called into question. 50 billion cubic meters of gas that went through them became inaccessible," Scholz alleged during the event, lauding his government's efforts to buy gas elsewhere.

Medvedev, incensed at Scholz's comments, took to the social media platform X, formerly Twitter, to condemn the German chancellor for "lying" and trying to shift the blame for EU actions on Moscow.

"The German is lying through his teeth! They rejected it themselves, they screwed over their own



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people because of their hatred for Russia, and now they are dodging and lying!”

Although Scholz did not provide more details regarding the EU energy crisis during his speech, he seemed to be referring to the crisis around Nord Stream that was unveiled last summer, shortly before the pipelines ended up being damaged in a sabotage attack on September 26.



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