



Independientes en Inglés
TecMun Morelia 2022

European Union



Committee:



President

Arie Gonzáles Álvarez



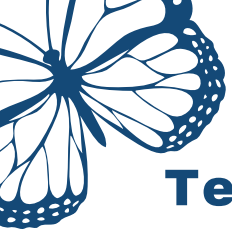
Moderator

Brenda Mora Rangel



Conference Officer

Evelyn Nicole Castañeda Serrato



TecMun Morelia 2022

The dais of the European Union committee, made up by the conference officer Brenda Mora, the moderator Nicole Castañeda, and the president Arie González, extends a cordial welcome to all the delegates present at this forum.

The European Union is a political and economic union between 27 European countries, among them; Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain and Sweden.

The objective of the European Union is Promoting peace and security, fundamental rights and freedoms, and its values are based on, human dignity, freedom, democracy, equality, rule of law and human rights. The European Union has brought prosperity, peace and stability for more than half a century, generating an important role in diplomacy, fundamental freedoms and the rule of law, throughout the planet.

The European Union is based on the rule of law. Every action taken by the EU is based on treaties that have been approved democratically by all the countries that are part of the EU. A treaty must meet the objectives of the EU, in order to make a decision between the relationships of the countries that are members of the EU.

Some of the achievements of the European Union are; rights and protections of citizens, charter of fundamental rights, labor rights, consumer rights, companies, growth and trade among others.





Topic A: Prohibition of visible religious signs that disturb public order

What is the issue:

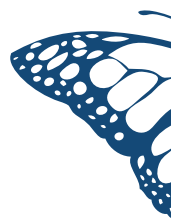
European companies can prohibit the use of any visible sign of their political, philosophical or religious beliefs, such as headscarves, in order to present a conservative, neutral company image and thus avoid social conflicts.

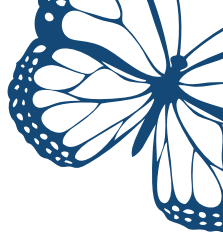
The Court of Justice of the European Communities (CJCE), affirmed that "The prohibition can be justified by the need of the company", to be able to present itself in a neutral way towards the clients, thus avoiding any type of conflict. Nevertheless, it must be taken into consideration that a genuine need on the part of the employer must also be satisfied, and the court of each member state must take into account the specific context of each country, since not all are equality, and national provisions relating to the protection of freedom of religion.



A religious symbol is a manifestation and exteriorization of the religious affiliation of a community or individual, generating a determined confession and therefore part of the content of religious freedom. A religious symbol has a symbolic character towards a religious belief and even has a representative capacity for it. Its function is to convey emotions, feelings and information about religion, but on the other hand they also fulfill the function of indoctrinating.

In France, secularism was established as a result of the separation between religions and state. The state is religiously neutral and any interference in the life of the various religions present in France is prohibited. On the other hand, in a reciprocal way, the belonging to some religion of the people cannot interfere in the operation of public services. Secularism does not mean denying religions, it seeks that all possible options exist, thus making it a principle related to freedom.





Current Relevance of the Situation

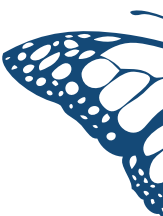
The topic took place after the dismissal of a Belgian citizen, Samira Achbita, who had been working as a receptionist at the GS4 security company for three years when she expressed her intention to wear the Islamic veil. The company prohibits its employees from displaying religious, political and philosophical symbols, and after she protested they reacted by firing her. With the support of the Belgian Center for Equal Opportunities and the Fight against Racism, she appealed. Her lawsuit was rejected in the first two instances but when it reached the Court of Cassation, the highest magistracy in the country, the judge decided to raise the issue to the EU.

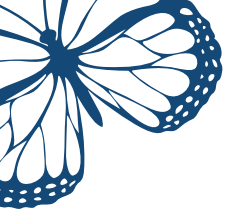


Another factor of emergence is related to the first interpretation of the issue, linked to France, which decided to get imposed to the visible religious signs, and citizens were forced to choose in the public space between their religious identity and their citizen identity.

This is caused by the consideration that exposing religious signs can be threatening for the common citizen identity of all Europeans, and against the identification with the constitutional values of equality, respect and pluralism that preside over public life.

The opinion of the EU attorney general is based on a very clear principle: religion is more "an aspect of private life" than an invariable condition. And "while the worker cannot leave in the cloakroom his sex, his skin color, his ethnic origin, his sexual





orientation, his age or his disability when accessing the employer's facilities, a certain neat can be required at work with respect to the exercise of his religion. This principle will be applied proportionally: smaller and discreet symbols will be more acceptable than those that cover the head, for example, she says. Or the rule may be stricter if the worker is obliged to wear a uniform, Juliane Kokott recalls that the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights on equal treatment aims to promote the integration of the most disadvantaged social groups and maintains that the prohibition of the veil does not hinder the labor integration of Muslim women. The proof, she says, is that Achbita was able to work smoothly for the first three years without wearing the Islamic veil.

The European jurist recommends evaluating each case individually looking for "a fair balance between all conflicting interests" and all the relevant circumstances of the specific case, as well as taking into consideration the national identity of each country, in this case Belgium. The judges of the Court of Justice are now beginning their deliberations on the matter. In general, in three out of four cases they are guided by the opinion of the attorney general.



Currently, most nations have implemented freedom of thought, conscience and religion commonly in their constitutions. The right to religious freedom appears in several international documents, such as the International Convention on the Rights of the Child (Article 14) or the American Convention of Human Rights (Article 12).



Article 18 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights establishes that everyone has the right of freedom of thought, conscience and religion. Including the freedom to have or to adopt a religion or belief of one's choice, and freedom, either individually or in community with others and in public or in private, to manifest one's religion or belief in worship, observance, practice and teaching. No one shall be subject to coercion which would impair his freedom to have or to adopt a religion or belief of his choice.



Freedom to manifest one's religion or beliefs may be subject only to such limitations as are prescribed by law and are necessary to protect public safety, order, health, or morals or the fundamental rights and freedoms of others.

Over time, European judges have emphasized this right, since they consider it to be an important aspect of a democratic society. The judges take freedom of religion as an aspect of vital importance in the life of believers, it gives them an identity and conception of life.

In recent years, laws and impediments have been implemented against religious signs visible in public, with the Muslim veil being the main affected. The European Union has taken actions attached to the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion. In September 2010, the French parliament aimed to prevent the use of Muslim veils in public places, which is why a law was created that prohibits face coverings in public. It is considered a crime to force a woman to wear a Muslim veil, and is punishable by one year in jail and a fine of 30,000 euros. Women who break this law will be fined 150 euros and will have to attend a citizenship course. A similar law was approved in April 2010 by the low chamber of the Belgian parliament.



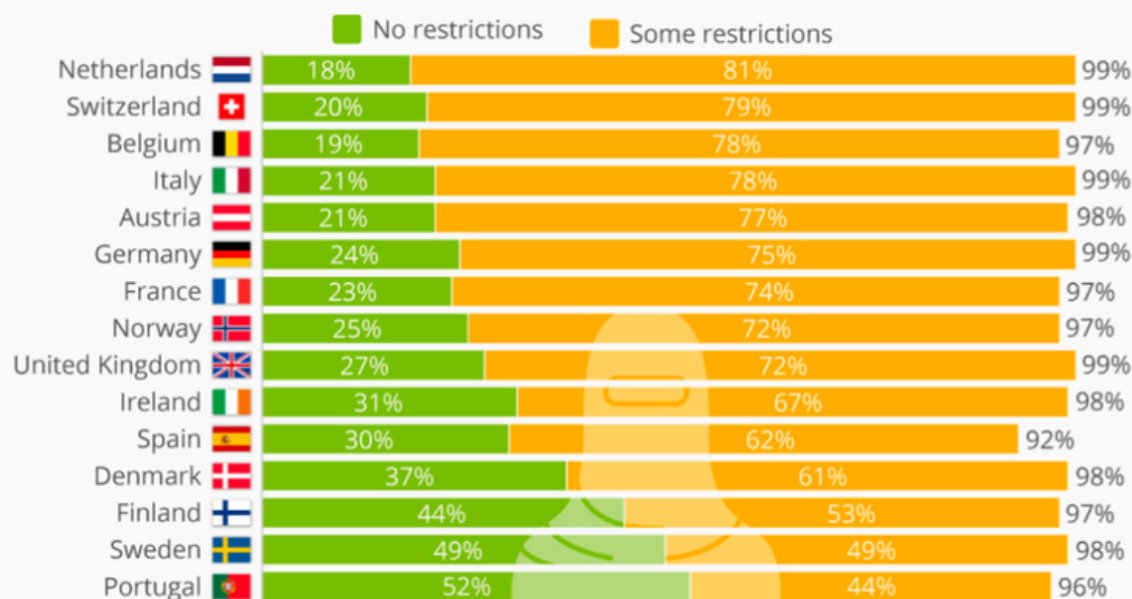
Other nations such as Spain and the Netherlands have also adopted certain measures, the Spanish Senate in June 2010 asked Spain to prohibit the use of clothing or accessories that completely cover the face, arguing that the majority of Spain considers that the Muslim veil is discriminatory and harmful against the dignity of women. In October 2010, a plan to ban headscarves was implemented in the Netherlands.



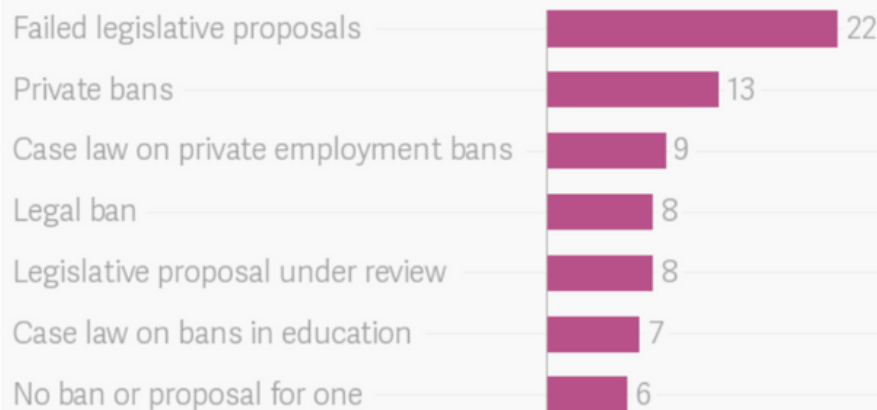
On July 15, 2021, the Court of Justice of the European Union ruled that employers can limit the expression of religious, political or philosophical beliefs in the workplace in order to prevent social disputes.

General Statistics

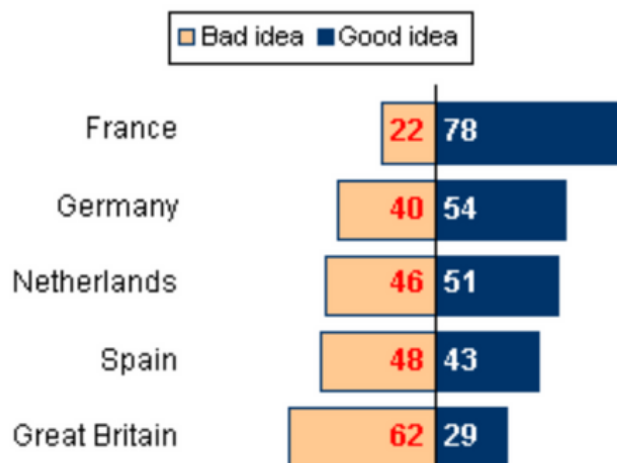
% saying Muslim women in their country should/shouldn't face clothing restrictions*



Number of countries with bans on headscarves or face veils within the European Union.



Banning of Muslim Headscarves.



Perspectives on the Solutions

- The Netherlands: In August 2019, the ban on the full “burqa” in public spaces came into force. The norm –in a country where 5% of the population is Muslim– was ratified on July 26, 2018 by the Senate and defines the ban as “partial”, and not “total”, because it only limits the use of these garments in public areas such as schools, hospitals, public transport and government buildings.
- France: On July 13, 2010, the French National Assembly approved the bill that prohibits the use of the full-face veil in any public space and on April 11, 2011 it entered into force. France is the EU country with the highest percentage of Muslim population and was also the first in the Union to restrict religious symbols in public places.
- Belgium: On July 23, 2011, the law that prohibits the public use of the full veil, including the “burqa” and the “niqab” (clothing like the burqa that only leaves the eyes uncovered), came into force in Belgium, which turned This country is the second in the European Union after France to generally prevent the use of these garments.
- Denmark: On August 1, 2018, Denmark became the third country in which the ban on the “burqa” and “niqab” came into force amid protests by Muslim women who believe that the new rule limited their rights.
- Germany: Eight federal states prohibit female teachers from wearing the hijab (Islamic veil) and any other religious or political symbol, but female students may cover their heads with it. Officials cannot completely cover their heads with the veil when they attend to the public.



- Italy: Since 1975, there is a law in Italy that prohibits wearing the face and head completely covered in public spaces specifically with religious veils. In 2011, the government parties Pueblo de la Libertad (PDL) and Liga Norte, as well as the 'Responsible Initiative' parliamentary group, voted in favor of the decree that prohibits the use of the "burqa", with penalties of up to one year in prison for who wears the "burqa" in a public space and fines of up to 30,000 euros for those who force others to wear this clothing or even go out into the street with their faces covered.
- Austria: The Austrian Parliament approved a law that prohibits Muslim girls between 6 and 10 years of age from wearing the veil in primary schools, while Islamic associations request to reverse this regulation that it considers "discriminatory". Since November 2018, the Islamic veil for girls under the age of six was already prohibited in the country's nurseries. Already in 2017 the Government already prohibited the full veil in public spaces, limiting the use of religious symbols among officials to guarantee the "neutrality" of the State and vetoing certain Salafist proselytizing campaigns (ultra-conservative Islamists).
- Latvia: In January 2017, a ban on wearing face coverings in public places came into force in the country. The then Minister of Justice, Dzintars Rasnacs, justified the application of this rule as necessary "not only to ensure public order, but also to protect cultural property in Latvia".





Spain: There is no legislation on the use of the Islamic veil in public spaces and political groups have intensified the debate on the advisability of approving it, especially after ten city councils (eight in Catalonia, one in Andalusia and one in Madrid) prohibited the use of the burqa and niqab in municipal facilities.

-Ensuring compliance with human rights

By censoring signs that explicitly demonstrate ideologies, even in order to try to reduce the rates of social conflicts, may result in attending against Human Rights, this is why it is considered essential to reach a solution that does not disrespects the ideological integrity of citizens, and respects, in its entirety, human rights.



-Preserving cultural identity

The system of values, beliefs, traditions, rites, and religious customs, are considered to be a fundamental part of a person's cultural identity, this helps us to preserve an environment of cultural diversity in the world, this diversity can be put at risk if the ways of expressing previously constituted ideologies are limited.



-The preservation of peace as the main objective
Putting into action what is mentioned in the topic, has the intention of avoiding violence and social disorder, that objective must be maintained, therefore we must find a solution that does not violate the integrity of any human right, and is also an effective way to avoid discriminatory acts for reasons of ideological disagreement.



Key Questions

About the delegation

How is the delegation involved in the topic?

What has the delegation done to find a solution?

What type of conflicts would your delegation avoid?

What is the country's posture about the topic?

About the topic

How does this affect the development of boys and girls belonging to a religion?

Could it leave, as a consequence, a decrease in the diversity of religion?

How would this affect foreign women that come from countries where women are forced to wear the veil, the niqab or the burqa?

Banning clothing and religious symbols in public places is an adequate way to preserve secularism?

Are the positive consequences bigger or more important than the negative ones?

Could this affect the amount of tourism in the countries that have banned religious signs?



Research Sources for the Agents



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Topic B: Reducing European dependance on Russian gas



The second largest energy source in Europe is natural gas, accounting for 25% of the total energy consumed. 38% of the gas is produced internally, the rest is imported, 40% arrives by gas pipelines (80% of this comes from Russia) and 22% via LNG (20% of this comes from Russia). Russia also provides the countries of the European Union with 60% of the oil and refined products and 70% of the coal. Germany imports 65% of the gas it consumes from Russia while Spain 10%.

Liquefied natural gas (LNG or LNG) is a liquid that forms when natural gas is cooled to -162°C , the process to reduce its volume 600 times is through cooling, making storage and transportation easier and safer like tanker trucks or boats. The European Union's share of gas supply from Russia fell from over 40% in 2021 to just 20% in June 2022. Lately, what has been breaking several supply contracts with its EU trading partners is Gazprom (it is a gas company), thus generating some supply cuts to the EU.



Gazprom is one of the largest Russian gas companies founded in 1989 during the Soviet period and currently controlled by the Russian State, however the business economic management that they carry is that of a private company, with 56,000 employees and annual sales of more than 164 000 million dollars. This company focuses its services on the production, transportation, storage, transformation and marketing of natural gas and other hydrocarbons.

The substitution of Russian gas for LNG can only be met by reducing EU gas demand. The immediate deployment must be something very coordinated in order to substantially reduce the overall cost of that reduction. For EU countries (organized into regional groups), the required cut is estimated to range from zero to 54%. The EU market is not perfectly connected, this means that some groups of countries will need much steeper demand cuts. Winter temperatures are one of the key variables in this, generating uncertainty.





What is the issue?

In autumn 2021 and to date, the European Union has been affected by the high costs of natural gas, electricity and fuels. In addition, Europe imports 40% of natural gas and 27% of oil from Russia.

Russia began cutting supplies last summer, before the conflict with Ukraine began, and natural gas prices soared then. This is considered a major conflict, because the European continent has relied on this gas for years to power factories, generate electricity and heat homes.

The crisis deepened when the Russian state exporter Gazprom announced the indefinite closure of the Nord Stream gas pipeline (with connection to Germany) after assuring that it had detected oil leaks in the only compressor unit currently active. "The supply will be completely suspended until they are eliminated (problems) highlighted in the operation of the equipment," Gazprom warned in a statement.



The closure of the Nord Stream 1 pipeline means Russian gas shipments are down 89% from last year. Russia supplied 40% of Europe's natural gas and even more to Germany, where low-cost energy was a mainstay of the economy.

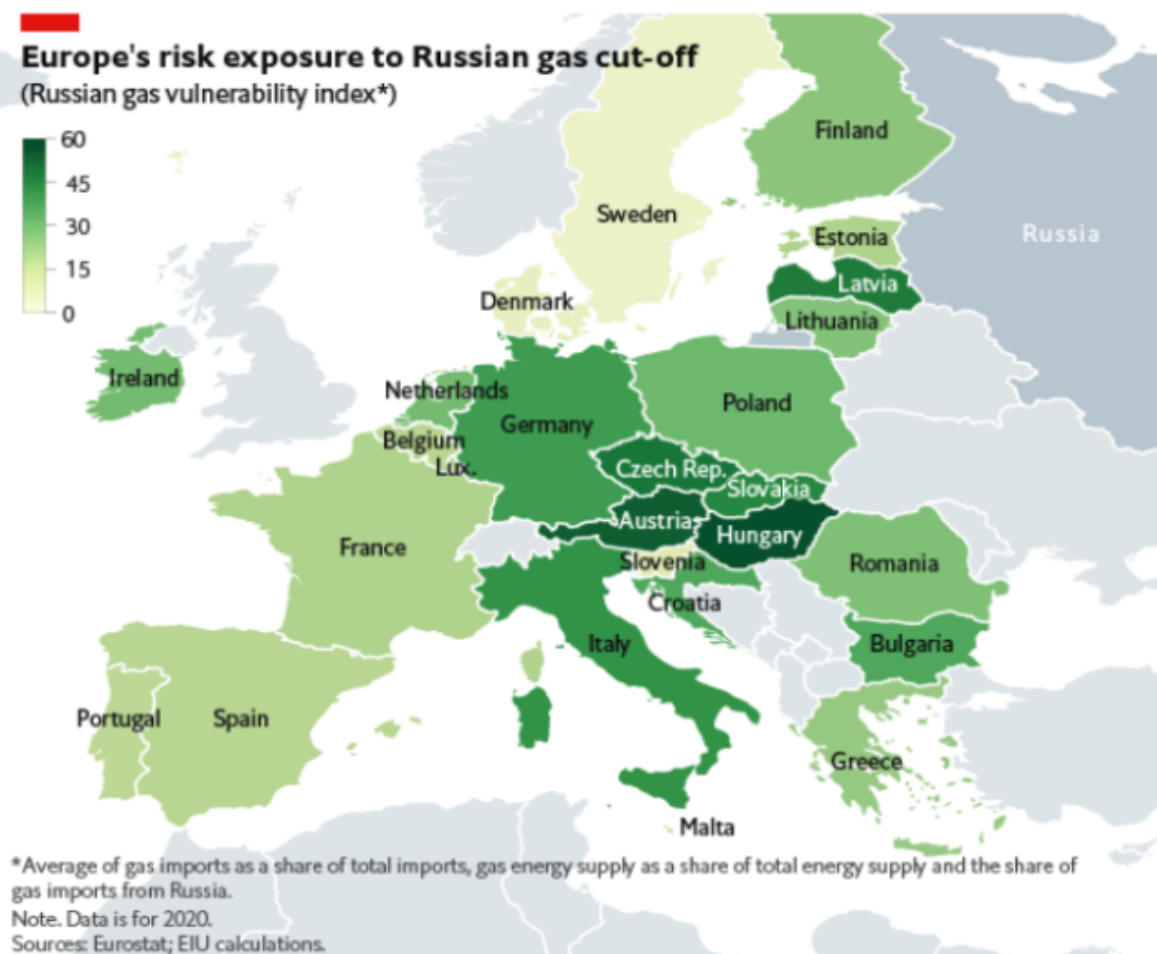
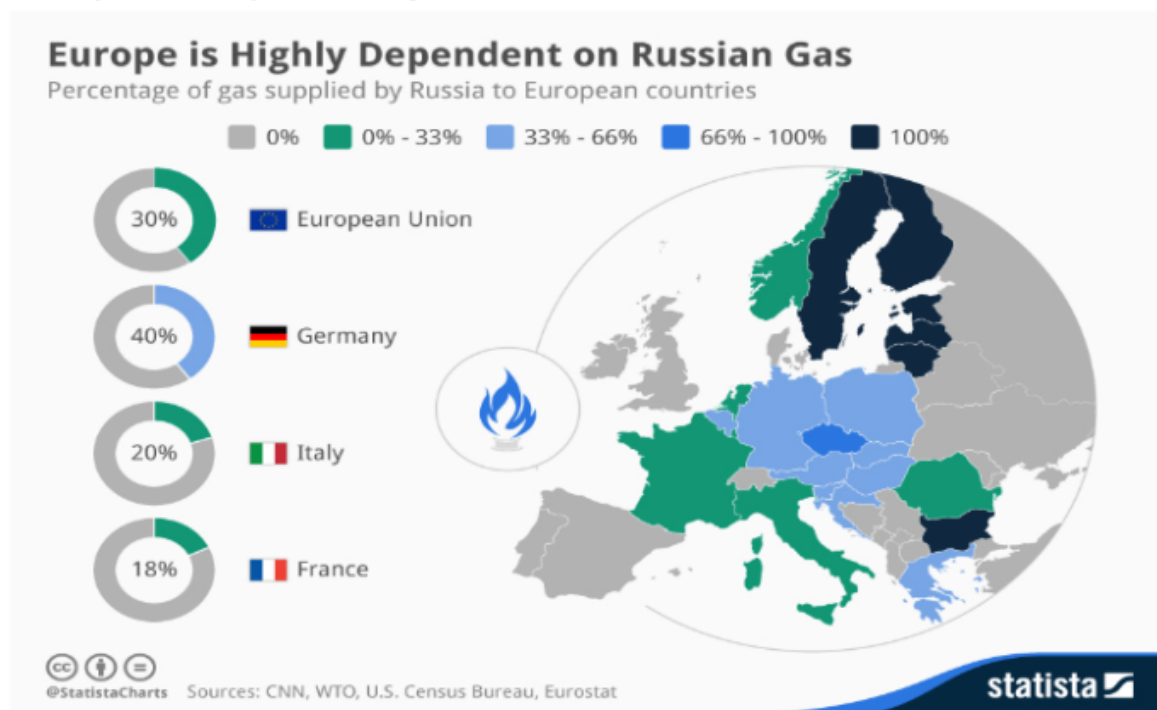
This has forced European governments into a desperate search for new providers and for ways to lessen the impact when economic growth slows and household electricity bills rise.

In March 2022, the first strategy to reduce Russian gas in Europe emerged, this strategy was called REPowerEU. Its objective is to make Europe independent of the use of Russian gas before the year 2030, in addition to this, 85% of the European population believes that this should be carried out.

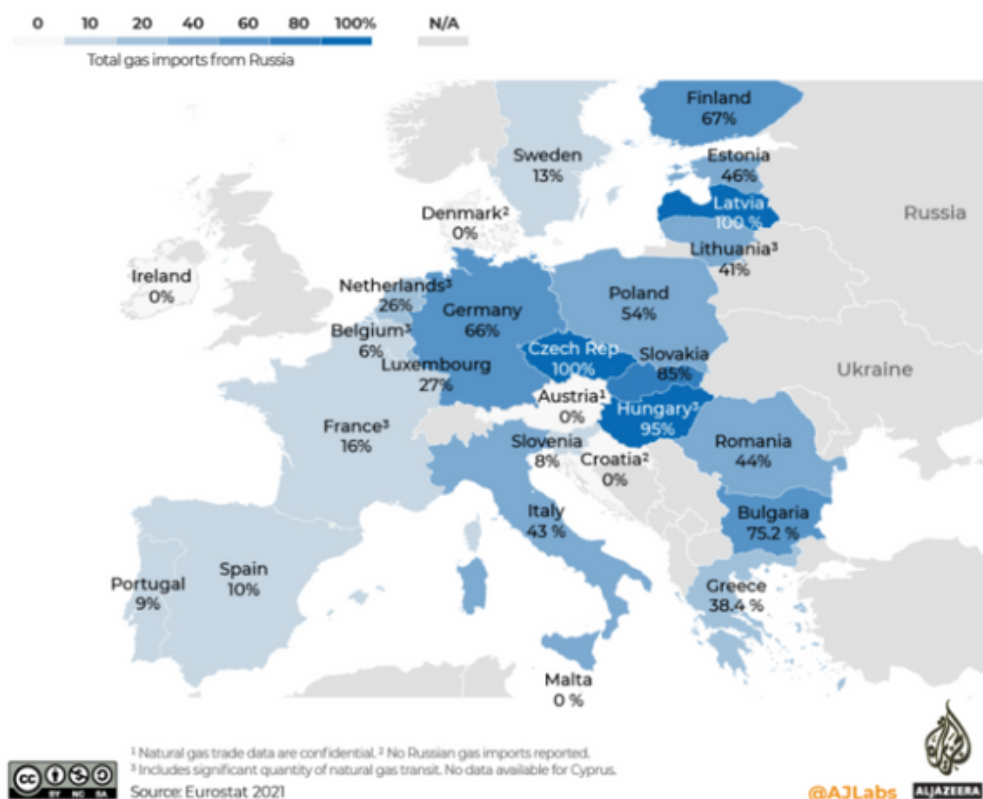
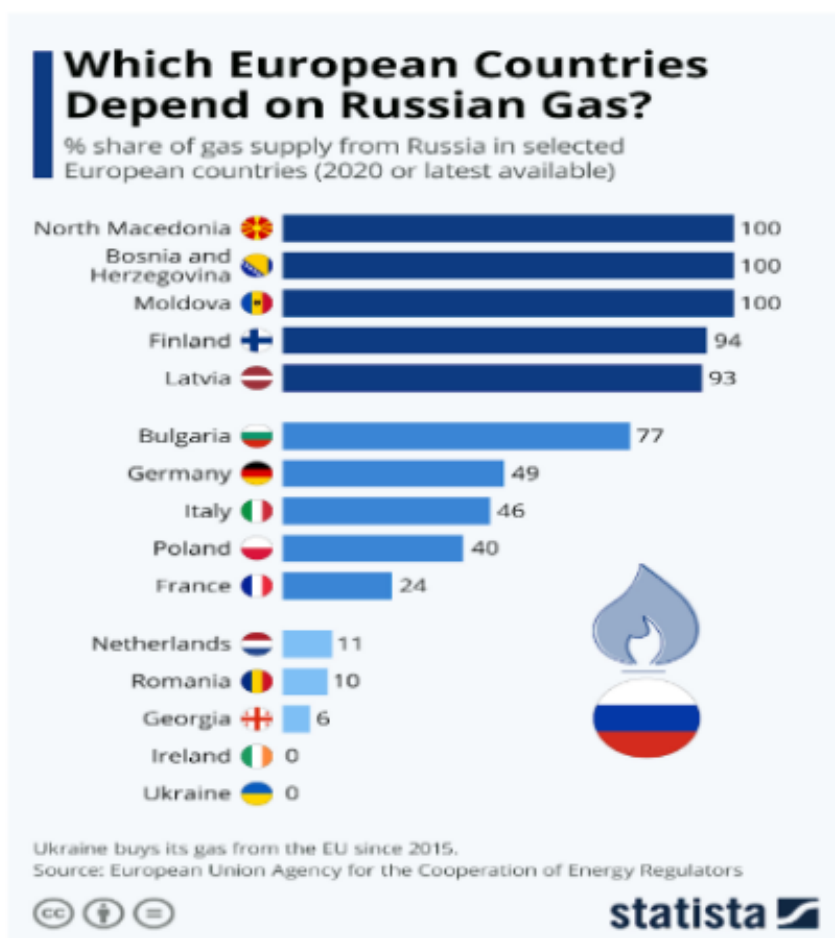


General Statistics

European Dependency on Russian Gas.



General Statistics



Perspectives on the Solution



The main way the EU is proposing is to rapidly reduce dependence on Russian gas by increasing imports via LNG.

There are two issues in this problem, one of them is the LNG infrastructures in Europe. It is estimated that Europe will not have enough capacity to import LNG to end Russian dependency until 2025/2030. A third of the dependency could be reduced in the short term, but in order to take on more LNG, several years are needed, since the necessary transport infrastructure (gas pipelines and regasification plants) would need to be built. Of the 49 regasification plants that Europe has, only 41% were used in 2021, 20 of those are in Spain, Portugal and the UK (53% of total capacity) and connectivity via gas pipelines from these countries to the rest of Europe is limited.



The second is "The global LNG market", the amount of gas imported by Europe from Russia is equivalent to 40% of the global LNG market. Europe is the largest buyer of LNG in the world with 23% of the total, followed by China with 20% and Japan with 19%, increasing the import of LNG to supply Russian gas means that we would demand 60% of the total market, which does not make it good since the demand from Asia will continue to increase and the global supply of LNG is unlikely to grow more than 10% per year until 2025.





Most involved and affected countries

Austria: Before Russia's war in Ukraine began, Austria had been heavily dependent on Russian gas. Environment minister Leonore Gewessler said this week the country had successfully managed to reduce that dependence from 80 to 50 percent.

As Russian state-owned company Gazprom failed to provide gas to fill Austria's storage capacity ahead of winter, the government allowed other companies to make use of it.

Belgium: relied on Russia for around 6 percent of its gas, and is instead a hub for supply to other countries in the European Union.

The Belgian port of Zeebrugge is an important import centre for Liquefied Natural Gas (LNG). Much of it is supplied by Qatar.

Nevertheless, high gas prices have affected households and industry.

Bulgaria: In late April, Bulgaria was among the first EU countries to be cut off from Russian gas for refusing to pay for it in roubles.

Dependent on Russian gas by about 90 percent, Bulgaria stepped up LNG purchases, looking at suppliers including the United States.

It also expanded the capacity of a pipeline that runs from Azerbaijan's giant field in the Caspian Sea.





Croatia: Has passed a law in June to enable the construction of an LNG terminal in an attempt to wean itself off Russian gas.

At just over 50 percent, Croatia's gas storage levels were among the lowest in the EU in early August – a far cry from the EU's overall target of at least 80 percent.

Czechia: The country is almost 100 percent dependent on Russian gas, but most buyers purchase gas through foreign traders rather than directly from Gazprom.

A transit country, the Czechia connects northern Germany to southern Germany and Slovakia, from where the gas flows to Austria and Italy. Earlier this year, it reported a dip in gas transit, but importers said supplies remained stable.

Denmark: was also cut off from Russian gas after Danish multinational Ørsted refused to pay in roubles.

The country pledged to quickly restart its Tyra gas field in a bid to become independent from Russian supplies, but that plan has been subject to delays of up to nine months, and is estimated to reopen in the final quarter of 2023 or the first quarter of 2024.

Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania: Despite their dependence on Russian gas, the Baltic states announced they would stop all imports from Russia in April.





Russia provided gas to Latvia via both Estonia and Lithuania, while Estonia was the most dependent on Russia for its gas supply.

Latvia, which was due to stop all imports from Russia in early 2023, was cut off from Russian gas in late July, citing the country's breach of "terms for extraction of gas."

France: with about 17 percent of its supply coming from Russia, France is less dependent than other large European economies such as Germany and Italy.

France has secured its gas storage from Qatar and other countries supplying via Norway. It signed an energy cooperation agreement with the United Arab Emirates and has announced plans to bump up nuclear power generation. However, those plans have been disrupted by recent heat waves, which have pushed up river temperatures.



Germany: until the war in Ukraine started, Germany's dependence on Russian gas had been a political choice. That dependence has now been reduced from 55 percent to a still high about 30 percent.

In early August, the country put a coal power plant back online as gas supplies from the Nord Stream 1 pipeline further dwindled.

The coal power plant, located in Lower Saxony, has received a temporary permission to operate until April 2023 to provide energy to at least half a million families.

German cities have cut back on lighting and hot water in an attempt to avert the worst scenarios for the winter.





Greece: relies on Russia for 40 percent of its gas, two thirds of which is used for power generation. The country hasn't experienced any disruption to its supply so far.

Greece has managed to replace a good amount of Russian gas by ramping up LNG imports, and plans to implement rotating power outages in case of a supply disruption.

Hungary: about 85 percent dependent on Russian gas, Hungary has been opposed to EU sanctions on gas imports from the country.

Lagging behind in securing gas storage ahead of winter, Hungary expects to sign a new deal with Russia this summer for further supplies.

Italy: has cut much of its dependence on Russian gas from 40 percent at the beginning of the year to about 25 percent – which still exposes it to the Russian cutoff.

The country has sought to strike a new deal to get gas from Algeria, and has ramped up on LNG imports. It also plans to get more from Azerbaijan.

The Netherlands: has pursued agreements to buy more LNG to limit its dependence on Russian gas, while also running a campaign urging citizens to save power by, for instance, taking shorter showers.

Before the crisis, the government had planned to close a giant gas field in the north of the country, Groningen, due to local opposition over the environmental threats it posed, including earthquakes. The plan to permanently close the field has now been shelved.





Poland: Alongside Bulgaria, Poland was the first EU country to be cut off from Russian gas back in April. As of early August, it had filled its storage capacity by nearly 100 percent.

Most of Poland's electricity needs are covered, controversially, by coal-fired power plants. It also has an LNG terminal in Świnoujście through which it has been importing gas from the United States of America, Qatar, Egypt and Israel.

Portugal and Spain: Neither country in the Iberian peninsula counts on Russia for its gas, but both have suffered from a rise in the cost of LNG imports.

Romania: turns to Russia in winter to cover around 20 percent of its gas needs, but has significant reserves both at sea and on land.

Earlier this year, the Romanian government passed a law to facilitate extraction in the Black Sea.

Despite being less vulnerable to a Russian gas cutoff than other countries, increased energy costs are posing a challenge to the country's economy, while gas export facilities are still underdeveloped.

Slovakia and Slovenia: the two countries rely on Russia to cover about 60 percent of their gas needs.

In Slovenia, the government has put in place measures aimed at energy savings of about 10 percent. Slovakia announced it will import gas from other suppliers, particularly Norway.



Key Questions



About the topic

What other gas sources can replace Russian supplies?

Which would be the economic repercussions for Europe if the price of gas continues to rise disproportionately?

How can gas storage be properly and strategically distributed to all European countries?



About the delegation

Is the delegation currently affected by this issue?

What strategies has the delegation carried out?



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Classroom
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