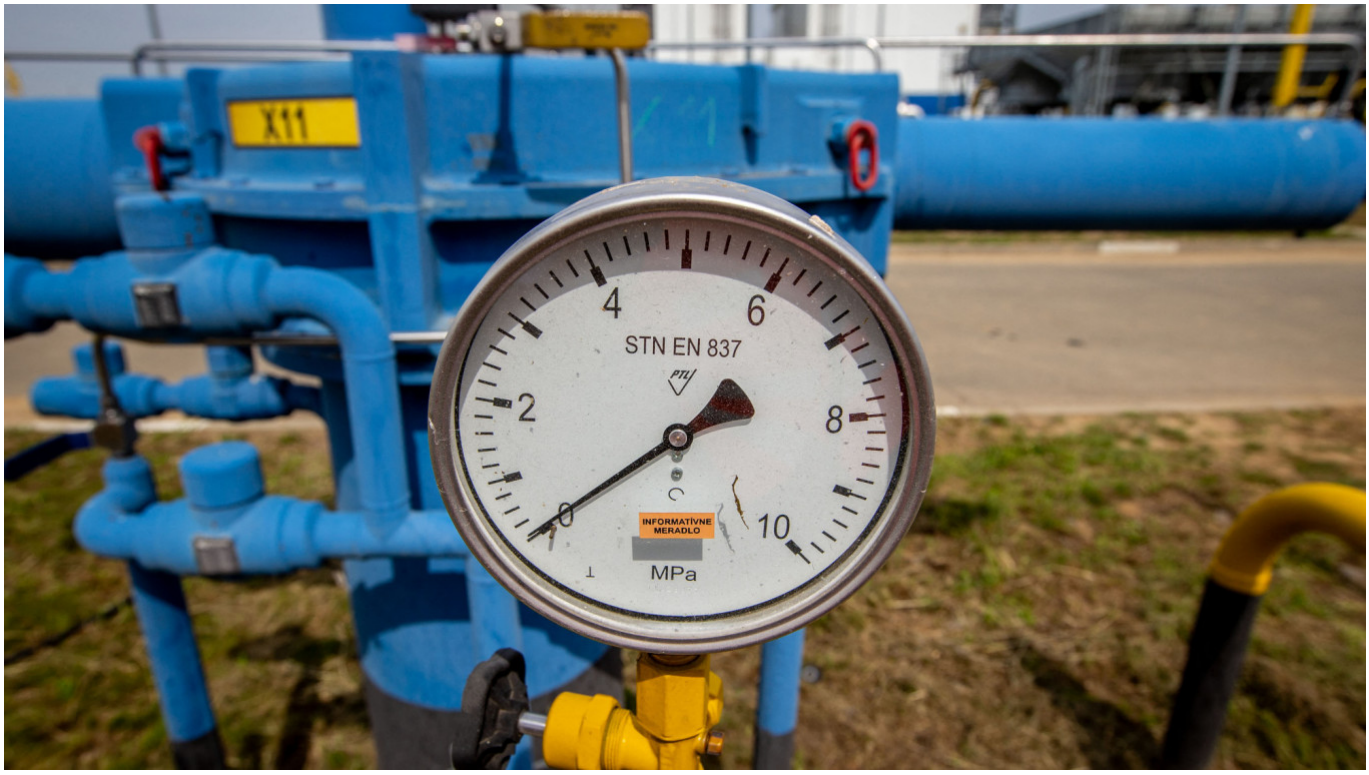
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Ukraine Ends Russian Gas Transit to Europe, Marking Historic Break

By AFP

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TOMAS BENEDIKOVIC / AFP

The decades-long transit of Russian natural gas to Europe via Ukraine ended on Wednesday, officials in Moscow and Kyiv confirmed, as the key energy arrangement fell victim to the war between the two neighbors.

Russian gas had flowed through Ukrainian pipelines since the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, generating revenue for Moscow and transit fees for Kyiv. But the current contract expired after Ukraine opted not to renew the deal following Russia's full-scale invasion in 2022.

"This is a historic event," Ukrainian Energy Minister German Galushchenko said, announcing the halt. "Russia is losing its markets and will suffer financial losses."

Russia's state-controlled energy giant Gazprom echoed the announcement, saying that gas

transit through Ukraine ceased at 8:00 a.m. Moscow time as the company no longer had the "technical and legal right" to use Ukrainian pipelines for shipments to Europe.

Related article: Gazprom Reduces European Gas Flows Ahead of Transit Deal Expiration

The end of gas flows highlights the erosion of Russia's once-dominant role in Europe's energy market. Russian gas accounted for less than 10% of the European Union's gas imports in 2023, a steep decline from over 40% before the war.

While most EU members have drastically reduced reliance on Russian gas, some Eastern European countries still depend on it for both logistical and political reasons. Hungary, for example, remains largely unaffected by the transit halt, as it receives Russian gas via the TurkStream pipeline that bypasses Ukraine through Turkey and the Balkans.

Others, including Slovakia, now face heightened pressure to draw from reserves and secure additional liquefied natural gas (LNG) imports. European natural gas prices spiked above 50 euros ($51.78) per megawatt hour on Tuesday in anticipation of the transit's end — the first time prices have reached that level in over a year.

Despite the disruption, the European Commission sought to reassure member states, saying preparations for a halt to Russian gas via Ukraine had been underway for over a year.

"The Commission has been working specifically on preparing for a scenario without Russian gas transiting via Ukraine," it told AFP on Tuesday.

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