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The Facts of the Matter Distilled

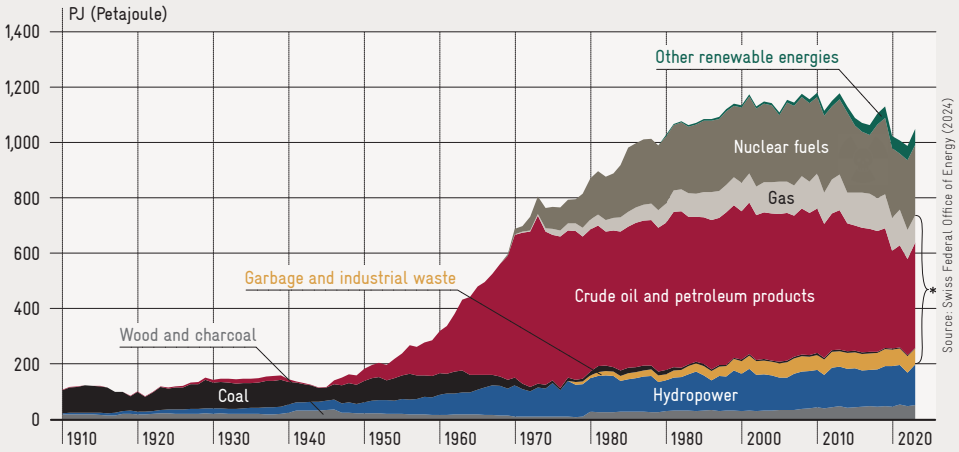
Energy Policy under Pressure

Swiss energy policy is under pressure: to find a new balance in energy supply, aspects such as sustainability, security of supply and profitability need to be considered.

Situation

Switzerland is aiming for climate neutrality by 2050. To achieve this, a complete overhaul of its energy supply is necessary. Fossil fuels, which are currently used largely for mobility and heating, need to be replaced by sustainable alternatives. Electrification is at the heart of this process, which will lead to an expected increase in electricity demand of around 50%. Aspects such as sustainability, security of supply and cost-effectiveness must be considered, and conflicts of interests resolved in a measured way.

Gross energy consumption in Switzerland 1910–2024



Since the beginning of the millennium, gross energy consumption has stabilized and is now decreasing. To meet its climate targets, Switzerland needs to replace the fossil fuel share (*), which accounts for around half of energy consumption.

Facts

>40 TWh

Most models forecast a net electricity demand of around 80 TWh in 2050. If we consider the closure of all nuclear power plants (around –18 TWh), an additional contribution of more than 40 TWh would be required.

■ **Supply** is organized in a very heterogeneous way depending on the energy source. Private companies dominate the national petroleum products market, while public owners dominate the gas and electricity markets. Nearly 90% of electricity distribution companies are publicly owned.

■ **Approval procedures** for large-scale photovoltaic, wind and geothermal power plants are riddled with pitfalls, and there are numerous objections possible. This considerably delays construction projects and puts the brakes on the energy transition.

■ **The production of sustainable energy** and the use of technologies that do not emit greenhouse gases are promoted using a variety of instruments, often at federal, cantonal and municipal level. Promotion is poorly coordinated and there are significant windfall effects.

■ **Switzerland's self-sufficiency in energy** would entail very high costs. From an economic point of view, it makes more sense to base cooperation with neighboring countries on a stable contractual basis.

Recommendations

The **resilience** of energy supply, particularly during critical **winter months,** needs to be reinforced. This means not only developing electricity production, storage, and distribution, but also **encouraging the introduction of intelligent solutions** to reduce peak consumption. This will enable savings on investment in infrastructures. To this end, a relevant measure would be the **complete liberalization of the electricity market.** In addition, **connection to the EU's energy infrastructure,** particularly in the field of electricity and hydrogen, is of paramount importance.

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