

EU Energy Chief Aims for Ukraine-Russia Deal at Friday Gas Talks

By [The Moscow Times](#)

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BRUSSELS — European Energy Commissioner Günther Oettinger said he aimed to propose an interim solution to the gas price row between Russia and Ukraine at talks he is brokering in Berlin on Friday.

If the mood of the talks is constructive, he said he hoped for a deal on gas supplies between now and April, to cover the peak demand winter season.

Russia cut off gas supplies to Ukraine in June because of a row over Ukraine's unpaid gas bill. Oettinger has brokered a series of talks between the two sides.

Oettinger said there has been progress and "a perfect exchange of dates, facts and figures between Ukraine and the EU, between Naftogaz and our gas industries, between Gazprom and the EU."

"We could come to an interim solution to have a package to avoid any lack of supply between October and April next year," he said further at a conference in Brussels.

The conference was also attended by Tord Lien, Norwegian energy minister, who said he gave full support to the European Union's ambitions to achieve supply security.

"The government does not market gas," Lien added, however, meaning that decisions on whether non-EU Norway could supply extra to the EU were in the hands of commercial energy firms.

In the past, officials have said Norway will only help the EU with any supply crisis if it makes commercial sense.

Russia is the European Union's biggest energy supplier, providing about a third of its oil and gas. Norway is the second biggest gas supplier.

Roughly half of the Russian gas supplied to the EU is pumped via Ukraine, raising the risk that the supply cut off to Kiev could have knock-on effects for the EU.

So far, EU supplies have been comfortable, but EU officials are nervous there could be a shortfall in the event of a severe winter. Already Russia's Gazprom has been varying the amounts it supplies to EU customers.

The European Union has been working on a strategy to make its energy supplies more secure, reduce reliance on Russia and improve storage levels.

Oettinger on Thursday repeated comments made earlier this year that it could be wise to increase the minimum natural gas storage requirement for EU nations to the equivalent of 60 days demand compared with 30 days now.

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