

Net-express

Initial situation

The Swiss electricity grid must meet future increased requirements and also needs to be upgraded, particularly the grid level 1 (transmission grid). This will lead to an increase in power line projects and the associated procedures. The planning and approval procedures required for the conversion and expansion often take several years. In addition, the expansion of renewable energies should not be delayed by a lack of grid capacity. A revision of the relevant laws is therefore intended to speed up the procedures for the expansion and conversion of the electricity grids. The bill is therefore also known as Net-express. The revision requires amendments to the Electricity Act (EleG), the Electricity Supply Act (StromVG), the Spatial Planning Act (RPG), and the Energy Act (EnG).

On December 18, 2025, the Swiss National Council, as the first chamber, debated the bill. The Council of States will next debate the bill.

Acceleration of procedures

The revision provides for the elimination of the sectoral plan procedure for renovations and replacements of existing extra-high-voltage lines on existing routes. Projects immediately adjacent to railway lines or national roads are also to be exempt from the sectoral plan requirement. (With a sectoral plan, the Federal Council shows how tasks and objectives in a specific area are to be implemented, coordinated, and achieved. A sectoral plan consists of a map and text and is publicly accessible).

As further important steps to speed up the process, the reconciliation procedures between specialist and lead authorities in the federal administration are to be shortened, and the courts are to be urged to decide on appeals relating to

projects of national interest as far as possible on the merits of the case and within 180 days.

The restriction of the right to appeal in the case of plan approvals is also intended to speed up the process. Only those who participated in the proceedings before the lower court, are particularly affected by the order, and have a legally protectable interest in its revocation shall be entitled to appeal.

Distribution network facilities in the national interest

The Federal Council will now also be able to designate individual facilities that are not part of the transmission grid but belong to the distribution grid as being in the national interest if this enables important grid expansions to be realized more quickly.

The National Council also approved a minority motion stating that a transformer station outside the building zone that does not exclusively serve buildings and facilities outside the building zone is nevertheless considered to be located outside the building zone within the meaning of the Spatial Planning Act and could therefore be built if certain conditions are met. This applies in particular if the location borders directly on the building zone and if it has been proven that no suitable location could be found within the building zone without expropriation. This is intended to avoid expropriation proceedings, which could in turn take years. In addition, the transformer station should have a maximum area of 10 square meters and a maximum height of 2.5 meters.

Overhead line principle

The principle that lines with a nominal voltage of 220 kilovolts or higher should be constructed as

overhead lines and only in exceptional cases as underground cables was already highly controversial in the Federal Council's consultation process and also in parliamentary deliberations. In this regard, the main topics of discussion are construction costs and the protection of animals and the landscape. The majority of the National Council has now voted in favor of the overhead line principle and hopes that this will significantly speed up the process.

Outlook

Issues relating to electricity supply are a high priority in politics, as is the Net-express. The Council of States Committee for the Environment, Spatial Planning, and Energy is expected to discuss the bill in January and February 2026 and prepare the motions for consideration by the Council of States, ideally for the spring session in March 2026.

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