

1. ENERGY AUTONOMY REMAINS A CHALLENGE

Μέσο: INTERNATIONAL NEW YORK TIMES_KATHIMERINI

Ημ. Έκδοσης: . . .24/03/2026 Ημ. Αποδελτίωσης: . . .24/03/2026

Σελίδα: 2

Innews AE - Αποδελτίωση Τύπου - <http://www.innews.gr>



Energy autonomy remains a challenge

COMMENTARY | BY MANOS MATSAGANIS*

Radical uncertainty is the hallmark of the new era inaugurated by US President Donald Trump's second term, but the maelstrom into which the attack on Iran has plunged the global economy is, by all accounts, unprecedented. The Israeli attack last Wednesday on Iran's South Pars facilities – the world's largest natural gas field – and the Iranian retaliation the following day on Qatar's Ras Laffan LNG terminal – the world's largest – led to a new surge in prices in Europe, which are now double what they were three weeks ago.

Last week's summit in Brussels concluded that the **European Commission** would work with member-states on temporary and targeted measures to mitigate the impact of imported fuel and electricity price hikes. As is known, Greece has called for "decisive and immediate intervention to protect households and businesses," modeled after the 2022 energy crisis, while also supporting the Italian government's proposal to suspend the EU's Emissions Trading System (EU ETS) because it "unduly burdens competitiveness." Both sound like they are in the best interest of the people. But appearances are deceptive.

As we know, in 2022 the Greek government spent 4.9% of our GDP

to protect businesses and households from skyrocketing energy costs, much more than the other 40 member-states of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD): Italy and Poland tied for second place with 2.8% of GDP. Most of the cost of the Greek government's measures (2.7% of GDP) was covered by EU funds, which have been intended for other purposes – the just energy transition. The rest, 2.2% of GDP, came from national resources – a not insignificant amount, considering that we remain Europe's champions in public debt (151% of GDP). As for the "putting people first" nature of the 2022 measures, their distributional impact was inversely progressive – the wealthier the household, the greater the benefit.

As for the Emissions Trading System (also known as the Emissions Stock Exchange), it is the most liberal of all environmental policy tools. It reduces pollution in industry and energy production through a flexible pricing mechanism for pollutants. Despite its weaknesses, the system works – which is why the **European Commission** has proposed extending it to shipping and transport.

As Federico Fubini, editor-at-large of the always measured *Corriere del-*

la Sera, commented the other day, the Italian government's request to suspend the "Pollution Stock Exchange" constitutes an admission of failure. The national goal should be to regain energy autonomy and limit fuel imports from unstable regions of the planet (Middle East, North Africa), as well as from countries that may use their energy advantage to extort geopolitical benefits at the expense of Europe. Fubini classifies not only Russia, but potentially also the US, in the latter category.

How is Greece doing on the issue of achieving energy autonomy? Thanks to the spectacular increase in solar and wind energy production in recent years, the country has become a net exporter of electricity. However, the share of electricity production in total energy consumption is only 20% (the same as in 2021). Overall, energy dependence has worsened: In 2024, net fuel imports represented 78% of the country's energy needs (compared to 74% in 2021). As Russia's share declines, that of the United States is growing: 86% of the liquefied natural gas loaded into Revithoussa LNG terminal last year came from there.

Greece's recent agreement with the Chevron to look for natural gas south of Crete and the Peloponnese (which was ratified last week by Parliament), as well as the planning for the Vertical Corridor that will link the country's two LNG terminals (in Alexandroupoli and Revithoussa) with the gas systems of Bulgaria and Romania – where almost 100% of the cargo will come from the US – are moving in the same direction of dependence on the US. How prudent is all of this?

Dependence on fossil fuels not only harms the energy autonomy of Europe and Greece, it also harms the economy. After the spectacular drop in the cost of solar energy production, what follows is the rapid decrease in storage costs. The national interest requires accelerating the green transition, not abandoning it.

* Manos Matsaganis is a professor of public finance at the Polytechnic University of Milan, and head of the Greek and European Economy Observatory at the Hellenic Foundation for European and Foreign Policy (ELIAMEP).



HANNEAL HANSCHEIDT

Liquefied natural gas facilities in Ras Laffan Industrial City in Qatar, on February 25. Iranian missiles hit Ras Laffan Industrial City on March 18, causing significant damage to the natural gas industrial complex.