

Transnistrian gas crisis as Moscow's political tool

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A week-long energy crisis has been unfolding in Transnistria, triggered by Russia's decision to limit gas supplies to this separatist region of Moldova, which remains under its control. Consequently, major industrial plants – including the Rîbnița steel works and the textile and clothing producer Tirotex – have been forced to suspend operations. On 14 November, the Moldavskaya GRES power plant, which supplies electricity to the entire region and is fuelled primarily by gas, switched to emergency operation using solid fuel (anthracite), of which it holds only limited reserves. According to available data, Transnistria is currently receiving approximately 1.8–1.9 mcm of gas per day – only around two thirds of the usual volume.

By financing gas supplies to Transnistria, Moscow seeks to keep the parastate – and therefore Moldova as a whole – in a state of permanent instability. Reducing or potentially cutting off deliveries of the resource during the winter may be intended to trigger a humanitarian catastrophe in the region and to discredit Chișinău by accusing it of failing to address the situation effectively.

Commentary

- **The energy crisis in Transnistria was caused by Russia's failure** to settle its financial obligations to the region's gas supplier. Since February 2025, the fuel has been delivered by the Hungarian company MET and paid for by Dubai-registered entities linked to Moscow. Previously, until the end of 2024, Transnistria had received natural gas directly from Gazprom via a pipeline running through Ukrainian territory, but this became impossible as of January this year after Kyiv refused to extend the transit contract with the Russian giant (see '[Moldova: Russia's gas crisis game in Transnistria](#)').
- **The crisis will most likely last no more than several days**, nor is it the first in recent months. In October, when similar disruptions resulted from a protracted change of the company acting as Russia's paying agent to another such entity, also registered in Dubai, the interruption in supplies lasted two weeks. This led not only to a shutdown of local industry, but also to temporary restrictions on certain public services, such as the provision of hot water to households connected to the municipal heating network and the supply of LPG.
- **By limiting gas supplies to Transnistria, Moscow may be seeking to destabilise Moldova.** Coping with such a serious crisis would not only consume the already scarce resources of the state administration, which is focused on accession negotiations with the EU, but would also harm the pro-Western ruling PAS party. The opposition would blame it for the region's problems, portraying the new Moldovan government as

ineffective (see '[A technocrat for tough times? Moldova's new government](#)'). One should therefore expect similar disruptions in gas supplies to occur several more times in the coming months, particularly given the likelihood that Russia will exploit the period of increased demand during the winter season.

- **The Transnistrian economy is on the brink of collapse.** Even when the Russian side pays its dues to MET on time, the volume of gas delivered is markedly lower than before 2025. The standard daily volume (when the cost of the gas is paid punctually) is now 3 mcm – just over half of what the parastate used to receive from Gazprom before the end of transit through Ukrainian territory (approximately 5.7 mcm daily). Consequently, the separatist region's industry does not have sufficient fuel to operate at full capacity. This reduces its productivity and adversely affects revenue from taxes and customs duties (exports from Transnistria between January and October were 42% lower than in the same period last year). Moreover, the region's authorities previously generated substantial revenue by selling the gas they obtained free of charge to local consumers – revenue that flowed into the budget and effectively acted as a subsidy helping to cover the deficit. Today – owing to the sharp reduction in supplies – the parastate is facing growing financial difficulties.