



Baltic states to make historic switch away from Russian power grid



Energy bold pilar

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Baltic states to make historic switch away from Russian power grid More than three decades after leaving the Soviet Union, Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania are preparing to unplug from Russia's electricity grid and join the EU's network The two-day process will begin on with residents told to charge their devices, stock up on food and water, and prepare as if severe weather is forecast.

Many have been told not to use lifts - while in some areas traffic lights will be turned off A giant, specially-made clock, will count down the final seconds before the transition at a landmark ceremony in Lithuania's capital on Sunday, attended by EU chief Ursula von der Leyen. The three nations will then officially transition away from the so-called Brell power grid, which has connected them to Russia and Belarus since the end of World War Two.

The Brell grid - which stands for Belarus, Russia, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania - is controlled almost entirely by Russia and has long been seen as a vulnerability for the former Soviet republics, which are now Nato members. After disconnecting from it, the three countries will operate in "isolated mode" for about 24 hours - surviving only on their own power - before integrating into the European grid via Poland.

"We are now removing Russia's ability to use the electricity system as a tool of geopolitical blackmail," Lithuania's Energy Minister Zygimantas Vaiciunas told AFP news agency. "It's the culmination of efforts over more than 10 years or 20 years, to reduce that energy dependence," Prof David Smith of the Baltic Research Unit at the University of Glasgow told the BBC.

"When the Baltic States joined the EU and Nato, everybody talked about them being an energy island that was still dependent on that joint electricity network with Belarus and Russia," said Smith. "That's been completely broken now."

Tensions between the Baltic States and Russia, which share a combined 543 mile-long (874km) border, have soared since Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine in February 2022.

Since then, a spate of suspected sabotage incidents involving electricity cables and pipelines in the Baltic Sea have prompted fears that Moscow could retaliate against the shift towards EU energy.