

DO NOT RELEASE UNTIL: 25 June 2019 12:00

Swissgas with new strategy

The company will unbundle its “Gas Network” and “Gas Procurement” activities over the next few years. Under the direction of André Dosé, who was newly elected president last year, Swissgas is reorienting itself towards its future role as an important nationwide gas network operator, as announced at today's general shareholders' meeting in Bern.

Ever since it was founded in 1971, natural gas procurement has been the core business of the national procurement company Swissgas. At today's general shareholders' meeting in Bern, a new strategic orientation was announced: after unbundling, Swissgas will focus on its future role as an important nationwide gas network operator. To that purpose, Swissgas is abandoning its natural gas procurement business. The existing procurement agreements will be fulfilled by Swissgas by their expiration date. For the unbundling, Swissgas's participation in its subsidiary SET (Swiss Energy Trading AG) will be terminated immediately. The four regional companies EGO, EGZ, Gaznat and GVM will acquire all of Swissgas's shares in SET. In a second step, the shareholder structure of SET will be adjusted through the exit of EGO and the acquisitions of the SET shares by the other three regional companies.

Highly dynamic Swiss energy and gas market

In his inaugural speech, André Dosé discussed the current situation in the Swiss energy landscape. “Numerous challenges await us. But as a representative of the gas industry, we also have a great opportunity to fight for natural gas and biogas as part of Switzerland's future energy supply”, he pointed out. It is becoming increasingly clear that the “2050 Energy Strategy” cannot be implemented in its current form because it is merely an electrification strategy that deliberately ignores the questions of where the electricity will come from and how it will be produced. Dosé expressed his hopes that the political world will also realise that natural gas and biogas are part of the solution: for security of supply, decarbonisation and thanks to storage technologies such as “Power-To-Gas” also in the context of the use of electricity from renewable sources. Finally, André Dosé emphasised the urgent need for a gas supply act. That is the only way to create the necessary legal certainty, which, in view of the Competition Commission's upcoming proceedings against individual network operators, is jeopardised through a disorderly, case-by-case market liberalisation.

Importance of long-term commitments for the security of supply

Swissgas CEO Ruedi Rohrbach focused his speech on the security of supply and the related need for long-term investments and commitments as vital elements for risk prevention, since the market does not simply regulate such matters itself. On the contrary, the general conditions and supply must be designed to work smoothly in both good times and bad. That requires an active commitment and the willingness and desire of all the participants to secure energy over the long term (specifically including natural gas and biogas) along with the necessary infrastructure. The political sphere is not sending out the corresponding signals, however, so that Swissgas is now struggling with difficult general conditions. As examples, he mentions the legal uncertainty in market liberalisation, the lack of political acceptance of both natural gas and the gas network infrastructure as well.

Profiting from experience in foreign markets

Guest speaker Keith Martin, Chief Commercial Officer of the listed German energy company UNIPER, talked about the current challenges and the experiences of various European energy markets with the tense interplay between liberalisation and security of supply. Switzerland is now able to profit from those experiences for its future energy supply.

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Swissgas, Swiss Company for Natural Gas Limited

The joint procurement platform Swissgas procures natural gas on behalf of the four regional Swiss gas distribution companies Gasverbund Mittelland (GVM), Erdgas Ostschweiz (EGO), Gaznat and Erdgas-Zentralschweiz (EGZ), which in turn bundle the natural gas requirements of around 40 local natural gas suppliers in Switzerland. Swissgas operates its own high-pressure pipelines in Switzerland, participates in the transit pipeline including capacities throughout Switzerland and holds transportation rights abroad. In addition, Swissgas handles coordination activities for access to the networks of the various high-pressure network operators in Switzerland.

Zurich, 25 June 2019