

Bosnia and Herzegovina and Croatia in the Southern Gas Corridor?

On 7 April, BH-Gas – a gas operator from Bosnia and Herzegovina – signed a memorandum of co-operation with the consortium TAP, which is implementing the trans-Adriatic gas pipeline construction project through which Caspian gas will be transported from Greece through Albania to Italy. A similar deal was struck at the end of February this year by the Croatian gas operator, Plinacro. These documents do not decide that Bosnia and Herzegovina and Croatia will be connected to the planned TAP gas pipeline but they still point to the increasing interest of the two countries in developing their gas markets and diversifying gas supplies.

The documents signed envisage the establishment of closer technical co-operation between the Bosnian and Croatian companies with the TAP consortium, which includes Switzerland's EGL (42.5%) and Norway's Statoil (42.5%) – both of which have access to Caspian gas fields – and Germany's E.ON (15%). This especially concerns checking the possibilities of combining the TAP gas pipeline with the idea of building the Ionian-Adriatic Gas Pipeline (IAP), which would connect the gas systems of Croatia, Montenegro, Albania and Bosnia and Herzegovina.

If the IAP and TAP gas pipelines are built and connected, energy security of the countries in this region would improve significantly. It is true that Croatia has two gas interconnectors (with Slovenia and Hungary), but Bosnia and Herzegovina is totally dependent on Russian gas supplies (interconnector with Serbia). Montenegro and Albania have very poorly developed gas infrastructures and have no connectors to the gas systems of other countries. Co-operation with these Western Balkan operators will enable TAP to promote the trans-Adriatic gas pipeline as a project at least as important as the other pipelines forming the EU-supported Southern Gas Corridor, Nabucco (Turkey, Bulgaria, Romania, Hungary and Austria) and ITGI (Greece, Turkey and Italy). Although all these projects are aimed at supplying Caspian gas to Southern and Central European countries, only TAP would enable supplies to the Western Balkans. <dab>