

The North-South gas corridor as a priority issue for the Visegrad Group

The project of the Central European energy corridor, North-South, covering the development of the gas transport infrastructure between the planned LNG terminals in Świnoujście, Poland and on the Croatian island of Krk, was discussed during the meeting of ministers in charge of the energy sector from the Visegrad Group, which took place on 25 January in Bratislava. The project, which has been positively evaluated by the European Commission, is to be approved by the Central European prime ministers on 3 February. The V4 countries intend to set the technical preparations of a faster track and to co-operate in the process of raising funds.

The significance of building cross-border interconnectors between the gas, oil and power supply infrastructures of the V4 countries was emphasised during the ministerial meeting. The flagship project of the V4 is the concept of building the North-South gas corridor, which has been in the process of implementation on the basis of agreements made during the regional energy summit V4+ held last February in Budapest. The EC put the corridor project on the list of priority infrastructural projects, which should be completed by 2020.

The corridor includes the number of gas interconnectors i.a. Polish-Czech (the construction is to be completed this autumn) and Polish-Slovakian (a letter of intent was signed this January by transport operators). Also an interconnector was launched in the middle of December 2010 on the Croatian-Hungarian border. The prime ministers of Slovakia and Hungary also signed an agreement on the construction of a gas interconnector between the two countries.

However, the security of oil supplies is still a challenge for the V4 since the future of the Druzhba oil pipeline is uncertain. The declaration of the ministers mentions the possibilities of modernising the Balkan oil pipeline Adria and increasing the capacity of the TAL oil pipeline (running from Italy to Germany).

Co-operation in energy security is a priority issue in the Visegrad Group. Consultations and arrangements cover common stances on the EC's initiatives regarding EU energy policy. Apart from the engagement of particular governments, the tempo and scope of the realisation of the North-South corridor concept will be influenced by the mechanism of financing those investments as part of the new EU financial perspective for 2014–2020.

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