

ENERGY CRISIS

Papastavrou: Serbia can't be left out of blueprint for Vertical Gas Corridor



Photo: Ministry of Environment and Energy

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Minister of Environment and Energy of Greece Stavros Papastavrou said that Serbia, because of its regional significance, can't be left out of the blueprint for the Vertical Gas Corridor for American gas. After a meeting with Serbian Minister of Mining and Energy Dubravka Đedović Handanović, he stressed that his country has positioned itself as an energy gateway for Southeastern and Central Europe. They also discussed the possibilities of cooperation in nuclear energy.

Minister of Mining and Energy of Serbia Dubravka Đedović Handanović spoke in Belgrade with Minister of Environment and Energy of Greece Stavros Papastavrou. Following their meeting, she pointed out that Serbia is planning gas interconnections with North Macedonia and Romania for more than four billion cubic meters in total per year.

Works on the link with North Macedonia are beginning this year, and it will come online in early 2028, she asserted. The planned capacity of the link, which would further extend to Greece, is 1.5 billion cubic meters.

“That way we will get another supply route through which gas can come to Serbia from different sources, including the TANAP gas pipeline and LNG terminals in Greece. The goal is to have more gas supply options and greater energy security, for which it is crucial we stay interconnected within the region, work in a coordinated manner, and regularly exchange information to build the necessary infrastructure as quickly as possible,” Đedović Handanović stated.

The ministers agreed that it is essential to strengthen cooperation and coordination between Serbia, Greece, North Macedonia, and Bulgaria in the energy sector, for the region's security of supply.

HELLENiQ Petroleum helped keep Serbian fuel market stable

Đedović Handanović recalled that Serbian state-owned gas supplier Srbijagas has booked 300 million cubic meters of gas per year at the liquefied natural gas (LNG) terminal in Alexandroupolis in Greece, for a 10-year period.

She expressed gratitude to petrol station chain operator EKO Serbia of the HELLENiQ Petroleum group – part of HELLENiQ Energy – which significantly increased imports of oil derivatives last year. The minister stressed that it contributed to market stability amid the sanctions-related challenges for Serbian oil company NIS.

“Like us, Greece relied on coal for a long time, but today it generates 55% of its electricity from renewable energy sources. Our goal for 2030 is to have 3.5 GW of installed RES capacity and 45% of electricity production from renewables. We are carefully planning the development of this sector, including investments in the transmission grid to maintain supply stability. Greece's experiences will be very significant for us on that path,” Đedović Handanović said.

Verification process underway for power market coupling with EU

According to her, Serbia has completed all the important steps for electricity market coupling with the European Union, and a verification process by European institutions is currently underway.

“We will be the first non-member country to enter the EU electricity market. We will first conduct market coupling with Hungary, and I hope the EU completes the verification process as soon as possible, for which Greece’s support is important to us,” she added.

Enhanced bilateral cooperation holding broader significance for Southeastern Europe

The two officials also discussed cooperation in nuclear energy, concluding that both countries recognize its potential for enhancing energy security in a transition period, the Serbian ministry’s readout reveals.

“Energy cooperation between Serbia and Greece, which we have been steadily building in recent months, holds broader significance for Southeastern Europe as it contributes to the integration and connectivity of the entire region. This is why we strongly support Serbia’s European path... We choose to cooperate, to create greater security, connectivity and trust, and to build a new regional energy architecture that will give the Balkans a geopolitical advantage,” said Papastavrou.

Papastavrou: We choose to cooperate, to create greater security, connectivity and trust, and to build a new regional energy architecture that will give the Balkans a geopolitical advantage

He added that in recent years, Greece has established itself as an energy gateway for Southeastern and Central Europe through its LNG infrastructure and pipelines. The country is planning the Vertical Gas Corridor, which would carry American gas to countries in the region, Papastavrou underscored, per the Serbian ministry.

“The Vertical Corridor is an artery of development, progress and stability. Serbia cannot be left out of this blueprint, because it plays a key role in the region. Therefore, we support accelerating Serbia’s European Union accession process and believe it is necessary to speed up the procedures that will bring it where it belongs – into the EU,” the minister said.

Tags: Dubravka Đedović , electricity , fossil fuels , fossil gas , gas , HELLENiQ Energy , interconnections , liquefied natural gas , LNG , market coupling , natural gas , renewable energy sources , Statement of the Day , Stavros Papastavrou

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POLITICS

Vučić and Rama write: Market and Schengen, without the right of veto

Non-Dest Rujevic prepared
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Serbia President Alexander Vucic and Prime Minister of Albania Edi Rama propose to the European Union to quickly receive their countries into the market and Schengen – but without the veto in Brussels. So Vučić and Rama write for FAZ.



Vučić and Rama at the Belgrade Fair (2022)

Foto: Government of North Macedonia

Quickly to the EU common market and in the Schengen area – is requested by the President [Serbia Alexander Vucci](#) and Prime Minister [Albania Edi Rama](#) in the common text they sign for **Frankfurter algemajne caitung (FAZ)**.

In return, they add, they do not ask that the new members have the right to veto, nor the commissioners or Members of the European Parliament.

Extension [EU](#) contributed to the spread of democracy, stability and well-being, the two of them write. But since 2013, there have been no receipt of new members as a result of „complex“ circumstances, not always „lack of engagement“.

„U našem regionu, **Zapadnom Balkanu** – koji je geografski okružen Evropskom unijom, a istorijski povezan sa sudbinom Evrope – izgledi za članstvo ostaju najvažniji motor reformi, investicija i pomirenja“, navode, uz zahvalnost EU za finansijsku podršku, politički dijalog i korake u integraciji.

Legitimne brige

U tekstu se poziva EU da prepozna da je vreme za idući korak. Kao „legitimne“ se priznaju brige „mnogih Evropljana“ da li EU sa znatno više članica može da bude efikasna i politički jedinstvena.

„Nismo naivni. Ti argumenti imaju težinu. Sami smo – često na teži način – naučili koliko je teško ubediti sve države članice da ubrzaju proces našeg pristupanja i koliko lako se napredak može blokirati, često iz razloga koji potiču od unutrašnjih političkih razmatranja pojedinih članica.“

Ali, dodaju Rama i Vučić, ako kandidati za EU budu morali da čekaju da se sama EU reformiše – bilo bi to ravno zatvaranju vrata. Bilo bi, pišu, još svečanih govora i obećanja, ali se ništa ne bi desilo – „a to je pogrešno, kontraproduktivno i u ova vremena čak i opasno“.

„Napisali smo ovaj tekst zajedno jer priznajemo da Evropa danas ima dva jednako legitimna cilja: zemlje kandidati traže realističan put do punopravnog članstva. Države članice žele da sačuvaju sposobnost da deluju i jedinstvo EU“, dodaje se u tekstu.

Za šta se zalažu

Te dve stvari mogu se pomiriti, pišu Vučić i Rama. „Zato se zalažemo za ubrzanu integraciju pripremljenih zemalja kandidata u zajedničko tržište i Šengenski prostor. To bi građanima donelo osetne prednosti i istovremeno ojačalo ekonomsku i geopolitičku poziciju EU, bez opterećivanja arhitekture donošenja odluka EU ili narušavanja njene institucionalne ravnoteže“, navodi se u članku u frankfurtskom listu.

„Ne bi bilo prava na veto niti dodatnih komesara, poslanika Evropskog parlamenta niti izmena u strukturama odlučivanja“, nude Rama i Vučić.

Takva njihova ponuda, pišu, olakšaće svakom evropskom političaru odluku da podrži brže proširenje kao i da to pojasni građanima u svojoj zemlji.

„EU enlargement has never been an act of mercy. There was an investment on mutual profit. The EU has conquered markets, talents, strategic depth and political stability. The new members won well-being, security and voice-making in shaping Europe“, two Balkan leaders add.

But above all, peace is conquered. „Opponents of Europe live on the narrative of doom and division. The European strength has constantly come from the ability to turn the crises into integration, and diversity into unity.“

The next successful chapter would, they conclude, be important for both the Western Balkans and Europe.

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