

***EC expects Russia-Germany Baltic Sea pipeline to be linked to Stokhman gas field***

VIENNA. APRIL 24. INTERFAX CENTRAL EUROPE – The European Commission expects the proposed undersea natural-gas pipeline from Russia to Germany to be linked to the huge Stokhman field under development off Russia's Arctic coast, the EU's point man for energy contacts with Moscow, Christian Cleutinx, told Interfax Central Europe at the Europe-Russia Forum Tuesday.

“To us, energy security means diverse origin of products and diverse means of transport,” said Cleutinx, a director within the EC's Energy and Transport Directorate. “That is why Nord Stream, [as the projected pipeline is known] to us, has always been linked to Stokhman. And not this approach, that we will have Nord Stream, and then we will see where the gas is going to come from.”

The Central European countries between Russia and Germany that would be by-passed by the pipeline are staunchly opposed to it, fearing it would nullify the limited leverage they enjoy over their powerful eastern neighbor. After pricing disputes with Belarus and Ukraine led to a series of cut-offs, or threatened cut-downs, of energy deliveries to Central Europe, Poland and Lithuania fear Moscow could cut them off without fear of alienating its more-powerful customers further west.

In addition to the Central Europeans' political concerns, the Nord Stream pipeline raises environmental issues, he said.

“Environmental considerations need to be prerequisite to this project,” Cleutinx said.

Sweden and Finland have been among the countries voicing concerns over the environmental impact of the project. The Baltic, a smallish sea, has piles of chemical weapons and other noxious substances sunk by the Germans in the dying stages of the World War II.

AN/JT

For further information please e-mail [newsroom@interfax.pl](mailto:newsroom@interfax.pl) or phone (+48) 22 630 83 88.