Environmental impact of the planned gas pipeline in the Baltic Sea to link up Russia and Germany

2007/2118(INI) - 27/05/2008

The Committee on Petitions adopted the own initiative report by Marcin **LIBICKI** (UEN, PL) on the environmental impact of the planned gas pipeline in the Baltic Sea to link up Russia and Germany (Petitions 0614/2007 and 0952/2007): the Nord Stream project.

MEPs are of the opinion that Nord Stream is an infrastructure project with a wide political and strategic dimension for both the EU and Russia, particularly to ensure the European Union's security of supply. Recall that this project, together with other complementary pipelines, such as the Yamal II and Amber, should be planned in the spirit of a common European foreign policy on energy and should take fully into account their impact on the environment and on the security of the EU Member States. MEPs reiterate, in particular, that **Member States must speak with one voice on energy issues** and recall, in this regard, the resolution of 26 September 2007 on a common European foreign policy on energy (see INI/2007/2000).

According to MEPs, it is essential to support initiatives aimed at diversifying energy sources, both geographically and by developing sustainable alternatives. Likewise, energy security must be regarded as an essential component of the overall security of the European Union, whereby the definition of energy security should not merely be limited to the lack of internal EU production but should also take into account the **geopolitical aspects of dependency on imports** and the potential therein for politically motivated interruptions.

Nord Stream: the marginal role played by the EU in this project: MEPs point out that greater EU involvement would reduce the uncertainty felt by many Member States about the Nord Stream project. They take note of the opposition expressed by certain Member States to the pipeline project planned for the Baltic Sea area and ask that the project be carried out in cooperation with each of the states around the Baltic Sea in accordance with relevant legal instruments. Overall, MEPs are opposed to the carrying-out of an investment on the proposed scale **without the consent** of all the littoral states first being obtained. They emphasise that a long-term sustainable solution requires full transparency for all parties during both the construction and operating phases of the project.

Securing energy supply while respecting the EU's commitment to environmental protection: a real challenge: MEPs consider that the challenge of securing energy supply while respecting the EU's commitment to environmental protection and sustainable development makes it imperative to implement a coherent and coordinated European policy on supply of natural gas, based on careful evaluation at European level of the environmental aspects of alternative solutions and on mutual solidarity between Member States. MEPs therefore call on the Commission and the Council to make a full commitment to analysing the environmental impact of the construction of the North European gas pipeline. In this respect, MEPs regret the Commission's failure to accept the proposal contained in Parliament's resolution of 16 November 2006 concerning the preparation of objective environmental impact assessments of proposed projects by the Commission.

Nord Stream: a threat to biodiversity: MEPs call on the Council and the Commission to conduct a thorough assessment of the question whether the implementation of the project is in keeping with Community and international law as this project will cover an area of up to 2 400 km², requiring the use of a large number of vessels and representing a serious threat to biodiversity in the region. They call on the

Commission and Member States to carry out a thorough assessment of the economic and budgetary aspects of the Nord Stream project and the firms involved in it. Furthermore, MEPs point out that the investor intends to use a highly toxic compound when building the gas pipeline. They therefore call on the Commission to conduct a reliable environmental study on the additional impact on the Baltic Sea caused by the Nord Stream project and call on the developer to ensure that the construction and operation of the pipeline does not endanger the many species of fish and birds in the area. MEPs also fear the absence of any strategy to address structural failure and external threats to the security of the pipeline. It is therefore necessary to clearly define all aspects related to security and emergency response, including financial resources, actors, roles and procedures. In addition, given the serious environmental risks and the high cost of the proposed project, MEPs emphasise that **alternative gas pipeline routes** should be analysed first, taking into account both environmental and economic aspects. The issue of economic compensation for any failures or damage must also be tackled (particularly in the case of threats for the states bordering the Baltic Sea).

Environmental impact assessment of the project: MEPs stress the need to assess all the potential impacts of this project and that this assessment must be at all levels (Community, Member States and international level through existing conventions). They regret, in particular, that in the legal instruments and communications concerning marine strategies initiated by it, the Commission usually passes over the problem of subsea pipelines. They also point out the importance of a transparent communication strategy on the results of the environmental impact assessment of this project. MEPs therefore call on the Council, the Commission and the Member States to use every legal means at their disposal to **prevent the construction of the North European gas pipeline** on the scale proposed by the investor, **should it become apparent that there is a risk of an environmental disaster** in the Baltic Sea area. In particular, they call on the Commission to ensure compliance with the provisions of the Convention on the Law of the Sea, the Helsinki Convention, the Espoo Convention, the Aarhus Convention and Directives 85/337 /EEC, 97/11/EC, 92/43/EEC and 79/409/EEC, as well as Article 10 of the EC Treaty and the precautionary principle and the principle of sustainable development, and to initiate proceedings under Article 226 of the EC Treaty in the event of failure to comply with the above obligations. MEPs also call on the Commission to evaluate the market competition situation caused by the possible completion of the Nord Stream pipeline and, if necessary, to take measures to prevent Gazprom from assuming a dominant role on the EU gas markets. Lastly, they suggest the establishment of a system of common supervision of the pipeline, to include all countries in the Baltic Sea region and that the obligation to pay compensation for environmental damage should lie solely with Nord Stream.