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## **BERLIN WOOS US IN EUROPE GAS BATTLE**

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12.02.2019

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EurActiv (12 February 2019)

Germany will put on a show of unity with the United States Tuesday (12 February) in talks on importing natural gas, as Berlin battles accusations an under-construction pipeline deepens European energy dependence on Russia.

Economy Minister Peter Altmaier will meet the US deputy energy secretary, Dan Brouillette, Tuesday morning at a conference his ministry is hosting on liquid natural gas (LNG).

Germany and the US share an interest in secure and dependable energy supplies, Altmaier said in a statement Monday.

With LNG we can get gas from even more suppliers and increase our security of supply.

Economy ministry sources told AFP Altmaier will unveil a policy paper proposing regulatory changes to allow easier imports of the gas.

LNG as a potential alternative to Russian gas became a hot topic as construction on the Nord Stream 2 pipeline got under way last year.

The pipeline will double the capacity of an existing link between Russia and Germany, and combined with the planned Turkish Stream connection could remove the need to pump gas to Europe via Ukraine.

Kyiv fears eliminating its role as a transit country will expose it to further aggression from Moscow, after Russia annexed the Crimean peninsula in 2014 and backed separatist rebels in Ukraine's east.

Meanwhile eastern EU member states including Poland and the Baltic nations, backed by the US, have complained the pipeline also undermines their security.

We aren't fundamentally against Russian gas in Europe. But we're against too much Russian gas driving our partners into dependency, American ambassador to Germany Richard Grenell told the Welt am Sonntag newspaper.

Some 16 of the EU's 28 member nations share Washington's fears, he added.

### **Visible splits**

Chancellor Angela Merkel has always dismissed such fears, describing Nord Stream 2 as a purely

business project.

On Friday she reiterated that Germany has the right to secure its energy supply in a diverse way.

That includes Russian natural gas, but not exclusively \* weve made it clear that in future we will land LNG in Germany.

Earlier last week the intra-EU battle came to a head, when France said it would vote for common oversight of the pipeline □ potentially allowing opposing member states to strew obstacles in its path.

But Paris agreed at the last minute to leave the responsibility with Germany.

### **France steps on the gas in eurobudget talks**

France made surprising back-and-forth moves on Nord Stream 2, which could be explained by the countrys effort to secure German and Dutch support in a completely different dossier.

A near-unanimous final vote in favour of the compromise revealed growing displeasure among the EU states over the attempted US influence, a European diplomat told AFP Friday on condition of anonymity.

The Kremlin capitalised on the failure of American lobbying, as spokesman Dmitry Peskov accused Washington of underhanded competition by trying to encourage Europeans to buy more expensive American gas.

Altmaier said Monday his meeting with Brouillette was simply an opportunity to discuss the development of the LNG import market with companies and energy industry federations from both sides of the Atlantic.

Competitive prices for gas were a precondition of any import business, he underlined.

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Kaynak/Source: