
RUSSIA'S TMK EYES GAS PIPELINE CONSTRUCTION IN BULGARIA

- 28.02.2019

Ekathimerini (27 February 2019)

Russian oil and gas pipe maker TMK said on Wednesday it was interested in bidding for the construction of a gas pipeline in Bulgaria, as Sofia looks to secure a link with the Moscow-designed TurkStream gas pipeline.

TurkStream, which traverses the Black Sea from Russia to Turkey, is part of Russias efforts to bypass its political foe Ukraine, a key route for lucrative Russian gas exports to Europe.

The first line of TurkStream, with a capacity of 15.75 billion cubic metres per year, will feed Turkeys local market. Another line with a similar volume is mooted for customers in southeastern Europe.

Bulgaria sees that line, from Turkey to Serbia, as part of its plan to set up a regional gas hub and get TurkStream extended to central Europe. Bulgaria recently issued a tender for the expansion of its domestic gas network.

TMK is considering the possibility of participation in the Bulgartransgaz tender aimed at Bulgarias gas transportation system expansion, a TMK spokesman said.

TMK is currently not involved in any gas pipeline project in Turkey or Bulgaria, he added. Bulgartransgaz did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

Russian gas giant Gazprom must choose from two possible routes for TurkStream: via Bulgaria or through Greece. So far, the company has not said officially whether it has picked either route.

Next week, Russian Prime Minister Dmitry Medvedev will travel to Bulgaria to discuss and sign a number of documents, including on energy, the government said earlier this week without elaborating.

Energy analysts have expressed concern that Gazprom will cement its dominant position as gas provider in southeastern Europe. At present, Gazprom fulfils all of Bulgarias gas needs.

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