
MOLDOVANS FACE BIGGER GAS BILLS AFTER GAZPROM HIKES PRICE

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Russian energy giant Gazprom has raised the price of the natural gas it delivers to Moldova by 25 per cent since the start of the year compared to the same period of 2018.

The present contract between Gazprom and Moldova will expire by the end of this year and Moldova has not yet built a pipeline connecting it to the European energy system via Romania.

Analysts warn that because of that, domestic energy prices will likely go up next year, as Moldova will not have much leverage in future negotiations with Gazprom, although the stakes are very high for Chisinau.

Moreover, the new TurkStream pipeline will be operating by the end of 2019, enabling Russia to supply gas to the Balkans via Turkey, bypassing Moldova and Ukraine. These were the main routes until now for Russia to export gas to the Balkans.

The Trans-Balkan pipeline built in the early 1990s gave Moldova some leverage in previous negotiations with Gazprom.

Victor Parlicov, the former chief of the National Agency for Energy Regulation ANRE, in Moldova and now an expert at the IDIS Viitorul think tank in Chisinau, told BIRN that Gazprom expects TurkStream to give Russia more bargaining power because it bypasses the old gas transit system through Ukraine and Moldova.

At present, the price of natural gas delivered to Moldova by Gazprom is 237.46 US dollars for a thousand cubic meters, according to web portal Moldstreet.com.

A Russian company effectively controls MoldovaGaz, the main provider of gas in Moldova, owing 50 per cent of its shares. Moldovas Ministry of Economy owns 35.3 per cent and the separatist regime in Transnistria has 13.4 per cent. Minor shareholders hold about 1.2 per cent of the shares.

MoldovaGaz has not yet called for an increase in the gas price for consumers, but might well do so in the near future, the present director of ANRE, Stefan Creanga, told Radio Chisinau.

During his election campaign, the pro-Russian President of Moldova, Igor Dodon, said he had talked directly to Russian President Vladimir Putin about gas prices, asking him to keep them low for Moldova.

Moldova is 100-per-cent dependent on Russian gas, and Moscow has been accused of using energy as a weapon to influence political decisions taken in Chisinau.

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