
WEBER VOWS TO BLOCK NORD STREAM 2 AMID 'SUE' THREAT

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The European People's Party candidate for the next European Commission president, Manfred Weber, says he will block the construction of a Russian gas pipeline should he win the race to replace Jean Claude-Juncker.

The move to obstruct the Nord Stream 2 positions Weber, a German, in direct opposition with the German government, which wants it built, and comes amid a legal threat by the project's corporate representatives to sue the European Union.

But Weber, in an interview with the Polska Times on Tuesday (23 April), said the Russian pipeline is not in the interests of the European Union.

"I'm not the German candidate for the head of the European Commission, but a candidate for the European People's Party," he told the paper.

The Nord Stream 2 is spearheaded by Russian state energy company Gazprom, posing broader risks to the EU's energy security.

Construction of the pipeline kicked off last May on Germany's Baltic sea coast. The plan is to pipe 55bn cubic metres (bcm) of Russian gas every year by 2020.

Opponents of the pipeline, such as Poland and the Baltic states, are worried it would give Russia strategic leverage to cut gas supplies in times of geopolitical tension.

The European Commission is also against the project.

Earlier this year, reforms to the EU's gas directive were extended to apply to all gas pipelines to and from third countries.

Some exemptions may apply but under commission supervision.

It means gas pipelines from Russia will have to follow EU anti-monopoly law on their offshore sections - but only in the territorial waters of EU states.

It also means Germany and Russia will be able to operate the new Nord Stream 2 gas pipeline, most of which lies outside EU waters in the Baltic Sea, as they see fit.

The amended rules are set to kick in later this summer.

Threat to sue EU

But Nord Stream 2 representatives are now piling on the pressure to also control the 54km section of pipeline within EU waters.

A letter obtained by Politico Europe, reveals Nord Stream 2 representatives are threatening to take the European Union to court.

Drafted by Nord Stream 2 CEO Matthias Warnig to European commission president Juncker, the letter says the completed sections of the pipeline meet the derogation criteria under the revamped EU gas rules.

He says any such derogation must take into account the previous lack of EU rules on gas pipelines from third countries.

The basis of Warnig's legal argument revolves around the notion of what it means to have a "completed" section of the pipeline.

He says the relevant section of Nord Stream 2 will be "substantially completed", if the amendment enters into force by this summer. They will not, however, be operational.

Kaynak/Source: