

The issue of oil pipeline reopening was discussed at a meeting in Thessaloniki, held on the sidelines of a visit by US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo. Hellenic Petroleum (ELPE), Greek and North Macedonian Governments have begun talks on the reopening of an oil pipeline linking ELPE's refinery in Thessaloniki with the Macedonian OKTA refinery, also operated by ELPE, through an extrajudicial settlement by the end of the year. At the meeting, ELPE and North Macedonian officials were interested on achieving an out-of-court settlement. ELPE is seeking a compensation in the amount of 32 million dollars for a breach of contractual obligations concerning minimum supply amounts between 2008 and 2011. The company has already won an older case, on the same issue, at the International Court of Arbitration in Paris in 2007, for compensation worth 52 million dollars. The Greek and North Macedonian sides, encouraged by the US, agreed to form a committee to work on a solution that could enable the oil pipeline to reopen by the end of the year following a seven-year interruption. The oil pipeline stopped operating in 2013 after ELPE deemed its OKTA refining activities were no longer feasible. The 213 kilometers long pipeline has a capacity of 350,000 tons. Until 2013, the pipeline was used to transfer crude oil from ELPE's Thessaloniki refinery to the OKTA refinery in Skopje.