

# **Position of SEE region and its importance within European external energy policy, interview with Mrs. Anita Orban, Ambassador for Energy Security, Hungary MFA**

**Categories :** [Uncategorized](#)

**Date :** October 15, 2012

Energy policy is a member state competence. However, Hungary has always been an advocate for a joint EU external energy policy. Energy security came to the forefront of the foreign policy thinking of the last three Hungarian governments. The energy strategy of every country in the region affects directly its neighbors: the supply sources it chooses, the way electricity is produced in the particular countries and the level of interconnectivity a country aspires for. The Energy Community is an essential platform for the extension of the EU energy market and for assisting non-EU member states in the implementation of the EU acquis.

Serbia Energy Magazine had a pleasure in speaking with His Excellency Mrs. Anita Orban, Ambassador for Energy Security in Hungarian Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

**Serbia-Energy.com:** The question of energy security is one of the most important topics for most of the EU members, Hungary also introduced high level diplomatic position for this topic. Can you tell us more about your position and in general Hungary energy security policy ?

Hungary was hit hard by the gas crisis of 2006 and 2009 when the vulnerability of the Central European region and that of Hungary became visible. In 2009, Hungary was among those countries which were able to assist their neighbors, among them Serbia, thanks to the

existing infrastructure. As a result of the two crises, energy security came to the forefront of the foreign policy thinking of the last three Hungarian governments. The position of ambassador-at-large for energy security was created in 2008. In order to address the vulnerability issue, Hungary also started to be involved in new pipeline projects which would bring gas from different sources, we started to build interconnectors with our neighbors and also work on the integration of the internal energy market. We inaugurated two interconnectors in 2010, one with Romania and one with Croatia. The Slovak-Hungarian interconnector is under preparation, as well.

**Serbia-Energy.com:** EU projected goals and policies for energy sector allowing EU members to reach goals but within its national authorities. Still there are joint external energy policy actions toward suppliers, transit countries and neighborhood programs. Can you tell us more how does Hungary manages its energy policy and in what way Hungary is involved in joint EU external energy policy?

Energy policy is a member state competence. However, Hungary has always been an advocate for a joint EU external energy policy. During the Hungarian EU presidency, the February 2011 summit of the heads of states and governments called for the European external actions service to incorporate the energy security dimension into their activities. Since then, we have been involved in facilitating the thinking on this issue. The EU does not capitalize on the size of its internal market when it comes to its external relations with suppliers and transit countries. The European Commission has taken many initiatives in the last few years in unifying and coordinating positions towards these parties, and we need many more initiatives like those.

**Serbia-Energy.com:** Current status of Hungary energy security, level of diversified energy supply sources and routes for outside supply?

Hungary has a long-term supply contract with Russia providing for more than 80% of the Hungarian gas import. At the same time, we are much better interconnected with our neighbors than we have been a few years ago. Additionally, we have reached substantial progress regarding the North-South Energy Corridor, as well. The North-South Energy Corridor will establish the missing infrastructure link which connects the East-West pipeline systems and creates the infrastructural basis for market integration. The work on the corridor was launched during the Hungarian EU presidency and it is making good progress in identifying the crucial missing infrastructure links and mobilizing regional support behind them. For Hungary, the North-South interconnector will facilitate access to LNG terminals on its Northern and Southern ends.

**Serbia-Energy.com:** Many saying that Hungary and Balkan region are interdependent in areas of gas and electricity supplies, is this mean the energy security of Hungary and Serbia are interdependent as well? What are the positive examples and practice which you find applicable to neighboring countries?

We are all interdependent in our region and interestingly we rely much less on this interconnectivity than we should. The energy strategy of every country in the region affects directly its neighbors: the supply sources it chooses, the way electricity is produced in the

particular countries and the level of interconnectivity a country aspires for. We shall work together much more than we do at the moment. For example, we work together with Serbia within the Danube strategy framework which provides an excellent platform for cooperation.

**Serbia-Energy.com:** Is South Stream primarily gas supply project for Hungary, are there any other projects in which Hungary might be interested to join?

Hungary is involved in several pipeline projects: Nabucco, AGRI and South Stream. We also support the preparations for the LNG terminal in Croatia. Our interest is to have as many different sources of supply and supply routes as possible. In case of Nabucco, we had a successful ministerial meeting on October 8<sup>th</sup> where important steps were discussed.

**Serbia-Energy.com:** Energy Community for South East Europe, as EU energy sector initiative for regional integration and preparation for accession to EU market, is managing regional energy markets reform. Is Hungary interested in the process and how do you evaluate current results?

The Energy Community is an essential platform for the extension of the EU energy market and for assisting non-EU member states in the implementation of the EU acquis. Hungary is very much involved in the work of the Energy Community Secretariat and we also developed a close relationship with the Secretariat within the framework of the Danube Strategy.

*Source Serbia Energy Magazine*