

Starting its push into the lucrative energy market dominated by Russia, Azerbaijan has started commercial natural gas supplies to Europe via the Trans-Adriatic (TAP) pipeline. Managing Director of TAP AG, a company in charge of the construction and operation of the pipeline, Luca Schieppati said that the new pipeline is an essential part of Europe's gas network, contributing to the energy transition road map. It offers a reliable, direct and cost-effective transportation route to southeastern Europe and beyond.

The project has the backing of the European Commission as part of efforts to curb Europe's dependence on Russian energy. Russia controls 34 % of Europe's gas market and plans to raise gas exports to Europe, including Turkey, to 183 billion cubic meters next year from the 171-172 billion expected this year. Europe's annual consumption stands at around 500 billion cubic meters, used mostly in electricity generation.

TAP project envisages 878 kilometers long pipeline that will connect to the Trans-Anatolian (TANAP) near the Turkish-Greek border and cross Greece, Albania and Adriatic Sea before reaching its final destination in Italy. Current shareholders of TAP AG are British Petroleum (20 %), Azeri state-owned SOCAR (20 %), Italian Snam (20 %), Belgian Fluxys (19 %), Spanish Enagas (16 %) and Swiss Axpo with 5 % of the shares. The initial capacity of the pipeline is 10 billion cubic meters of gas per year, with an option to expand the capacity to 20 billion cubic meters. The cost of the project was initially estimated at some 6 billion euros, but in 2016 CEO of TAP AG Ian Bradshaw confirmed that the construction should cost 4.5 billion euros. The construction of the Greek section of the pipeline was launched on 17 May 2016, while construction works on the Albanian section started on 30 September same year. The works on the 105 kilometers long offshore section between Albania and Italy started in October 2018. The pipeline was launched in mid-November 2020.

The so-called Southern Gas Corridor is a system of pipelines, of which some are already built while the other are still in plan, which will connect the Caspian Sea region and the European Union bypassing Russia. The system includes the South Caucasus pipeline, Trans-Anatolian pipeline (TANAP) and Trans-Adriatic pipeline (TAP). The Corridor crosses the territories of Azerbaijan, Georgia, Turkey, Greece and Albania. Natural gas from Shah Deniz field will be exported to Turkey and European markets by expanding the South Caucasus pipeline and connecting it with the Trans-Anatolian (TANAP) and Trans-Adriatic (TAP) pipelines which are currently under construction. According to initial estimates, first shipments of gas to Turkey will be delivered in 2018, and a year later for Europe.