

TAP AG, a consortium managing Trans-Adriatic (TAP) natural gas pipeline, said that an increase in the capacity of the pipeline is being planned to help reduce dependence on Russian gas in southeastern Europe.

The statement from the company said that the initial target was to increase gas deliveries to 12 billion cubic meters a year from 2022, up from roughly 8 billion in 2021, and to possibly raise its capacity to 20 billion cubic meters a year, with the final decision to depend on a market test to be conducted in 2023.

Last week, The European Commission (EC) signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with Azerbaijan to double imports of natural gas within a few years in order to reduce its dependence on Russian gas imports. With the deal, Azerbaijan commits to double the capacity of the Southern Gas Corridor to deliver at least 20 billion cubic meters per year to the European Union by 2027.

Azerbaijan is already increasing deliveries of natural gas to the EU from 8.1 billion cubic meters in 2021 to an expected 12 billion in 2022. It has been supplying gas to Europe through pipelines running via Georgia and Turkey.

In May, EU leaders agreed to stop most Russian oil imports by the end of the year, as part of unprecedented sanctions against Russia due to its attack on Ukraine. However, the bloc has put off an outright ban on Russian gas imports, which in 2021 amounted to 155 billion cubic meters - nearly 40 % of the EU's needs.

The expansion of TAP's capacity will establish Greece as an energy hub for southeastern Europe and the EU as a whole, as the pipeline carries gas from Azerbaijan to Italy from the Greek-Turkish border, via Albania and an undersea pipeline.