

Test run of the Balkan Stream gas pipeline (the extension of TurkStream pipeline intended to bring Russian gas to southeastern and central Europe) has started, according to Serbian media.

At the moment, the automatic and control systems, the dispatching stations, valves, optics and power supply are being tested, so that the conditions would meet for the gas to start flowing from Bulgaria as soon as 30 December.

Director of Serbian gas company Srbijagas Dusan Bajatovic said in an interview that the pipes of the interconnector between the Bulgarian and the Hungarian border are filled with gas and all the systems necessary for reliable operations of the gas pipeline which is part of the internal gas transport system of Serbia are being tested at the moment. He assured that the gas pipeline will be ready for operation on 30 December and that Serbia will start being supplied with gas from Bulgaria as soon as 1 January 2021. This means that Serbia will be supplied with gas from the direction of Bulgaria, which, along with the existing direction from Hungary, now presents new possibilities, but also a greater degree of security of supply of the markets of Serbia and Bosnia and Herzegovina.

The information on the test run was also confirmed by Serbian President Aleksandar Vucic. Serbia has completed the laying of the pipes for its section of the TurkStream gas pipeline extension in December last year. The construction of Serbian section, connecting Bulgarian and Hungarian borders, has officially started in May 2019. With an envisaged capacity of almost 14 billion cubic meters of gas per year, 403 kilometers long Serbian section should be put into operation as early as 2020, and reach its full capacity during 2022. The operator of the pipeline in Serbia is local company Gastrans, a joint venture between Russian Gazprom and state-owned gas company Srbijagas.