

Energy Minister of Serbia, Zorana Mihajlovic said last week in Brussels, after the conference on South Stream in the European Parliament, that Serbia is ready to begin construction of a gas pipeline and that it will bring new jobs. Serbia is ready to start the works on South Stream, and our intention is to form a consortium of Serbian companies which can participate in everything from construction to monitoring - Mihajlovic told reporters after the meeting "South Stream - The Evolution of a pipeline," which was held at the headquarters of the EP.

At the conference, which was attended among others, by general director of Gazprom Export Alexander Medvedev and representatives of the European institutions, the Minister has estimated that for the business of construction of the South Stream even 150,000 people could be hired directly or indirectly, while 3,500 could remain continuously employed in the maintenance of the pipeline.

Asked to comment on the words the European Commission representative Klaus Dieter Borhart that Gazprom's business in some respects is not accordance with EU regulations, Mihajlovic said that it was a matter on which Russia and the EU need to discuss among themselves.

- The energy agreement signed with Russia in 2008 is different from the agreements signed by the EU member states, because it also includes NIS and gas storage - noted the Minister, adding that it was a dispute between the Russian Energy Ministry and the relevant directorates of the EC.

- No one can expect from a small Serbia to revise the contract (with Gazprom) and that none of the other countries, including EU member states such as Bulgaria, was not done that - she said, noting that the revision of the energy agreement would mean the fall of Serbian government.

Mihajlovic said that her ministry is fully prepared for the forthcoming negotiations on the Association Agreement with the EU.

We are fully prepared for the opening of Chapter 15 (Energy) and 27 (environment) - she said.

Siromjatin: Serbia is important for South Stream

High official of Gazprom Alexander Siromjatin said after the conference that Serbia is very important for South Stream, because it is a central hub in the region.

He said he does not expect that Gazprom's disputes with the European Commission will have consequences for Serbia, because Serbia negotiations on the signing of the third energy package with the EU is not expected before January 2015.

By that time, all problems should be solved - he said.

Source; Serbia Energy/MERZ