

Amendments to an agreement on gas imports from Russia to Serbia, which Serbia's parliament is expected to confirm, should enable Belgrade to sell Russian gas to other countries.

"Changes in the agreement will bring that possibility for Serbia - but it would mean also that Serbia needs to solve problem with its infrastructure, as now we only have an interconnection with Bosnia," a Serbian energy expert, Dragan Budosan, told BIRN.

The agreement on natural gas deliveries from Russia was signed in October 2012. The document said the deal was designed "to increase energy security", and to "strengthen long-term economic cooperation" between Serbia and Russia.

The agreement covered the period 2012 to 2021, and included delivery of up to 5 billion cubic meters of gas per year to Serbia. It was also agreed that gas exported to Serbia was intended only for the Serbian market.

The newest amendments, which are on the agenda of parliament in Serbia, envisage erasing this limitation. Russia approved the amendments to the agreement in December.

Although the document is awaiting approval by MPs, it is expected to pass, as the government, which has a large majority in parliament, proposed it.

Although the changes will enable Serbia to re-export Russian gas, some issues are still unsolved, Budosan explained that as Serbia has gas interconnections only with Bosnia, it would need to build infrastructure as soon as possible to re-sell the gas.

A few weeks ago, Serbian officials announced plans to construct a "Serbian Stream", reviving the idea of an alternative gas pipeline that would bring Russian gas to Serbia and the rest of Europe.

The announcement followed the abandonment of the South Stream gas pipeline, which was supposed to transport gas from Russia to the European Union under the Black Sea and through Bulgaria and Serbia.

It was abandoned in 2014 due to its non-compliance with European Union competition and energy legislation.

Asked which countries might be interested to buy gas from Serbia, Budosan answered: "anyone, if it sees its interest".

He noted that Serbia stands to gain from this deal, as many countries, especially members of the EU, do not have such agreements with Russia, so might be interested to import Russian gas purchased from Serbia.

*Source: Balkaninsight*