

Serbian Energy Agency (AERS) has certified local company Gastrans, majority owned by Russian Gazprom, as an independent natural gas transmission operator.

The statement from the regulator said that Gastrans is obliged to submit certificates of occupancy or evidence confirming that it operates and manages the constructed transmission system independently six months since the beginning of operational work at the latest.

The company is wholly owned by Swiss-based South Stream Serbia, in which Gazprom holds a 51 % stake, while state-owned Srbijagas holds the remaining 49 %. Gastrans is in charge of the construction of Serbian section of TurkStream gas pipeline extension, which should bring Russian gas via Turkey, Bulgaria and Serbia to Hungary and Central Europe.

In January, The Energy Community (EnC) Secretariat has published its Opinion on the Serbian regulator's draft certification decision on Gastrans, the operator of the Serbian section of the TurkStream gas pipeline extension. In its Opinion, the Secretariat recalls that Gastrans has not been lawfully exempted from the unbundling provisions of the Gas Directive. The project does not enhance competition, as required for an exemption under Article 36 of the Gas Directive, but is detrimental to the development of competition on the Serbian market. By consequence, Gastrans is not eligible for a model of unbundling outside the Third Energy Package, as created by Serbian energy regulator AERS, but can only be certified under the Gas Directive's provisions on ownership unbundling.