

Serbia could start receiving Russian natural gas via Bulgaria in 2021 if Bulgaria completes its section of TurkStream gas pipeline extension according to schedule, said President of Serbian Gas Association Vojislav Vujanic.

Vujanic explained that the capacity of so-called Balkan Stream is 15 billion cubic meters of gas per year, which translates to about 180 million dollars in annual transit fees. However, since the operator of Serbian section of the pipeline Gastrans is jointly owned with Russia, Serbia will get some 90 million dollars per year.

There financial gains from gas transit only, but benefits from the new pipeline will be much greater, wince state-owned power utility EPS will now be able to build environmentally acceptable power plants which run on natural gas instead of coal.

Vujanic noted that the existing supply route via Ukraine will no longer be available in the near future, since the pipeline is old and the cost of its reconstruction or construction of a new land-based pipeline is outweighed by much cheaper route via Black Sea.

Serbia has completed the laying down 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.