

Serbia: South Stream is in the grip of politics, the gas pipeline within the EU-Serbia landscape framework, analysis

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After the Deputy Prime Minister of Serbia, Zorana Mihajlovic said that the construction suspension of the South Stream in Bulgaria probably would also delay the works on the pipeline in our country, personally the Prime Minister Aleksandar Vucic confuted her, representing in the public completely a different story.

- The Government of Serbia has not made a decision on the construction postponement of the South Stream pipeline and all goes according to the project plan. Such a decision should be made by the Government of Serbia, which was not in session. As for us, in the case of the South Stream project everything is going as planned so far - said the Prime Minister Aleksandar Vucic yesterday. He added that he would like that there was more patience for making such serious decisions, such as those of South Stream.

However, the fact that the works in Bulgaria have been stopped completely make efforts to develop project in Serbia according the plan pointless. Serbian analysts are convinced that the decision to suspend the South Stream construction in Bulgaria is motivated solely by political reasons that have nothing to do with the energy strategy. The European Union on the one side and Russia on the other have diametrically opposing views on the issue of resolving the crisis in Ukraine. Nikola Rajakovic, former State Secretary in the Ministry of Energy, told for "Danas" that the policy stirred its fingers in this project realization and hoped that the situation would change soon.

- It is not good for Serbia if the Bulgaria decision on stopping the South Stream construction remains in effect, that if the European Union suspends the project. In Serbia's interest is to continue it and I sincerely hope that it will actually occur after the tensions calming in Ukraine. There is no doubt that only the policy stops the construction of this pipeline, and the current situation clearly shows that the alternative route of "blue energy" supply is essential to consumers in Europe. Also, I do not believe that companies and EU countries involved in the pipeline construction will allow stopping its implementation - says Rajakovic.

General Secretary of the Serbia Gas Association Vojislav Vuletic is convinced that nothing can stop the South Stream construction, not even the current political conflict between Brussels and Moscow over tensions in Ukraine.

- The evidence that the project construction takes its course and there is no question of any deadlock is the fact that Austria, the EU member, twenty days ago signed an agreement on the South Stream construction with Gazprom. Would Vienna decide on the move like this if it was confident that the EU countries which have signed agreements with the Russians would quit and prevent the project - says Vuletic.

He added that the South Stream construction, no doubt, bothered to someone and says that he primarily means at the United States. Also opposes the Brussels administration, which by this attitude tries to put pressure on Moscow in order to alter view of the developments in Ukraine.

- However, this does not mean that influential EU members like Germany, France and Italy they have stopped the construction. Statements of their statesmen show that in this case they are far more restrained than officials in Brussels. Simply, the companies from these three countries are the owners of 50 percent of the company for the South Stream construction. This means that the project stopping would not be only against the economic interests of Moscow, but Berlin, Paris and Rome. I do not believe that the EU administration is ready to work against the interests of their companies. Besides it should not be forgotten the fact that the South Stream precisely is built for the consumers' needs in the European Union, primarily in Italy - says our source.

Officially because of the tender

On Wednesday, June 4th, at the request of the European Commission, Bulgaria suspended the construction works on the South Stream. The European Union has previously accused Sofia of violating European rules on tendering for the infrastructure projects construction, and that it was giving privileges to the Russian and Bulgarian companies. Requests from Brussels to Bulgaria related to the South Stream construction coincided with the conflict between the European Union and Russia on the situation in Ukraine where conflicts smolder at the east of the state.

South Stream is a problem of Brussels and Moscow

Belgrade - First Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Ivica Dacic said that the problems with the South Stream pipeline project were problems on the route Brussels - Moscow and Serbia would not be much impact on their resolution. "We expect these problems to be solved at the same level, especially because other pipelines such as Nord Stream, were built without problems", Dacic said, adding that no one would take so much right to threaten energy security and stability of citizens in this part of Europe, including Serbia. He added that Serbia did not make a decision on the work suspension and that it was waiting to see what would happen next.