

# Kiev Gas Plans Could Pollute Russia

By [The Moscow Times](#)

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Planned drilling for shale gas in Ukraine is likely to pollute downstream waters in neighboring Russia, environmental conservation group the World Wide Fund for Nature, or WWF, said Thursday.

Ukraine last year announced a joint project with Europe's biggest oil company, Shell, to drill for shale gas in the eastern Kharkiv region, which borders Russia. Extraction is due to begin in 2018 or 2019.

The project is expected to decrease Ukraine's current dependence on natural gas from Russia following a series of gas wars that saw Moscow using the lucrative resource for political leverage.

But shale gas extraction in the eastern region is likely to pollute the Seversky Donets River, which flows into Russia, the WWF's Alexei Knizhnikov said.

Russia cannot compel Ukraine to present an international assessment of the project's risks

because Russia has not ratified the United Nations' Espoo Convention on cross-border environmental impact, said Knizhnikov, who oversees energy projects at the WWF's Russian branch.

Moscow and Kiev both signed the convention in 1991, but only Ukraine ratified it.

Russia recently stepped up political pressure on Ukraine over the latter's plans to sign an association agreement with the European Union next month.

Earlier this week, the chief executive of Russian gas export monopoly Gazprom demanded an immediate resolution of Ukraine's unpaid August gas bill, which he said amounted to \$882 million.

Bulgaria's prime minister and the chief of gas company Gazprom have launched the construction of the Bulgarian stretch of a pipeline meant to transport Russian natural gas to Europe, The Associated Press reported.

Plamen Oresharski and Gazprom CEO Alexei Miller announced Thursday the start of work on the 540-kilometer section of the South Stream pipeline, which is expected to start operating in December 2015.

The trans-European pipeline would ship up to 63 billion cubic meters of gas annually to Bulgaria, Serbia, Hungary, Slovenia, Austria and Italy in one leg and Croatia, Macedonia, Greece and Turkey in a second.

The pipeline's route bypasses transit nation Ukraine to ensure safe shipping. Pricing disputes between Russian and Ukraine have caused disruptions in recent years, cutting gas for millions of customers.

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