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EU Accuses Russia of Breaching Law With Turkish Stream Gas Route

By The Moscow Times

February 04, 2015



President Vladimir Putin and Turkey's President Tayyip Erdogan attend a news conference at the Presidential Palace in Ankara.

Russia's proposal to pump gas to the Turkish-Greek border and from 2019 to cease using Ukraine as its main energy transit route to Europe is in breach of legally binding contracts and is economically flawed, the EU's energy chief said Wednesday.

At the start of December, Russia announced it was scrapping its South Stream pipeline to carry gas to southern Europe and instead named Turkey as its preferred partner for an alternative route named Turkish Stream.

Russia's state gas company Gazprom has since said that from 2019 Ukraine would no longer be a gas transit route to the European Union.

European Commission Vice President Maros Sefcovic said he raised the issue during talks in

Moscow last month and questioned whether it could be economically viable to deliver suddenly the huge volumes shipped via Ukraine to a different destination.

"I asked how this should be possible and how this could be in accordance with long-term contracts which EU companies have," he said, adding that these contracts had clauses that determined the place where the gas would arrive.

He did not say what the Russian response was, although he said there was a need to continue discussion to "come back to a more rational debate."

Relations between Moscow and Brussels have deteriorated since Russia annexed the Crimea region of Ukraine in March last year.

Adding to the complexity of the conflict between Russia and Ukraine, Russia last year cut off gas supplies to Kiev because of unpaid gas bills.

An agreement brokered by the European Commission in October last year has only provided a solution until the end of March, raising the risk of further disruption.

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