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European Commission, Ukraine in 'Intense' Talks Over Assistance With Gas Purchases

By The Moscow Times

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Ukraine halted purchases from Russia's Gazprom this month after Commission-brokered talks on pricing failed.

BRDO PRI KRANJU, Slovenia — The European Commission is in "intense communication" with Ukraine and international institutions to help Kiev pay for gas supplies for next winter, Commission Vice President Maros Sefcovic said on Thursday.

Ukraine halted purchases from Russia's Gazprom this month after Commission-brokered talks on pricing failed although Russian gas bound for Europe is still being piped across the country.

About half of the Russian gas the European Union buys follows this route. In total, Russia provides the EU with around one-third of its oil and gas needs.

"We are now in intense communication with Ukrainian authorities but also international financial institutions," Sefcovic told Reuters at a conference in Slovenia.

"We are analyzing the ways in which we can assist Ukraine in financing gas purchases for the next heating season."

Sefcovic said he had sent "issues papers" to Moscow and Kiev to seek ways to close the rift between the two after the breakdown of their gas talks in Vienna on June 30.

"We would like to get their answers in a short period of time and I suggested to both Russia and Ukraine to have quite extensive bilateral meetings by the end of August to make sure that when we see each other next time we have realistic chances of succeeding," he said.

The aim is to secure a gas deal that would allow Ukraine to top up its storage and ensure security of supply for the peak demand winter heating season.

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