

NGOs warn that Albanian families expected to give up their properties to make room for the Adriatic pipeline project, TAP, have not been adequately compensated, while some have faced threats of government expropriation.

Four families in Albania have submitted complaints to the European Investment Bank, EIB, over the low level of compensation they have been offered from TAP representatives for the displacement of their properties as a result of building the pipeline.

"We informed people in Albania about their complaint options and there are several that they can use, the EIB, the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development, TAP itself and the Albanian Ombudsman.

"We think more cases are possible," said Anna Roggenbuck, policy officer with CEE Bankwatch Network, a group of NGOs tracking the social and environmental impacts of the EU's public investments, mainly through the EIB, and the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development, EBRD.

On September 7, on behalf of TAP, the Albanian government set the total compensation package at 2,334,515 euros. This figure includes house and land displacement and also those properties that will be taken into temporary usage for TAP.

The four complaints were filed after two Bankwatch fact-finding missions during summer. The Trans Adriatic Pipeline will transport natural gas from Azerbaijan via Turkey to Greece, Albania and then across the Adriatic Sea to Italy.

Construction of the project, estimated to cost around 5 billion euros, started in 2016. EIB is considering a 2 billion euro loan for the construction of TAP.

The first gas supply via TAP is expected in 2020. In Albania, the pipeline will follow a 200-km route.

TAP's shareholders are major energy companies such as SOCAR, Snam, BP, Fluxys, Enagas and Axpo.

According to Bankwatch Network, the TAP in Albania will impact on around 80 communities whose livelihoods are based on agriculture to a large extent.

"It has a tremendous social impact in Albania. It hasn't consulted well with people. They told them they have to give up their land for the pipeline construction and that they will be compensated. But they didn't tell people they could negotiate over the compensation or simply not agree to it," Roggenbuck said.

Bankwatch believes the pipeline in Albania will do most damage to farmers, and the level of compensation offered for this group was not satisfactory.

It has also noted that people who have opposed the set compensation sums have been

threatened with government expropriation.

“For some of them, the impact is really severe, it means that they will lose the basis for their livelihood ... People need to be compensated for current and future losses,” she said.

“The Albanian government has an agreement with TAP to help them construct the pipeline. Unfortunately, this help has taken the form of expropriation,” Roggenbuck added.

source: balkaninsight.com