

European Commission vice-president Maros Sefcovic, the commissioner for climate action and energy Miguel Arias Canete and the energy ministers from 12 EU and Energy Community countries and contracting parties in Central and Southeastern Europe Gas Connectivity met in Budapest last week.

At a meeting September 9, the Bulgaria-Romania-Hungary-Austria Connecting Europe Facility grant agreement of €179mn was signed, as were statements by governments and transmission system operators from Greece, Bulgaria, Romania and Hungary on cooperation on gas projects along the so-called "Vertical Corridor".

And TSOs from Ukraine, Romania, Bulgaria and Greece signed memoranda of understanding on reverse flows on the Trans-Balkan pipeline which runs from Ukraine to Turkey carrying Russian gas. Ministers also welcomed the imminent completion of the new interconnector between Bulgaria and Romania and the project to reinforce the Bulgarian network preparing it for further interconnections with neighbouring countries.

Looking ahead, the relevant ministers committed to the rapid completion of four further priority projects: the LNG terminal in Croatia and connecting infrastructure towards Hungary, the Greece-Bulgaria interconnector and the Bulgaria-Serbia interconnector. Sefcovic said the meeting was a "milestone in regional cooperation and in advancing our plans for Energy Union. In working together, we can achieve heightened energy security and diversification in a region which has already experienced severe vulnerability to its gas supplies."

Canete said: "I'm glad that our cooperation in the region has produced tangible results: Bulgaria now has access to LNG and Ukraine will soon have it too. But we want to go further including beyond cooperation in the gas sector. This is why we are also extending our cooperation to renewable energy and energy efficiency to help also boost energy security by lowering dependence on external energy suppliers."

The meeting also saw the adoption of an Action Plan on regulatory issues to smooth out the operation of existing and planned infrastructure in the region and to improve market functioning. Moreover, Ministers also decided to move the CESEC's cooperation into new areas aiming to create a regional electricity market as well as boosting renewable energy and energy efficiency in the region. The meeting was convened following the substantial progress achieved in one year of reinforced regional cooperation.

source: naturalgasworld.com