

The European Commission backs the construction of Bulgaria's "Balkan" gas hub, which is projected to extract natural gas from the Black Sea.

This became clear after a meeting between Bulgarian Prime Minister Boyko Borisov and EU Commissioner for Climate Action and Energy Miguel Arias Canete, who is on a two-day visit to Bulgaria on Thursday and Friday.

This represents the first time when such a high-level EU official expresses firm support for the construction of the hub.

Canete said that Bulgaria has the potential to be a key player in Europe's gas network and has the capacity to be leader in the construction of the Balkan gas hub due to its historical capacity and the exceptionally well-built gas transmission network.

According to him, the Bulgarian government has done everything possible for the construction of the gas interconnectors with neighbouring countries.

In his opinion, Bulgaria and the EU have worked tirelessly since last year for the construction of the interconnectors with Serbia, Greece and Turkey, which are key infrastructure projects for Europe and vital for the realisation of the Balkan gas hub.

The commissioner pointed that the gas hub will provide opportunity for different interconnectors, including Russian ones. Borisov also highlighted that the construction of the hub is not directed towards Russia.

Canete added that the Commission and Bulgaria are working together for the construction of the gas interconnectors with Greece and Romania and are seeking funding for the interconnector with Serbia through one of the financial instruments.

He was firm that Brussels will support each infrastructure project which complies with EU legislation.

In his words, the European Commission also appreciates the work done by Bulgarian Deputy Prime Minister Tomislav Donchev and Energy Minister Temenuzhka Petkova.

The commissioner noted that Bulgaria and the EU have managed to start and almost finalise all fourteen projects of common interest related to the energy sector.

Canete identified Bulgaria as leader in the security of supplies and added that the country has the potential to become one of the important gas hubs.

The commissioner described Bulgaria as a reliable partner and commended the country for managing to reduce its harmful emissions, enhance the level of energy security and efficiency and surpass the benchmarks.

In his words, Bulgaria is heading in the direction of full liberalisation of its energy market. Canete added that the EU wants to continue working in close partnership with Bulgaria in order to prevent the repetition of gas crises as the ones which had occurred in 2005 and



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