

At a time when public calls for tackling the causes of the climate crisis are growing, Romania's gas industry has been expanding, courtesy of the Parliament and international financial institutions.

A new report released by the environmental group Bankwatch Romania finds that much of the burgeoning gas development in Romania over the past two years has been enabled by a set of questionable changes in the regulatory framework.

The report shows legislative measures have been time and time again adopted in a non-transparent manner, and without any public participation.

Romania has a clear set of rules for projects considered of national or strategic importance. But, as the report shows, gas projects such as the BRUA pipeline and plans for offshore gas drilling in the Black Sea have taken a different route - a legal bypass, in fact.

Specifically, they have benefited from legal derogations and legislative reinterpretations regarding the protection of the environment, of protected areas, or property rights. In this way, protected natural areas like Danube Delta or the Jiu Valley National Park are made eligible for the construction of gas pipeline and gas treatment stations.

Moreover, the legislation analysed in this report was the one in force until September 1st, 2019. Yet, the law concerning offshore oil operations is again subject to change.

These mega-projects have been enjoying both the government's backing and financial support from the European Investment Bank and the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development.

Yet, while these institutions have policies to uphold, and even promote, certain standards of democracy, the rule of law, transparency and public participation, they appear to have been particularly tolerant to deviations from international law in the cases described in the report.

„The projects and legislative changes analysed in this case study prove that in Romania, climate and environmental policies and objectives mean too little. Facilitating the construction of pipelines and natural gas facilities in the middle of protected natural areas casts a serious doubt over the integrity of the institutions involved and the ability of Romanian authorities to develop the energy sector without further degrading the environment,” said Laura Nazare, campaign coordinator at Bankwatch and author of the report.



Major gas projects in Romania enabled by regulatory acrobatics

Source: bankwatch.org