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Commissioner Piebalgs welcomes the agreement on the construction of the Burgas-Alexandroupolis oil pipeline

Energy Commissioner Andris Piebalgs welcomed today the signature of an agreement between Russia, Greece and Bulgaria on the construction of the Burgas-Alexandroupolis pipeline. This new infrastructure will link the Bulgarian Black Sea port of Burgas with the Greek Mediterranean port of Alexandroupolis. The construction of this pipeline will reduce the increasing pressure of maritime oil transport through the Bosphorus and the Dardanel Straights.

"In the oil sector, increasing international concern is being expressed over the threat of maritime accidents and the ensuing significant environmental damage caused by the resulting oil spills. Given the increasing density of maritime traffic in the enclosed Black Sea and additional quantities of oil exported from the region, it is of utmost importance to give a higher priority to the alternative of transporting oil by pipelines", said the Commissioner.

Burgas-Alexandroupolis oil pipeline was considered by the Commission as a Project of pan-European Interest in the INOGATE program which identifies strategic routes for hydrocarbons¹. The pipeline will have a length of 280 km and a yearly capacity of initially 35 and later 50 million tons of crude oil after its opening in 2009-2010.

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¹ The INOGATE Programme stands for Interstate Oil and Gas Transport to Europe. INOGATE is an international co-operation programme aiming at promoting the regional integration of the pipeline systems and facilitating the transport of oil and gas both within the greater NIS region and towards the export markets of Europe, while at the same time acting as a catalyst for attracting private investors and international financial institutions to these pipeline projects.

The INOGATE Programme is funded mainly under the EU's Tacis Regional Co-operation Programme, which covers primarily the NIS region, and also receives in-kind contributions from participating INOGATE countries. INOGATE is a complementary programme to other EU-funded programmes which support the development of new energy infrastructure projects through the provision of targeted technical assistance.