**"EESC Energy Days" - Amending gas directive raises concerns among stakeholders**

**The second "Energy Day" organised by the EESC in Brussels, on 8 March 2018, looked at the forthcoming changes to the current Gas Directive. In its proposal, the European Commission maintains that gas pipelines from and to third countries should comply with the core principles of existing EU legislation. Some civil society organisations, though, highlight the uncertainty that this new text would bring in legal, commercial and environmental terms.**

In order to increase competition between gas suppliers and guarantee energy security in the Energy Union, the European Commission put forward a proposal to amend the Gas Directive (2009/73/EC) in November 2017. The objective is to make sure that gas pipelines from and to third countries are subject to the common rules of the internal gas market.

Given the EU's increasing dependency on gas imports, the proposed amendments raise a number of political and economic issues, in particular concerning their implications for current and future investment, the regulatory burden for national authorities, and the autonomy of Member States in conducting external energy policy.

"We import 65% of our energy from outside the EU and the dependence of the EU on gas imports is constantly growing," said **Jerzy** **Buzek**, Member of the European Parliament and chair of the European Parliament's Committee on Industry, Research and Energy (ITRE). "It is important that we have stability and continuity of gas supply in the EU. This amendment proposed by the Commission is a revision of a technical nature and limited in scope, and it will be applicable to the EU territory as a whole. It is a precondition for our energy security and independence; it will create a level playing field among all actors involved and facilitate free competition."

However, some concerns were raised by stakeholders in the legal, commercial and environmental sectors. **Ana Stanič**, Director of E&A Law Limited, pointed out that the proposed amendment of the Gas Directive would not resolve the unclear legal state of play but would create further conflict and result in additional uncertainty, as it would be in breach of some provisions of international law.

**Christian Schwarck**, Deputy Director of EU Affairs at the International Association of Oil and Gas Producers, stated that the policy focus should be on developing gas hubs rather than gas infrastructure. According to the producers' representative, gas hubs are much more flexible and resilient and provide a neutral playing field for the markets to operate efficiently, whereas gas storage obligations may distort the market.

Some doubts were also expressed by **Antoine Simon**, advisor at Friends of the Earth Europe, who questioned whether the overall management of EU gas policy was compatible with the goals of the Paris Agreement. The fossil-free campaigner highlighted that gas was not a low-carbon fossil fuel, and therefore that the debate should not be about new pipelines, but about what would be done with our current gas system once the post-fossil fuel era came.

EESC member **Baiba Miltoviča** stressed how important it was to better coordinate the rules in relation to external suppliers and to achieve a single regulatory framework so that energy was supplied according to the same rules everywhere. **Ms Miltoviča** will coordinate all contributions from the event, which will feed into the [EESC opinion](https://www.eesc.europa.eu/en/our-work/opinions-information-reports/opinions/amending-internal-gas-market-directive) on amending the Internal Gas Market Directive, due to be adopted at the April plenary session.