

# Ukraine Expected to Curb Russian Gas Dependency with Europe Deal

By [The Moscow Times](#)

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Gas pipeline operators in Slovakia and Ukraine are expected to sign a deal soon that allows the European Union to ship gas through Slovakia to Ukraine, helping to reduce Kiev's dependence on Russia, the European Commission said.

An agreement could signal a historic partnership between Ukraine and the EU.

"We consider that we are very close to a deal," Commission spokeswoman Marlene Holzner said. "The content of the deal has been agreed, whereby the gas will flow from west to east through Slovakia to Ukraine. It is just a matter of signing, which should be in the next few days."

She said the deal followed more than a year of talks brokered by EU Energy Commissioner Günther Oettinger.

The gas would be shipped by physical reverse flow, through existing, unused pipelines, plus a small section of pipeline to be built next year.

The EU has a keen interest in strengthening ties with Ukraine and pulling the former Soviet republic from Russia's orbit. Ukraine's price disputes with Russia have disrupted gas supplies to both Ukraine and the EU.

The EU has been courting Ukraine with the idea it could become a gas hub, rather than just a transit site that depends on a dominant supplier, Russia.

Since late last year, technology allowing pipeline flows to be reversed has allowed Ukraine to re-import some gas back from EU nations, including Hungary and from Germany via Poland.

Reverse flow through Slovakia is more helpful strategically, because volumes would be higher. But it is also politically sensitive, because of worries about the impact on Slovakia's own supply.

Eurostream, Slovakia's gas pipeline operator, has annual transmission capacity of 90 billion cubic meters, 90 percent of which goes to the EU. The gas is Russian.

A spokesman for Eurostream said late Monday that Eurostream was cooperating with its Ukrainian partners but could not disclose details until a deal was signed.

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