



MEPs debate gas: How to move from crisis to security

The gas dispute between Ukraine and Russia has taken much of Europe's gas supply hostage. While the EU is waiting for supplies to resume, MEPs will debate the lessons from the crisis on Wednesday afternoon from 1630 CET. Russia supplies around 42% of the European Union's imports of gas with 90% of Russian gas passing through Ukraine.

Some countries such as Poland, Slovakia and the Baltic States are entirely dependent on gas from Russia. Due to cuts Bulgaria has had to close schools and other public buildings.

In total 17 European countries have had their gas supplies from Russia either cut or have suffered a fall in supply.

There is some respite in sight however as at the end of last week negotiations between the EU, Russia and Ukraine lead to an agreement finalised this Monday. Under the deal Russia would restart supplies intended for the European Union and other European countries.

Observers from Ukraine, Russia and Europe are to make sure that all the gas reaches its destination.

Energy Committee considering new alternatives

The EP's Industry, Research and Energy Committee is looking at an energy review launched by the European Commission last year.

Liberal French MEP Anne Laperrouze is likely to present her report on the review to her colleagues on the Committee next week.

Among other issues the report is likely to stress the need for Europe to develop alternative pipelines and infrastructure for liquefied gas. The review stresses the need for more energy-efficient buildings and products and a wider range of energy sources.

Backdrop to the gas dispute

On 1 January Russia's gas giant Gazprom stopped supplying Ukraine after weeks of negotiations about prices and conditions for 2009 had failed.

According to Gazprom, Ukraine had received gas at a price of 179.5 USD per 1000 cubic metre in 2008 and rejected the offer to move further to market prices with a new price of 250 USD for 2009. The average market price is currently above 400 USD.

On 7 January gas transits via Ukraine were stopped, with Russian PM Putin saying it was pointless to pump the gas into the pipeline if it was being diverted by Ukraine for its own consumption (for which there was no agreed price).