

ORAL QUESTION WITH DEBATE O-0113/05

pursuant to Rule 108 of the Rules of Procedure

by Bogusław Sonik, Jacek Saryusz-Wolski, Gitte Seeberg, Gunnar Hökmark, Piia-Noora Kauppi, Vytautas Landsbergis, Valdis Dombrovskis, Tunne Kelam, Christopher Beazley, Françoise Grossetête, Richard Seeber, Marie Panayotopoulos-Cassiotou, Eija-Riitta Korhola, Charlotte Cederschiöld, Christofer Fjellner, Anna Ibrisagic, Anders Wijkman, Ville Itälä, Aldis Kušķis, Rihards Pīks, Anna Záborská, Zita Pleštinská, Jerzy Buzek, Zdzisław Chmielewski, Małgorzata Handzlik, Stanisław Jałowiecki, Filip Kaczmarek, Bogdan Klich, Barbara Kudrycka, Zbigniew Kuźmiuk, Janusz Lewandowski, Jan Olbrycht, Paweł Piskorski, Zdzisław Podkański, Jacek Protasiewicz, Czesław Siekierski, Janusz Wojciechowski, Zbigniew Zaleski, Tadeusz Zwiefka, Marek Siwiec, Lidia Geringer de Oedenberg, Andrzej Szejna, Józef Pinior, Genowefa Grabowska, Bogdan Golik, Wiesław Kuc, Dariusz Rosati and Adam Gierek
to the Commission

Subject: Threat to the natural environment and energy safety in connection with the construction of the North European Gas Pipeline, the so-called Baltic Pipeline

In 2000 the North European Gas Pipeline project was granted the status of a trans-European energy network of common interest for the European Union. However, an in-depth analysis of the planned pipeline indicated the existence of significant problems which have not so far been discussed. These include a negative impact on the natural environment of the Baltic Sea basin and a threat to the energy safety of some EU Member States from Central and Eastern Europe. The problems call into question the decision to construct the Baltic Pipeline, and the urgency of having them explained increases with the nearing deadline for the scheduled start of the construction work.

The Baltic is a shallow sea with little water exchange, and consequently considerable potential to accumulate hazardous substances. As a unique and sensitive ecosystem it has been given the status of a Particularly Sensitive Sea Area (PSSA) by the International Maritime Organisation. The Baltic seabed is already littered with thousands of tonnes of metal originating from ships dating back to WW2, as well as chemical weapons. The underwater route is to measure 1189 km. The decision of companies involved in the building process to increase capacity and construct an additional gas pipe heightens the threat of environmental pollution.

One should also consider the fact that the operation of the Baltic pipeline will have a negative impact on the energy safety of eight countries of the European Union from the Baltic States and Central-Eastern Europe. It will not only rob them of the possibility of receiving gas from alternative sources, but it will also reduce the transit significance of the two existing pipelines, i.e. Yamal I and Brotherhood. In addition, the cost of the Baltic Pipeline is at least three times higher than the construction of an alternative pipeline like Yamal II or Amber.

When and how does the Commission plan to deal with the question of the Baltic Pipeline and what steps will be taken concerning the protection of the threatened environment of the Baltic Sea? Moreover, how does the EC intend to prevent discrimination against and the marginalisation of EU Member States from Central and Eastern Europe in relation to the common EU energy policy?

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