

EU-Turkmen Talks to Focus on Energy

The European Union is to hold a high-level meeting with Turkmen officials in Brussels on June 3 and 4. The Turkmen delegation will be led by Foreign Minister Rashid Meredov.

The agenda for the meeting includes plans to diversify export routes for Turkmenistan's natural gas routes, and possible Turkmen involvement in the Nabucco project, which envisages a pipeline running from Turkey to Europe without going through Russia.

Securing supplies of Turkmen gas is seen as key to making the Nabucco project viable, and the EU, which favours this option, will be hoping for positive signals at the talks.

In principle, President Gurbanguly Berdymuhammedov favours having a range of export routes and selling gas to Europe direct rather than through Russia's Gazprom company as intermediary. At the moment, the sole westward routes go through Russia using pipelines owned by Gazprom.

European concerns about the fate of Nabucco will have increased following an EU-sponsored meeting in Prague on May 8, at which Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan and Kazakstan refused to sign a declaration committing them to Nabucco. This option would mean they had to transport gas across the Caspian Sea rather than around it and into Russia.

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