

Kazak Oil High on Wish List for Poles

Author: [News Briefing Central Asia](#)

As Poland shows increasing interest in Kazakstan's oil, there is talk of export pipeline networks that would cut out Russia altogether. However, energy experts interviewed by NBCentralAsia say these plans remain a distant prospect.

On March 7, Polish president Lech Kaczynski and Ukraine's Viktor Yushenko announced an energy summit for May to discuss possible projects that would result in Kazak and Azerbaijani oil reaching European markets without going through Russia. Both Georgia and Ukraine are keen to become transit routes.

Kazakstan is expected to participate in the May talks.

A Polish delegation which visited Astana in late February concluded an agreement to set up a working group that will assess the feasibility of Kazakstan joining a project to build an oil pipeline between Odessa on the Black Sea and Brody near the Polish border, and subsequently to Plock in Poland.

The Polish oil company Polski Koncern Naftowy Orlen (PKN) Orlen is expected to sign an agreement in late March under which it will become involved in extraction in Kazakstan's Caspian fields.

But even though the Poles are actively recruiting Kazak support for their oil schemes, NBCentralAsia experts doubt that they will be able to create alternative routes for importing Kazak oil while bypassing Russia.

"Poland can only get crude oil via Russia, and that won't change in the next few years. It is certainly politically advantageous for [Poland] to have oil purchase deals with Kazakstan as well as Russia, but in technical and physical terms, these deals remain part of 'the Russian project'," said NBCentralAsia economic analyst Petr Svoik.

One of the reasons behind the Polish rush to buy Kazak oil is that the Lithuanian oil refining company Mazeiku Nafta, recently purchased by PKN Orlen, needs more crude.

Kazakstan's national oil and gas company KazMunaiGaz also wanted to buy the Lithuanian firm but lost out to the Poles, and the latest negotiations may offer the Kazaks the edge if they still want a stake in the deal, according to NBCentralAsia political expert Andrei Chebotarev.

"KazMunaiGaz might now suggest that it gets some of PKN Orlen's Lithuanian assets in return for the Polish firm participating in extraction projects in Kazakstan," he said.

(News Briefing Central Asia draws comment and analysis from a broad range of political observers across the region.)

Location: Kazakstan

Focus: News Briefing Central Asia

Source URL: <https://iwpr.net/global-voices/kazak-oil-high-wish-list-poles>