

---

## Nord Stream firms prepare scientific study on Baltic ecosystem

RIA Novosti - 18/9/2008

---

Companies involved in the construction of the Nord Stream undersea pipeline project will submit an assessment of the environmental impact on the Baltic Sea in October, Germany's ex-chancellor said Thursday.

Gerhard Schroeder, who chairs the Nord Stream board, said at a meeting with Russian Prime Minister Vladimir Putin that at a cost of \$143 million the research would be the most in-depth environmental study ever made.

Schroeder, 64, said the study will include not only an assessment of the environmental impact of the Nord Stream natural gas pipeline, but also address concerns regarding World War II munitions dumped on the seabed.

"This means that the Russian, German and Dutch firms involved in the project are concentrating their maximum efforts on resolving the environmental issues," Schroeder said, to which Putin replied: "Excellent."

The Russian premier said protecting the environment was a priority to the successful implementation of the project.

Schroeder, who took up the Gazprom post as Nord Stream chair after leaving office in 2005, said if he had not been certain that "everyone was approaching the issue of protecting the environment extremely sensitively," he would never have taken the job.

"I would like to assure you that all firms participating in the project are fully aware of their responsibilities to preserve the environment," he said.

Russian energy giant Gazprom is building the Nord Stream pipeline, which will pump gas from Siberia to Europe under the Baltic Sea, together with Germany's E.ON and BASF and Dutch gas transportation firm, Gasunie, at an estimated cost of \$12 billion. Gazprom's share in project operator Nord Stream AG is 51%.

German leader Angela Merkel reassured President Dmitry Medvedev in June that Germany would continue to promote Nord Stream, which she called "strategically important" for the whole of Europe.

The first of Nord Stream's two parallel pipelines, approximately 1,200 kilometers (750 miles) long, with a transport capacity of some 27.5 billion cubic meters per year, is to become operational in 2010. In the second phase, capacity should double to about 55 billion cubic meters per year.

Estonia, Poland, Sweden and Finland have expressed concerns over the environmental safety of the project, although many political analysts have suggested that Poland is more concerned with the economic losses that it may incur if it ceases to be a transit country for Russian gas.

Gazprom CEO Alexei Miller said Thursday at the meeting with Putin that supplies of Russian gas via the Nord Stream pipeline would satisfy gas demands of over 25 million households of Europe.

Miller added that the construction would be completed by the end of 2011.

"There are no doubts that the project will be implemented by late 2011," he said.

Putin said Thursday that Russia could consider proposals to increase the number of European partners in the Nord Stream project.

---