



Around Europe

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The Nabucco Gas Pipeline: A chance for the EU to push for change in Turkmenistan

The EU's flagship gas security project the Nabucco pipeline has come a number of stages closer to fruition over the last few months. In July, a landmark agreement was signed between transit countries Austria, Hungary, Romania, Bulgaria and Turkey which settled legal issues, as well as pipeline access and tariff arrangements. With the operating framework established, the key challenge remaining for the EU is securing supply. The consortium of energy companies that propose to construct Nabucco has identified three key target suppliers - Iraq, Azerbaijan and Turkmenistan. Shortly after the intergovernmental agreement on Nabucco was signed, German energy company and Nabucco partner RWE finalised a deal with the Turkmen government to explore for gas in the Caspian Sea. Whatever RWE finds could be destined for Europe via Nabucco.

In the April edition of *Around Europe* I wrote about the EU's courting of Turkmenistan to secure gas supplies. The EU's commitment to the promotion of human rights, democratisation and development sits uncomfortably next to this ambition. Turkmenistan is among the world's most repressive dictatorships, with widespread human rights abuses continuing to be documented by Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch. Freedom House places Turkmenistan in their rogues' gallery of states without social and political freedoms, alongside North Korea and Burma. The dictatorship maintains its power through its control of oil and gas revenues. These revenues are managed in a completely opaque manner, and it is not possible for Turkmen

citizens to monitor exactly how public finances are being spent. It is clear however that money from oil and gas sales help maintain the state security apparatus that is used to repress dissenters and political opponents.



Previous EU attempts to politically and economically isolate the Turkmen government have failed to improve human rights and development conditions in the country. The EU is now committed to engaging more fully with Turkmenistan and the energy relationship is the focus of that engagement. The EU hopes that its leverage will increase once a gas deal is struck with Turkmenistan. Unfortunately, the EU is not planning to address one of the key perpetuating factors behind the continuing tyranny in Turkmenistan: the mismanagement of oil and gas revenue.

“if the EU makes clear that the Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative is important to it, Turkmenistan may listen”

A new QCEA report, 'The Nabucco Gas Pipeline: A chance for the EU to push for change in Turkmenistan' calls on the EU to live up to its values by attempting to engage Turkmenistan in the Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative (EITI), an international scheme which can improve both hydrocarbon revenue transparency standards and the freedoms of repressed civil society groups. The scheme has been implemented in many countries where civil liberties are severely curtailed, and it can provide vital stimulus for change by providing an internationally protected space for civil society groups to come out into the open.

(See page 2)





Why would Turkmenistan agree to take part in EITI? Involvement would be a way of consolidating relations with the West, as regional EITI implementers Azerbaijan and Kazakhstan have done. Turkmenistan is keen to diversify its gas customers to reduce its reliance on Russia, who currently imports most of Turkmenistan's gas. Shoring up the energy relationship with the EU is a significant part of this diversification, so if the EU makes clear that EITI is important to it, Turkmenistan may listen.

In addition, EITI improves the investment climate for foreign energy companies and in turn the ability of the implementing government to strike more lucrative deals. With these benefits in mind, concessions to civil

society and transparency could be an acceptable sacrifice for the Turkmen government.

However, it will take pressure from European civil society to get the EU to promote EITI in its dealings with Turkmenistan. You can help with this effort by asking your MEP to raise the issue with the European Commission. For a model letter to send to your MEP and to access further campaign materials please download the Turkmenistan campaign pack on the QCEA website <http://www.quaker.org/qcea/energysecurity>.

Here you can also read the full QCEA report on Nabucco and Turkmenistan.

Neil Endicott

Influencing the Influential

On 1 December 2009 the eagerly awaited Lisbon Treaty finally entered into force. A cause for joy for many European citizens since the Treaty strengthens the voice of the European Parliament as the body representing them. It is therefore an important step in countering the often evoked democratic deficit of the complex entity which is the EU.

However crucial some view the adoption of the Lisbon Treaty to be, it is certainly not a panacea against the lack of possibilities for ordinary citizens to actively engage in European policy. A pivotal part of shaping policy will continue to be played by another actor who although comparatively new, has proven to be very effective: the lobbying sector.

As the EU has evolved and expanded over the last 50 years, its sphere of influence has increased both geographically and with regards to content and competences. As a result, lobbying has become much more important. The phenomenon picked up a head of steam particularly in the 90s and its influence has been increasing ever since.

Notwithstanding the huge number of very specific topics the EU deals with nowadays, it has comparatively few experts to rely on. National governments have far more personnel for providing decision makers with the necessary expertise. Therefore, lobbying itself certainly does fulfil a function because the need for information on complex issues has to be met somehow.

So what is wrong with lobbying and why should we care about this in the first place?

Lobbying (interest representation) by its very nature runs counter to genuine democracy. The fact that around 90% of experts consulted by the European Parliament, the Council of the EU and the Commission are highly paid industry lobbyists undermines the concept of a well-balanced democratic decision-making structure acting on behalf of citizens.

The EU claims to care about its citizens and their wellbeing but nearly exclusively relies on the expertise given by industry which - generally speaking - can be assumed to be rather less than objective when it comes to topics such as climate change and energy. It is estimated that around 15000 to 20000 lobbyists are currently working in Brussels, most of them employed by multinationals. Naturally they have an interest in blocking or slowing down certain steps such as carbon taxes, as laws adopted in these areas might cost them trillions of Euro. The result: a much-discussed carbon tax which might not be such a bad idea from the perspective of climate change mitigation has constantly been adjourned.

Another example: the funds for the 7th Research Framework Programme provided for research and development in order to guarantee innovation in the EU are mainly spent on Carbon Capture and Storage (CCS) - a very

EUROPE

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Catherine Who?**



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controversial technology allowing for the continuation of emission-intensive energy production rather than fostering an exit-strategy for it. Consequently there is less money left for reducing greenhouse gases in a more effective and above all more sustainable way.

- 15000 - 20000 Lobbyists are estimated to currently work in Brussels to influence EU decision making
- Lobbying has been characterized as the *fifth power* in politics after media
- The phenomenon started in the 70s and has constantly gained ground ever since
- A successful lobbyist can earn up to 350 Euro/hour

As active European citizens, we cannot allow important decisions to fail because of this biased influence on decision makers. If one thing has become clear during the countless meetings on climate change during this year, it is the distressing certainty that the political will of many governments is insufficient. There is a chance that half-hearted attempts to mitigate climate change will result in failure, with all the disastrous consequences for our planet that that brings with it. Therefore we need to keep our voices heard! Only an active civil society can counterbalance the excessive influence industry exerts on our governments.

Sonja Schindelbeck

Active Citizens' Participation in EU Policy-Making - an Imminent Reality?

It is nearly 8 years since the Convention on the Future of Europe posed the question of how to bring the EU closer to its citizens. After one failed attempt at ratifying and implementing a new treaty, and after overcoming many other obstacles, the Lisbon Treaty has now been ratified. Now is the time for the implementation of the new provisions in this new Treaty.

One of the innovations the Treaty brings is the so-called 'citizens' initiative'. This was already incorporated into the erstwhile Constitutional Treaty and has survived, unchanged into the Lisbon Treaty. The relevant Article is Article 11 (4) - Treaty on European Union (Consolidated Version). This says:

'Not less than one million citizens who are nationals of a significant number of Member States may take the initiative of inviting the European Commission, within the framework of its powers, to submit any appropriate proposal on matters where citizens consider that a legal act of the Union is required for the purpose of implementing the Treaties.

The procedures and conditions required for such a citizens' initiative shall be determined in accordance with the first paragraph of Article 24 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union.'

The European Commission, now that the Treaty can be implemented, has to develop procedures and conditions for the implementation of this article and has started the ball rolling by publishing a Green Paper and opening a public consultation. The public consultation is open to all citizens and representative organisations until 31 January 2010.

The questions raised in the green paper are:

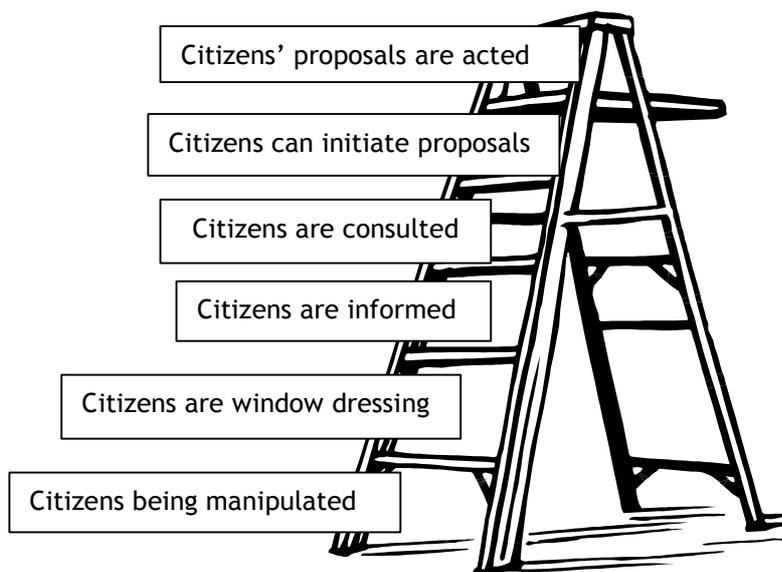
1. How should the term 'significant number of Member States' be defined?
2. Should there be a minimum number of signatures from any one Member State?
3. Should there be a minimum age for participating in a citizens' initiative?
4. Should there be a specified form of wording for a citizens' initiative?
5. How should signatures be collected, verified and authenticated? And should it be possible to sign initiatives on-line?
6. Should there be a time limit for collecting signatures?
7. Should initiatives be registered in some specified way?
8. What level of transparency on the background and funding of organisers of initiatives should there be?
9. Should there be a time limit for the Commission to examine/respond to an initiative?
10. Should there be restrictions on resubmitting initiatives on the same issue?



QCEA has made a submission in response to the consultation and this can be found on our website at www.quaker.org/qcea. Our approach has been:

- The obstacles to participation should be as small as possible in order to ensure that this participatory model can work
- There should be maximum transparency regarding the interests of organisers and funders of initiatives
- The European Commission should have an obligation to respond within a reasonably short time to initiatives
- Administrative arrangements should be as low key as possible and ensure that the logistics of organising such an initiative across potentially 27 Member States with 23 languages between them do not become impossible.

Ladder of Participation



QCEA has also raised the question of how citizens of third countries who are long-term residents of EU Member States should be treated with regard to participation in initiatives and whether there should not be some minimal funding available to ensure that organisers of initiatives can overcome the language issues faced by citizens in the EU who want to communicate effectively with each other and with their decision makers.

The fact that such initiatives are legally possible as a result of the Lisbon Treaty and, if achieved, will put the European Commission under a strong moral obligation to listen to and act on the express wishes of citizens, is an opportunity for active political engagement. It is also a potential for minority issues to take centre stage in an already crowded policy schedule. Whether this will be a force for good or not will depend on the willingness of citizens to engage constructively with the process.

Martina Weitsch

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