

Russia, Finland sign Nord Stream agreement

December 10 2010



Russian Prime Minister Vladimir Putin (R) and his Finland counterpart Mari Kiviniemi attend a news conference in St Petersburg on December 10. Russia vowed Friday to keep Finland fully informed about the environmental impact from the controversial Nord Stream natural gas pipeline to Europe it is currently building under the Baltic Sea.

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Moscow's commitment was spelled out in a memorandum of understanding signed by Russia's natural resources minister and the Finnish environment minister.

"The parties agreed to submit current environmental data obtained from the ecological monitoring programme (that accompanies) the

construction of the Russian and Finnish sectors of the Nord Stream natural gas pipeline," the Russian ministry said in a statement.

The agreement was inked in Saint Petersburg on the sidelines of talks between Russian Prime Minister Vladimir Putin and his Finnish counterpart Mari Kiviniemi.

The data exchange agreement will expire once the section is completed in December 2012, the Russian ministry said.

Nord Stream was granted a permit in February to construct the gas pipeline in Finland's waters. The project already has approval from every other country through which the pipeline will pass.

But the project has sparked heated protests from environmentalists who worry about the impact of both construction and any potential accidents.

Finnish and Estonian environmental groups took their case to Finland's Supreme Administrative Court in October after a lower court refused to hear their complaint.

The 7.4-billion-euro (10.1-billion-dollar) project to build the 1,220-kilometre (760-mile) pipeline to deliver Russian natural gas to Germany is led by Russian state-run energy giant Gazprom in partnership with Germany's E.On Ruhrgas and BASF-Wintershall.

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