

# Preparatory works start on disputed Russian gas pipeline

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Transit of Russian gas through Ukraine has declined since the Nordstream 1 pipeline was opened in 2011

Preparatory work for the construction of a controversial Russian gas pipeline began off the German coast on Tuesday, said a consortium led

by Russia's Gazprom, days ahead of a visit by German chancellor Angela Merkel to Russia.

"Nord Stream 2 AG today started the offshore preparatory works for the subsequent pipelaying in the Bay of Greifswald" on Germany's Baltic Sea coast, the consortium said in a statement.

It said the [work](#) was in line with planning approval granted by German authorities, and that similar offshore work had begun off the coast of Finland where approval has also been granted.

The [pipeline](#), NordStream 2, will follow the track of the existing NordStream 1 pipeline and will double the amount of Russian gas arriving in the European Union's most powerful economy via the Baltic Sea when it is finished in late 2019 to 110 billion cubic metres per year.

The pipeline has proved controversial, in particular in eastern European EU states, who fear it could be used as a tool to boost Russian influence over the bloc.

Moscow notoriously used gas prices to pressure Ukraine during a mounting conflict with its former satellite which saw Russia annex the Crimean peninsula in 2014—prompting EU sanctions in response.

NordStream 2, by increasing Gazprom's capacity to deliver gas directly to Germany, will give Moscow even more ability to route gas exports around Ukraine.

Transit of Russian gas through Ukraine has declined since the first NordStream pipeline opened in 2011.

German Chancellor Angela Merkel unexpectedly threw German support for the pipeline into question last month when she said it could not go

forward unless there were guarantees for Ukraine concerning overland gas [transit](#).

While Gazprom signalled its willingness to maintain transit of gas via Ukraine, it only offered lower volumes, prompting Ukraine to reject the offer.

Merkel is to travel to the southern Russian city of Sochi on Friday to meet with President Vladimir Putin where gas transit is expected to be discussed.

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