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Permit approved for Nord Stream 2 natural gas pipelines between Russia and Germany

The Regional State Administrative Agency for Southern Finland has granted the permit required under the Finnish Water Act for construction of the Nord Stream 2 natural gas pipelines between Russia and Germany within the Finnish Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ). The permit recipient has previously received consent from the Finnish Government for the use of the EEZ.

In the Nord Stream 2 project, two subsea natural gas pipelines are constructed from the Narva Bay in Russia to Lubmin, Germany. The total length of the Baltic Sea pipeline is approximately 1,200 kilometres, with 374 kilometres passing through the Finnish EEZ. The route of the natural gas pipelines will run in proximity to the existing Nord Stream pipelines.

The project consists of laying two subsea natural gas pipelines, as well as their use and maintenance within the Finnish EEZ. The pipes are laid in a predefined, 20-metre wide installation corridor. The area of the installation corridors contains some 87 unexploded wartime munitions, which will be cleared before other work is begun. To reinforce the pipelines, rock banks will be constructed at several sections of the seafloor. Other seafloor structures, such as historical artefacts, cables and pipes, will be protected or circumvented. The planned service life of the natural gas pipelines is 50 years.

Environmental impact aimed to be kept at a minimum

Preparations for the installation of the natural gas pipelines are scheduled to begin in the spring of 2018 and the pipelines are planned to be operational in late 2019. The work will cause effects such as increased water turbidity, noise and pressure. The most significant environmental damage will be caused to local wildlife, such as seals, fish and birds, during the clearing of unexploded munitions. The permit decision places conditions that are aimed at minimising the environmental impact of the project. These include restrictions on the timing of the construction work, as well as requirements for the use of acoustic deterrents and air bubble curtains. An exclusion zone is established around the pipelaying vessel for the duration of the installation work, which will temporarily impede shipping and fishing.

The permit recipient has agreed to reimburse losses incurred by commercial fishers as a result of the installation work. The permit stipulates the payment of an annual fisheries fee of EUR 33,500, which will be used to reduce damage caused to fishing by the construction and use of the natural gas pipelines. The fisheries fee will be reviewed every five years.

As the recipient has received authorisation for preparatory measures, these may begin before the permit decision becomes legally valid. To this effect, the permit recipient is also ordered to pay a

security of EUR 70 million, which will cover compensation for any damage, nuisance and costs that may result from repealing the decision or amending the conditions of the permit.

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