

Romanian state planning to acquire through Romgaz 50 pct stake in Neptun Deep offshore gas project

The Romanian state intends to acquire through the National Natural Gas Corporation Romgaz the 50 percent stake in the Neptun Deep gas block currently held by ExxonMobil, Minister of Economy, Energy and Business Environment Virgil Popescu told AGERPRES on Friday.

In an earlier online broadcast by media platform EM360 Popescu had said that Poland's state-owned oil company PGNiG had given up plans to take over a part of the Neptun Deep deposit, without giving a reason for this decision.

"They didn't announce us, but their partner companies in the project, Petrom and Romgaz. They offered no argument," the Minister said.

Asked what the next steps in this project will be, he said: "We would like to acquire [ExxonMobil's] entire stake of 50 percent, through Romgaz. We also notified our plan to Petrom."

OMV Petrom and ExxonMobil currently hold equal shares in the Black Sea Neptun deepwater exploration project estimated at 42 - 84 billion cubic meters of gas. For comparison, Romania's current gas production is of 10 - 11 billion cubic meters of gas per year.

Last year, Exxon announced its intention to exit Romania, and OMV Petrom representatives too have repeatedly argued that unless the Offshore Law is amended, gas extraction from the Neptun Deep block will become uncertain.

In early October, Secretary of State with the Ministry of Energy Nicolae Havrilet said that the Ministry has worked out a draft amendment to the Offshore Petroleum Exploitation Law, which was agreed upon with Black Sea investors and which will be put up for public debate before the general election, but will be approved by the next Parliament.