

OMV Petrom's Franck Neel: Black Sea could turn Romania into EU's largest gas producer

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We started with the liberalization of the natural gas market as of July 1, 2020. It was a good initiative to get in line with the European Union, and an important step, because there has been much debate about how prepared the market is and for finding solutions for the market to work well, said the Petrom official.

He went on to note that the connection with Bulgaria has also improved and gas is flowing now not just between Bulgaria and Romania, but also between Bulgaria, Romania and Ukraine. A liberalized market requires competition and also interconnections among countries. For Romania, one of Europe's largest gas producers, it is important to ensure the continuity of this industry. We expect that Romania - with the Black Sea - could be the number one gas producer in the EU. Romania would then have an important role to play for the security of supply of the region, not just domestically, Neel explained.

However, the OMV Petrom official said that investors are concerned about some certain legislative delays, the Offshore Law included.

Gas has a role to play in the energy transition and in reaching the Green Deal targets, he said, because the existing storage capacities in Romania and the upstream experience provide the foundation for further development and the creation of jobs in the storage of CO2 needed to produce blue hydrogen.

Black Sea gas is a huge opportunity for Romania and is Romania's top investment priority. If we want to make a speedy recovery from the economic crisis generated by the pandemic, Black Sea gas will help. Gas plays a key role in the energy system. We should set targets for the hydrogen economy in 2030, he added, mentioning that Petrom will also look at the petrochemical market and will act if a new capacity is needed.