

MINISTRY OF TRANSPORT AND COMMUNICATIONS

28 February 2007

1799/08/2006

Uusimaa Regional Environment Centre

Reference: Statement by the Uusimaa Regional Environment Centre
UUS-2006-R-32-53

Matter: Statement by the Ministry of Transport and Communications on the environmental impact assessment of the undersea natural gas pipeline between Russia and Germany in Finland's exclusive economic zone

The Ministry of Transport and Communications has studied the material sent by the Uusimaa Regional Environment Centre concerning the assessment of the environmental impact of the undersea natural gas pipeline between Russia and Germany in Finland's exclusive economic zone. The Ministry of Transport and Communications believes that the prepared assessment conforms to the assessment procedure in accordance with the EIA legislation, and the assessment takes into consideration the project's environmental impacts broadly, and also its wider interactions.

When layed across the Gulf of Finland, the undersea natural gas pipeline will travel inside Finland's exclusive economic zone for a distance of almost 370 kilometres, or about one-third of the total length of the natural gas pipeline. The account of the shipping traffic in the Gulf of Finland and the Baltic Sea in section 4.5 is a good description of the present state of maritime traffic and its development over the next few years. The description of the impacts in section 6.3.4 is also along the right lines, although the risks should be evaluated more precisely, and prepared for, if the natural gas pipeline is constructed. Busy maritime traffic in the Gulf of Finland, especially the intersection of routes between Helsinki and Tallinn (passenger traffic between Helsinki and Tallinn, and freight traffic and oil shipments from harbours in the Gulf of Finland and the Leningrad area) is already fairly high-risk. The risks are being reduced by the mandatory ship reporting system in the Gulf of Finland (GOFREP) maintained through cooperation between the Finnish, Russian and Estonian authorities.

The safety zones set up in association with the construction of the natural gas pipeline should not endanger shipping traffic and increase risk from the present levels. Because the route of the natural gas pipeline in the Gulf of Finland will travel clearly closer to the coast of Finland than the coast of Estonia, and the natural gas pipeline travels in the most vulnerable area of Finland's maritime exclusive economic zone (the coastal archipelago and busy intersecting ship traffic), the risk of possible

accidents in maritime traffic during the construction are probably the greatest in Finland's maritime exclusive economic zone. If and when the construction of the natural gas pipeline starts, special attention should be paid to the safety of maritime traffic and the reduction of the risk of accidents.

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