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Press release

Cooperation for more competition and simple gas transport

Milestone for more competition on the German natural gas market – network operators combine their market areas

Hannover/Leipzig/Kassel/Emden/Kiel, 5 March 2009. As part of a comprehensive cooperation agreement, the trans-regional gas transport companies Gasunie Deutschland, ONTRAS - VNG Gastransport, WINGAS TRANSPORT, StatoilHydro Deutschland and DONG Energy Pipelines wish to lay the groundwork for an open and highly competitive natural gas market in Germany. For German household and industrial customers this means much more competition when it comes to choosing their natural gas supplier in future.

The pipeline operators from Hannover, Leipzig, Kassel, Emden and Kiel today announced that they wish to combine their market areas, which used to be operated separately, by the end of the year. This will create a transport and trading area for natural gas that will bring together more than 300 networks from import points to end customers virtually all over Germany.

“By entering into this cooperation we are making the transport of gas across ownership lines easier in future and are providing crucial impetus for competition on the German natural gas market. In addition, we are allowing our customers non-stop access to international interconnection points on the border to our European neighbours: Poland, the Czech Republic, Denmark, the Netherlands and Belgium“, the cooperation partners said explaining the new cooperation agreement.

Leading companies on the German natural gas transport market, Gasunie Deutschland, ONTRAS, WINGAS TRANSPORT, DONG Energy Pipelines and StatoilHydro Deutschland are taking part in the cooperation, which is also open to further partners. The cooperation partners have already initiated the internal authorisation process and say they are confident that any open questions can be resolved with the Federal Network Agency

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(Bundesnetzagentur) and the Federal Cartel Office (Bundeskartellamt). Then nothing else will stand in the way of the cooperation.

The new transport and trading area generated by this cooperation also helps to enhance supply security in Germany. It lies in the heart of Europe, links up six EU countries and also connects these to the most important natural gas suppliers in Norway and Russia. More than half of the H-gas volumes transported in Germany flows through the networks in the new market area.

For example, any supplier wishing to deliver household customers in the new market area with natural gas simply has to feed this gas into one of the networks or purchase it there. The network operators then make sure that the right quantities of natural gas get to all the end customers. Supplying customers thus becomes much less complicated. "This makes gaining lasting access to the market much easier for new energy providers, especially in the household sector, and it is the consumers who benefit from this in the end", the cooperation partners agreed.

WINGAS TRANSPORT GmbH & Co. KG operates a national gas pipeline network. It offers its customers state-of-the-art, competitive transport services using a high-pressure pipeline network more than 2,000 km long which covers the whole of Germany and includes nine compressor stations. More than 100 other network operators are connected to the WINGAS TRANSPORT pipeline network in Germany. More than 3 billion euros have been invested in this pipeline network overall since 1990. This infrastructure is positioned at the heart of Europe as the interface of European natural gas transportation.

ONTRAS - VNG Gastransport GmbH is a trans-regional gas pipeline operator in the European grid system. ONTRAS operates a high-pressure pipeline network, which is over 7,000 km long and has around 500 interconnection points, and markets its capacities. The pipeline system runs through six federal states in Germany from the Baltic Sea coast to the German-Polish border and from the German-Polish border to the Thuringian Forest. It cooperates with over 130 downstream network operators.

Gasunie Deutschland Transport Services GmbH based in Hannover is responsible for the management, operation and development of a long-distance pipeline grid in North Germany, which is about 3,100 kilometers long. Because of its geographical position, the Gasunie pipeline network in the Netherlands and in Germany, which is more than 15,000 kilometers long in total, acts as the 'gas roundabout' of northwest Europe. Gasunie Deutschland is a subsidiary of N.V. Nederlandse Gasunie.

DONG Energy Pipelines GmbH based in Kiel is a German subsidiary of the Danish energy company DONG Energy A/S, one of the leading energy providers in northern Europe. As a trans-regional gas pipeline network operator, DONG Energy Pipelines offers its customers gas transport capacities from Ellund on the Danish-German border through its high-pressure gas pipeline network.

StatoilHydro Deutschland GmbH based in Emden is a 100% subsidiary of the Norwegian energy provider StatoilHydro ASA. With 30,000 employees and branches in over 40 countries, StatoilHydro is one of the biggest crude oil exporters in the world and one of the most prominent natural gas producers on the European gas market. Network operator StatoilHydro Deutschland GmbH provides its customers with capacities for transporting natural gas. Its transport network is 341 kilometers long and runs from Dornum via Etzel to Steinitz in Saxony Anhalt.