

## **PRESS RELEASE**

### **World's Largest Pipelay Vessel Enters the Baltic Sea to Lay Key Part of Nord Stream Pipeline**

- **Allseas' Solitaire passes under the Storebælt Bridge en route to laying pipe in Russian and Finnish waters**
- **Dynamically-positioned pipelay vessel will operate without anchors in the congested Gulf of Finland**

**Zug, 22 August 2010.** Allseas' Solitaire, the world's largest pipelay vessel, has passed under Storebælt Bridge, the Great Belt Bridge, on its way to construct a key section of the 1,224 kilometre Nord Stream natural gas pipeline in the Baltic Sea.

The Solitaire is en route for Russian waters, where it will start constructing the 342.5 kilometre section of the pipeline from kilometre point (KP) 7.5 in Russian waters to KP 350 in the Finnish Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ). This part of the Baltic Sea presents particular environmental challenges, as it is congested and has many historic mine lines. The Solitaire is ideal for laying pipe in this environment, as it uses full dynamic positioning, dispensing with anchors, thus only touching the seabed with the pipeline.

The Solitaire is equipped with ten thrusters with an integrated propulsion power of 50,000 kW to counteract waves, currents and winds for precise manoeuvring and to maintain the vessel's position. These thrusters keep the pipelay vessel automatically in place. They are steered by a computer system that constantly monitors the actual position of the vessel in comparison to its target position (in this case the agreed pipeline route). Should there be any deviation, the thrusters instantly propel it back into the target position, so that the vessel is always operating along the precise agreed route.

At 300 metres long (excluding stinger) by 40.6 metres wide the Swiss-based Allseas Group's Solitaire is the length of three football pitches. It has a massive 22,000 tonne pipe-carrying capacity and work stations on several levels to enable it to receive and store the 12 metre long 23-tonne pipes, weld them together, test the welds, join the pipes to the pipeline, and lay it on the seabed along the agreed route at a rate of about 2.5 kilometres a day. The vessel accommodates 420 people and is equipped to lay pipe 24 hours a day 7 days a week.

Denmark's Storebælt Bridge, the Great Belt Bridge, is one of Europe's greatest bridges. It is the gateway to the Baltic Sea and is almost seven kilometres long. With a vertical clearance of 65 metres, the bridge allows

even the world's largest cruise ship to pass under it. No special precautions are needed to allow the Solitaire to pass.

The sections in Russian and Finnish waters adjoining the 342.5 kilometres of pipeline to be laid by Solitaire are being constructed by Saipem's Castoro Sei pipelay vessel, including the section at the Russian landfall in Portovaya Bay, Vyborg. A third pipelay vessel, Saipem's flat-bottomed Castoro Dieci, is responsible for constructing the pipeline in the shallow waters at and near the German landfall at Lubmin, near Greifswald.

When completed in 2012, the Nord Stream Pipeline will be 1,224 kilometres long and comprise 202,000 concrete weight coated steel pipes. The pipeline will transport 55 billion cubic metres (bcm) of natural gas a year to Europe.

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**Notes to editors**

**Nord Stream** is a natural gas pipeline that will link Russia and the European Union through the Baltic Sea. The European Union's annual natural gas imports in the year 2007 were approximately 312 billion cubic metres (bcm) and are projected to increase to 516 bcm by the year 2030. This means that by 2030, the EU's annual import needs will have increased by about 200 bcm (Source: IEA, World Energy Outlook, 2009). Nord Stream will meet about 25 percent of this additional gas import requirement by connecting the European gas pipeline network to some of the world's largest gas reserves. The project will be an important contribution to long-term security of supply and a milestone of the energy partnership between the European Union and Russia.

Nord Stream AG plans to have the first of two parallel pipelines operational in 2011. Each line is approximately 1,220 kilometres long, providing a transport capacity of some 27.5 bcm per year. Full capacity of about 55 bcm per year will be reached when the second line goes on stream. This is enough gas to supply more than 26 million European households.

**Nord Stream AG** is an international joint venture established for the planning, construction and subsequent operation of the new offshore gas pipeline through the Baltic Sea. Russian OAO Gazprom holds a 51 percent stake in the joint venture. The German companies BASF SE/Wintershall Holding GmbH and E.ON Ruhrgas AG hold 15.5 percent each, and the Dutch gas infrastructure company N.V. Nederlandse Gasunie and the French energy company GDF Suez S.A. each hold a 9 percent stake.

**Nord Stream is included in the Trans-European Energy Network Guidelines (TEN-E) of the European Union.** In 2006, the project was designated a "project of European interest" by the European Commission, the European Parliament and the Council of the European Union. Nord Stream is, therefore, recognized as a key project for meeting Europe's energy infrastructure needs.

**Construction of the Nord Stream Pipeline** started in April 2010, after completion of environmental studies and planning and an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) along the entire pipeline route. Three pipelay barges have been commissioned to work on the project: Saipem's Castoro Sei is carrying out the majority of the construction in the Baltic Sea. The Castoro Dieci is operating in German waters. Allseas' Solitaire will handle construction in the Gulf of Finland. The first pipeline is scheduled to be operational in 2011, the second one in 2012.