

## THE IMPORTANCE OF TRANSIT COUNTRIES IN ENSURING EU ENERGY SECURITY: THE CASE OF BALKAN REGION

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### ABSTRACT

European Union is characterized by a high level of energy dependency from Russia. In order to minimize dependence on Russia, the EU should strengthen its ties with other energy sources, where the Caspian region can play a key role. Access to new sources does not imply that the EU can meet its demands, because Russia will remain an important source of energy, but on the contrary, by diversifying the EU will be more 'immune' to pressure from Russia. Regarding the diversification of EU energy sources, the energy projects of transit countries play a very important role. The Balkan region, due to its geo-strategic position, can play a vital role in this matter. Security and stability is directly related to ensuring EU energy security. The case of Ukraine clearly shows the importance of transit countries in having energy security; therefore the EU should pay special attention to the potential and the importance of the Balkan region. The implications of the Trans Adriatic Pipeline project (TAP) will be analyzed as an integral part of the Balkans role in this regard. The data used in the context of this paper refers mainly to data International Energy Agency (IEA), British Petroleum (BP), European Commission (EC) and the TAP project.

**Keywords:** Energy security, European Union, Balkan region, TAP.