

THE REASON WHY WE SAY “NO” TO THE HUGE PIPELINE BRINDISI-MINERBIO

The 687 kilometres long pipeline Brindisi - Minerbio (Bologna) with a gas compressor plant located in Sulmona is a project planned by Snam-ENI in 2004 that has the general purpose to guarantee the transport capacity requested by the Pipeline in Brindisi that should be built by the British Gas.

The pipe is 1200 millimetres wide it is laid at 5 meters below the ground level with a 40 meters wide right of way. The promoters say that it is a strategic project: who is it strategic for ? For Italy or for Snam's and partners' benefits ?

Snam gets rid of the “zero option” (i.e. not building the pipeline at all) beforehand but it does not give any evidence of the fact that our Country actually needs more gas supplies. While facts say the opposite.

At the moment the need of gas in Italy is about 85 billions of squared meters a year while the existing gas transport infrastructures have a much larger capacity: 107 billions a year. They estimate that in 10 years' time the gas requirements might be 110 billions but if we add the planned pipelines and gasifiers to the existing infrastructures by 2020 we will reach a supply of at least 230 billions squared meters a year which is more than twice the expected Italian gas consumption.

What is all this gas supposed to be for then ?

One of the main aims of the Company is to strengthen its role of hub (i.e. a gas retail store for a third party in particular countries in Central Europe).

But in order to become an actual gas hub in Europe it is necessary to boost the gas transport capacity along the Italian backbones.

That is what the large Brindisi-Minerbio pipeline is for.

More flexibility and more supplies for the regional and municipal networks? Forget that!

The duplicating of the existing pipelines as Snam said allows to limit the land consumption and to use the already established servitudes.

But quite amazingly once it got to the Biccari area (Foggia) the pipeline was diverted towards the inland along the Apennines dorsal producing some supposed but not actually proved environmental geological and urban criticalities that would have prevented the building of the pipeline along the Adriatic coast.

As a matter of fact it is just diverting the pipeline route towards the Apennines dorsal that this project clashes with some criticalities that do not exist along the coast or that are much fewer there if compared to the inland area.

The glaring aspect is the one about the seismic risk.

It is Snam itself that calls the Sulmona-Foligno pipeline one of the most critical section of the whole project.

The pipeline route winds along the inland tectonic depressions in the Central Apennines which have been affected by a high seismic rate since ancient times. A kind of seismicity that has proved to be of high magnitude.

The towns and villages that should be run through by the pipeline are exactly the ones that were more struck by the disastrous earthquake on April 6th 2009.

Another relevant criticality of the project is the one about the environmental impact. Paradoxically the project route seems to follow the same route of the A.P.E. (Apennine Europe's Park) which is considered the most important Italian project aiming at preserving Nature.

Both the pipeline and the gas compressor plant (which is going to be built in Sulmona Case Pente) interfere with an area where there are three National Parks (Majella Gran Sasso Laga and Sibillini Parks) a Regional Park (Sirente – Velino Park) and dozens of areas belonging to Natura 2000 Project (S.I.C. ZPS and Natural Oasis).

Finally we can't forget all those problems linked to the negative effects on the local economy: high quality agriculture (some areas in Umbria and above all in Le Marche where the white truffle is grown the red garlic from Sulmona orchards olive groves etc.) and the damage to tourism.

Citizens' spontaneous committees are strongly opposing all that in particular the "No Pipe" Committees in Le Marche and in Umbria the citizens' environmentalist committees from Sulmona Public Associations and Administrations who have officially stated they are against the project.

In September 2010 an Inter-regional Committee Against the Pipeline was funded. The Committee's leader is L'Aquila Town Council whose province is affected by the pipeline for 103 kilometers.

Together with its suburbs and all the towns and villages of the crater who are facing a difficult reconstruction L'Aquila can't see in Snam's stubborn will to build the project along the Apennine dorsal at any cost the application of the principle of precaution which is the only instrument to use in order to protect the safety of those people who live in an area which is already at high risk.