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Press release | 21.02.2013

Offshore oil and gas rules

Legislative deal a missed opportunity to address risks and liability of offshore drilling

A deal on draft EU rules on offshore oil and gas exploration was reached today in negotiations between the European Parliament, Council and Commission (1). The Greens expressed regret about the outcome, which will fail to provide for ambitious safety supervision and falls short in terms of provisions on liability in the case of accidents, and urged MEPs not to endorse the deal. Commenting on the outcome, Green MEP **Eva Lichtenberger** (Austria) said:

"Today's outcome would represent a missed opportunity for equipping the EU with robust rules to deal with the risks of offshore drilling. The legislation, as agreed today, would fail to deliver on the original promise by EU energy commissioner Oettinger to provide regulation aimed at ensuring an accident like the Deepwater Horizon disaster can never happen in Europe. We hope the EP, as a whole, will see through this deal and seek changes to ensure tougher rules.

"The draft legislation agreed today fails to address the current gaps in EU rules on offshore exploration, notably as regards liability for accidents and independent safety assessments of installations. It also fails to call for a moratorium on drilling in sensitive or extreme environments (like the Arctic).

"The absence of an oversight structure would be a serious shortcoming in terms of ensuring offshore exploration safety and we would urge MEPs not to endorse a deal on these terms. The European Maritime Safety Agency will be given no oversight competence and its role will be primarily limited to post-accident situations.

"Today's deal would also fail to ensure that offshore operators are fully liable and financially responsible for any damages resulting from accidents. Crucially, there are no provisions for a financial security mechanism, to which operators would be required to contribute, and which would be used to cover damages in the case of an accident."

(1) The legislative agreement must now be confirmed by EU governments (with a decision expected at tomorrow's council of EU energy ministers) and the European Parliament as a whole (with a vote foreseen for its April plenary session).

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