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Shale gas

Key step for regulating shale gas, as MEPs endorse compulsory environmental impact assessments

The European Parliament today voted to revise EU legislation on environmental impact assessments (EIAs). The Greens strongly welcomed provisions to make EIAs compulsory for non-conventional fossil fuel projects, notably shale gas extraction and exploration involving fracking. Commenting on the vote, Green environment spokesperson **Sandrine Bélier** said:

"MEPs have today voted to ensure that all shale gas extraction projects and shale gas exploration involving the controversial fracking process are subject to compulsory environmental impact assessments. While this would not prevent permits from being granted, it would ensure a basic standard of assessment and public participation. This will help prevent risky shale gas projects being bulldozed through in spite of environmental concerns and public will.

"While the Greens believe there is already sufficient evidence to ban this risky technology, particularly in sensitive areas, there is a need to ensure that environmental and liability rules are applied and vigorously enforced at the very least. Today's vote is a first step in this direction. EU liability rules must also be revised to ensure that those involved in shale gas exploration and extraction are fully liable for all damages and provide financial guarantees to cover the potential risks.

"The growing body of evidence about the environmental and health risks associated with shale gas extraction, notably through fracking, cannot be ignored. The potentially disastrous impact of the use of toxic chemicals in the fracking process, particularly on the water table, has been well documented, with even the Commission raising doubts about fracking. This is not to mention the negative climate impact resulting from the intensive extraction process entailing significant fugitive emissions of methane and subsequent combustion of this fossil fuel."

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