Press release | 12.03.2014

Shale gas

New rules fail to ensure environmental impact assessments for shale gas

The European Parliament today voted to confirm a legislative agreement revising EU rules on environmental impact assessments (EIAs). The Greens voted against closing the legislative review in first reading, as the agreement with the Council would fail to make EIAs compulsory for shale gas extraction and exploration involving fracking. Commenting after the vote, Green environment spokesperson **Sandrine Bélier** said:

"The failure to ensure that shale gas extraction projects and shale gas exploration involving the environmentally destructive fracking process are subject to compulsory environmental impact assessments is a major setback. The lack of an obligation for a basic standard of assessment and public participation, as provided for by EIAs, could lead to risky shale gas projects being bulldozed through in spite of environmental concerns and public will. With the EU Commission having decided not to propose any EU-level regulation of shale gas, this legislation compounds the blow to EU citizens and the environment.

"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 and release 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. The Greens believe there is already sufficient evidence to ban fracking but ensuring informed permit decisions through the environmental impact assessment procedure must be the absolute minimum. Despite some improvements over current rules, the failure of this revised legislation to make EIAs mandatory for shale gas projects leave the Greens with no choice but to vote against."

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