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Press release | 21.11.2012

Shale gas and fracking

MEPs highlight concerns, urging tough regulation

The European Parliament today adopted a report setting out its opinion on shale gas, notably as regards the health and environment concerns and need for EU regulation (1). The Greens welcomed the Sonik report, which calls for caution, notably a ban in sensitive areas, and underlined the need for tougher regulation and proper application of existing EU rules. Commenting after the vote, Green environment and health spokesperson **Carl Schlyter** (MEP, Sweden) stated:

"The EP has today underlined growing public concerns with shale gas and the damaging methods for its extraction and urged caution to be exercised while the health and environmental impacts of shale gas are assessed. This implies that member states should think twice before allowing any projects of this controversial technology to go ahead.

"While the Greens believe there is already sufficient evidence to ban this risky technology, existing EU legislation must clearly be vigorously enforced at the very least. MEPs have today highlighted this, as well as calling for EU liability rules to be revised to ensure that those involved in shale gas extraction are fully liable for all damages and are required to provide financial guarantees to cover the potential risks. Crucially, MEPs also explicitly called for a ban in sensitive areas.

"The growing body of evidence about the environmental and health risks associated with shale gas extraction, notably through fracking, cannot be ignored (2). The potentially disastrous impact of the use of toxic chemicals in the fracking process has been well documented, particularly on the water table. The European Commission itself has raised doubts over the compatibility of fracking with EU legislation on water quality (the Water Framework Directive) (3). There are also doubts as to whether some of the substances used in the fracking process are compatible with EU chemicals rules. This is not to mention the negative climate impact resulting from the intensive extraction process and subsequent combustion of this fossil fuel."

(1) The EP adopted the Sonik report on the environmental impacts of shale gas and oil extraction activities, which the Greens/EFA group voted in favour of. A separate report on the shale gas industry was also voted on, which the Greens/EFA group voted against.

(2) See new campaign material from the Greens on shale gas:
http://www.stopclimatechange.net/index.php?id=shalegas

(3) http://ec.europa.eu/environment/integration/energy/unconventional_en.htm

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