Press release | 22.01.2014

Shale gas and fracking

Cop out as EU Commission bows to fossil fuel lobby and its political cheerleaders

The European Commission today presented proposals for mere recommendations on the exploitation of unconventional fossil fuels, notably shale gas. The Greens condemned the failure to propose binding measures to address shale gas and minimise the associated risks. Commenting on the proposals, Green environment and public health spokesperson **Carl Schlyter** stated:

"These proposals represent a cop-out by the European Commission. Instead of seeking to address the very real environmental and public health concerns with shale gas and the controversial fracking process, Commission president Barroso has bowed to the pressure of the fossil fuel lobby and its political cheerleaders like David Cameron.

"Serious proposals on shale gas and fracking would have to include binding measures. This includes compulsory environmental impact assessments (including for exploration), clear separation distances and bans in environmentally-sensitive areas. In failing to regulate, the Commission is essentially promoting new, high-risk fossil fuel extraction in Europe. This is a blow for European citizens and the environment. Pushing ahead with shale gas extraction is a waste of effort and capital at a time when we need to be looking for ways to use less, not more fossil fuels."

Green environment spokesperson **Sandrine Bélier** added:

"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 recognising the multiple risks associated with fracking. This is not to mention the lack of added-value and 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 this risky technology. Member States should suspend ongoing activities, abrogate permits, and place bans on new projects, whether exploration or exploitation. Europe should develop genuine solutions like renewable energy and energy savings rather than going down the risky and wasteful shale gas path."

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