



EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

Parlaimint na hEorpa

MEMBER OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

Mr. Janez Potočnik
Commissioner for Environment,
The European Commission,
Berlaymont Building,
200 Rue de la Loi,
Brussels 1000.

04 October 2011

Re: Impacts of shale gas and shale oil extraction on the environment and on human health

Dear Commissioner,

I am writing to you with regard to the extraction of trapped gas in formations of shale through the mining process known as hydraulic fracturing.

I understand that the Irish Government are currently considering the issuing of licences to extract shale gas from the Lough Allen Basin, which is located in the North West of Ireland.

I am deeply concerned with this development due to the harmful ecological and environmental consequences caused by hydraulic fracturing.

The Lough Allen Basin is one of Ireland's most sensitive areas with many pristine lakes and waterways located in the region.

In June 2011, the European Parliament published a study on the impacts of shale gas and shale oil extraction on the environment and on human health.¹

The recommendations contained in the study state that "a number of gaps" currently exist in the regulatory framework on hydraulic fracturing.

The study concludes that the threshold for an Environment Impact Assessment (EIA) on hydraulic fracturing is set to high. I understand from your answer to a written parliamentary question² that an EIA is required if a project exceeds 500,000 m³ of extracted gas per day.

Can you confirm whether this threshold is to be reviewed considering the substantial evidence, which considers this method of gas extraction to be unproven and may leave a lasting negative impact in an area after the mining process is completed?

¹ Impacts of shale gas and shale oil extraction on the environment and on human health, The European Parliament, Policy Department A, Environment, Public Health and Food Safety, June 2011

² E-006090/2011

PAT THE COPE GALLAGHER M.E.P

Dungloe, Co Donegal Tel: 074 95 21276 Fax: 074 95 21133

www.patthecope.com email: patthecope.gallagher@europarl.europa.eu

The study also recommends that the Water Framework Directive should be re-examined due to the impact of fracturing on surface water. The chemicals used in the mining process and the contaminants released by the fracturing have the potential to pollute water supplies.

These so-called flow-back fluids contain hazardous substances when released could damage groundwater resulting in severe damage to drinking water, surface waters and wetland habitats. Can you confirm whether you intend to review the Water Framework Directive to cover the process of hydraulic fracturing?

The study also calls for the European Institutions to assess whether the use of toxic chemicals for injection should be banned in general. Can the European Commission confirm whether it intends to investigate this possibility?

In conclusion the study calls on a new directive at EU level to comprehensively regulate hydraulic fracturing due to the risks to the environment and to human health.

I strongly believe that European Commission should announce a moratorium on all hydraulic fracturing in the European Union until (a) an in depth investigation is carried out into the impacts of hydraulic fracturing on the environment and human health and (b) until a proper regulation is developed to protect citizens and sensitive areas such as the Lough Allen Basin in Ireland.

I look forward to hearing from you soon in relation to this important matter.

Yours sincerely,



Pat the Cope Gallagher MEP

Cc. Günther Oettinger, Commissioner for Energy

Cc. Pat Rabbitte, T.D, Minister for Communications, Energy & Natural Resources of Ireland