

## **EU civil society voice opposition to European Commission green light for fracking**

**Some 300 civil society groups from across Europe have addressed their concerns over proposals by the European Commission to issue non-binding guidance for the shale gas industry this week.**

In an [open letter](#) addressed to EU institutions, some 300 diverse groups from across Europe criticise the Commission's proposals to issue non-binding guidance for the industry, which pave the way for shale gas exploration. The EU executive body will announce its plans this Wednesday, as part of its 2030 Climate and Energy Package. Pressure from the fossil fuel lobby, as well as from Member States, with the [UK playing a leading role](#), has resulted in the Commission making a [U-turn](#) from its previous course to deliver binding legislative proposals, initially favoured by Environment Commissioner Janez Potočnik in October.

As new drilling sites appear across Europe, from Barton Moss in the UK to Pungești in Romania, groups point to how the current legal situation in the EU does not even guarantee mandatory Environmental Impact Assessments. Lobbying from Member States during recent negotiations on the review of the EIA Directive have resulted in the exemption of an amendment which would have required mandatory EIAs for shale gas projects. With no specific regulations in most Member States and plans for EU-wide legislation now scuppered, communities are at the mercy of an unregulated industry which has left a frightening toll of [destruction](#) in its wake in the US.

The Commission's move also flies in the face of EU public opinion. The [results](#) of a consultation it carried out last year reveal that two-thirds of EU citizens believe the shale gas industry should not be developed in Europe at all. When asked which policy option respondents would like it to pursue most, citizens chose the development of a comprehensive and specific EU piece of legislation, while industry opted for guidance.

Legislators seem intent to turn a blind eye to the dangerous realities of the industry despite its own recommendations. A [study](#) published by the Commission in September 2012 identified significant gaps in at least eight key environmental directives. The same study confirmed the high risk nature of shale gas activities. A growing body of [peer-reviewed scientific evidence](#) highlighting the threats to air, water and human health continues to emerge, along with an ever expanding list of global bans and moratoria, with Dallas, Texas the latest US community to outlaw the industry.

With failure from Brussels to provide protection to citizens, Leitrim County Council voted [last week](#) to insert a ban in its County Development Plan, lending a huge boost to plans for a nationwide ban.

To coincide with the Commission's announcement this Wednesday, citizen groups will also be staging demonstrations in protest.