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ENV.F.1 - Resource Efficiency & Economic Analysis

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Mr Andy Gheorghiu  
Resolution Korbach

**Subject: Reply to the letter sent to President Barroso concerning hydraulic fracturing**

Dear Mr Gheorghiu,

Thank you for your electronic submission of 5 January 2014 to President Barroso, in which you propose a mandatory environmental impact assessment for hydrocarbon activities using hydraulic fracturing and to establish areas that are excluded from hydraulic fracturing. Your inquiry has been referred to me for reply.

In its meeting of 22 January 2014, the Commission adopted a Recommendation to Member States aiming to ensure that proper environmental and climate safeguards are in place for the high-volume hydraulic fracturing technique used in shale gas operations. This Recommendation sets minimum core principles for the exploration and production of hydrocarbons using high-volume hydraulic fracturing. The Recommendation is intended to complement EU existing legislation, covering issues such as strategic environmental assessments and planning, underground risk assessment, well integrity, baseline reporting and operational monitoring, capture of methane emissions, and disclosure of chemicals used in each well. In particular, the Recommendation encourages Member States to carry out an environmental impact assessment and to provide clear rules on possible restrictions of activities, for example in protected, flood-prone or seismic-prone areas, and on minimum distances between authorised operations and residential and water-protection areas.

The Commission opted for a Recommendation because it was requested to act urgently. A Recommendation to Member States has the advantage of being applied faster, while providing a reference for action at national level. The Commission will closely monitor the application of the recommendation, comparing the situation in different Member States on a publicly available scoreboard.

The Commission will review the Recommendation's effectiveness 18 months after its publication and will decide whether it is necessary to put forward legislative proposals with legally-binding provisions on the exploration and production of hydrocarbons using high volume hydraulic fracturing.

Yours sincerely,

Carina VOPEL