

**Question for written answer E-002027/2019
to the Commission**
Rule 130
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Subject: Research into hydrocarbon extraction in the Ionian Sea

In 2018, the Greek Government issued a law granting the right to carry out hydrocarbon exploration and exploitation work in the Ionian Sea.

Given that:

- the two contractors – France’s ‘Total’ and Spain’s ‘Repsol’ – have announced that geophysical seismic surveys will be carried out over a total area of around 17 000 square kilometres and a ministerial decision has exempted the two contractors from the obligation to carry out an Environmental Impact Assessment;
- locals and companies operating in the Ionian islands have reacted strongly to the start of the works, as important marine and coastal ecosystems, as well as protected species, are under immediate threat, not to mention the serious concerns expressed in relation to the seismic vulnerability of the area, which make mining particularly dangerous;
- the primary sector of the economy and tourism are the main source of income for local residents;

can the Commission say:

1. Does the exploration for and extraction of hydrocarbons take into account the above and, if so, how will protected marine ecosystems be affected?
2. Does the Aarhus Convention apply to this exploration work? If so, what rights do citizens have to information and participation?
3. Can the above-mentioned activities be exempted from the obligation to carry out an Environmental Impact Assessment?