

**Question for written answer E-004277/2011
to the Commission**

Rule 117

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Subject: Shale gas and oil exploration

The Commission seems to view shale gas and oil as a solution to energy security problems and dwindling fossil fuel reserves.

Although shale gas and oil exploration is increasing in the United States, reports by scientists and the US Environmental Protection Agency on the environmental and health impact of this method of gas extraction are particularly worrying.

This method of extraction, called hydraulic fracturing, involves vertical drilling and horizontal propulsion of water, sand and toxic chemical products (the use of over 600 of which has been recorded) into the rock at extremely high pressure in order to fracture it and release the oil and gas within.

The environmental damage is immeasurable and lasting: groundwater pollution, severe air pollution, irreversible damage to the landscape and abnormal and increasingly frequent seismic activity in the vicinity of gas wells.

From a health point of view, the situation is equally worrying. Most of the products used in the fracturing process are classified as carcinogenic, toxic to reproduction or allergenic. Their use has led to an upsurge in certain diseases in areas surrounding extraction sites (liver and respiratory problems, cancers and skin conditions).

Despite widespread protests by concerned members of the public and the environmental and health dangers, the Commission surprisingly shows no sign of respecting the precautionary principle and declaring a Europe-wide moratorium.

Why has the Commission failed to take climate change issues and its aim of reducing greenhouse gas emissions into account in the context of the debate on shale gas?

Finally, why does the Commission insist on playing down the health and environmental risks of hydraulic fracturing and rejecting the idea of carrying out an impact assessment?