

**Question for written answer E-000898/2012
to the Commission**

Rule 117

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Subject: Oil drilling near the Apulian coastline in the area between Monopoli and Ostuni

On 20 November 2011, the company Northern Petroleum started seismic prospecting work in order to locate oil fields a few miles off the Apulian coastline, in the area between the municipalities of Monopoli and Ostuni, in Italy. The air-gun methodology used for prospecting consists in violent compressed-air bursts that damage fish and the entire marine ecosystem.

A flourishing tourism sector has developed in the region in question, with thousands of hotels, farmsteads, holiday complexes and bed and breakfasts. This key productive sector is likely to be permanently damaged by oil drilling sites that would transform the sea from a tourist resource to an industrial area. This area is also home to one of Italy's largest fishing fleets, and fishing, which is already going through a severe crisis, is also likely to be severely impacted.

Local authorities (in municipalities, provinces and regions) have taken several formal, administrative and legislative measures expressing their strong opposition to the establishment of oil drilling sites in the Adriatic Sea. This stance is further strengthened by a groundswell of opinion that culminated in a demonstration in Monopoli on 21 January 2012, in which thousands of members of the public, hundreds of associations – including the WWF and Legambiente – and all of the region's institutions took part.

In light of the clear opposition to oil drilling by the region's institutions and its population, can the Commission state:

1. What action it will take in light of Parliament's report No 2011/2072 (adopted), taking into account the importance of tourism in the region concerned and its fishing industry?
2. If it intends to check whether the prospecting and any subsequent drilling that may have started a few miles off the Apulian coastline comply with current EU legislation, i.e. with Council Directive 92/43/EEC establishing the Natura 2000 network with the aim of conserving natural habitats and wild flora and fauna (Habitat Directive) and with Directive 2008/56/EC establishing a framework for community action in the field of marine environmental policy (Marine Strategy Framework Directive, the main measure for marine biodiversity conservation in Europe)?
3. Whether issues linked to oil prospection and drilling, as well as the relevant legislation, need urgently to be reviewed in order to introduce a specific ban on offshore prospecting and drilling where the affected region's economy is based on activities strongly linked to the sea, such as tourism and fishing?