Subject: Definition of acidisation

Acidisation is a ‘stimulation technique’ used to release oil and gas from unyielding rock. Fracking fluid typically consists of water mixed with 0.5 % chemicals. Acidising fluids can contain up to 18 % chemicals.

In its recommendation of 22 January 2014, the Commission based its definition of hydraulic fracturing only on the volume of water injected¹. Acidisation requires a lower volume of water. In its report of 15 December 2016, the Commission admitted that low-volume operations do not fall under the scope of the recommendation in most cases².

Acidisation entails many of the same risks as hydraulic fracturing, especially its cumulative impact across multiple sites, toxic liquid waste, potential spills, leaking wells, water and air pollution, and stress on communities.

Since 2014, permit applications for acidisation operations have significantly increased, introducing a complicated array of terms (such as ‘acid wash’, ‘acid stimulation’ and ‘matrix acidisation’).

These terms lack definitions, creating legal uncertainty and transparency implications for planning authorities, regulators, stakeholders and concerned citizens.

Will the Commission:

1. Review its recommendation for the definition of hydraulic fracturing to include low-volume operations?
2. Propose new recommendations for a regulatory framework and definitions for acidisation operations in order to provide legal clarity for Member States?