

Adopted Resolution

STOP EXPLORATION AND DRILLING OF FOSSIL FUELS IN THE ADRIATIC SEA

In 2014, the Croatian government launched an international tender for 33 concessions on the exploration and drilling of fossil fuels (oil and gas) in the Croatian epi-continental sea territory. Oil companies were invited to submit their best investment offers, and in return, the best of them would gain the right to exploit the oil or gas that is found in the following 30 years. Until now, 6 oil companies have already applied for the concession, to explore and drill on the Croatian side of the Adriatic Sea. According to government plans, the first concession contract should be signed in April / May 2015.

The whole process was conducted so without any previous spatial, marine or environmental study, and without any previous consultation with or compliance from local communities on the Croatian Adriatic coast or islands. In other words, the whole process was driven, far from the public eyes, until it almost came to its formal completion.

This plan is being carried out in the framework of an already endangered Adriatic Sea. In Italy, the presence of hydrocarbons has been confirmed in recent years awaiting the green light for exploitation from the Italian Government. This will be favoured due to the recent political decisions of the Renzi Cabinet that greatly eased the administrative procedures for concessions.

At the beginning of 2015, following large protests held by environmental organisations, coastal citizens, fishery organisations, tourist-dependent entrepreneurs, citizens in general, and most of the political opposition parties, the Croatian Ministry of Economy quickly produced a Study of Probable Environmental Impacts of the Exploration and Drilling of Fossil Fuels in the Adriatic Sea. This study was not accepted as being valid by marine and environmental experts, due to the fact that possible risks were not taken into account at a sufficiently high extent.

There are several arguments against drilling for fossil fuel in Adriatic Sea:

1. The Adriatic is a small and shallow part of the Mediterranean Sea, located in a geologically unstable area. Its ecosystem is specific and fragile, but still rather unpolluted. In the occurrence of an oil accident, the damage would be fatal and un-recoverable, due to a heavily indented coastline with more than thousand islands. The risk that goes with the exploitation of oil is huge in comparison to the benefit of extracted fossil fuel.
2. The Croatian economy depends on tourism at the Adriatic coast. Tourism is a source of ¼ of Croatia's annual GDP, and is the most propulsive branch of the Croatian economy. There are more than one million inhabitants benefitting from tourism, and hundreds of thousands who depend on fisheries for their livelihood. These industries would be existentially ruined in the event of an oil-related accident. A landscape that is spoiled by unsightly oil platforms would also discourage tourists from visiting the Adriatic.
3. The probable discovery of oil or gas in the Adriatic Sea would not bring energy security to the region, neither to Croatia, nor to Italy. This is because concessions would be given to foreign multinational oil companies over the next 30 years. This means that the profits of this business would go elsewhere, and that Croatia and Italy would still be forced to buy oil and gas on international markets.

Therefore, the European Greens ask the following from the Croatian and Italian governments:



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1. Stop concessions in the Adriatic Sea. Before such investments can be considered, Croatia and Italy should comply with at least two international conventions that have been ratified – the Arhus Convention and the ESPOO Convention.
2. All countries bordering the Adriatic Sea should participate in the strategic environmental assessment of Italian and Croatian concessions, and should be done so for any exploration that may concern Croatia, Italy, as well as other Adriatic countries' shores and sea flora. Assessments related to the Habitats Directive should also be taken into consideration.
3. Put in the utmost effort to preserve the natural heritage of the Adriatic Sea, for the sake of citizens and sustainable tourism development in the region, and the rest of the world.
4. The exploration or exploitation of fossil fuels in the Adriatic Sea should not impede upon the efforts taken towards the development of renewable energy sources. These could bring technological progress, economic prosperity and energy security to Croatia and Italy.
5. Furthermore, the European Greens ask from their MEPs to urge the European Commission to investigate compliance, or the lack of it, by Croatia and Italy of the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) Directive (2201/92/EU) as modified by Directive 2014/52/EU.