

EVENT REPORT
TRANSATLANTIC CLIMATE ROUNDTABLE

Shale Gas in Europe – what for?

The EU Office of the Heinrich Böll Foundation gathered policy experts and decision-makers from the United States and Europe to discuss challenges and opportunities for shale gas production in Europe. While Central and Eastern Europe is betting on shale gas in its quest to decrease its dependency on Russian gas imports and to meet its climate targets, shale gas exploitation, especially hydraulic fracturing and its consequences on the environment, public health and safety, are a major concern for civil society and water utilities.

The roundtable discussion took place as part of the [Climate Network](#) and was chaired by Roderick Kefferpütz, Policy Advisor in the European Parliament and Associate Research Fellow at the [Centre for European Policy Studies](#). Speakers included Saya Kitasei, Sustainable Energy Fellow at the U.S. [Worldwatch Institute](#), Stanislaw Cios, First Counsellor and Head of the Global Energy Security Unit in the Polish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, as well as Michael Schuetz, Policy Officer for Indigenous Fossil Fuels in the [Directorate-General for Energy](#) at the European Commission.



While shale gas production is not yet a reality in Europe, it comprises almost a quarter of natural gas production in the United States. On both sides of the Atlantic, natural gas is considered to be a cleaner alternative to coal and a viable bridging energy source in many low-carbon strategies. However, there are serious doubts about such a positive embracement of natural gas, and particularly shale gas, as its environmental impacts are severe. These entail potential explosions and leaks of chemicals that endanger surrounding life and nature and thus hamper the enthusiasm about major investments in shale gas development across Europe.

According to Article 194 of the [Lisbon Treaty](#) EU member states have the right to determine their own energy mix. At the same time, member states can also set more stringent environmental protection measures than required by EU legislation. Both Germany and France have in fact decided against shale gas explorations due to strong public and environmental opposition. In Poland on the other hand there is a high potential for shale gas production and the race for test drillings and exploration licences is underway. The benefits for the country in terms of energy security, independence and prices seem to outweigh the environmental concerns. Similar positions can be found elsewhere in Central Eastern Europe.

Due to the different attitudes in European countries towards shale gas, the European Union does not have any coherent shale gas policy as of yet. The use of indigenous fuels, including unconventional gas, is considered important. However, the EU still needs to clarify the economic potential and pledges to find credible answers to environmental concerns. A transatlantic scientific and policy related exchange on both the opportunities and challenges related to the issue would prove to be of great value for the future development of shale in Europe.