

Safety of offshore oil and gas operations

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As required by Directive 2004/35/EC ('Offshore Safety Directive'), the Commission presents its annual report on the safety of offshore oil and gas operations in the European Union for 2016, based on reports from Member States. Its purpose is to provide data on the number and type of installations in the EU and to provide information on incidents and the safety performance of offshore oil and gas operations. Since this is the first annual report on this subject, a comparison with preceding years and conclusions on EU safety trends are not yet possible.

The main points in the report are the following:

Installations and production:

- **North Sea:** the vast majority of offshore installations in EU waters are located in the United Kingdom and in the Netherlands (approximately 38 % and 26 % of offshore installations in EU waters respectively).
- **Mediterranean:** Italy is the most active Member State followed by Croatia.
- **Black Sea region:** Romania has an offshore oil and gas industry and Bulgaria has commenced exploration activities for offshore oil and gas.
- **Baltic Sea:** only Poland is reported to produce oil and gas offshore in this area.

Approximately **94 %** of the EU's domestic oil and gas is produced in the **North Sea and Atlantic region**. **The United Kingdom** is by large the most important contributor followed by the Netherlands and Denmark. Whereas Italy and Croatia are active producers in the Mediterranean Sea, only Romania currently has a noticeable oil and gas output in the Black Sea

Offshore investigations: following serious incidents, **two** Member States have carried out investigations during the reporting period:

- the United Kingdom (21 for safety and environmental concerns, 1 for a major accident) and
- the Netherlands (1 for a major accident).

Enforcement actions: the United Kingdom has taken **7 enforcement actions**, mainly improvement notices, for the 129 installations included in this part of its report (out of 225 installations), the Netherlands 2 (administrative fines) and Ireland 1.

Incident data: the United Kingdom, the Netherlands and Denmark reported incidents:

- **United Kingdom:** 27 reportable events including one major accident; the UK's report covers 129 installations out of a total of 225. In its annual report, the UK did not submit additional details on the major accident, which was still under investigation;
- **the Netherlands:** 13 reportable events, including one major accident. The causes of the major accident were procedural/organisational errors and an operational error;
- **Denmark:** 2 reportable events and no major accident.

Of the reportable events, the majority fell into the category of **unintended releases** (59.5 % of the total), 26.2 % concerned the loss of well control (blowout/diverter activation), 7.1 % failures of safety and environmental critical elements (and 4.8 % loss of structural integrity. One incident required the evacuation of personnel.

The Commission concludes that the European offshore oil and gas industry appears to have **demonstrated an adequate level of safety**, taking into account the figures provided and taking note of the low number and low level of severity of accidents reported. It states that this conclusion is **in line with the assessment by national competent authorities**, for example the UK, which reports a **decline in dangerous occurrences** and in the frequency of reportable injuries in relation to hours worked. Specifically, the Commission takes note that no fatalities were reported for 2016. Future reports, comparisons between years and the monitoring of trends will show whether the offshore sector can maintain this level of safety or make further progress.