

Safety of offshore oil and gas operations

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In accordance with Directive 2013/30/EU amending Directive 2004/35/EC (Offshore safety Directive), the Commission has presented its second annual report on the safety of offshore oil and gas operations in the European Union (EU), on the basis of Member States' reports.

As in the report for 2016, the purpose of this annual report is: (i) to provide data on the number and type of installations in the EU; and (ii) to give information about incidents on — and the safety performance of — offshore oil and gas operations. In the coming years, when additional reports are available, the series of annual reports will serve as a record of safety performance in Member States' offshore oil and gas activities.

The figures provided by Member States, specifically on the number and severity of accidents reported in relation to the number of installations, indicate that the European offshore sector also demonstrated a good safety performance in 2017.

The main findings are as follows:

The offshore oil and gas sector in the EU

The Commission received data from Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Denmark, Germany, Greece, Ireland, Italy, the Netherlands, Poland, Romania, Spain and the United Kingdom. Most of the facilities are located in the North Sea and the Atlantic Ocean (378 facilities), while 166 facilities are located in the Mediterranean Sea, eight in the Black Sea and two in the Baltic Sea.

Most of the EU's domestic oil and gas production comes from the North Sea and Atlantic region (around 94%). The United Kingdom is by far the largest contributor, followed by the Netherlands and Denmark. Italy and Croatia are active producers in the Mediterranean, while in the Black Sea only Romania currently has significant oil and gas production.

In total, there were 554 production and non-production installations reported in EU waters in 2017, which constitutes a decrease of approximately 5% (32 fewer installations) compared to 2016.

Inspections at sea

The competent authorities of the Member States regularly inspected the offshore installations under their jurisdiction in 2017. The number of inspections and investigations carried out has not changed significantly. Overall, the number of inspections carried out in 2017 (630) has decreased compared to 2016 (735). However, additional efforts have been made in terms of person-days (2083 man-days in 2017 compared to 1913 in 2016).

Following several incidents, three Member States (the United Kingdom, Denmark and the Netherlands) carried out investigations during the reporting period. The United Kingdom conducted 16 investigations into safety and environmental concerns and two major accident investigations. One of the major accident investigations conducted by the United Kingdom was still ongoing at the time of reporting. Denmark and the Netherlands have each conducted an investigation for a major accident.

Incident data

As in 2016, no fatalities were reported in 2017. In the EU, the total number of reported incidents increased from 42 in 2016 to 59 in 2017, largely due to an increased number of unintended releases. In contrast, the ‘loss of well control’ incidents fell from 11 in 2016 to eight in 2017, and the ‘failures of safety and environmental critical elements’ fell from three to one in the same period. There were no reports of failures of structural integrity in 2017, in contrast to two such failures reported in 2016.

Three collisions involving ships were reported for 2017 as well as two failures of a well barriers. In 2017, a total of four incidents were classified as major accidents, as they could have caused death or serious injury.

The Commission appreciates the decrease of incidents in certain categories, such as losses of well control, failures of safety and environmental critical elements, and failures of structural integrity. It notes the number of major accidents, unintended releases, vessel collisions and failures of well barriers. Based on the above, it can be said that the European offshore sector demonstrated a good safety performance in 2017.