

# TOWARD AN EU OFFSHORE DRILLING BAN

MANIFESTO



**SURFRIDER**  
FOUNDATION EUROPE

# YEAR 2020: A UNIQUE CHANCE TO BAN EU OFFSHORE DRILLING

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## WE NEED TO OVERCOME OUR ADDICTION TO FOSSIL ENERGY

If Europe wants to fulfill its Paris Agreement commitments, as well as its ambition to become climate neutral by 2050, the EU countries need to step up their efforts to cut CO<sub>2</sub> emissions. While all-encompassing measures must be taken in order to achieve this, there is no avoiding the need to overcome our addiction to fossil energy, which has so far contributed to 82% of world CO<sub>2</sub> emissions.

We are aware that transforming our energy mix is no simple task. However, we now also know that we must leave at least 80% of discovered fossil fuels in the ground in order to stay within the established climate goals. So let's first start with the sacrifices that are straightforward and address the most disastrous activities – **ban offshore drilling in European waters by 2035.**



## OFFSHORE DRILLING HARMS OUR ENVIRONMENT AND OUR ECONOMY

Today we keep drilling deeper and deeper in zones that are increasingly harder to reach, as well as in areas with vital fragile ecosystems - thus putting human lives and ocean biodiversity in danger. Oil and gas exploration and exploitation have become progressively more expensive and harmful for the environment. **All the European seas face unavoidable hydrocarbon spills and releases** (European companies reported 47 of those in 2017 alone), as well as **water pollution by “drilling muds”** containing benzene, zinc, arsenic, radioactive materials, and other contaminants with irreversible consequences. The Elgin blowout in 2012 demonstrated the impact that offshore drilling accidents can have in European waters: approximately 6000 tons of gas leaked into the ocean over a period of 7 weeks, forming a gas slick more than 11 km in length. Moreover, seismic testing that precedes exploitation has a huge impact on marine life - resulting in hearing loss, reduced catch rates of 40-80%, and beach strandings for a number of species.

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But the ecological impacts are not the only ones that we are facing: **the dangers imposed on the lives and livelihoods of coastal communities by the offshore drilling industry substantially outweigh the economic gain it generates.** In 2017, offshore oil and gas activities in Europe employed less than 63 000 people and brought in 17 billion euro in value added. In contrast, in the same year, European tourism generated 65 billion euros and more than 2 million jobs, and the fishing industry employed 570,000 people and grossed over 20 billion. The offshore drilling industry's economic contribution is minute compared to the value added by the sectors which it threatens the most.

Ignoring citizen mobilization and environmental risks, Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Denmark, Germany, Greece, Ireland, Italy, Malta, the Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Romania and Spain still have not prohibited oil and gas exploration and/or exploitation off their coasts. This goes against the future European Green deal which is set to fulfill three relevant objectives:

- Increase the EU's Climate ambition for 2030 and 2050
- Supply clean, affordable and secure energy
- Achieve a zero-pollution ambition for a toxic free environment.



## WE ARE CALLING FOR A BAN OF OFFSHORE DRILLING

On the 20th of April 2010, humanity faced its biggest offshore drilling catastrophe: the Deepwater Horizon explosion, which took the lives of 11 people and impacted more than 400 marine species, spilling over 500 million liters of oil. On April 20th of this year, marking the 10th anniversary of the Deepwater Horizon oil spill, **Surfrider Foundation Europe and all the signatories of this Manifesto are calling on the European Union and EU Member States to adopt a hardline stance against offshore drilling in line with its climate, biodiversity and zero pollution commitments.** 2020 offers us a unique chance, namely with the upcoming revision of the Offshore Safety Directive 2013/30/EU, to shape the future of our continent's energy policy. The EU and EU member States must adopt **a coherent common strategy of phasing out current offshore oil and gas drilling activities by 2035:** first, by stopping approving new drilling permits both for exploration and exploitation by 2023, then by committing to refuse renewals on issued authorizations after their expiration date. We also urge the Member States to stop subsidising offshore oil and gas operations and incentivize the companies to put an early end to these activities.

Last but not least, it is absolutely crucial to take urgent and decisive steps that would protect the health of the ocean's most sensitive zones and their ecosystems:

- We are urging the EU **to put a stop to exploitation and exploration activities in and around Marine Protected Areas (MPAs)**, as well as vulnerable areas of high conservation value. Their protection is crucial for boosting the ocean's resilience, and it goes without saying that ongoing oil and gas operations are not compatible with the conservation of those fragile ecosystems. Our plea is echoing the call for a ban on offshore exploitation in marine protected areas from the European Parliament in 2018 in its resolution on International Ocean Governance.
- The EU should lead the international efforts **to protect the Arctic waters**, starting by prohibiting drilling in the EU and the EEA icy Arctic waters. The Arctic is an example of an area where the probability of an incident occurring is higher and the potential damage is worse due to its vulnerable ecosystem with spawning areas for keystone species.



## NOW IS NOT THE TIME TO REST ON OUR LAURELS, BUT TO ACT

The signatories of this Manifesto recognize and welcome the European Union's ambition to become a leader in the fight against climate change. Now is not the time to rest on our laurels, but to act. We must search for sustainable energy solutions rather than drill for fossil fuels off our coasts, keeping the "business as usual" attitude. In accordance with its Paris Agreement commitments to keep the rise of temperatures under 1,5C, it is vital that the EU sets an example to other nations.

Offshore drilling is harmful and dangerous both for humans and marine species. It does not fit in the Green Deal ambition of our continent and we should put an end to it. **If the EU wants to be known as the world climate champion, it must act like one.**



# SIGNATORIES

This Manifesto is supported by NGOs from all over Europe that together are calling for a ban on offshore drilling in European waters by 2035.





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