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REPORT FROM THE COMMISSION

Annual Report from the European Commission on the Safety of Offshore Oil and Gas Operations for the Year 2023

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1. INTRODUCTION

Since 2016, the European Commission has published an annual report on the safety of EU offshore oil and gas operations.

The legal basis for this report is Directive 2013/30/EU¹ of the European Parliament and of the Council of 12 June 2013 on safety of offshore oil and gas operations and amending Directive 2004/35/EC (hereinafter: the “Offshore Safety Directive”). It aims to achieve a high level of safety in offshore oil and gas operations, for the benefit of:

- i. workers.
- ii. the environment.
- iii. offshore platforms and equipment.
- iv. economic activities, such as fishing and tourism.

The Directive, as implemented by Member States, helps to:

- i. prevent major accidents and incidents.
- ii. reduce the number of incidents.
- iii. ensure effective follow-up of accidents and incidents to reduce the severity of their consequences.

As past reports do, this annual report:

- i. gives the number and type of installations in the EU.
- ii. provides information on safety incidents in these installations.
- iii. assesses the safety performance of offshore oil and gas operations.

The report now covers a period of eight years, and it serves as a record of the safety performance in Member States’ offshore oil and gas activities.

This report is based on annual reports and data submitted by Member States as required by the Offshore Safety Directive.

There are 164 offshore oil and gas installations located in the Mediterranean Sea, 136 in the North Sea and Atlantic Ocean, 9 in the Black Sea and 4 in the Baltic Sea. In 2023, the competent Member State authorities inspected the safety of 388 offshore installations in their jurisdiction. The countries reported no major accidents.

The number of incidents increased from 37 in 2022 to 44 in 2023.

¹ OJ L 178, 28 June 2013, p. 66.

2. LEGAL BASIS

In line with Article 25 of the Offshore Safety Directive, the Commission must publish an annual report on the safety and environmental impact of offshore oil and gas operations. This report is based on individual annual reports that Member States must submit to the Commission. Annex IX (3) to the Directive sets out the minimum information the annual reports must contain:

- i. the number, age, and location of installations.
- ii. the number and type of inspections and investigations carried out, in addition to any enforcement action or convictions.
- iii. incidents that have occurred.
- iv. any major change in the offshore regulatory framework.
- v. the performance of offshore oil and gas operations.

The deadline for Member States to publish and submit the required information is 1 June following the reporting period (e.g., 1 June 2024 for 2023).

Member States must submit the information using the templates provided in Commission Implementing Regulation (EU) No 1112/2014 of 13 October 2014². The templates allow:

- i. operators and owners of offshore oil and gas installations to share information on major hazard indicators.
- ii. Member States to publish information on major hazard indicators.

A guidance document³ provides specific information on the Implementing Regulation and explains how to use the reporting templates.

3. METHODOLOGY AND INFORMATION RECEIVED

Member States must submit clearly defined information on safety incidents in the offshore oil and gas sector using the templates. The data must include information on the offshore oil and gas installations in the EU, such as number, type, location, and age. Reports from Member States must also provide information on the number of (i) offshore inspections, investigations and enforcement actions taken; (ii) incidents by category; and (iii) injuries.

For this annual report, the Commission has used information provided by Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Denmark, France, Germany, Greece, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Malta, the Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Spain, and Sweden. Other Member States were not active in the offshore oil and gas sector or did not submit information. All Member States with offshore oil and gas operations declared they had submitted all the required information on all installations.

² OJ L 302, 22 October 2014, p. 2.

³ Guidance Document on Commission Implementing Regulation (EU) No1112/2014 of 13 October 2014

4. THE EU OFFSHORE OIL AND GAS SECTOR

4.1 Installations and production

Member States reported 313 installations in EU waters in 2023 (see Table 1):

- Most offshore installations⁴ were in the Mediterranean Sea. Italy is the most active (with 45% of all installations in EU waters) followed by Croatia.
- In the North Sea and Atlantic, most installations (approximately 37% of all installations in EU waters) were in the Dutch part of the North Sea (known as the exclusive economic zone of the Netherlands).
- In the Black Sea, Romania has a well-established offshore oil and gas industry. Bulgaria has continued offshore hydrocarbon exploration, but only had one installation and is producing small quantities of oil and gas.
- In the Baltic Sea, only Poland has offshore installations.

Table 1: Installations on 1 January 2023: type of installation by region and Member State

Region	Country	Type of installation (*)					Change compared to 2022
		FMI	NUI	FNP	FPI	Total (region/country)	
Baltic Sea		3	1	0	0	4	--
	Poland	3	1	0	0	4	--
Black Sea		5	4	0	0	9	+1
	Bulgaria	0	1	0	0	1	--
	Romania	5	3	0	0	8	+1
Mediterranean Sea		15	147	0	2	164	0
	Croatia	2	17	0	0	19	--
	Greece	1	1	0	0	2	--
	Italy	11	127	0	2	140	--
	Spain	1	2	0	0	3	0
North Sea and Atlantic		39	92	5	0	136	+1
	Denmark	7	11	1	0	19	--
	Germany	1	1	0	0	2	--
	Ireland	0	0	0	0	0	-2
	The Netherlands	31	80	4	0	115	+3
Total (type of installation)		62	244	5	2	313	+2

(*) FMI: Fixed, manned installation; FNP: Fixed, non-production installation; FPI: Floating production installation; NUI: Normally un-attended installation.

⁴ Mobile offshore drilling units are not part of the data in section 4.1.

More than half of offshore installations came into operation between 1980 and 2000. In 2023, two new fixed installations came into operation. Since 2010, the development of new production installations has dropped noticeably in the North Sea and Atlantic.

Approximately 74% of the EU's domestic oil and gas (15 518 kilotons of oil equivalent (hereinafter: "ktoe") is produced in the North Sea and Atlantic (see Table 2). The biggest contributors in the North Sea and Atlantic are the Netherlands and Denmark. Italy and Croatia are the biggest producers in the Mediterranean Sea. Spain and Greece had no production. In the Black Sea, only Romania's output is significant.

Table 2: Offshore oil and gas production in the EU in ktoe in 2023

Region	Country	ktoe	% of EU total	% change compared to 2022
Baltic Sea		284	1.8%	+ 4.7%
	Poland	284	1.8%	+ 4.7%
Black Sea		1786	11.5%	+93.7%
	Bulgaria	7	0.0%	-50.3%
	Romania	1778	11.5%	+96.1%
Mediterranean Sea		1897	12.2%	-8.3%
	Croatia	193	1.2%	-2.3%
	Greece	60	0.4%	--
	Italy	1645	10.6%	-12.1%
	Spain	0	0.0%	--
North Sea and Atlantic		11552	74.4%	-11.2%
	Denmark	4700	30.3%	+6.0%
	Germany	706	4.5%	-6.5%
	The Netherlands	6146	39.6%	-21.3%
Total		15 518	100 %	-4.6%

Production increased in Romania (+ 96%) with positive values also in Denmark (+ 6%) and Poland (+ 4.7%) but declined in all other Member States, particularly in the Netherlands (continuing the trend from 2022) and Bulgaria. Greece resumed the production stopped in 2022. Spain had no production. Compared to production in Member States in 2021, there was an overall 4.6 % loss of production (cca. 746 ktoe) in 2023 in the EU.

From overall production in the EU measured in ktoe, 67 % was gas and 33 % oil. Denmark (3410 ktoe) was the most important producer of oil, followed by Germany (698 ktoe), Italy (380 ktoe), Poland (260 ktoe) the Netherlands (265 ktoe), and Greece (50ktoe).

4.2 Offshore inspections, investigations, enforcement actions and regulatory framework

The competent authorities in the Member States regularly inspected the offshore installations in their jurisdiction in 2023 (see Table 3). The more installations a country had, the more inspections it usually carried out.

Compared to 2022 the overall number of inspections in the EU decreased (from 524 to 435). While the number of inspections increased in some jurisdictions (e.g. Romania), in most jurisdictions the number declined.

In the Netherlands, the number of inspections dropped by 30 compared to 2022. At the same time, the Netherlands decommissioned thirty-two installations during the reporting period.

Table 3: Offshore inspections by region and Member State in 2023

Region	Country	Inspections	Working days spent on installation (travel time not included)	Number of installations inspected
Baltic Sea		1	1	1
	Poland	1	1	1
Black Sea		30	203	9
	Bulgaria	0	0	0
	Romania	30	203	9
Mediterranean Sea		269	295	249
	Croatia	28	36	8
	Cyprus	2	6	2
	Greece	1	12	1
	Italy	238	241	238
	Spain	0	0	0
North Sea and Atlantic		135	219	129
	Denmark	20	123	16
	Germany	3	6	1
	Ireland	0	0	0
	The Netherlands	112	90	112
Total		435	718	388⁵

Article 18 of the Offshore Safety Directive gives rights and powers to the competent national authorities for operations and installations in their jurisdiction. These powers include the right to prohibit operations and to request measures ensuring both risk management compliance and safe operations.

⁵ An installation could be inspected more than once during a reporting year; therefore the “number of inspections” (435) is different from that of “total installations” (388), due to the number decommissioned facilities along the year and the number of facilities that start operation along the year.

In 2023, there were no investigations regarding major accidents (since there were no major accidents reported).

No enforcement actions have been taken during 2023.

5. INCIDENTS AND SAFETY PERFORMANCE

Operators and owners of installations and national authorities must report an accident or situation of serious danger (referred to as an ‘event’). However, a single event can be categorised by one or more incidents. For example, two incident categories must be notified for the same event if there was an (a) unintended release of gas that (b) required the evacuation of staff.

Member States reported 44 events⁶ in 2023 compared to 37 in 2022:

- Denmark – 12 events, no major accidents (same as in 2022).⁷
- Croatia – 8 events, no major accidents (comparing to 2 events in 2022).⁸
- The Netherlands – 24 events, no major accidents⁹ (11 events in 2022).¹⁰

Of the incidents that occurred in 2023, 86,36 % belong to the unintended releases of gas and/or oil, 6,82 % belong to the category of safety and environmental critical element failure, and 6,82 % to loss of wells. None of those incidents led to the loss of life. Also, no vessel collisions or helicopter accidents were reported.

Table 4: Incidents by category (set out in Annex IX to the Offshore Safety Directive) in 2023

Category	Total	Share of category total	Share of total incidents
(a) Unintended releases – total	38	100%	86.36%
Fires caused by ignited oil/gas	0	0%	0.00%
Explosions caused by ignited oil/gas	0	0%	0.00%
Unignited gas	14	37%	31.82%
Unignited oil	7	18%	15.91%
Hazardous substance	17	45%	38.64%
(b) Loss of wells – total	3	100%	6.82%
Blowouts	0	0%	0.00%
Blowout/diverter activation	3	100%	6.82%
Well barrier failure	0	0%	0.00%

⁶ The reporting obligation does not cover certain events (e.g. those not related to operations).

⁷ For Denmark, all 12 incidents consisted in Unintended releases.

⁸ For Croatia, out of the 8 events, 5 were due to Unintended releases, and three due to Failures of safety and environmental critical elements.

⁹ Major accidents include incidents that could cause fatalities or serious injuries (even if none occurred).

¹⁰ For the Netherlands, the incidents consisted in three Loss of wells, and 21 Unintended releases.

(c) Safety and environmental critical element failure	3	100%	6.82%
(d) Loss of structural integrity – total	0	0%	0.00%
Loss of structural integrity	0	--	0.00%
Loss of stability/buoyancy	0	--	0.00%
Loss of station keeping	0	--	0.00%
(e) Vessel collisions	0	--	0.00%
(f) Helicopter accidents	0	--	0.00%
(g) Fatal accidents (*)	0	--	0.00%
(h) Serious injuries of five or more people in the same accident	0	--	0.00%
(i) Evacuation of personnel	0	--	0.00%
(j) Environmental accidents	0	--	0.00%
Total	44		100.00%
<i>(*) Only if related to a major accident.</i>			

In the EU, the total number of incidents increased from 37 in 2022 to 44 in 2023. This difference mainly comes from the rise in unintended releases of both oil and gas from 28 to 38. The events related to safety and environmental critical element failures dropped from 7 to 3. Incidents involving loss of wells remained approximately the same (from two in 2022 to three in 2023) reaching the same value as for the reporting over 2021. No incidents were classified as major accidents in 2023. The Member States authorities are assessing, together with the operators, the causes of the incidents to determine if investigations or enforcement actions are needed.

6. CONCLUSIONS

In 2023, there were 313 offshore oil and gas installations in the EU. The Netherlands decommissioned thirty-two installations during the reporting period.

Overall oil and gas production decreased from 16 264 ktoe in 2022 to 15 518 ktoe in 2023 (4.6% loss of production, compared to 11% decrease between 2021 and 2022). Denmark and the Netherlands produced 70% of the EU's total offshore oil and gas.

The Commission has assessed the safety of the EU's offshore oil and gas operations based on the information provided by Member States, according to the rules of the Implementing Regulation on reporting. The accuracy of the Commission's analysis therefore depends on the accuracy of this information.

In 2023, national authorities kept up their efforts to ensure a high level of safety in offshore oil and gas operations by inspecting 388 installations (compared to 485 in 2022). No enforcement actions have been reported over the reporting period.

There were no major accidents in 2023. The total number of incidents increased from 37 in 2022 to 44 in 2023. No fatality was reported. 49 injuries¹¹ and 8 serious injuries¹² occurred.

In conclusion, due to the obligatory inspections and actions taken, as stipulated by the Offshore Safety Directive, the work of Member State authorities has once more resulted in safe offshore oil and gas operations.

To maintain the level of safety, the Commission continues to work closely with the European Union Offshore Authorities Group (EUOAG). The EUOAG promotes best practices for carrying out safely all operations, and assists national authorities represented in the group.

¹¹ Poland, Greece, and Italy – one for each, Romania 3, Denmark 25 and the Netherlands 12

¹² Italy and the Netherlands – one for each, Denmark 6