

Romania to review moratorium on shale gas

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Romanian girls holds placards reading in Romanian "NO to the shale gas exploitation" (L) and "We want clean water, not contaminated" (R) during a protest near Bucharest in March 2012. Romania will review its stand on shale gas when a drilling moratorium expires in December and align itself with a future joint EU position on the controversial issue, Prime Minister Victor Ponta said Friday.

Romania will review its stand on shale gas when a drilling moratorium expires in December and align itself with a future joint EU position on the controversial issue, Prime Minister Victor Ponta said Friday.

"There is a moratorium (on shale gas) until December," Ponta told foreign media in Bucharest.

"After that, we plan to adopt a decision that takes into account both concerns over environment protection and the importance of [alternative](#)

[energy sources](#) for Romania," he added.

Ponta, whose Social-Democrat Party has campaigned against shale gas tapping, said time was not of the essence, since the exploration phase would not be over before 2018.

"In six years' time technology will evolve a lot and a decision will be taken at a European level regarding the dangers linked to it and the way to do away with them," he said.

"We want to be neither the only country to accept shale gas tapping nor the only one to oppose it."

Ponta's centre-left government adopted a moratorium on [shale gas](#) soon after coming to power in May, putting on hold plans by American oil giant Chevron to drill the first exploration well in the second half of 2012.

Chevron has a concession on 600,000 hectares in the Barlad area (east) and three others in the Dobroudja region (south-east), near the Bulgarian border.

Its plans sparked opposition from [environmentalists](#) who insist the drilling technique, based on [hydraulic fracturing](#) or 'fracking', poses serious environment and [health risks](#).

'Fracking' uses high pressure injections of water, sand and chemicals to crack open rock and release oil and gas trapped inside.

The technique has been banned by countries such as France and Bulgaria.

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