

Germany 'to approve fracking with conditions'

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Anti-fracking protestors in Berlin earlier this month. The German government is prepared to give the go-ahead to the revolutionary oil and gas technique of "fracking" in Germany, but under certain conditions, according to a ministry paper obtained by AFP.

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Under a draft proposal by the economy and environment ministries, fracking would be banned in areas where there are [water reserves](#) and mineral springs.

This is a concession to public opinion where there are serious concerns about safety, as well as the environmental and health effects of the technology.

Rigorous studies into the environmental impact would be undertaken at each proposed site, the paper said.

"Domestic oil and [gas](#) production will continue to make a substantial contribution to the security of supply and price stability in Germany," as the country has pledged to abandon nuclear energy entirely by 2022, the ministries said.

Estimates put Germany's underground [gas reserves](#) at as much as 2.3 trillion cubic metres.

With annual consumption of some 86 billion cubic metres "this can be categorised as a very significant source of energy," they said.

The technology of "[hydraulic fracturing](#)" has unlocked immense gas and [oil resources](#) and changed the geopolitics of energy.

But unlike large areas of the United States, Germany is a very densely populated country, Chancellor [Angela Merkel](#) warned recently.

The technology, also called "unconventional" production, remains highly controversial, with widespread, serious worries for the environment and the health of people living near the "fracking" locations.

It has been banned in France since 2011 but German Environment

Minister Peter Altmaier has promised to introduce legislation on the topic before federal elections on September 22.

Since its invention in 2007, "fracking" has become the gold rush of the 21st century, with tens of billions of dollars in revenue and hundreds of thousands of new jobs.

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