

Poland starts shale gas extraction

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Children play near where oil company Chevron plans to put a shale gas drilling rig, Zurawlow, Poland, June 11, 2013. Shale gas extraction has begun at a test well in northern Poland, a first for the EU member, a minister said in a newspaper interview on Wednesday.

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The firm Lane Energy Poland, controlled by US energy giant

ConocoPhillips, has been extracting about 8,000 cubic metres of gas per day since July 21, deputy environment minister Piotr Wozniak said.

"It's good news for Poland, and also for Europe," Wozniak, who is also the country's chief geologist, told the Rzeczpospolita daily about the test production near the town of Lebork.

He said that although the yield was lower than at sites in Canada and the United States, it was the best such result in Europe to date.

The amount is not big enough to qualify as commercial production, however.

Gas is being extracted at a depth of 3,000 metres (9,800 feet) "without threat to the environment", Wozniak told the television channel Polsat.

Members of the European Union are divided in their approach to [hydraulic fracturing](#) or fracking, the controversial method of extracting hydrocarbons.

Poland, for example, has granted exploration rights to local and global firms which have sunk 48 exploratory wells.

France has banned the method.

Fracking involves using huge amounts of pressurised water mixed with chemicals to crack open shale—[sedimentary rock](#) containing hydrocarbons—to release natural gas.

Environmentalists have raised the alarm that the chemical-laced waste could be contaminating fresh water resources.

Poland uses about 14 billion cubic metres (500 billion cubic feet) of

natural gas a year, of which 60 percent is imported from Russia.

The country of 38 million people plans to invest 12.5 billion euros (\$17.0 billion) in exploration and development of its shale gas sector by 2020.

Poland could have between 800 billion and two trillion cubic metres of exploitable [shale gas](#) deposits, according to the Polish Geological Institute.

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