
Global business paper emphasizes nuclear role in EU energy policy

"The European Union is like Gulliver, an economic giant tied down by its increasing dependence on foreign energy sources.

"So said Loyola de Palacio, the EU Commissioner, as she published her green discussion paper on energy security (in November).

"She is right to raise the alarm, not only because on present trends the EU would depend on the outside world for 70% of its total energy by 2030. Just as worrying is that this increasingly heavy dependence on foreign oil and gas compounds the problem of climate change ...

"... important is the impact of the rundown in Europe's coal and nuclear power sectors. The (European) Commission is probably right to conclude that the decline in coal is unstoppable, although it suggests maintaining some mines for emergency use. But the main argument against coal – that it creates carbon dioxide pollution – strengthens the case for nuclear power. In spite of the problems of waste, nuclear stations produce negligible amounts of greenhouse gases.

"By generating 30% of its electricity with nuclear power, the EU avoids pumping 300 million tonnes of carbon into the atmosphere a year, equivalent to the emissions of 75 million cars.

"Yet most EU states are committed to freezing or phasing out nuclear power. Unless this is reversed, the Commission points out, the EU has no chance of meeting its greenhouse gas reduction targets under the Kyoto Protocol.

"This unpleasant truth riles anti-nuclear organisations, which suggest that renewable energy sources such as wind power should replace the awkward atom.

"So, to an extent, does the EU executive, which calls for a levy on all traditional energy sources to help renewable energy double its 6% share of total energy. But the Commission has a bad record of getting its energy tax proposals past EU ministers, and even a doubling of renewable energy's share would not plug the gap left by nuclear energy...

"Real energy security lies in diversifying energy products as much as its geographical sources."

Editorial commentary in *The Financial Times*, November 30

Industry seeking to build Finland's fifth power reactor

Finland's TVO electricity generating company has applied for a government decision in principle to build the country's fifth nuclear power reactor.

Ministers must now decide whether the project is for "the overall good of society". If their decision is "yes", then it must be ratified by parliament.

Finland's present four power reactors are among the most efficient in the world.

Adding a fifth would be the least-cost option for new generating capacity, says a detailed energy economics study by the country's Lappeenranta Technical University.

"Finland has to maintain its own adequate and competitive energy production to be assured of its security of national supply," affirms Juhani Santaholma, president of the Finnish energy industries federation (Finergy). "Finland also needs additional nuclear power to enable the development of other carbon-neutral and renewable energy sources as well as new energy production systems."

He adds that Finland will need even a sixth nuclear power unit, if it is to meet its Kyoto commitments to curb global warming gases.

Nuclear flexibly sustainable says British Energy chief

"Nuclear is sustainable in every sense," says British Energy chief executive Peter Hollins.

"It deals with its by-products responsibly, providing the electricity we need without harming the environment.

"Even though its contribution to avoiding climate change is not financially recognised, it pays its way commercially – good nuclear power plants will continue to operate very effectively in competitive markets.

"Wherever there are claimed to be intractable problems, we have provided solutions. Look around the world. Waste treatment and disposal? Scandinavia is demonstrating that it can be done.

Regulating nuclear in competitive markets? Look at the US. Attracting investment? Look at the UK and North America."

Germany begins year-long launch of research-and-health reactor

Munich Technical University's new research reactor (FRM II) is starting nuclear trial operation. The trials are scheduled to run to around the end of 2001.

The reactor will become a neutron source for research in physics, biology, chemistry, environmental analysis, and medicine. It will include a beam-line to treat brain tumours.

Team starts equipping facility to store Dutch used nuclear fuel

An integrated project team is now managing the installation of equipment and systems at the HABOG facility – newly built to hold Dutch spent nuclear fuel and intermediate and highly radioactive waste.

The facility's three air-cooled vaults are able to store the country's high-active waste for the next 100 years.

The facility is alongside existing treatment and storage units for low-active waste, close to the Netherland's sole operating nuclear power station, Borssele.

HABOG has been supplied to national radwaste agency COVRA by the French SGN company, with Dutch HBKC as sub-contractors for civil works.

German unit to treat waste at Lithuania's nuclear power plant

Siemens is to supply a waste treatment facility to Ignalina nuclear power station.

The facility will process and solidify low- and medium-active liquid wastes from the station's two Russian-built reactors.

The 10-million-euro facility will include a cementation unit, as well as interim storage for the treated waste.

West finishes simulators at Eastern nuclear power stations

EU-backed simulator projects have just been completed by Tractebel Group's Corys TESS at nuclear power plants in Slovakia, Russia and Armenia.

Slovakia's Bohunice nuclear station now has two modern, completely specific full-scope simulators: one for its older and one for its newer reactors.

Russia's Beloyarsk BN600 fast breeder power plant has signed final acceptance of its high-precision simulator supplied by the consortium Siemens, Corys TESS and Belgatom.

Armenians are beginning training on a screen-operated analytical simulator of their Metsamor nuclear power station.

Armenia's "modernised" reactor goes back on line

Armenia's sole operating nuclear power unit, Metsamor-2, is again producing 35% of national electricity, after three months of safety improvements – including strengthening it to resist severe earthquakes.

The EU wants the 21-year-old Soviet-type reactor to close by 2004. But it is now able to run safely well beyond then, say Armenian sources.

Ukraine replacing Chernobyl by completing other N-plants

Nearly 15 years since the accident that destroyed its Unit 4, Chernobyl nuclear power station has finally closed its last operating reactor.

The closure by the Ukraine government is to be offset by completing two 80% built power reactors: Khmelnitski-2 and Rovno-4.

Completion is being backed by a new loan of 215 million US dollars from the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development and 585 million from Euratom. Russia is to lend USD 225 million.

Nucleus is an ENS briefing sheet mailed to all members of the European Parliament's Energy Committee, the EU Commission, Economic & Social Committee, and Joint Research Centre.

Nationally it is distributed to opinion leaders in most West and East European countries.

It is published by ENS in English and translated into Bulgarian, Croatian, Czech, Dutch, Hungarian, Polish, Romanian, Russian, Serbian, Slovak, Slovenian and Ukrainian

For details, see <http://www.euronuclear.org/publications/nucleus>