News | 22.11.2011

Greens launch study on Nuclear "Stress Test"

Independent study shows weaknesses of assessment

Green MEPs Rebecca Harms and Yannick Jadot today launched an independent study on the Nuclear "Stress Test", the preliminary results of which are to be presented by the European Commission tomorrow. Presenting the analysis, study author Wolfgang Renneberg painted a worrying picture of the weaknesses of the "Stress Test" and outlined in detail how it failed to meet requirements.

The “Stress test” of the European nuclear power plants as defined by the European Nuclear Safety Regulators Group does not meet the requirements of the EU council nor the expectations of the European public for a comprehensive safety assessment. It doesn’t provide a method for comparing the safety of the different plants, nor does it answer how safe European plants actually are.

The prevention of nuclear accidents – which is the centre of the nuclear safety provisions – is practically excluded by the test. Instead, the scope of the "test” focuses on which measures are left in the case an accident does happen.

But even then, the scenarios which are under review are incomplete. Internal scenarios such as fire-scenarios, electrical surges, leakage of pipes, malfunction of valves, human failures and combinations of those events are not included in the scope of the test. External scenarios like airplane crashes are also excluded.

Warning from History

It seems that no lessons have been learnt from recent history. The first practical experience of the Fukushima accident is that nuclear accidents can happen everywhere, and that the residual nuclear risk cannot be eliminated.

Beyond this experience the most important lesson of the Fukushima accident was that a plant and its management must be checked against well-known modern standards for nuclear safety, because in the instance of Fukushima, it was not, and consequences of such a review had not been drawn.

With nothing new to offer, and a too limited focus, the results of this "Stress Test" will ring hollow. The safety concerns surrounding nuclear power plants cannot be swept under the carpet in this way.

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