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PINC 2016

the Nuclear Illusory Programme

A reality check of the 2016 Nuclear Illustrative Programme prepared by the European Commission to be presented under Article 40 of the Euratom Treaty

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Nuclear Illustrative Programme, PINC 2016 will be the sixth presented under article 40 of the Euratom Treaty since 1958, and the first to present the nuclear vision of the new European Commission. The present note proposes a reality check of this vision, as it appears in a draft version of PINC 2016 and the attached Staff Working Document that were provided to WISE-Paris, against the current evolution of nuclear power. It also discusses how this vision stands in the face of the analysis outlined in the previous illustrative programme, an update in 2008 of PINC 2007.

• Dramatic changes occurred since this previous programme from an international perspective. While the decline of nuclear power, increasingly losing competition against rapidly expanding renewables, should be the starting point of any update of the Commission's vision, this trend is not even reflected in PINC 2016.

• Also, the growing role of renewables in Europe, and how it challenges the role of nuclear power in EU energy policy is not discussed in PINC 2016, which on the contrary uses biased arguments to exaggerate the contribution of nuclear power to energy security and climate mitigation.

• PINC 2016 then badly fails to account for the real status and trend of nuclear power in the EU, where no new reactor came on line and no new construction was started since PINC 2007, while 21 less are operating. Instead, the Commission introduces very ambitious, and seemingly unrealistic targets for maintaining most of the European nuclear capacity through 2050, combining new builds and a huge programme of lifetime extension, so-called long term operation (LTO).

• Safety issues, which appeared to be a major concern of the Commission in the previous PINC, are not

anymore discussed, failing to account for the implications of the Fukushima disaster. The need for strong safety reinforcements of existing reactors, the preparedness and cross-border concerns attached to the consequences of major accidents, and the insufficient level of civil liability covered by operators compared to the cost of such a catastrophe are not seriously addressed.

• While the Commission acknowledges the difficulty for new nuclear reactors to compete and get financed on the European electricity market, it makes no amend for getting it so wrong when it set the economic case for nuclear power competitiveness in its previous programme. No real lessons are drawn from the financial disasters of EPR projects in Olkiluoto or Flamanville or the obstacles to the investment decision regarding Hinkley Point C.

• Instead of discussing the drifting of generating costs and clearly pointing to state aids involved, PINC 2016 is still using biased methodology to downplay the increase of costs and claim they could decrease in future, in denial that construction of new nuclear power plants is uneconomic. The Commission also clearly underestimates the costs and challenges of LTO programmes.

• The investment needs presented by PINC 2016 are a groundless mix of underestimated costs applied to overestimated projections. Investment needs in new reactors and LTO could be underestimated by one third and at least half respectively, making it even less likely that these investments are made.

• The Commission also appears to underestimate by more than half the possible costs for decommissioning and waste disposal, through a mix of low assumptions and omissions. It was a strong request of PINC 2007 that appropriate scheme guarantee that operators will cover the long term liabilities. Insufficient estimates combine with an insufficient rate of constitution of funds and an insufficient security of the funds to put the European taxpayers at risk of taking over hundreds of billions of euros, a pressing issue that the Commission renounces to address.

Through misrepresentation of difficulties, lack of self-criticism for its past assessments and blindness to real challenges, PINC 2016 appears as a nuclear illusory programme. Against the evidence for a strong revision of its nuclear strategy, the Commission is putting the EU at risk of supporting unrealistic nuclear developments while creating more related problems.

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