

ITER

Funding gap for nuclear fusion puts important EU 2020 projects at risk

Today the Council for Agriculture adopted the conclusions on the future financing of the nuclear fusion project ITER as an 'A-item' without debate. **Rebecca Harms**, president of the Greens/EFA group in the European Parliament comments:

"Today's decision to reaffirm the commitment to the ITER project is an impressive demonstration of inability to reconsider past decisions and adapt to a new situation. All the reasons for a reversal are there: The estimated construction costs have tripled before the main construction has even started and nuclear fusion will not contribute to the EU's energy supply for decades - if ever. Several studies have come to the conclusion that renewables will be able to cover the EU's energy supply by 2050. Since fusion will not be commercially available before that, it has become irrelevant for Europe's energy future.

"To add insult to injury, the Council asks the Commission to give preference to financing ITER to the detriment of other, more relevant projects in the framework of the EU 2020 strategy. 1.4 billion Euro earmarked for 2012 and 2013 for the European programmes on innovation and non- nuclear research, education, transport and energy networks and poverty reduction will, according to the Council, simply need to be diverted to close the finance gap of the ITER project. This is outrageous, given that even the Commission itself has stated scepticism towards this approach.

"The least costly option clearly would be abandoning the project before the main construction has started at all. This has however not been considered by the Council at all.

"Today's decision also shows once again the democratic deficit in the EU's nuclear decision making. Despite the strong implications for the EU budget this decision has been taken without discussion in the Council, without prior consultation of Parliament and without proper information to the public. In the upcoming budgetary decisions the Parliament will have to defend the strategic goals of the EU 2020 strategy and prevent the noncritical focus on one energy research option."

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