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ITER nuclear fusion project

Latest budget increase and delay must cause EU to pull the plug

The ITER nuclear fusion project would have its start date further delayed and its budget further increased under a new action plan for the project adopted yesterday by the ITER Council, the project's supervisory body. Reacting to the action plan, the Greens/EFA group called for the EU's support for the project to be suspended. Green budgetary transparency spokesperson **Igor Soltes** said:

"This news that the ITER project will face further delays and need even more funding should really be the final straw. The project is already 3 times over budget and the ITER Council is now admitting that even more funds are needed; it is time for the EU partners to pull the plug. ITER relies on the EU budget for a large proportion of its funding (1). The costs are clearly spiralling out of control and the European taxpayer should not be left to foot the bill. The Court of Auditors has raised concerns about further future cost overruns, delays, mismanagement in the ITER agency and the negative impact on other EU budget lines. It is now clear that these concerns have been confirmed and the EU cannot continue to ignore the situation."

Greens/EFA group co-president and nuclear energy expert **Rebecca Harms** added:

"With such massive cost overruns and ever further delays, the ITER project is turning into a farce. Beyond the unacceptable ballooning budget for ITER and how the project is run, there is the inescapable reality that nuclear fusion is a pipe dream. Even if the disappointing ITER project were to produce some results on its further delayed schedule, we would remain decades away from commercial application. In the meantime, ITER is diverting funds from home-grown and immediately actionable sustainable energy technologies in the energy efficiency and renewables sectors. It is time to finally call time on ITER and European politicians need to stop sticking their heads in the sand."

(1) Over 1/3 of the funding for the ITER nuclear fusion project comes from the EU budget, with the remainder from EU member states and the other participating countries (China, India, Japan, South Korea, Russia and the USA).

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Igor Šoltes

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