Press release | 04.05.2011

Nuclear safety

EU nuclear stress tests set to fall short of thorough risk assessment, ignore terror threat

A decision on the proposed EU nuclear stress tests is expected as early as next week, with the draft stress test criteria already in circulation (1). The Greens are concerned that, based on current drafts, the stress tests would fail to thoroughly assess the risk of nuclear reactors, notably excluding assessment of the risk of terrorist attacks, such as the impact of a passenger airplane crash. Commenting on the draft nuclear stress tests, Greens/EFA co-president and nuclear expert **Rebecca Harms** said:

"Based on current drafts, the proposed EU nuclear stress tests look set to fall far short of rigorously assessing the potential risks and safety of Europe's nuclear reactors. As currently constituted, the stress tests would fail to assess the risks or 'stress' posed to nuclear reactors from a host of potential scenarios. This only serves to underline fears that these stress tests are part of a strategy on the part of the nuclear industry to assuage growing public concerns about nuclear safety and lull the public back to a false sense of security on the risks of nuclear.

"Crucially, the stress tests would fail to assess the ability of a reactor to withstand the impact of passenger plane crash, as well as other potential terrorist attacks. The foiled plot at Sellafield yesterday evening is a timely reminder of the very real threat of a terrorist attack on nuclear installations, which would have catastrophic consequences. That this would simply be omitted is scandalous.

"From the outset, we have been concerned that allowing the nuclear industry to set the parameters of the proposed nuclear stress tests was the wrong approach. It is now clear that this poacher-turned-gamekeeper approach to nuclear safety is flawed. The Commission and Council should instead be moving to immediately shut down the most dangerous reactors, where the threat is already widely known, and developing a comprehensive nuclear phase out strategy."

(1) The deadline for comments on the draft stress criteria is tomorrow (5 May). The consultation and drafting process is being coordinated by the nuclear energy regulators authority (WENRA).
http://www.wenra.org/extra/news/?module_instance=1&id=31
Draft stress tests:
http://www.wenra.org/dynamaster/file_archive/110421/0ea2c97b35d658d73d1013f765e0c87d/StressTests Specifications2011-04-21.pdf

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Rebecca Harms

Member

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