

## **Nuclear industry hails positive evolution of public opinion in the EU**

**Brussels, 3 July 2008: FORATOM welcomes the results of the latest *Eurobarometer* survey, *Attitudes towards radioactive waste*, which was published today. The results show a gradual and significant evolution of public opinion in favour of nuclear power. Since the previous *Eurobarometer* on waste was published in 2005, there are now as many citizens who are in favour of nuclear energy (44%) as are against it (45%). This compares with 37 % in favour and 55% against in 2005. The announcement that a second EPR will be built in France demonstrates that where there is the political will to promote nuclear, there is no reason to believe that public opposition can prevent nuclear new build from going ahead.**

According to the *Eurobarometer* survey, there are now as many EU citizens in favour of nuclear as there are against it and public acceptance has improved in 17 out of 27 EU countries. Radioactive waste remains a major concern, but if those against nuclear felt the issue of radioactive waste management were solved, a majority of EU citizens would be favourable to nuclear (61%). That compares to 57% in the 2005 *Eurobarometer*.

This positive evolution reflects the nuclear revival in Europe. Even in countries where a nuclear phase-out policy is being implemented like Sweden, Germany and Belgium, debates on the issue are taking place and support for nuclear power is quite strong. Moreover recent political declarations in the UK and Italy show that nuclear is gathering momentum throughout Europe. It indicates that when political decisions to increase nuclear capacity are taken, public acceptance tends to improve as has been the case in the UK.

The population is now aware of nuclear power's benefits: 64% of EU citizens believe that nuclear energy enables European countries to diversify their energy sources, 63% believe that using more nuclear energy would help reduce Europe's dependency upon oil, 62% agree that one of the main advantages of nuclear energy is that it produces less greenhouse gas emissions than coal and oil.

Indeed, the *Eurobarometer's* results show that the greater the level of knowledge, the more favourable public opinion is towards nuclear energy. On average EU citizens do not feel well informed about nuclear issues in general and radioactive waste in particular. However, in countries where the level of knowledge is greater, like Sweden, Finland and the Netherlands, public opinion is also more favourable to nuclear power.

The European nuclear industry is committed to engaging in an open dialogue on Europe's energy future with all stakeholders. Commenting on the results of the latest *Eurobarometer*, FORATOM Director General, Santiago San Antonio, stressed: "The results of the latest *Eurobarometer* show that opinions towards nuclear are on average quite moderate in the EU and that in many countries citizens are very much in favour of nuclear. The recent positive evolution of public opinion can be accounted for by the open debates that have been going on in many EU countries on energy and nuclear power. It indicates that information and transparency are essential for the future of the European nuclear industry."

For further information contact Mark O'Donovan at: Tel. 02/505 32 26 or email: [mark.odonovan@foratom.org](mailto:mark.odonovan@foratom.org)