

## EU Institution Endorses Nuclear Power Option

**Brussels, 7 June 2001:** A key EU institution, the European Economic and Social Committee (ESC), has strongly endorsed the use of nuclear power to meet the energy supply and climate change challenges facing the European Community.

The ESC, an important EU consultative body also known as ECOSOC, has issued its response to the European Commission's Green Paper on security of energy supply, published last November.

The ESC said yesterday (Wednesday)\* that the committee adopted – without opposition – an 'opinion' on 30 May, stating that the best way to reduce energy supply risk was to "ensure the most diverse and balanced possible use of different types and forms of energy". About 35% of the EU's electricity is generated by nuclear power plants, which emit virtually no greenhouse or acid rain gases.

The committee has taken the view that EU member states should take their own decisions on the use of nuclear power, and that this independent decision-making must be respected in the future.

**The ESC adds: "However, it is difficult to see how the EU can in future meet the challenges of climate change and ensuring energy supply at reasonable prices without nuclear power continuing to make at least its current contribution to electricity production. Nuclear power may also in the future support the developing hydrogen economy, which requires a secure supply of electricity or natural gas."**

The ESC's position has been welcomed by FORATOM, the trade association for the nuclear industry in Europe. Secretary General Dr. Wolf-J. Schmidt-Küster said: "The committee statement shows there is broad-based recognition of the important role that nuclear power plays in meeting Europe's economic and environmental targets. This contrasts sharply with the steps taken by some European governments to phase-out nuclear for purely political reasons."

The ESC acts as an advisor to the three main EU Institutions – the European Parliament, Council and Commission. The committee also seeks to promote input into EU policy matters from civil society. The ESC is made up of 222 representatives from all EU member states, drawn from organisations representing employers, workers, farmers, the professions, consumers, environmentalists and NGOs involved in social issues.

The Green Paper was published to initiate a wide-ranging and dispassionate debate on security of energy supply in the EU. The Community is currently dependent on imports to meet about 50% of its energy needs, but this level of dependency is expected to rise to 70% over the next 20-30 years. As one of "tomorrow's priorities", the Green Paper said: "The nuclear option must be examined in terms of its contribution to security of supply and greenhouse gas emission reductions."

FORATOM's response to the Green Paper is available on the Internet (<http://www.foratom.org>).

\* ESC Press Release:

[http://www.esc.eu.int/pages/en/acs/press\\_rels/cp\\_ces63-2001\\_cp\\_en.PDF](http://www.esc.eu.int/pages/en/acs/press_rels/cp_ces63-2001_cp_en.PDF)

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