

■ EU Energy Policy Diary 2009



European Parliament backs investment plan for nuclear energy

On 3 February, a report on the Second Strategic Energy Review (SER II), which was drawn up by MEP Anne Laperrouze (ALDE, France), was adopted in the European parliament (EP) by a large majority of MEPs (406 votes in favour, 168 votes against, and 87 abstentions). The *Laperrouze Report* called for a specific roadmap for investments in nuclear power and highlighted the key issues of security of supply, energy independence and investing in energy infrastructures. It recommended that EU energy Policy should be founded on a balanced mix of non-carbon energy sources, the lowest emitting fossil fuels and new carbon-mitigating technologies and that nuclear power be “*used safely and transparently, and at the highest technologically possible level of safety.*” It also recommended mandatory emergency plans in the event of gas shortages, more grid interconnections among Member States, new climate change targets to be met by 2050 (cutting greenhouse gases by 80%, a 60% share of renewables and 35% improvement in energy efficiency) and further investment in nuclear energy.

The result of the vote in favour of the *Laperrouze Report* underlined how a large majority within the EP sees nuclear energy as having an important role to play at the heart of the energy mix and EU energy policy in general.

For further information, you can read the press release of the European Parliament at: http://www.europarl.europa.eu/news/expert/infopress_page/051-48107-033-02-06-909-20090203IPR48106-02-02-2009-2009-false/default_en.htm



EP backs EU-wide safety framework

On 22 April, the EP adopted by a resounding majority (511 in favour, 116 against and 36 abstentions) an own-initiative report on the draft Council Directive on nuclear safety entitled, *Setting up a Community Framework for Nuclear Safety*, which the EC had proposed in November 2008. It was tabled by the MEP and *rapporteur*, Gunnar Hökmark (EPP-ED, Sweden). Under the Euratom treaty, the report was only a consultative document. However, it showed how a majority of MEPs support the establishing of a new Community framework governing nuclear safety based on continually improving safety standards at all nuclear installations across the EU. It stressed that safety applied to workers in the nuclear sector, as well as to the public and the environment. It also urged Member States to ensure the independence of their national safety regulators.

The adoption of the *Hökmark Report* demonstrated the EP's growing support for nuclear power - a fact that was reinforced by the fact that all the proposed Green Party amendments were rejected.



ENEF contributes to the development of nuclear energy

On 29 May, the fourth meeting of the European Nuclear Energy Forum (ENEF) took place in Prague, during the Czech Republic of the EU Presidency. The meeting underlined the continuing importance of the ENEF process to the development of nuclear energy policy in the EU. Here is a summary of what of the main protagonists said at the meeting:

Jan Fischer, Prime Minister of the Czech Republic, his Slovak counterpart Robert Fico and former EU Commissioner for Employment and Social Affairs and Equal Opportunity, Vladimír Špidla, kicked off the conference. *A propos* the draft Directive on nuclear safety Prime Minister Fisher pointed out that: *“the Czech presidency is focusing on nuclear safety.”* He also expressed the belief that the Directive could be adopted by the Council in June. Commissioner Špidla stressed how the draft Directive *“takes into account the opinion of ENEF.”* Janos Toth, President of Transport and Energy section of the European Economic and Social Committee (EESC) reiterated the need to *“make the ENEF process better known”* and *“more available and open to the civil society because at the end of the day it is public opinion that will decide on nuclear new build.”*

The three participating anti-nuclear NGOs, Greenpeace, Friends of the Earth and *Sortir du Nucléaire*, walked out of the Forum because they felt it was biased in favour of the nuclear industry. However, other civil society organisations like EESC (European Economic and Social Committee), ANCLI (the national association of local information committees, in France) and GMF (the Group of Municipalities with Nuclear Facilities) remained onboard.

The Chairpersons of the three ENEF Working Groups (WGs) - *Risks, Opportunities* and *Transparency* - gave an overview of the work each WG had done since the previous ENEF meeting. It was decided that the ENEF plenary sessions would take place once a year instead of biannually to allow more time for the WGs to deliver concrete results.

For further information, the press release of the EC can be accessed at:

<http://europa.eu/rapid/pressReleasesAction.do?reference=IP/09/853&format=HTML&aged=0&language=en&guiLanguage=en>



Institutional changes: new EP, President Barroso receives backing for second term

On 7 June, the EP elections took place. The centre-right European Peoples' Party -European Democrats (EPP-ED) group was the clear winner, largely at the expense of the Party of European Socialists (PES), the second largest group. The elections also saw the emergence of a eurosceptic alliance called the European Conservatives and Reformists (ECR). It includes the British Conservatives, who had earlier withdrawn from the EPP-ED group and eurosceptics from the Czech Republic and Poland.

The question on everyone's lips was "How favourable to nuclear energy is the newly-configured EP going to be?" EPP-ED MEPs remain generally in favour nuclear energy (except for intrinsically anti-nuclear countries like as Austria, Ireland and Greece). The ECR is likely to follow the largely pro-nuclear views of the EPP-ED group on nuclear issues. The European Socialists (PSE) and the liberal democrats (ALDE) remain divided on the issue of nuclear energy. The Greens/EFA (European Free Alliance) made substantial gains, increasing its number of seats from 43 to 52, making them an anti-nuclear group that had to be reckoned with.

On 18 June, EU heads of State unanimously voiced their support for the re-election of EC President José Manuel Barroso. His re-election was seen as a positive thing for the nuclear industry, since he has repeatedly recognised the role of nuclear in the EU low-carbon energy mix.

Following the adoption of the Lisbon Treaty in November 2009 the configuration of the EP changed. As of December 2009, there are now 751 MEPs (instead of 736 after the June elections). Some of the political groupings have changed their name and the ECR (European Conservatives and Reformists) have, as expected, formed their own group. The new political groupings are as follows: EPP265, S & D (former PES) 184, ALDE 84, Greens/EFA 55, ECR 54, EUL/NGL 35, EFD 32 and NI (Independents) 27. There are a further 15 MEPs yet to take their place in the EP. It is not yet clear to which political groupings they will belong. Things will become clearer in early 2010.



EU adopts nuclear safety binding legal framework

On 25 June, at the Environment Council in Luxembourg, the Council adopted the Directive establishing a new Community framework for nuclear safety based on the principle of the further harmonisation of safety standards at nuclear installations across the EU. The Directive was endorsed by the EP and the EESC.

This new legislation reiterated how the safety of workers, the general public and the environment are of paramount and equal importance. The European nuclear industry welcomed the news stating that safety had always been, and will always remain, its primary consideration. It added that it had always supported the need for an EU-wide nuclear safety framework to ensure the further harmonisation of safety standards at all of Europe's nuclear facilities.

The Directive, which is legally binding but still needs to be transposed into national legislation by Member States, ensures the independence of regulators and will contribute to improving public acceptance by giving EU citizens guarantees regarding the safety of nuclear facilities.

The EC's press release can be consulted at:

<http://europa.eu/rapid/pressReleasesAction.do?reference=IP/09/1039&format=HTML&aged=0&language=EN&guiLanguage=en#footnote-2> and the Nuclear Safety Directive at: <http://register.consilium.europa.eu/pdf/en/09/st10/st10667.en09.pdf>.



EP elects new President and Committee Chairmen

From 14 - 16 July, the first plenary session of the new EP took place in Strasbourg. The EP elected its new President and the Chairmen of the EP's Committees. Since the EPP-ED group (later renamed the European People's Party EPP) had won the election it had the responsibility to elect the new President. It elected MEP Jerzy Buzek (EPP-ED, Poland) as the new President of the EP. He was elected with a thumping majority - he obtained 555 votes - 86.18 % of the total. President Buzek is the first President of the EP to come from Central and Eastern Europe and will hold office for two and a half years (until January 2012).

MEP Herbert Reul (EPP, Germany) was elected Chairman of the Industry, Research and Energy (ITRE) Committee. He was the author of an own-initiative report entitled *Conventional Energy Sources and Energy Technology* that was adopted by the EP in October 2007. In it he expressed his views on nuclear energy, referring to it as: "*the largest low-carbon energy source in Europe*" and "*a key component in Europe's future energy mix.*" His election underlined how MEPs now treated nuclear energy on an equal footing with other energy sources.

The new Chairman of ENVI Committee was confirmed as MEP Jo Leinen (S&D, Germany). He is not in favour of nuclear energy.

Further information can be gleaned from the EP's website at: http://www.europarl.europa.eu/news/public/default_en.htm.



EC recommends more investment in research on clean technologies, including nuclear

On 7 October, the EC published a Communication entitled, *Investing in the development of low-carbon energy technologies*. It was a step forward in the implementation of the Strategic Energy Technology Plan (SET-Plan), which is the main technology component of the EU's energy and climate policy. It mentioned the key clean technologies that require increased investment in R&D, which include sustainable nuclear fission. The Communication showed how the EC sees advancing low carbon R&D as a priority.

Sustainable nuclear fission is recognised as a prominent low carbon technology and the Communication recommended that the EU invest €7 billion in it as part of an overall €50 billion investment drive aimed at promoting clean energy technology R&D over the next ten years and stimulating jobs, growth and competitiveness in the EU. This drive will increase current annual funding from €3 billion to €8 billion.

Finally, the Communication stressed the importance of increasing both private and public investment, which will provide impetus to the implementation of the SET-Plan

The EC's press release on the Communication can be viewed at:

(<http://europa.eu/rapid/pressReleasesAction.do?reference=IP/09/1431&type=HTML&aged=0&language=EN&guiLanguage=en>) and the communication itself at:

(http://ec.europa.eu/energy/technology/set_plan/doc/2009_comm_investing_development_low_carbon_technologies_en.pdf).



Technology Platform for Implementing Geological Disposal launched

On 12 November, the Technology Platform for Implementing Geological Disposal (IGD-TP) of nuclear waste was launched in Brussels with the support of the EC. European Technology Platforms (TPs) provide a framework for stakeholders, including industry and end-users, to define R&D priorities, timeframes and action plans for the development of key technologies. They address technological challenges that can potentially contribute to a number of key policy objectives essential for Europe's future competitiveness.

The IGD-TP launch marked the end of a process that was piloted by radioactive waste management organisations in Sweden, Finland and France. Among those involved were ONDRAF/NIRAS (Belgium), Posiva (Finland), ANDRA (France), ENRESA (Spain), SKB (Sweden), NAGRA (Switzerland), NDA (UK). Also involved in the process was BMWi - the German Federal Ministry of Economics and Technology. These bodies consulted widely with R&D organisations and other stakeholders, including national authorities, academia and international associations.

A *Vision Document* was presented at the launch event. It described the mission, objectives, benefits and organisation of the TP and summarised the technical steps needed within a 10 -15 years timeframe to construct the world's first geological repositories for high-level and long-lived nuclear waste. It stated that the highest safety and environmental protection standards will be strived for at all times.



EU Copenhagen strategy Resolution: nuclear is part of low-carbon energy mix

On 25 November 2009, the European Parliament adopted a Resolution on the EU Strategy for the Copenhagen Conference on Climate Change (COP 15). The Resolution "*stresses that an international shift towards a low-carbon economy will consider nuclear energy as an important part of the energy mix in the medium term*". It "*points out, however, that the issue of safety and security of the nuclear fuel cycle must be addressed in an appropriate manner at international level in order to ensure the highest possible level of safety*".

The Parliament's delegation consisted of approximately 50 MEPs from all political parties and was chaired by MEP Mr. Jo Leinen (S&D, Germany). Mr. Leinen is the Chairman of the Committee on Environment, Public Health and Food Safety (ENVI). Furthermore, Connie Hedegaard, who chaired the summit, was recommended by EC President Barroso as candidate for the newly-created European Commission's Climate Action portfolio.



German politician proposed for EC's energy portfolio

On 27 November, EC President, José Manuel Barroso, announced that his recommendation for the nomination as the next Energy Commissioner was Günther Öttinger, from Germany. Mr Öttinger has been Minister President for the Baden-Württemberg region since 2005. He belongs to the Christian Democratic Union Party (CDU) in Germany, the largely pro-nuclear party of Chancellor Merkel. Mr Öttinger has declared that he is in favour of extending the operational duration of Germany's NPPs.

President Barroso recommended Janec Potocnik from Slovenia (currently R&D Commissioner) for the environment portfolio and Connie Hedegaard, from Denmark, as the first ever Climate Actions Commissioner.

All prospective Commissioners will be interviewed during hearings with the relevant EP Committee(s). Mr. Potocnik will be interviewed by the ENVI Committee at a hearing on 13 January 2010. Mr. Oettinger's hearing with the ITRE Committee will take place on 14 January. Mrs. Hedegaard's hearing with both the ENVI and the ITRE Committees will take place on 15 January.

The EP will vote on the nominations on 26 January and then the Council will have its say. The new Commission will most probably begin its work as of approximately mid-February.

For further information on Mr. Öttinger's you can read his CV at: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/G%C3%BCnther_Oettinger) and the EC's press release at: (<http://europa.eu/rapid/pressReleasesAction.do?reference=IP/09/1837&format=HTML&aged=0&language=EN&guiLanguage=en>).