

Ursula VON DER LEYEN
President
European Commission
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BELGIUM

23 july 2021

Subject : follow up letter from trade unions in the European nuclear sector

Dear Mrs von der Leyen, dear President of the European Commission,

Eleven energy trade unions from six European countries sent you a letter on 28 January. We drew your attention to the necessity of including nuclear power in the European taxonomy on the basis of a technology-neutral evaluation with regard to the DNSH criteria and respecting a fair treatment of the various sectors and their employees.

We brought to your attention the fact that the exclusion of nuclear power from the taxonomy would have a strong negative impact not only on the European nuclear industry (more than one million jobs) but also on all European industries using nuclear energy, in particular electro-intensive industries. We also underlined that Europe's transition to low-carbon energy needs the advantages of nuclear power in order to succeed and that Europe can only achieve the Green Deal objectives through decisions based on the best scientific advice, allowing for a climate efficient, economically sustainable and socially just energy policy.

Since our letter, in March 2021, the European Commission's Joint Research Center carried out the assessment suggested by the TEG and concluded: "*The analyses revealed no scientific evidence that nuclear power is more damaging to human health or the environment than other power generation technologies already included in the taxonomy as climate change supporting activities*". The JRC clearly called for the inclusion of nuclear power in the taxonomy.

Several expert and auditing bodies in different countries have drawn attention to the dangers of an imbalance of a too high percentage of intermittent renewable energy for the reliability of the electricity system. This is notably the case of France Stratégie, the Federal Court of Auditors in Germany (Bundesrechnungshof), the International Energy Agency and now the Swedish transmission system operator : they all warn of the growing dangers of blackouts, brownouts, and grid collapse as the share of solar and wind power increases and adjustment power is insufficient.

More than ever, we will need the controllable and abundant baseload energy of nuclear power. As a publication of a first delegated act has been proposed by the Commission, we wish to express our concerns about a complementary Delegated Act possibly covering nuclear announced without any clear timetable.

Given that almost half of the decarbonized electricity produced in the European Union comes from nuclear energy, we believe that adopting at this stage a regulation that would qualify their revenues or a large part of their revenues as "not eligible for taxonomy" would create significant market distortions from 2022 onwards and affect the ability of a large numbers of nuclear energy companies or companies for which nuclear is part of their energy mix to attract external financing. As we mentioned in our first letter, extension of existing nuclear reactor is a priority, new generation nuclear reactors will soon be connected or are planned and concerning small nuclear units, we can now read news from the United States about plans to take these into use for electricity production.

As seven European heads of state (Czech Republic, Romania, France, Slovakia, Hungary, Slovenia, Poland) pointed out in a joint letter to the Commission on 19 March 2021, this discrimination against nuclear power would lead to a significant loss of high-quality jobs in many European countries in addition to drawbacks for low-carbon energy production. Already important new nuclear and hydrogen development projects in France, Poland, Finland, and the Czech Republic would be seriously affected in their financing if a quick science based decision respecting technological neutrality was not finalised at the same time for all energies concerned.

In this perspective, strict consideration should be given to a fair way of including nuclear energy production in the taxonomy. In the absence of a single delegated act dealing with the different energies and if it is not possible to achieve a quasi-simultaneous promulgation of the main Delegated Act and the complementary Delegated Act, we ask you to postpone the first Delegated Act until the adoption of the complementary Delegated Act announced by the Commission. Another possibility is to suspend the reporting requirements for activities that are not considered as excluded from the taxonomy and for which the assessment is ongoing, such as nuclear energy production.

Our organisations are committed to the success of European ambitions for a low-carbon energy transition, which were further strengthened last May with a 55% reduction target for 2030 and the achievement of European climate neutrality by 2050.

We are convinced that this transition cannot succeed without nuclear power, at least for those Member States that make this choice, thus meeting one of the primary objectives of the Treaty establishing the Euratom Community and respecting Article 194 of the TFEU, which allows each Member State to develop the energy of its choice independently of the choice of others. The employees of the European nuclear industry and of all the associated sectors that we represent are ready to play their part and to contribute to the success of a fair, efficient and equitable transition.

Respectfully yours,

Joint piece : previous letter, from trade unions in the European nuclear sector – 28 January 2021



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Jari Jokinen
Secretary General
Academic Engineers and Architects in Finland TEK



FR - Cyrille VINCENT, secrétaire national



FR - Sébastien MENESPLIER, secrétaire général



FR - Hélène LOPEZ, secrétaire générale



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