

Energy | 18.09.2010

Huge Berlin protest targets government's nuclear policy



Nuclear energy is unpopular in Germany

Anti-nuclear protestors took to the streets of Berlin on Saturday to voice their anger over the government's decision to extend the lifespans of Germany's atomic reactors. Organizers say around 100,000 people took part.

At least 30,000 people marched through the streets of Berlin to voice their anger over the government's decision to keep nuclear reactors in use beyond a deadline set by the previous government.

The demonstration was organized by various environmental and anti-nuclear groups, with high-ranking politicians from opposition parties also taking part.

People formed a human chain around Germany's parliament building, the Reichstag, and the chancellery, while using whistles and hooters to stage a "nuclear alarm." There was also a rally at Berlin's central railway station.



The protests were organized by environmental groups

"We will show the government that it won't get very far with its nuclear energy policy," said one of the organizers Jochen Stay.

Huge turnout

Organizers say around 100,000 people took part in the demonstrations, far more than expected. The police say, there were at least 40,000 protestors.

The previous government decided in 2000 to shut down all nuclear plants by 2021, but the current governing coalition of Angela Merkel's Christian Democratic Union and the Free Democratic Party now wants to extend that deadline by 10 or 15 years as a stop-gap measure until renewable energy sources are more developed.

The opposition parties as well as environmental and some renewable energy groups accuse the government of pandering to the big energy providers.



Germany has no permanent storage facility for nuclear waste

"The government's decision to extend the lifespans of nuclear reactors is a dirty deal and it favors companies like RWE, E.On, EnBW and Vattenfall," Juergen Trittin, the head of the Greens in parliament and former environment minister, said at the rally.

But the government defended its policy on Saturday, accusing the opposition parties of playing into people's fear of atomic energy without offering real solutions.

"Back then, the former governing coalition of Greens and Social Democrats decided to turn its back on nuclear energy without thinking it through," Hermann Groehe, secretary general of the Christian Democrats said on Saturday.

"They simply shut out any thoughts on where our energy will come from in future and where we're going to store atomic waste," he added.

Author: Nicole Goebel (dpa/Reuters/AFP)

Editor: Ben Knight