

Nuclear Power | 01.10.2007

Some EU Officials Want to Resist Nuclear Power Renaissance



High-ranking European government officials, representing seven anti-nuclear states called Monday for alternatives to nuclear energy, which is experiencing a renaissance as attention turns to lowering greenhouse gases.

Politicians questioned the actual benefits nuclear energy would bring the environment

Representatives from Germany, Austria, Ireland, Norway, Italy, Luxembourg, and Latvia started a two-day meeting in Vienna on Sunday, Sept. 30, to forge a joint declaration against nuclear energy. Participating politicians called for more investments in energy-efficiency measures and renewable energies rather than nuclear power.

"We are no anti-nuclear coalition, but we want to show alternatives," said Austrian Environment Minister Josef Pröll. The declaration, focusing on the safety and security risks surrounding nuclear energy, said this form of energy was not the best way to fight climate change.

Matthias Machnig, German deputy minister for environment, criticized the alleged positive role of nuclear energy in reducing global greenhouse gases as a "myth," adding that the world's combined power plants would only contribute with 8 percent to carbon dioxide reduction.

The discussion on nuclear energy only slowed down investment into energy efficiency and alternative energy forms, he said.

Nuclear renaissance?



The Chernobyl disaster led some countries to rethink their nuclear power strategy

Support for nuclear energy dropped after the 1986 Chernobyl disaster but the energy source has come back into fashion as governments and officials look at strategies toward lowering greenhouse gas emissions. Recent increases in gas and oil prices as well as questions about the reliability of Russian energy supplies have also raised European energy concerns.

European Union Energy Commissioner Andris Piebalgs said in an interview published in Spanish daily *El Pais* on Monday that the EU should aim to generate 30 percent of its electricity from nuclear sources in order to ensure member states' energy security.

Industry officials are promoting third-generation pressurized water reactors which provide greater energy, improved security and reduced waste compared to earlier versions of nuclear reactors. These new reactors are still rejected by environmentalists.

Long-term ecological effects



Nuclear power opponents question what will become of radioactive waste

But Italy's Environment Minister Alfonso Pecoraro Scanio warned of the long-term ecological effects -- his country is still dealing with nuclear waste, 20 years after quitting nuclear energy.

Latvia was the only country in the group that is actively moving ahead with expanding its nuclear energy capabilities, while all other seven members either have no nuclear energy or are planning a phase-out, like Germany.

The cooperation was no contradiction, Latvia's deputy environment secretary Martins Jirgens said, as he hoped the planned Latvian involvement in the construction of the Lithuanian nuclear reactor Ignalina would not go ahead.

An issue for national governments

European Commission chief Jose Manuel Barroso urged EU nations on Monday to hold a "total and frank debate" about the use of nuclear energy.

"Member states can not avoid the question of nuclear energy," he said Monday during an energy conference in Madrid. "It is not the EU's role to decide if they should or should not use nuclear power."

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