



12. NUCLEAR CRISIS: Germany plans more rapid nuclear phaseout (03/25/2011)

Germany is leading the way in schemes to abandon nuclear energy by wagering billions on expanding renewable energy to meet power demands.

In the wake of the nuclear crisis in Japan, Germany is the only industrialized nation attempting to stop using nuclear energy because of its risks. Germany has the world's fourth-largest economy.

The country had planned a slow, 25-year transition to renewable energy, but the Fukushima disaster rapidly accelerated it.

Berlin recently took seven of its 17 reactors offline for three months for new safety checks. In turn, it's provided insight into how Germany will be able to phase out nuclear energy, from which it currently gets almost a quarter of its power. Specialists are saying that it's a good path for countries like the United States to follow.

"If we had the winds of Texas or the sun of California, the task here would be even easier," said Felix Matthes of Germany's Institute for Applied Ecology. "Given the great potential in the U.S., it would be feasible there in the long run, too."

But countries like France, which depends on atomic energy for more than 70 percent of its power, may face a greater challenge in moving past nuclear. France has no plans to phase out nuclear.

Nuclear has little popularity in Germany ever since radioactivity from the 1986 Chernobyl disaster in Ukraine spread across the country. Previous governments made plans to completely abandon nuclear technology by 2021, but those were amended last year when a 12-year extension on the plants' lifetime was granted. The extension is currently being re-evaluated (Juergen Baetz, [Associated Press](#), March 24). -- JJP

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