

The “Call for a Nuclear Transparency Watch”

4th December 2012, Brussels

This text is proposed for signature to the elected officials after the NTW meeting on the 4th December 2012, European Parliament, Brussels.

The Fukushima accident has raised all over the world, the societal awareness of the risks and catastrophic potential entailed by civil nuclear activities and of the imperative necessity to reach and maintain a high level of nuclear safety. There is now a wide range of public and governmental attitudes towards the role of nuclear power. However, vigilance on nuclear safety will remain a topical issue whatever is the position of each Member State vis-à-vis nuclear energy, even in the countries which have decided to phase out for they will have to undertake decommissioning activities over many decades and radioactive waste management on the long term. In other Member States, a possible decrease of the share of nuclear electricity production could have a significant impact on nuclear safety and environmental protection in a context of declining industries associated with decreased human resources and increasing cost constraints. The decrease of nuclear activities does not necessarily entail, at least in the short term, the decline of nuclear risks. There is no border for nuclear accidents. Nuclear safety has a European dimension that transcends borders and involves the introduction of enhanced European cooperation. Vigilance on nuclear safety will therefore remain a key European issue in the future whatever choices will be made on the energy mix.

We, as European elected officials in charge of regulating environment, health and energy policies are aware that nuclear safety entails an actual engagement and vigilance of civil society in the follow up of the safety of nuclear activities as stated by the terms of the Aarhus Convention. Nuclear safety does not only entail a high commitment of the nuclear operators and safety authorities. As soon as favourable conditions are created, there are many examples where civil society organisations develop a counter-expertise which reports a different point of view compared to the one of industry and regulators, thus contributing to increase the quality of decision-making on safety. These disputes allow elected officials to hear different points of reasoning and to improve their understanding of what is at stake.

A lot is still to be done to deploy the contribution of civil society to nuclear safety in a systematic way in the context of the many European nuclear facilities. A precondition of societal vigilance is the effective public access to reliable information and expertise on nuclear safety. The vigilance of civil society is not only requested at local and national levels in the decision-making on nuclear safety. It is also needed at European level where regulators, operators, experts are increasingly developing cooperation with European institutions such as the EP and the EC, as witness the trend of regulating nuclear activities with ad-hoc European directives (on nuclear safety and radwaste management), organising the European Nuclear Energy Forum, together with other instances and initiatives such as the post-Fukushima European Stress-Tests. Whereas the industry is well organised at national and European levels, there is an observed deficit of structuration of civil society at European level that impedes its capacity to raise its voice.

As European elected officials, in order to raise the voice of civil society in the EU decision-making processes on nuclear activities and on energy policies and to convey effectively the civil society views to us, to the public and to the media, we therefore call on civil society (CSOs, trade unions, academic researchers, think-tanks) to organize to create one (or more) civil society network(s) capable of :

1. raising awareness of policy makers and European society on the necessity to increase the transparency of nuclear activities,
2. developing a counter-expertise of the civil society on nuclear safety at local, national and European levels,
3. providing support to initiatives and local civil society organizations in the Member States.

As elected officials from different political families we may differ on the measures to be taken. But we all agree on the need to maintain in the EU a high level of nuclear safety and from this perspective to increase nuclear transparency and the engagement of the civil society in the decisions regarding the nuclear industry.

As MEPs, we invite the Members of national parliaments to join our call.

December 2012