

Why Europeans need nuclear power

Stakes here are high: do we truly have the ambition, or not, to fight climate change and to achieve energy independence? Will we rely on our best assets, or not, to decarbonise our economy?

Climate change is not the future's, but today's leading battle. In its last report on climate change, the IPCC made its predictions very clear: our 1.5°C to 2°C target for global warming by the 21st century will never be reached, unless deep reductions in greenhouse gas emissions occur in the coming eight years.

The rise of energy prices have also shown how important is it to reduce our energy dependence on third countries as fast as possible. Supply tensions will be more and more frequent and we have no choice but to diversify our supply. We should pay attention not to increase our dependency on energy imports from outside Europe.

Decarbonising requires immediate and profound transitions in our production and consumption activities to make them less carbon-intensive. This implies electrifying massively our uses and developing low-carbon energy industries such as hydrogen, which also require electricity production.

Nuclear power must be part of the solution. While renewable energy sources play a key role for our energy transition, we need also other emission-free energy sources to meet our needs, at a sufficient and a constant level. Nuclear power is necessary. It already accounts for about half of the European carbon-free electricity production.

Nuclear is a key affordable, stable and independent energy source. Firstly, because it prevents European consumers to be exposed to the volatility of prices, as we currently face with gas prices. Secondly, because it contributes decisively to the independence of our energy and electricity supplies. It is an available carbon-free energy that can deliver a wide amount of competitive electricity without increasing our dependencies to third countries' energy supply.

Nuclear power is safe and innovative. For more than sixty years, the European nuclear industry has proven its reliability and safety. It is one of the most regulated sectors in the world, with 126 nuclear power reactors operating in 14 Member States. Constant knowledge sharing between agencies gives the industry the ability to reach the highest security standards in the world. This is especially true for waste management methods.

The European nuclear industry is a world-leading and technology-intensive industry. The development of the industry could guarantee high-qualified jobs to over a million European workers in the near future. As cooperation between Member States grows, we will soon have the ability to build new modern reactors, such as the Small Modular Reactor (SMR) project.

This is why nuclear power must be treated equally to all other low-carbon energy sources. The European Treaties enable each Member State to define its own energy mix. Our rights must be guaranteed and all low-carbon technologies for electricity production should be considered on an equal footing.

It is, therefore, absolutely necessary that nuclear power is included in the European taxonomy framework by the end of 2021. All scientific assessments requested by the European Commission on the environmental impacts of nuclear energy come to the same conclusion: there is no science-based evidence that nuclear power is less climate-friendly than any of the energy sources included in the taxonomy.

To win the climate battle, we need nuclear power. It is, for us all, a crucial and reliable asset for a low-carbon future. All in all, nuclear power is a clean, safe, independent and a competitive low-carbon source of energy. Nuclear power is an opportunity for us Europeans, to continue developing a strong value-added industry, to create thousands of qualified jobs, to strengthen our environmental leadership and to ensure Europe's strategic autonomy and energy self-sufficiency. Let us not miss such a crucial opportunity.

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Romania: Virgil Popescu, Minister of Energy and Interim Minister of Economy,
Entrepreneurship and Tourism ja Dan Vîlceanu, Minister of Finance

Czech Republic: Karel Havlíček, Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Industry and Trade,
Minister of Transport of the Czech Republic

Finland: Mika Lintilä, Minister of Economic Affairs

France: Bruno Le Maire, Minister for the Economy, Finance and the Recovery ja Agnès
Pannier-Runacher, Minister Delegate for Industry

Slovakia: Igor Matovič, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance

Croatia: Zdravko Marić, PhD, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance ja Tomislav
Ćorić, Minister of Economy and Sustainable Development,

Slovenia: Andrej Šircelj, Minister of Finance ja Jernej Vrtovec, Minister of Infrastructure

Bulgaria: Andrey Zhivkov, Minister of Energy of the Republic of Bulgaria

Poland: Tadeusz Kościński, Minister of Finance, Development Funds and Regional Policy ja
Michał Kurtyka, Minister of Climate and Environment

Hungary: Mihály Varga, Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Finance