Opinion of the European Economic and Social Committee on the ‘Communication from the Commission to the Council and the European Parliament — Nuclear Illustrative Programme, presented under Article 40 of the Euratom Treaty for the opinion of the European Economic and Social Committee’

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(2007/C 256/11)

On 10 January 2007, the European Commission decided to consult the European Economic and Social Committee, under Article 40 of the Euratom Treaty, on the abovementioned proposal.

The Section for Transport, Energy, Infrastructure and the Information Society, which was responsible for preparing the Committee’s work on the subject, adopted its opinion on 19 June 2007. The rapporteur was Ms Sirkeinen.

At its 437th plenary session, held on 11 and 12 July 2007 (meeting of 12 July 2007), the European Economic and Social Committee adopted the following opinion by 81 votes to 28 with 15 abstentions.

1. Summary

1.1 In 2004 the EESC suggested in its Opinion ‘The issues involved in using nuclear power in electricity generation’ that ‘efforts should be made to provide information on the real issues of the nuclear industry: security of supply, elimination of CO₂ emissions, competitive prices and safety and management of spent fuel, so that organised civil society can carry out a critical analysis of the debates on these issues’. The new Nuclear Illustrative Programme (PINC) provides such information. The EESC broadly agrees with the analysis and description presented in the Commission communication. Most of the essential aspects concerning nuclear power are taken up and, in our view, correctly described. The Committee in addition points to some aspects of nuclear power to be taken into account.

1.2 Nuclear energy, with its share of 31 % of electricity and 15 % of the total primary energy consumption in the EU in 2004, plays a crucial role in the energy market. Nuclear also meets fully the objectives of EU energy policy. The cost of nuclear power is today clearly competitive. The external dependence is small and sources of fuel are diversified and secure, which meets the requirements of security of supply. Nuclear power is currently the largest source of essentially carbon dioxide free energy in Europe.

1.3 Following the European Council’s decision on greenhouse gas emission targets for 2020 and beyond, it is evident that all additional low carbon power generation capacity, be it renewables, nuclear or potentially clean coal, should substitute CO₂-emitting capacity and thereby add to total low-carbon electricity. In practical terms, if at least the present share of nuclear power is not maintained until totally new clean energy solutions may be available, climate and other energy policy goals are not to be met.

1.4 The EESC underlines the persistently important role of the EU to develop further the most advanced framework for nuclear energy in those Member States that choose nuclear power, in conformity with the highest standards of safety, security and non-proliferation as required by the Euratom Treaty.

1.5 The most important tasks is a solution to the question of radioactive waste, and especially final disposal of spent nuclear fuel, to which technology exists but political decisions are lacking. The EESC also agrees with the Commission on the other issues that still require attention at the EU level: Nuclear safety and radiological protection, which have a very good record in Europe, as well as secured long-term funding of decommissioning.

1.6 The EESC points attention to some additional aspects of nuclear power that have not been covered by the draft PINC. These are the threat of terrorism and in some power plants the issue of sufficient availability of cooling water.

1.7 For Member States which wish to persevere with nuclear power a concern could be the lack of attractiveness of the sector as an employer and research topic. The EESC agrees with the Commission’s view that expertise in radiological protection and nuclear technology is fundamental for the EU, and therefore education, training and research in these areas need attention.

1.8 Finally, the EESC underlines each Member States right to choose its own energy mix, including the use of nuclear as is mentioned in the PINC.

2. Introduction

2.1 According to Article 40 of the Euratom Treaty, the European Commission shall periodically publish illustrative programmes indicating in particular nuclear energy production targets and all the types of investment required for their attainment. The Commission shall obtain the opinion of the Economic and Social Committee on such programmes before their publication. Since 1958 four such illustrative programmes and one update have been published, last in 1997.
The present draft Nuclear Illustrative Programme (PINC) was published by the Commission in the context of the energy and climate package. An Energy Policy for Europe, on 10 January 2007. The final version will be prepared and published as soon as the Commission has received the Opinion of the EESC.

2.3 The other parts of the package cover firstly a proposal for climate change targets of 30 % reductions of greenhouse gases for the developed countries by 2020 from the 1990 level or in any case 20 % for EU alone. The package further deals with the internal market of gas and electricity, interconnections in the electricity and gas networks, proposals to promote sustainable power generation from fossil fuels; a roadmap to promote renewables including a 20 % binding target by 2020 for the share of renewables in the EU's overall energy mix and energy savings with a 20 % efficiency increase target by 2020 and a future European Energy Strategic Technology Plan. The European Council on 9 March 2007 supported the targets and the main policy contents of the package.

2.4 The EESC has prepared Opinions on each PINC, as the Treaty requires. The Committee has also touched upon nuclear power in several of its other Opinions, recently in particular the own-initiative Opinion on the role of nuclear power in 2004, stating in the conclusions that 'the EESC considers that nuclear power should be one of the elements of a diversified, balanced, economic and sustainable energy policy for the EU. In view of the issues which it raises, staking everything on nuclear is not an option which should be considered: on the other hand, the EESC considers that a partial or total abandonment of nuclear power would compromise the EU's chances of respecting its commitments on the climate issue'.

3. The Commission document

3.1 The Commission's document reviews the investments in nuclear energy for the past ten years, describes the economics of nuclear power generation, its impacts on the energy mix as well as its conditions for social acceptance. The content is, in some more detail, as follows.

3.2 It is for each Member State to decide whether or not to rely on nuclear power for the generation of electricity. Decisions to expand nuclear energy have recently been taken in Finland and in France. In the Netherlands, Poland, Sweden, Czech Republic, Lithuania, Estonia, Latvia, Slovakia, the United Kingdom, Bulgaria and Romania a debate has been re-launched on their nuclear energy policy. Germany, Spain and Belgium are— despite a continuing debate — continuing their nuclear phase-out policies for the time being. 12 of the 27 EU Member States do not produce nuclear energy.

3.3 With 152 reactors spread over the EU 27, nuclear power contributes 30 % of Europe's electricity today — however, if the planned phase-out policy within some EU Member States continues, this share will be significantly reduced. To meet the expected energy demand and to reduce European dependency on imports, decisions could be made on new investments or on the life extension of some plants.

3.4 According to the Commission reinforcing nuclear power generation could represent one option for reducing CO₂ emissions and play a major role in addressing global climate change. Nuclear power is essentially carbon emissions-free and forms part of the Commission’s carbon reduction scenario including the objective of reducing CO₂ emissions. This could also feature as an important consideration when discussing future emissions trading schemes.

3.5 The most crucial factor affecting the prospect of growth of nuclear power is its underlying economics as a nuclear plant involves an up front investment ranging from EUR 2 to EUR 3.5 billion. Nuclear energy generation incurs higher construction costs in comparison to fossil fuels, yet operating costs are significantly lower following the initial investments. In detail the Commission is stating:

3.5.1 'The economic risks of a nuclear power plant are linked to the major capital investment at the beginning and require quasi-faultless operation during the first 15 to 20 years of its 40-60 year lifetime to pay back the initial investment. In addition, decommissioning and waste management mean that financial assets must be made available for 50 to 100 years after the shutdown of the reactor.'

3.5.2 'In EU-27 (1) a total of 152 nuclear reactors are in operation in 15 Member States. The average age of nuclear power plants (NPPs) is approaching 25 years (2). In France, which has the largest fleet (59) of nuclear reactors accounting for nearly 80 % of its electricity generation, and Lithuania, with only one NPP yet accounting for 70 %, the average age is around 20 years. The UK fleet of 23 NPPs has an average age approaching 30 years, while in Germany the average age of their fleet of 17 operational NPPs is 25 years.'

3.5.3 ‘Nuclear power has traditionally shown a combination of higher construction and lower operating costs than fossil-fuel-based energy production, which exhibits lower capital costs but higher and potentially fluctuating fuel and, hence, operating costs.’

(1) Annex 2: Country-by-country information on current nuclear fuel cycle activities.

(2) Annex 1: See Figures 6 and 7 showing NPPs by age and age distribution by country.
3.6 Nuclear power generation is largely immune to changes in the cost of raw material supplies, as a modest amount of uranium, which comes largely from stable regions of the world, can keep a reactor running for decades. Reasonably assured and recoverable known uranium resources at competitive prices can sustain the requirements of the nuclear industry for at least the next 85 years at current levels of consumption. Therefore, in most industrialised countries new nuclear power plants offer an economic way to generate base-load electricity.

3.7 The nuclear industry has made considerable investments since 1997. The Commission recognises the importance of maintaining a technological lead in the field of nuclear power and supports the further development of the most advanced framework for nuclear energy, including non-proliferation, waste management and decommissioning. Since the establishment of the Euratom Treaty, nuclear safety and the radiological protection of the public have been one of the main concerns of the European Community and are issues that have gained further importance in view of the past and the present enlargement.

3.8 At EU level, the role should be to develop further the most advanced framework for nuclear energy in those Member States that choose nuclear power, in conformity with the highest standards of safety, security and non-proliferation as required by the Euratom Treaty. This should include nuclear waste management and decommissioning.

3.9 The Commission proposes that the discussion on the way forward should notably focus on:

- recognising common nuclear safety reference levels for implementation in the EU, building on the extensive expertise of Member States' national nuclear safety authorities;

- setting up a High Level Group on Nuclear Safety and Security with the mandate of progressively developing common understanding and, eventually, additional European rules on nuclear security and safety;

- ensuring that Member States put in place national plans for management of radioactive waste;

- during the early phase of FP7, establishing technology platforms to ensure closer coordination of research in national, industrial and Community programmes in the fields of sustainable nuclear fission and geological disposal;

- monitoring the recommendation on harmonisation of national approaches to management of decommissioning funds to ensure that adequate resources are made available;

- simplifying and harmonising licensing procedures, based on closer coordination between national regulatory authorities, aiming at maintaining the highest safety standards;

- ensuring greater availability of Euratom loans, provided the ceilings are updated in line with the needs of the market as already proposed by the Commission;

- developing a harmonised liability scheme and mechanisms to ensure the availability of funds in the event of damage caused by a nuclear accident;

- giving new impetus to international cooperation, notably through closer collaboration with the IAEA, the NEA, bilateral agreements with non-EU countries and renewed assistance to neighbouring countries.

4. General remarks

4.1 The EESC welcomes the Commission's new draft Nuclear Illustrative Programme. The energy environment has evolved much in the 10 years since the last publication. In particular in the last few years new and dramatic developments have directed much attention to all three aspects of energy policy — security of supply, competitiveness and reasonable prices as well as environment, in particular climate change. The EU has reacted to the evident problems and challenges by proposals for a European Energy Policy. In this context an analysis and proposals on nuclear energy are needed. It positions nuclear energy in the overall energy scene and provides necessary information for the discussion and definition of an energy policy for Europe.

4.2 In its Opinion 'The issues involved in using nuclear power in electricity generation' from 2004, the EESC suggested that 'efforts should be made to provide information on the real issues of the nuclear industry: security of supply, elimination of CO₂ emissions, competitive prices and safety and management of spent fuel, so that organised civil society can carry out a critical analysis of the debates on these issues'. The new PINC provides such information and the EESC broadly agrees with the analysis and description presented in the Commission communication. Most of the essential aspects concerning nuclear power are taken up and, in our view, correctly described. The Committee in addition points to some aspects of nuclear power to be taken into account.

4.3 Nuclear energy, with its share of 31 % of electricity and 15 % of the total primary energy consumption in the EU in 2004, plays a crucial role in the energy market. Nuclear also meets fully the objectives of EU energy policy. The cost of nuclear power is today clearly competitive, in particular when utilised as base load power. The external dependence is small and sources of fuel are diversified and secure, which meets the requirements of security of supply. Nuclear power is currently the largest source of essentially carbon dioxide free energy in Europe (see 4.8 below).
4.4 Better energy efficiency, including combined heat and power generation, and thereby curbing demand is the first and foremost target on the energy policy agenda. Still a big amount of investments in power generation is needed in the EU to substitute old plants and possibly also to meet additional demand, as market and technology developments may lead to a rising share of electricity in total energy demand.

4.4.1 In the medium and long term it is possible that new energy technologies like hydrogen technology, heat pumps, electric cars etc. will be increasing the demand of electricity as a share of overall energy demand faster than we now estimate in scenarios. This kind of development could make the role of nuclear energy in the EU energy palette much more important than it is now.

4.5 The Committee notes actual plans to extend the life of power stations which have exceeded the period of commercial usage of between 30 and 40 years. The question of ageing power stations in Europe was not covered in depth in the material prepared by the Commission and there is a need for more information on the subject. As the Commission writes that: 'certain financial and environmental risks still remain with governments in some Member States, such as responsibility for the facilities for long-term waste disposal and management', solutions will be needed in this area in the future.

4.6 These new investments should ideally correspond to the objectives of security of supply, competitiveness and combating climate change. In view of the features and potentials of other forms of power generation, life extension of existing nuclear plants as well as new investments is to be expected. On this we agree with the Commission.

4.7 According to the Commission, uranium resources would last for 85 years at current levels of consumption. Different sources give varying information on this issue, mainly varying from 85 to 500 years. As availability of fuel is important to security of supply of energy, the Commission should provide more detailed information on nuclear fuel availability.

4.8 When comparing environmental impacts of different energy sources it is important to evaluate the overall environmental impacts of the entire process from raw materials supply, production, transport and energy generation to recycling and disposal stages. The World Energy Council (WEC) has published a compilation report (Comparison of Energy Systems Using Life Cycle Assessment, WEC, July 2004), in which a number of existing life-cycle assessment studies were identified and reviewed. The report evidences that CO₂ emissions per kWh of electricity generated by nuclear power are low and at the same level with wind, biomass and hydro power, the level being 1-5 % of the coal-fired power plants emissions.

4.9 Thus, it is essential to take into account the valuable contribution that nuclear energy makes to the avoidance of greenhouse gasses. Now the use of nuclear power in the EU avoids about 600 million tonnes of CO₂ every year, taking into account the current energy mix. In the whole world the avoidance levels amount to roughly 2 billion tonnes of CO₂. This equals the present total CO₂ emissions of France, Germany and the UK altogether. If planned phase-out in some Member States is maintained, a large amount of the present European nuclear power plants needs to be replaced by other non-emitting energy sources. In addition, if existing nuclear power plants are not replaced by new ones at the end of their life, all nuclear power needs to be substituted by other non-emitting energy in the medium term.

4.10 Following the European Council's decision on greenhouse gas targets for 2020 and beyond, it is evident that all additional low carbon power generation capacity, be it renewables, nuclear energy or potentially clean coal, should substitute CO₂-emitting power capacity and thereby add to total low-carbon electricity. In practical terms, if at least the present share of nuclear power is not maintained until totally new energy solutions may be available, climate and other energy policy goals are not to be met in an economically acceptable way. On the other hand, it is obvious that a growing share of nuclear power together with renewables would mean better cost-effectiveness fighting against climate change.

4.11 The EESC supports the objective on internalising external costs in the prices of all energy and other market activities. According to the External Costs Study (ExternE) (1) by the Commission the external costs for nuclear power are about 0.4 cents/kWh. The corresponding external costs for coal-fired power production are estimated to be over 10 times higher, for biomass few times higher, for wind lower and for hydro power at the same level than for nuclear.

4.12 The Commission notes that one key question is whether nuclear energy requires policy intervention. All clean energy technologies should be treated equally. Mechanisms should be found to encourage research into next-generation reactors and the related nuclear fuel cycle. A subsidy but to totally new developments — pilots — could be envisaged. Conventional nuclear energy does not need any subsidy and it should not be subsidised.

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4.13 Public opinion and perception of nuclear power is recognised by the Commission as paramount for the future of nuclear policy. With this we agree, while reminding that the acceptance varies much between Member States. Accessibility of information for the public as well as transparent decision-making procedures has to be improved, as surveys show that the EU public is not well informed on nuclear issues. The Commission could play a useful role in this. But also real measures to meet public concerns are needed, as the EESC has stated many times before.

4.14 We underline the persistently important role of the EU to develop further the most advanced framework for nuclear energy in the Member States that choose nuclear power, in conformity with the highest standards of safety, security and non-proliferation as required by the Euratom Treaty.

4.15 The most pressing task is a solution for the issue of radioactive waste, and especially final disposal of spent nuclear fuel, to which technology exists but political decisions are lacking. This is a major issue concerning environmental and health impacts and public acceptance of nuclear power. PINC notes that no country has yet implemented the proposed final solution. However, there is progress in Finland, where a disposal site has been chosen, as well as in Sweden and France, where big steps towards site selection have been taken.

5. Remarks on proposals for measures

5.1 In chapter 6.5 of PINC ‘The way forward’ the Commission puts proposals on measures, mainly at the EU level, for discussion (see 3.9). The EESC views on the presented proposals are as follows:

5.1.1 The EESC agrees with the Commission’s present view that the common nuclear safety reference levels and their appropriate implementation should be built on the extensive expertise of Member States’ national nuclear safety authorities in collaboration within WENRA (4). Any other approach could possibly put in some member states the present high safety performances at risk.

5.1.2 A High level Group on Nuclear Safety and Security, consisting of representatives of competent national authorities, could add to the harmonisation process and help to improve links with international nuclear safety conventions.

5.1.3 The EESC sees an urgent need for Member States utilising nuclear power to put in place national plans for management of nuclear fuel and radioactive waste. National plans may include a purely national approach, a multinational approach or a dual-track approach. Anything else is to be seen as irresponsibly passing on the present generations’ obligations to next generations.

(4) (Western European Nuclear Regulatory Authorities).

4.16 We also agree with the Commission on the other issues that still require attention at the EU level: Nuclear and radiation safety, which has a good record in Europe, as well as securing of funding for decommissioning.

4.17 The new threat of terrorism is not mentioned in the PINC. It is a severe threat for nuclear power plants as well as for many other industrial plants and public buildings all over the world. All new nuclear power plants should be planned to stand a crash of a big passenger aeroplane without radioactive emissions outside the power plant. Technical and human security systems must also be planned and carried out in a way that prevents all kind of terror offensives inside a nuclear power plant. The Commission should start initiatives, in collaboration with responsible authorities and operators, to ensure that appropriate measures of terrorism prevention are in operation at each nuclear plant.

4.18 During recent hot and dry summers also the issue of sufficient availability of cooling water from rivers to condensing power plants has caught attention. The problem has so far been very local and neither frequent nor long in duration, but it might become more serious over time in some cases. This has to be taken into account in the design and choice of location for power plant units.

4.19 An additional concern is the attractiveness of the nuclear energy field as an employer and research topic after some 20 years of almost moratorium in Europe. The resulting lacking interest of students and professional experts is a bottleneck for the general development of nuclear energy and may also form a safety risk. The EESC agrees with the Commission’s view that expertise in radiological protection and nuclear technology is fundamental for the EU, and therefore education, training and research in these areas need attention. So does also the preservation and transfer of knowledge from the generation of scientists and engineers who constructed the existing fleet of plants in Europe, while in many countries during many years no younger experts have entered the sector.

4.20 The Commission reminds us that it is for each Member State to decide whether to use nuclear power. The EESC supports each Member States right to choose its own energy mix, including the use of nuclear. This right should be respected not only by the EU, but also by other Member States. However, the decisions of one Member State influence the situation of the others in many ways, and this interdependence will increase with more open internal markets.
5.1.4 Technology platforms have proven to be very successful instruments in creating public-private partnerships for developing European Strategic Research Agendas. The EESC supports the Commission’s idea of using this instrument in the area of sustainable nuclear fission and geological disposal. This could be a much needed instrument to attract young scientist to this industry.

5.1.5 In order to ensure full coverage of life long operating costs and a level playing field, it is essential that adequate resources are made available by operators through decommissioning funds within the EU as well as globally. The Committee does however not see a need for full harmonisation of the management of these funds, as long as principles of full and secured coverage and transparency are met.

5.1.6 An observation of the highest safety standards at the same time with a simplification of licensing procedures as well as their gradual harmonisation through cooperation between national regulatory authorities are needed in order to render lead times for construction projects more foreseeable, and thereby enabling more accurate planning and cost calculations. Safety must never be compromised.

5.1.7 EESC agrees with the Commissions proposals to update the ceilings of EURATOM loans and ensure their better availability. In principle investments in all forms of energy should have equal access on equal terms to financing instruments, otherwise provided by the EIB.

5.1.8 A harmonised liability scheme, including a mechanism to ensure the availability of funds in the event of damage caused by a nuclear accident without calling on public funds, is in the view of the EESC also essential for greater acceptability of nuclear power. The current system (liability insurance of $ 700 million) is inadequate for this purpose. The insurance problem of an extremely low probability of an accident combined with potentially very serious and costly damages needs to be addressed in an open, constructive and practical way. One possibility could be an insurance pool scheme.

5.1.9 The EESC welcomes the proposal to give new impetus to international cooperation with the IAEA and the NEA as well as bilateral agreements. Much emphasis should be put on assistance to neighbouring countries.

5.2 In addition to the proposals from the Commission, the EESC sees that the following issues would be worth attention when the Commission is preparing for the next steps:

5.2.1 Drawing the Member States’ attention the probability of re-increasing education and training needs in the broad area of nuclear energy and technology, including in particular education and training for nuclear safety. Education is not only a way of providing new professionals in the field of nuclear energy, but also of increasing public awareness in this field, which is of fundamental importance in shaping public opinion.

5.2.2 Exploring further possible problems in the framework for investments into nuclear power in an open energy market, given the size and long lead times, and possible market based solutions to them.

5.2.3 The European nuclear technology industry has gained a position as a global frontrunner, which provides high class jobs while at the same time being beneficial for nuclear safety worldwide, given its excellent safety records. In order to keep this lead position, as investments in nuclear are expected to surge globally, this industry including its upstream component industry should be considered as a target for the Commission’s new sectoral industry policy approach.

5.3 Finally, the EESC also welcomes the Commission’s intention to increase the frequency of publication of the Nuclear Illustrative Programmes and thereby providing a more updated picture of the situation in the EU.


The President
of the European Economic and Social Committee
Dimitris DIMITRIADIS
APPENDIX

to the opinion of the European Economic and Social Committee

The following amendments, which received at least one quarter of the votes cast, were rejected in the discussion:

**Point 1.1**

Amend as follows:

"In 2004 the EESC suggested in its Opinion "The issues involved in using nuclear power in electricity generation" that "efforts should be made to provide information on the real issues of the nuclear industry: security of supply, elimination of CO2 emissions, competitive prices and safety and management of spent fuel, so that organised civil society can carry out a critical analysis of the debates on these issues". The new Nuclear Illustrative Programme (PINC) provides **some** of this information. The EESC broadly agrees with the analysis and description presented in the Commission communication but also notes that important subjects are not discussed (see also point 1.6). Most of the essential aspects concerning nuclear power are taken up and, in our view, correctly described. The Committee also highlights certain aspects of nuclear power which should be taken into account."

Reason

This is clear from the other amendments and from point 1.6 of the draft opinion, which points to important aspects of nuclear power (the threat of terrorism and cooling water) that have not been sufficiently discussed.

Result of vote

For: 49
Against: 52
Abstentions: 11

**Point 1.2**

Amend as follows:

"Nuclear energy, with its share of 31% of electricity and 15% of the total primary energy consumption in the EU in 2004, plays a crucial role in the energy market. Nuclear also meets fully the objectives of EU energy policy. The cost of nuclear power is today clearly competitive. The external dependence is small and sources of fuel are diversified and secure, which meets the requirements of security of supply. Nuclear power is currently one of the largest sources of essentially carbon dioxide free energy in Europe. Its other environmental implications are limited and contained."

Reason

The Commission document states that nuclear power is currently 'one of the largest sources' of carbon dioxide-free energy in Europe, not 'the largest'. We should quote correctly.

For the other environmental implications, see other amendments.

Result of vote (N.B.: Last part of amendment, the deletion of sentence — was accepted by the Plenary)

For: 57
Against: 60
Abstentions: 3
Point 1.3

Amend as follows:

Following the European Council’s decision on greenhouse gas emission targets for 2020 and beyond, it is evident that all additional low carbon power generation capacity, be it renewables, nuclear or potentially clean coal, should substitute CO2-emitting capacity and thereby add to total low-carbon electricity. The Committee notes the statement contained in the Commission communication that: ‘At present over 110 nuclear facilities within the Union are at various stages of decommissioning. It is forecast that at least one third of the 132 NPPs currently operating in the enlarged European Union will need to be decommissioned by 2025 (without taking into account any possible extension of the working life of NPPs). As to date the Commission has been informed of the construction of only one new reactor, it is highly likely that the proportion of electricity generated using nuclear technology will fall sharply. And yet, as a study carried out by the German Federal Chancellor, relating to Germany, shows, the climate objectives can be met: this will, however, require further efforts to reduce electricity consumption and with regard to the efficiency and use of renewable energy sources. In practical terms, if at least the present share of nuclear power is not maintained until totally new clean energy solutions may be available, climate and other energy policy goals are not to be met.’

Reason
Clear from the Commission’s text and from the study mentioned.

Result of vote
For: 49
Against: 65
Abstentions: 6

Point 1.7

Amend as follows:

‘For Member States which wish to persevere with nuclear power an additional concern is the lack of attractiveness of the sector as an employer and research topic after some 20 years of almost moratorium in Europe. The EESC agrees with the Commission’s view that expertise in radiological protection and nuclear technology is fundamental for the EU, and therefore education, training and research in these areas need attention. Plant operators are primarily responsible for this.’

Reason
It is incorrect to speak of a ‘moratorium’. Moreover, responsibility for training lies primarily with the companies and not with the State/community of States.

Result of vote (only 2nd part of amendment was put to vote, 1st part was accepted)
For: 45
Against: 71
Abstentions: 2

Point 3.6.1

Insert a new point 3.6.1:

‘The Committee notes that there are discrepancies between the Commission communication and the summary of the most recent IAEA Red Book as regards the availability of uranium stocks. The summary reads: ‘As currently projected, primary uranium production capabilities including existing, committed, planned and prospective production centres supported by Identified Resources [...] could satisfy projected world uranium requirements by 2010 if all expansions and mine openings proceed as planned and if production is maintained at full capability at all operations. [...] However, secondary sources are expected to decline in importance, particularly after 2015, and reactor requirements will have to be increasingly met by the expansion of existing production capability together with the development of additional production centres or the introduction of alternate fuel cycles, both of which are costly, long-term enterprises. A sustained near-term strong demand for uranium will be needed to stimulate the timely development of needed Identified Resources. Because of the long lead-times required to identify new resources and to bring them into production (typically in the order of 10 years or more), there exists the potential for the development of uranium supply shortfalls and continued upward pressure on uranium prices as secondary sources are exhausted.’ The Committee expects the Commission to clarify this.’
Reason
We should draw attention to clear discrepancies rather than pass over them in silence.

Result of vote
For: 49
Against: 65
Abstentions: 5

Point 4.1
Amend as follows:

'The EESC welcomes the Commission’s new draft Nuclear Illustrative Programme. The energy environment has evolved much in the 10 years since the last publication. In particular in the last few years new and dramatic developments have directed much attention to all three aspects of energy policy — security of supply, competitiveness and reasonable prices as well as environment, in particular climate change. The EU has reacted to the evident problems and challenges by proposals for a European Energy Policy. In this context an analysis and proposals on nuclear energy are needed. It positions nuclear energy in the overall energy scene and provides some of the necessary information for the discussion and definition of an energy policy for Europe.'

Reason
The rapporteur herself writes that not all aspects are discussed (the threat of terrorism etc.).

Result of vote
For: 50
Against: 69
Abstentions: 2

Point 4.5
Amend as follows:

'These new investments should ideally correspond to the objectives of security of supply, competitiveness and combating climate change. In view of the features and potentials of other forms of power generation from other energy sources, the EESC notes the discussion currently underway in some Member States on the life extension of existing nuclear plants as well as new investments is to be expected. On this we agree with the Commission.

Reason
The author of the amendment cannot find any passage in the communication where the Commission states that life extension ‘is to be expected’. This is pure speculation.

See also point 1.5, which was amended in the section meeting, in which we express our concern about possible life extensions.

Result of vote
For: 50
Against: 67
Abstentions: 6

Point 4.6
Add the following text to the end of the point:

'According to the Commission, uranium resources would last for 85 years at current levels of consumption. Different sources give varying information on this issue, mainly varying from 85 to 500 years. As availability of fuel is important to security of supply of energy, the Commission should provide more detailed information on nuclear power fuel availability. It is once again pointed out that estimates vary widely as to the availability of uranium resources.'
Reason

Self-explanatory.

Result of vote

For: 55
Against: 68
Abstentions: 0

Point 4.8

Amend as follows:

‘Thus, it is essential to take into account the valuable contribution that nuclear energy makes to the avoidance of greenhouse gases. Now the use of nuclear power in the EU avoids about 600 million tonnes of CO₂ every year, taking into account the current energy mix. In the whole world the avoidance levels amount to roughly 2 billion tonnes of CO₂. This equals the present total CO₂ emissions of France, Germany and the UK altogether. If planned phase-out in some Member States is maintained, a large amount of the present European nuclear power plants needs to be replaced by other non-emitting energy sources as well as energy efficiency and conservation measures. In addition, if existing nuclear power plants are not replaced by new ones at the end of their life, all nuclear power needs to be substituted by other non-emitting energy and energy efficiency and conservation measures in the medium term.’

Reason

We have to do much more than think about how one form of power generation can be replaced by another. The EESC has repeatedly pointed this out.

Comment by the author of the amendment: I asked the rapporteur to verify the figures for CO₂ savings after a figure of 300 million tonnes had been quoted — with a source — in the working document. This has unfortunately not been done.

Result of vote

For: 61
Against: 61
Abstentions: 2

Point 4.9

Add the following text to the end of the point:

‘Following the European Council’s decision on greenhouse gas targets for 2020 and beyond, it is evident that all additional low carbon power generation capacity, be it renewables, nuclear energy or potentially clean coal, should substitute CO₂-emitting power capacity and thereby add to total low-carbon electricity. In practical terms, if at least the present share of nuclear power is not maintained until totally new energy solutions may be available, climate and other energy policy goals are not to be met in an economically acceptable way. On the other hand, it is obvious that a growing share of nuclear power together with renewables would mean better cost-effectiveness fighting against climate change. And yet studies (German Federal Chancellery in relation to Germany) show that the climate objectives can be met, although this will require further efforts to reduce electricity consumption, improve efficiency and use renewable energy sources.’

Reason

Self-explanatory.
Result of vote
For: 58
Against: 65
Abstentions: 1

Point 4.11.1
Insert a new point 4.11.1:

The Commission states that: “liability for nuclear accidents in the EU-15 Member States is governed by the Paris Convention of 1960, which created a harmonised international system on liability for nuclear accidents, currently limiting the liability to operators in case of nuclear accidents to around $700 million”. The EESC sees this as an indirect subsidy for nuclear energy and calls for all operators to be required to take out sufficient insurance to cover all potential risks.

Reason
At the study group meetings the rapporteur said that a solution had to be and could be found. The text does not make this clear. This is the purpose of the amendment.

Comment: In Germany cars have to carry liability insurance of EUR 100 million. Nuclear power plants on the other hand are insured for only USD 700 million – a derisory sum in view of the potential risks!

Result of vote
For: 41
Against: 44
Abstentions: 3

Point 4.14
Amend as follows:

The most pressing task is a solution for the issue of radioactive waste, and especially final disposal of spent nuclear fuel, to which technology exists but political decisions are lacking. This is a major issue concerning environmental and health impacts and public acceptance of nuclear power. PINC notes that no country has yet implemented the proposed final solution. However, there is progress in Finland, where a disposal site has been chosen, as well as in Sweden and France, where big steps towards site selection have been taken.

Reason
The technology does not exist.

Result of vote
For: 55
Against: 69
Abstentions: 4