

The Commission is responsible for ensuring that investment aid schemes which regions or national authorities introduce comply with the competition rules laid down by the EC Treaty. During the negotiation of programmes, the Commission also examines whether development plans are consistent with the general guidelines which it has proposed to Member States.

On the general issue of relocation, the Commission would ask the Honourable Member to refer to the answers given to Written Questions E-1396/99 by Mrs Keppelhoff-Wiechert ⁽¹⁾, E-1446/99 by Mr Meijer ⁽²⁾, P-1805/99 by Mrs Figueiredo ⁽³⁾ and P-1706/00 by Mrs Randzio-Plath ⁽⁴⁾.

⁽¹⁾ OJ C 170 E, 20.6.2000.

⁽²⁾ OJ C 203 E, 18.7.2000.

⁽³⁾ OJ C 219 E, 1.8.2000.

⁽⁴⁾ OJ C 81 E, 13.3.2001, p. 75.

(2001/C 174 E/004)

WRITTEN QUESTION E-2666/00

by Elly Plooij-van Gorsel (ELDR) to the Commission

(1 September 2000)

Subject: Safety of nuclear power stations in the applicant countries

The very controversial Temelin nuclear power station in the Czech Republic is currently being made ready to go on stream. It was built in the 1980s on the basis of a Soviet design. Last week, after years of debate about the safety of that nuclear power station, authorisation was issued in a suspicious manner. Accordingly, for a few months, reactor 1 of the power station may run on a test basis, despite powerful protests from citizens and the concern expressed by President Havel and the Austrian Government.

1. Does the Commission agree with me that, with a view to the accession of the applicant countries, Community standards relating to the safety of nuclear reactors in the European Union, including minimum safety requirements as regards design, construction and use, are urgently required?
2. What is the Commission planning to do, in the light of the accession negotiations, in order to prevent the commissioning of nuclear power stations, such as Temelin, which are unsafe?

Answer given by Mr Verheugen on behalf of the Commission

(29 November 2000)

Construction of the Temelin nuclear power plant (NPP) was started in the 1980s and later halted. Parts of the plant are still under construction. Electricity production is planned to start in 2001 (Unit 1) and 2002 (Unit 2). The reactor is of an upgraded VVER 1000 design and will incorporate new safety-related systems of recent design.

The Community has repeatedly recalled the need for nuclear power plants to respect high nuclear safety standards. The Commission has taken in Agenda 2000 a clear position in this respect. The December 1999 Helsinki European Council recalled the importance of high standards of nuclear safety and called on the Council to consider how to address the issue of nuclear safety in the framework of the enlargement process. The Council is currently looking into this matter, drawing on the expertise existing in the Member States, and the Commission is supporting this process fully. Nuclear safety is the national competence of Member States. This principle applies to candidate countries by analogy.

The Temelin NPP is one of very few nuclear power plants that might be commissioned in the period prior to the accession of candidate countries. The Commission has no means to prevent the commissioning of specific plants under the authority of the national regulatory responsibility within a candidate country. However, the Commission will continue to work with the Czech authorities to assist the continuous

existence of a strong and independent nuclear regulatory body, capable of enforcing a high level of nuclear safety. This is a key element of the Commission's responsibility to work towards a successful finalisation of the ongoing accession negotiations. According to Agenda 2000, the Temelin reactor type has been classified in the category of reactors upgradeable at reasonable cost.

The Commission would also like to draw the Honourable Member's attention to the reply given to Written Question E-2682/00 ⁽¹⁾ by Mr Wuori on the safety of the Temelin NPP.

⁽¹⁾ See page 6.

(2001/C 174 E/005)

WRITTEN QUESTION E-2682/00

by Matti Wuori (Verts/ALE) to the Commission

(1 September 2000)

Subject: Nuclear safety — Temelin power station

Some extremely alarming facts have come to light concerning the safety culture at Temelin nuclear power station. The power station's completion was delayed by nearly ten years on account of technical problems and cost factors affecting the building work, the additional costs arising partly from Western safety standards. The power company CEZ has nonetheless brought forward the commissioning of the power station, inter alia with an eye to the company's future privatisation, and nuclear fuel began to be loaded into the Temelin 1 reactor at the beginning of July 2000.

Independent observers, including the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) and Greenpeace, have reported that there are serious technical and safety problems associated with the commissioning of Temelin. At the beginning of July, Greenpeace published internal documents concerning the safety culture at Temelin which give rise to doubts as to how safe the nuclear reactor will be when in use. The documents reveal that, in building the number one reactor, test procedures which accorded with safety standards were not adhered to, that these procedures were altered because of unsatisfactory results and that the management of Temelin resorted to temporary safety solutions. The IAEA meanwhile has criticised the inadequacy of inspections by the Czech nuclear safety authority (SUBJ) this year. According to the IAEA, the SUBJ cannot guarantee that sufficient impartial inspections will be carried out. The CEZ's final assessment of Temelin power station has been declared secret on commercial grounds, and because of this the SUBJ has not allowed Greenpeace to inspect the document in question.

This year the Czech Republic will already be exporting 25% of its energy production. This being so, virtually the whole of Temelin power station's production capacity will be used to provide electricity for export. At the same time, however, in the EU accession negotiations the Czech Republic is asking for Community rules on the liberalisation of the energy market not to apply to the new Member States before 2007. According to these rules, trade in energy must be based on reciprocity.

Does the Commission consider that Temelin power station complies with technical and operational nuclear safety standards applicable in the EU Member States? Can the appropriate authorities in the Czech Republic guarantee that high standards will be adhered to? Have the appropriate parties in the Czech Republic forwarded information about nuclear safety to the Commission regularly? How is the Commission dealing with the issue of nuclear safety in the accession negotiations? What view does the Commission take of the possibility of delaying the liberalisation of the energy market in the applicant countries?

Answer given by Mr Verheugen on behalf of the Commission

(21 November 2000)

The issue at stake is to ensure that the Czech national standards and the national nuclear safety regulator (SUJB) impose a high level of nuclear safety, as repeatedly demanded in Agenda 2000 and (European) Council conclusions. In July, the Coreper mandated the Atomic Questions Group to address the issue of a high level of nuclear safety in the context of enlargement. The Commission is actively co-operating in this exercise.