

The seventh plenary meeting of the European Nuclear Energy Forum (ENEF) took place in Bratislava on 14 and 15 May 2012 and was hosted by the Slovak government. 270 high-ranking participants discussed the need for a new nuclear safety architecture in Europe, the society's expectations in terms of information and involvement, and the perspectives for nuclear energy in the EU in the medium to longer term, including generation IV reactors.

The Forum was opened by the Slovak Prime Minister, Robert Fico, his Czech counterpart Petr Nečas, and EU Commissioner Günther Oettinger, in the presence of Ministers, Members of Parliament, industry leaders as well as regulators and representatives of the civil society.

In the context of the comprehensive reassessment of the safety of nuclear reactors and the Energy Roadmap 2050, the Forum underlined that nuclear can meaningfully contribute to the long term energy supply in Europe if the highest standards of safety are met.

Risks

ENEF gave the opportunity to learn about the views on the on-going Europe-wide comprehensive safety and risk assessments of all nuclear power plants. While taking note of the ENSREG peer review report, the European Commission was called upon to put forward a comprehensive Communication to the European Council and to analyse ways to strengthen the safety framework at European level, referring, among others, to cross-border and governance aspects while certain doubts were expressed as to defining technical standards.

The Working Group Risks presented a preliminary paper calling for a stricter and more stringent safety architecture which should be supported by a strengthened safety Directive at European level. The Group also underlined their commitment to enhancing the effectiveness of the export control regime and of the nuclear non-proliferation regime more generally while limiting workload falling upon member states' administrations and industry.

Against this background, the Forum working group Risks could focus in particular on the following:

- Continue to resume the lessons from the stress tests for a reinforced nuclear safety framework in the European Union
- Guidance for reinforced international safety standards, using EU experience and best practices
- Guidance for the practical implementation of the proposed Directive on the management of spent fuel and radioactive waste; discussion on pros and cons of shared repositories.
- In cooperation with the WG Opportunities, progress towards European harmonisation of licensing and reactor design assessment

Opportunities

ENEF agreed that decarbonisation is possible and took note of the scenarios in the EU Energy Roadmap 2050. Three of the five result in a nuclear share in the electricity mix between 15 and 20% - while the electricity consumption increases by more than 40% compared to today. The least costly decarbonisation scenarios in the Commission's Energy Roadmap 2050 are those with the highest shares of nuclear. Nuclear would therefore not only contribute to emission reductions, but also to security of supply and competitiveness.

Current investment signals in the electricity field becoming more and more a concern for long-term stability and reliability of the electricity supply, ENEF called for a reliable and stable framework, including possibly the emissions trading scheme and other mechanisms where nuclear would be on

equal footing with other low carbon energy sources. A review of market structures seems to be required.

Keeping EU technology leadership on Generation IV systems requires the design and construction of demonstration projects in the coming decade.

Apart from their position paper on the Energy Roadmap, the Working Group Opportunities presented the second part of their SWOT analysis of nuclear (Opportunities and Threats until 2050) which integrates the first lessons of Fukushima.

The Opportunities Working Group is invited to focus on the following issues in the coming months

- Contribute to the Nuclear Illustrative Programme of the Community (PINC), extrapolating from the Energy Roadmap 2050 and defining actions and initiatives to support the role of nuclear in the long-term energy mix
- Reactivate the dialogue with the financial institutions and the Commission to facilitate investments in the electricity sector, among others, as part of the DG ENER Investor's Dialogue process
- In cooperation with the WG Risk, progress towards the harmonisation of licensing and reactor design approval at European level
- Ensure the proper connections with the Technology Platforms (SNETP and IDGTP) to streamline research and innovation priorities along the lines of the SET plan, in particular the Industrial Initiative on Generation IV Demonstrators. Contribute to the study preparing the symposium of February 2013 on the research aspects of benefits and limitations of nuclear energy and serving as input for Horizon 2020 and other financing mechanisms.

Transparency

ENEF welcomed the commitment to transparency shown by ENSREG during the comprehensive safety and risk assessments. While the time constraints clearly made an ideal process with regards to public involvement hard to implement, ENEF called for more public participation to be enshrined in European legislation.

The need was also recognised for more transparency to have an informed public debate on the future energy mix. The experiences of the Spanish Energy Mix Forum, supported by ENEF, could serve as a model.

Consequently, the Working Group Transparency should focus on:

- Further contribute to assuring an harmonised transparent and responsive approach to the safety and risks assessments (stress tests) at European level as well as to the strengthened safety framework to be proposed by the Commission;
- Come forward with proposals to improve information in the case of nuclear accidents in the EU;
- Reflect on the role, strategy, communication and engagement of ENEF, in close coordination with the Commission and the chairpersons of the other Working Groups, to establish ENEF as the preferred platforms for dialogue on nuclear issues. This would require development of more sophisticated broad-based communication tools to improve the flow of information on and within ENEF;

- Supporting initiatives on transparency in the nuclear field and energy policy, by providing advice and suitable input, as well as the consultative process on the implementation of the Aarhus Convention; considering results from such processes in the work of ENEF.

The next plenary session of the European Nuclear Energy Forum will take place in Prague in May 2013.