



European Economic and Social Committee

TEN/681

MFJ and nuclear decommissioning and radioactive waste

OPINION

European Economic and Social Committee

Proposal for a Council Regulation establishing the nuclear decommissioning assistance programme of the Ignalina nuclear power plant in Lithuania (Ignalina programme); and repealing Council Regulation (EU) No 1369/2013 and Proposal for a Council Regulation establishing a dedicated financial programme for decommissioning of nuclear facilities and management of radioactive waste, and repealing Council Regulation (Euratom) No 1368/2013 and Report from the Commission to the European Parliament and the Council on the evaluation and implementation of the EU nuclear decommissioning assistance programmes in Bulgaria, Slovakia and Lithuania

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Rapporteur: **Rudy DE LEEUW**

Referral	European Commission, 12/07/2018
Legal basis	Article 304 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union
Section responsible	Transport, Energy, Infrastructure and the Information Society
Adopted in section	20/11/2018
Adopted at plenary	12/12/2018
Plenary session No	539
Outcome of vote (for/against/abstentions)	177/8/6

1. **Conclusions and recommendations**

- 1.1 The EESC endorses the Commission's proposal and highlights the suggestions for future support put forward in the opinion.
- 1.2 The EESC does not suggest amending the proposal, but instead calls for closer monitoring of activities in areas raised in the opinion, particularly:
- a sustainable development oriented approach in the choice of energy sources;
 - proper consideration of the specific situation in Lithuania in particular, as well as in other countries concerned with regard to socio-economic aspects;
 - dissemination throughout the EU of knowledge acquired in the area of dismantling and on the issue of training workers;
 - safe and sustainable management of nuclear waste generated;
 - strengthening of performance indicators by including performance in relation to protecting workers from radiation.
- 1.3 In addition to experts and authorities, civil society should be encouraged and assisted to get involved in monitoring these activities.
- 1.4 The Committee invites the European Commission to assess the situation determined by the end of life of several nuclear power plants in the EU and present a report with proposals to minimize the costs and the risks of decommissioning the reactors and stocking the radioactive waste. The report should also pay attention to the effects of the considerable reduction within the EU of the capacity to reprocess fuel and nuclear waste due to Brexit and on the contrary in the UK the reprocessing overcapacity.

2. **Gist of the proposals**

- 2.1 The Commission proposes to continue, during the period covered by the post-2020 multiannual financial framework (MFF 2021-2027), the funding programmes for financial assistance for "Decommissioning of Nuclear Facilities and Management of Radioactive Waste" for Bulgaria (Kozloduy 1-4), Slovakia (Bohunice VI 1-2) and Lithuania (Ignalina 1-2) for the other part.
- 2.2 These proposals bring in two modifications.
- More flexibility in the use of the budget as stated: "... Additional budgetary flexibility may be obtained by re-distributing funds amongst the actions where and when needed in line with the actions' progress." This takes into account the variable and often unpredictable level of expenditures in a given year.
 - Joining the decommissioning programme of some JRC nuclear installations in Germany, Italy, Belgium and the Netherlands.

3. **General comments**

- 3.1 We note, with satisfaction, that with one of the programme's aims reached (to better address the needs and ensure the safe decommissioning of the facility), the next stage will focus on decommissioning activities that involve radiological safety challenges. These activities should also be assessed based on an approach geared towards a sustainable energy mix, in accordance with the international agreements to which the EU is party (the Paris Climate Agreement, the EU's commitment to a zero-carbon economy, etc.).
- 3.2 The report on the evaluation and implementation of the EU nuclear decommissioning assistance programmes in Bulgaria, Slovakia and Lithuania ("the report" from here on) confirms that it is financially feasible to continue the programmes. We note that the post-2020 MFF budget estimates for continuing and finalising the Kozloduy and Bohunice programmes correspond to less than a quarter of the 2014-2020 MFF estimates (EUR 63 million for Kozloduy and EUR 55 million for Bohunice) and will ensure that the agreed end state of the decommissioning is reached. The budget estimate for the post-2020 MFF is EUR 522 million, which exceeds the 2014-2020 MFF.
- 3.3 The EESC stresses that concerns remain regarding Lithuania. The Committee notes that the budget set out by the Commission only covers 70% of the needs for this period and considers therefore that this proposal does not show solidarity, nor does it provide sufficient financial assistance for a project that is also important for neighbouring countries. The successful dismantling of the Ignalina plant is the most significant challenges in terms of nuclear safety facing the European Union and should be tackled in such a way as to guarantee a reduction in risk to EU citizens.
- 3.4 We appreciate the initiative of the Commission to add some JRC installations to the programme for Bulgaria and Slovakia. The budget estimate for dismantling JRC nuclear facilities amounts to EUR 348 million. The Committee stresses the importance of the exemplary role the EU has to play when managing its own JRC operations, since it is an exclusive competence of the Commission (JRC) as licence holder. Under the Euratom Treaty, the JRC has to manage its historical nuclear liabilities and decommission its nuclear installations that have been shut down. The programme has great potential to create and share knowledge. In this way it helps EU Member States decommission their own installations.
- 3.5 With regard to knowledge, the EESC also highlights the importance of measuring the economic and social consequences of dismantling, e.g. on the labour market, health indicators and the structural development of Member States' regions. It is essential to seize the opportunity that dismantling activities present for providing additional theoretical and practical training to local workforces in areas that are critical for the future. This training cannot be excluded from the funding.
- 3.6 The EESC, within the call for closer monitoring, recommends that financial resources within the programme should be allocated for ensuring appropriate participation of local and national interested organizations of civil society with the aim to ensure independent, credible and permanent public monitoring of activities implemented under this financial assistance.

- 3.7 The Committee notes with satisfaction that Slovakia, Bulgaria and Lithuania have made significant progress in decommissioning their reactors in the time agreed. Nevertheless, the Committee points out that there will be some challenges in the near future: dismantling the core of the reactor and other operations in the reactor buildings. The report says little about nuclear waste management constraints, in particular for carbon, and old reactors in France and the UK. The EESC suggests that the report examine further the question of nuclear waste, which is a very important long-term issue.
- 3.8 The Committee also points out the good practice, specifically on the site of Ignalina, of helping former nuclear power plant workers find jobs locally – not only a socially valuable endeavour, but also conducive to developing specific decommissioning-related abilities and transferring knowledge. The Committee considers this an interesting way of addressing these people's needs. Moreover, this approach could be supported by measures to train workers. Research institutes should be encouraged to participate actively in such projects, which should receive proper financial support.
- 3.9 The scope of the programmes is in line with EU safety policy encapsulated in three directives:
- 1) Council Directive 2011/70/Euratom establishing a Community framework for the responsible and safe management of spent fuel and radioactive waste;
 - 2) Council Directive 2009/71/Euratom and its amendment Council Directive 2014/87/Euratom establishing a Community framework for the nuclear safety of nuclear installations;
 - 3) Council Directive 2013/59/Euratom laying down basic safety standards for protection against the dangers arising from exposure to ionising radiation.
- 3.10 But, for historical reasons, they partially derogate regarding the ultimate responsibility of the Member States to ensure that there are adequate financial resources for nuclear decommissioning and radioactive waste management. The Committee has already agreed with this stance for solidarity reasons.
- 3.11 In addition, increased nuclear safety is of crucial interest, not only at regional or national level, but at European or even global level. That is why a joint effort on the safe management of the technological problems associated with nuclear dismantling and the acquisition of knowledge in the field is not only important for the regions or Member States concerned, but also for the whole European Union. It is also why the EESC highlights the need for close cooperation between the Member States and the programme participants on one hand and the Commission on the other.
- 3.12 The Committee notes with satisfaction that the programme has made it possible to develop new highly effective tools for reducing the volume of waste. The Committee recommends the Commission take a proactive approach to helping to share knowledge on this subject.
- 3.13 We recognise the relevance of the key performance indicators used to monitor the progress of decommissioning and its financial costs. The EESC emphasises the benefit of careful monitoring and efficient implementation of the programme requirements. The Committee

highlights that activities funded by the EU should promote high-quality jobs, while complying with the highest safety and radiation protection levels in line with the relevant aforementioned European directives.

4. **Specific comments**

- 4.1 In line with these considerations the Committee considers that it should be possible to obtain a more concrete picture of the state of the operational radiological protection on each site in question, as well as an ALARA ("As Low As Reasonably Achievable") strategy. It is of course the exclusive responsibility of the Member State concerned to make sure this is the case, in accordance with Article 5 of Council Directive 2013/59/Euratom laying down basic safety standards for protection against the risks from exposure to ionising radiation. Maintaining the radiation dose workers are exposed to in the range of an optimised value of the effective dose is a symptomatic indicator, corresponding to one of the objectives of the programmes to focus on radiological safety. This data has to be available in the register of the safety and radiological authorities of the Member States concerned.

- 4.2 Another concern is the final disposal of radioactive waste. This is clearly the exclusive responsibility of the Member State. The Committee nevertheless recommends that the Commission support not only the sharing of knowledge, but also dynamic cooperation between Member States, when legally possible. This will help reach a high level of safety within reasonable economic parameters.

- 4.3 Cooperation with local safety authorities seems to be a point on which little information is given. Nevertheless some problems, identified in the proposal for a Council Regulation establishing a dedicated financial programme for decommissioning of nuclear facilities and management of radioactive waste, and repealing Council Regulation (Euratom) No 1368/2013, require further attention, especially when "*the lengthy authorisation procedures by national authorities ... make it difficult to manage the programme ...*". The Commission has many tools to enhance this cooperation, including the ENSREG group.
- 4.4 The Committee points out that several nuclear power plants in the European Union have reached or are reaching the end of life and will require to be decommissioned. This is the exclusive responsibility of the Member State, however the EESC invites the European Commission to assess the situation and present a report with proposals to minimize the costs and the risks of decommissioning the reactors as well as stocking the radioactive waste. The report should also pay attention to the effects of the considerable reduction within the EU of the capacity to reprocess fuel and nuclear waste due to Brexit and on the contrary in the UK the reprocessing overcapacity.

Brussels, 12 December 2018.

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The president of the European Economic and Social Committee
