

## Greenpeace Q&A

European Nuclear Energy Forum, 22 & 23 May 2008, Prague

- **What is the European Nuclear Energy Forum?**

The European Nuclear Energy Forum was set up in the wake of the European Commission issuing its Communication, "An Energy Policy for Europe" in January 2007.

The policy called for expanded use of renewable energies and for the enhancement of energy efficiency within the EU, while underlining what the Commission considers "the substantial contribution of low-CO2 emitting nuclear energy to the EU energy mix."<sup>1</sup>

At their March 2007 European Summit, EU Heads of State and Government endorsed a Commission proposal "to organise a broad discussion among all relevant stakeholders on the opportunities and risks of nuclear energy."<sup>2</sup>

The Prime Ministers from the Czech Republic and the Republic of Slovakia agreed to jointly host this nuclear discussion forum. Meetings are held twice a year in Bratislava and Prague successively.

- **What is its function?**

Proposals developed by ENEF are intended to feed into the development of European Union policy or possibly legislation. The Commission presents the Forum, together with an exclusive High-Level Group (HLG) on nuclear safety and waste, as the 'bottom-up' alternative to the failed Nuclear Package of the late Energy Commissioner Ignacia Loyola de Palacio. The High-Level Group comprises directors and presidents of national nuclear regulatory authorities and one representative of the Commission. There are no observers. The Forum should be a place where all sections of society can debate nuclear power without taboos. However, it is heavily industry-dominated.

- **Forum working groups**

Three working groups continue the work of the Forum between its six-monthly sessions:

- **'Risk' working group**

Organisers of the working group are pushing for EU-wide recognition of nuclear safety guidelines developed by the Western European Nuclear Regulators' Association (WENRA), the goal being to ensure European harmonisation. The WENRA guidelines are the lowest common denominator of principles applied by national nuclear regulatory authorities to nuclear power stations currently in operation. The nuclear industry's idea of 'harmonisation' is to lower costs at the expense of safety. Adopting and implementing the most lenient of national safety standards across the EU would make it more difficult for national authorities to impose more stringent requirements.

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<sup>1</sup> [http://ec.europa.eu/energy/nuclear/forum/index\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/energy/nuclear/forum/index_en.htm)

<sup>2</sup> [http://ec.europa.eu/energy/nuclear/forum/index\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/energy/nuclear/forum/index_en.htm)

Greenpeace's view is that any discussion about harmonisation on the European level must be on the level of the highest standards involving Best Available Technology (BAT) and Best Regulatory Practice (BRP).

The 'Risk' working group is proceeding in parallel with discussions in the HLG which are currently stalling. It appears that the ENEF is being used to push ahead with harmonisation of safety at the lowest common level.

The Risk group has had similar discussion on waste storage and the development of new technologies.

- ***'Opportunities' working group***

The 'Opportunities' working group is led by Foratom (the European Atomic Forum) and AREVA, the French nuclear company in which the French State is the major shareholder. The group has made a SWOT analysis of the competition situation of nuclear power. Foratom proposed a set of criteria for comparing nuclear power with other sources of energy.

Greenpeace considers that comparing single power sources is nonsense. And Foratom's selection of criteria such as "fatalities / GWh (Gigawatt-hour)", "used surface / GWh" or "tonnes of waste / GWh" illustrates how the nuclear industry is coming up with propaganda tools to try and give nuclear power an advantage.

Greenpeace has argued that if a SWOT analysis is conducted it should be made on the basis of policy options which lead to different energy mixes, along the lines used for the Energy [R]evolution Scenario.

The 'Opportunities' working group is the one pleading most heavily for streamlined licensing procedures and financing schemes for new nuclear builds.

- ***'Transparency' working group***

The 'Transparency' working group has three sub-groups: 'Better information', 'Implementation of Aarhus as basis for access to information and public participation in nuclear issues' and 'Best practice'.

The 'Better information' sub-group is attempting to redefine terminology presumably in order to sanitise the nuclear industry and prepare the ground for wider public acceptance. The word "recycling", for instance, is being proposed instead of "reprocessing" – the process for dealing with spent nuclear fuel that actually increases the volume of nuclear waste and reuses only a fraction of the spent fuel.

Developments in the 'Aarhus Implementation' sub-group, led by the French National Association of Local Community Information Centres on Nuclear Activities (ANCLI), might in the long run lead to more transparency in nuclear issues. ANCLI has produced a first report based on responses to questionnaires sent to a broader group of stakeholders than those represented in ENEF. It concluded that, although the Aarhus Convention on access to information and public participation in planning procedures should be applied to all nuclear projects, the reality is that a number of obstacles stand in the way of citizen involvement. Foratom, speaking on behalf of several industry groups, is trying to play down any critical language in the report.

The 'Best practice' group would be hilarious were the potential implications of what they are proposing not so dangerous. The group lists the Mochovce 3,4 nuclear power plant, in

Slovakia, as an example of best practice in public participation and intends to do the same with Belene, in Bulgaria. Construction of the Mochovce 3,4 nuclear reactors started in 1986 but was halted in the 1990s. The Slovak government wants to resume construction, without a so-called 'safety containment'. The reactor design dates from the 1970s. Public participation in the preparation phase, including a legally required Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) of the project, was prevented by declaring the 1986 building permit to be still valid. Public participation in the Belene project was severely criticised by Greenpeace and the energy organisation WISE on grounds of manipulation and corruption. The issue of Belene's Environmental Impact Assessment is still being considered by the courts three and a half years after the completion of the plant.

- **When was the first ENEF meeting held?**

The inaugural meeting was held in Bratislava on 26 and 27 November 2007. The meeting in Prague is the second in the series.

- **Who's there?**

Despite the intention to organise a "broad discussion among all relevant stakeholders", the meeting is largely restricted to the nuclear industry and officials and governments who are nuclear supporters. Attendance is by invitation only.

The Forum has around 200 participants. One participant from Greenpeace and one from Friends of the Earth are the only representatives of the whole of civil society.

- **Who's attending the Prague meeting?**

Political speakers and attendees listed in the draft programme include the Prime Ministers of the Czech Republic and the Republic of Slovakia, the Czech Deputy Prime Minister for EU Affairs, the Czech Minister for Foreign Affairs, the Czech Minister for Industry and Trade, the Slovak Minister of Economy, John Hutton, UK Secretary of State for Business, Enterprise and Regulatory Reform, José Manuel Barroso, the President of the European Commission, Andris Peibalgs, EU Energy Commissioner, and Members of the European Parliament.

The opening session will include a speech by Anne Lauvergeon, the CEO of French nuclear company AREVA. Her prominent role in the meeting serves to underline how the Forum is simply a promotional vehicle for nuclear power rather than an objective discussion.

Nuclear industry and electricity companies as well as industry and energy-intensive consumers will also be attending.

- **What's on the agenda in Prague?**

The ENEF agenda includes: 'The opportunities of nuclear industry'; 'The risks of nuclear energy'; and 'Transparency', in which the results of the three working groups will be presented respectively.

- **What does Greenpeace want?**

Greenpeace is extremely concerned about the pro-nuclear bias in the ENEF but was hardly under any illusions that the circumstances would be otherwise. The extremely limited participation of civil society representatives is also a major concern in a process supposedly based on transparency.

With regard to nuclear safety standards, Greenpeace wants to ensure that, if they are harmonised across the EU, this should be on the basis of Best Available Technology and on Best Regulatory Practice not on the most lenient standards among EU Member States.

Greenpeace's presence in the ENEF does not signal any endorsement of nuclear power. Greenpeace wants nuclear power to be phased out, at the latest on the basis of the originally-assumed technical lifetime of any plants and earlier where possible, in order to reduce the accumulation of nuclear waste and limit the chances of nuclear accidents or terrorist attack.

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