



Women in Europe for a Common Future | WECF

EU Energy Commissioner
Mr. Andris Piebalgs

Munich, Germany, 21. Of May 2008

Discussing nuclear without tabus

Dear Mr. Piebalgs,

I speak in behalf of the pan-European network Women in Europe for a Common Future, WECF. Thanks for inviting us to give our opinion regarding nuclear power.

WECF strictly opposes nuclear power. Nuclear industry is a thread to our health, our environment and human rights - at every step of production.

WECF 100 member organizations in over 30 countries in the EU, neighbour states and Central Asia have come to one common conclusion; nuclear energy is not a solution for climate change. Nuclear industry has lower CO2 emissions than coal, but has higher CO2 emissions than renewables, especially when grey energy is counted.

Our main argument against nuclear energy is the great thread it poses to health, environment, human rights and security. In our work – WECF works on practical projects to improve the health and environment of women and children – we encounter severe health problems and, often, human rights abuse of populations living near uranium mines (Armenia, Kyrgstan, Ukraine). The same is reported from uranium mining areas in other regions of the world. The EU has to import uranium, and has so far not been able to assure that the uranium which it uses has not badly harm local communities around the mines.

Another big problem in the countries where we work is the illegal trade of radioactive material. By continuing to spread nuclear technologies, the access to nuclear weapons capable material becomes easier and the danger of illegal nuclear proliferation dramatically increases. The EU should not promote export of nuclear technology

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abroad, especially not to undemocratic regimes like Chad (recent French deal) as it can not guarantee radioactive material will not end up in the hands of the wrong people.

If we go further the production chain to fuel production, to power generation to the unsolved crisis of the storage of waste – every step of the fuel chain contains potential disasters to human and planetary health. In our region, the population living around the Mayak nuclear complex in Chelyabinsk, Russia, continues to suffer from accidents caused in the complex which receives nuclear waste from the European Region (Bulgaria, Hungary). One of our member organizations defends victims of nuclear radiation in the Russian court, but often after years, the victims, badly ill, receive only a few dollars compensation in compensation for lifelong disability.

Knowing the above we wonder about the priorities of the EU in terms of investments for nuclear industry, for example from the 7. Framework Programme for research and technological development (FP7):

**The highest amount of money is spent on nuclear (EURATOM): 2751 million Euro
More than for climate change, energy efficiency and renewable energy**

2350 million Euro are spent on energy (> 50% for renewable energy and energy efficiency) and 1890 million Euro for environment (including climate change). Please do correct me if these are not the right figures – I refer to a presentation of Ms Hilikka Summa at the biomass-conference in Graz, January, this year.

If this data is correct: How does that fit to the political priority of climate change? And sustainable energy, which for us needs a clear focus on energy saving and efficiency as also decentralized sustainable renewable energy? Does that correspond to the political will of the European citizens?

In our opinion the highest amount of money has to go into energy saving and efficiency. That is the sector, which makes Europe's energy supply competitive, secure and sustainable.

We do not understand why governments still demand that we take the risk of nuclear contamination of our planet.

Nuclear energy causes health problems. Radioactivity even in low doses is a risk for many illnesses like cancer and leukaemia. Even the most "advanced" countries in Europe are not able to guarantee total safe operations of their nuclear powerplants (see recent accidents in Sweden and Germany). A recent epidemiological study in Germany revealed a statistically significant increase of childhood cancer (all malignancies) in youngest children (0 – 4 years) living in the vicinity of commercial nuclear power plants

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(< 5 km) in normal operation. This should be reason enough to shut down all nuclear power plants.

As women we are extremely concerned as the sensitivity to radiation of women is about double as high as for men with regards to the relative risk. Especially high is the radiation sensitivity for the unborn child. The radiation sensitivity depends on the age and sex.

Nuclear power is a roadblock to climate protection

Currently, nuclear energy only provides 2-3% of the worlds total final energy consumption right now – and uranium is finite too (with an estimated 40 years left at current level of nuclear power plants). All the money going into new nuclear energy systems, would be much better spend in energy conservation and renewable energies as mentioned before. The potential for renewables is enormous. Decentralized sustainable energy is truly sustainable – it benefits all sectors of society, local economies and the environment.

We very much welcome the leading part of the EU in the climate change negotiations and we also welcome the energy package – even if we think it is not enough.

So we urge you to increase your efforts and support for the creation of stable investment conditions for decentralized, sustainable, energy sources. These existing and exciting technologies should receive support from the European Commission – not a failed and deadly technology from the last century like nuclear power.

Kind regards,

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