



Ms Kadri Simson
European Commissioner for Energy
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1049 Bruxelles
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Mr Virginijus Sinkevičius
European Commissioner for Environment,
Oceans and Fisheries
BERL 08/204
1049 Bruxelles
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Brussels, 26 March 2020

Subject: Lifetime extensions of nuclear power plants

Dear Commissioner Kadri Simson,

Dear Commissioner Virginijus Sinkevičius,

In light of the earthquake that hit Zagreb on March 22nd, 2020 with a magnitude of 5,5 on the Richter Scale, concerns have been raised by European citizens and NGOs about the safety of nuclear power plants nearby the epicentre of the earthquake, notably the Slovenian-Croat power plant in Krško. Seismic waves of the earthquake in Zagreb were reaching as far as to the Austrian region Styria. We, the undersigned MEPs, are very alarmed about the safety of the European citizens living in close proximity of nuclear power plants whenever a natural disaster, such as the earthquake in Zagreb hits.

Slovenia's nuclear power plant at Krško is older than 30 years. The design of the reactors only allows a limited implementation of new technology and safety measures and protection against earthquakes are known to be insufficient. Slovenia and Croatia announced in February 2015 that they would extend the lifetime of their joint nuclear power plant at Krško by 20 years, i.e. until 2043, despite the numerous demands for the closure of this unit. Moreover, the Slovenian Environment Agency (ARSO) decided that no environmental impact assessment is necessary for this 20-year life-span extension.

Lifetime extensions of nuclear power plants should be treated like an application for a new project. On July 2019, the European Court of Justice found the Belgian government in breach of EU law concerning the prolongation of the operational life of the two nuclear reactors Doel 1&2 (which should have been closed in 2015 after being employed for 40 years, but they received an extension for ten more years). According to the ECJ, carrying out environmental impact studies before this decision should have been mandatory.



In the Commission's answer from 24 February 2020 to the written question **E-004179/2019** by the MEP Sabine Verheyen and MEP Pascal Arimont; the European Commission confirmed the Court's interpretation that the extension of the lifetime of a project (in this case a nuclear power plant) is equivalent to starting a new project in itself and therefore it is subject to the scope of the EIA Directive.

In February 2020, a group of NGOs has successfully challenged the decision of the Slovenian Environment Agency (ARSO) to refrain from performing an environmental impact assessment. Indeed, the Administrative Court leaned on the decision of the ECJ in the Belgian Doel 1 & 2 case. ARSO will now have to conduct another preliminary assessment and later possibly an impact assessment, which involves also a cross-border impact assessment.

Is the Commission aware of documents relating to an environmental assessment procedure? What is the Commission's assessment of Slovenia's plans to extend the lifetime of Krško nuclear power plant, which is close to the Austrian, Croatian, Hungarian and Italian borders?

In addition, the European Commission announced on 11 February 2020 to the Member States that it should revise its guidelines on the operationalisation of the decision of the Court of Justice under the Environmental Impact Assessment Directive (Directive 2011/92/EU). The same applies to the practical implementation of the recommendations of the ESPOO Convention on the extension of the lifetime of nuclear power plants.

We, the undersigned MEPs, ask you for more information about the timetable, procedures and consultation opportunities for the revision of the guidelines of the EIA Directive and the ongoing ESPOO Convention process. This is vital information for the public and should be as transparent as possible.

Furthermore, we insist that the lifetime extensions of nuclear power plants need to follow overarching European guidelines for the safety of the European citizens and that in every evaluation the precautionary principle is applied while making the evaluation process transparent and comprehensive for the public.

We thank you for your consideration.

Yours sincerely,

MEP Michèle Rivasi
MEP Thomas Waitz
MEP Jutta Paulus
MEP Tilly Metz