

Text presentation by Niels Henrik Hooge, NOAH FoE Denmark, for webinar on EURATOM reform on April 13th 2021

Slide 1

My name is Niels Henrik Hooge. I am from NOAH Friends of the Earth Denmark and I will speak about the perspective of non-nuclear EU member states on EURATOM and treaty reform.

Slide 2

So what is the issue?

14 EU-27 member states – which is the majority – do not have nuclear power programs. In these countries, there is generally very little interest in EURATOM reform or repeal. It is not on their political agenda and historically, they have not been willing to spend any political capital on this issue.

In reforming the EU treaties, process, politics, strategy and tactics matter. So the million dollar question is - could there be a way to solve this problem?

Slide 3

The Danish example might be typical of what is at stake. In Denmark there is no nuclear power program. The original program was abandoned in 1985 due to public pressure. No nuclear power plants were ever constructed.

Slide 4

In 2019, all the political parties in the Danish Parliament passed a resolution, demanding EURATOM reform. The Parliament expressed its dissatisfaction that Denmark contributes €27 million yearly to the EURATOM program's total annual budget, although Denmark has no nuclear power itself. Thus, it wanted to reduce the EURATOM budget framework and make it more beneficial to non-nuclear countries.

Furthermore, the parliament wanted to investigate, how the European Parliament could obtain influence on issues concerning EURATOM. A minority also wanted to make the Danish government cooperate with EU member states intent on reforming or abolishing EURATOM.

Slide 5

However, the Danish media never covered the proceedings. Nor was there any interest from Danish renewable industry organisations. The Danish government never really changed its policy towards EURATOM.

So, based on among others the Danish example, one has to ask oneself the question: What could trigger a real change in Denmark's and other non-nuclear EU member states' position on treaty reform in the energy field? What could be a possible way forward?

One solution that comes to mind would be to include all energy-related proposals for constitutional reform simultaneously in a revision procedure.

Slide 6

The arguments for this proposal seem obvious:

EU needs a new overriding vision in the energy field, which only a treaty on renewables, energy efficiency and energy saving can provide. There is also a substantial need for a stable framework for the long-term deployment of renewables.

In a negotiation situation it would make sense to have as many sensible options on the table as possible in pursuing a green European energy transition. In non-nuclear member states, the focus is first and foremost on renewables, energy efficiency and energy saving. However, as of now, there is no guarantee that decommissioned nuclear power plants will be replaced by renewables. Instead, they could be replaced by imports of fossil gas.

Slide 7

So far, none of the measures proposed by the European Commission or adopted by the European Council are sufficient to reach the objective of the Paris Agreement to limit global warming to 1.5 or 2 degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels.

In 2019, the then 28 member states presented integrated National Energy and Climate Plans for meeting EU's 2030 climate and energy goals on the way to the 2050 Net Zero objective. All the plans fall short on ambition and credibility. Even the highest scoring plans achieve only half the potential, whereas the member state average is at less than a third, because of inadequate targets and insufficient details on the policies and financing needed to move toward.

According to the European Court of Auditors, the EU needs to take significant action to generate more electricity from wind and solar power to meet its targets on renewable energies. Since 2014, there has been a slowdown of the deployment of renewables. The Court of Auditors calls on the Commission to urge member states to support further deployment and points out that the 2030 renewables target may be difficult to achieve in the absence of binding national targets.

Slide 8

To draw a conclusion:

The EURATOM Treaty could be replaced by a Treaty on Renewable Energies, Energy Efficiency and Energy Saving. An option could be the European Energy Transition Protocol proposed by the Austrian government back in 2016 or something similar.

Perhaps it would also make sense to emphasize the principal argument for any treaty on renewables in this presentation. It would be this: Although the costs of renewables are decreasing, neither their own positive externalities, nor the negative externalities of the competing energy sources are sufficiently priced in the energy markets, which is detrimental to the growth of renewables. Also, past support of nuclear power is already built into nuclear power's infrastructure.

Slide 9

Thank you.