



European Economic  
and Social Committee



## Summary record of the weCARE Event

in partnership with and hosted by the  
European Economic and Social Committee

29 June 2023

***Nuclear contribution for a balanced European  
low carbon energy mix***

ROOM VMA 2  
Rue Van Maerlant, 2  
1000 Brussels

## Context of the event

weCARE is an Alliance of European NGOs founded in 2019 aiming at interacting with the EU Institutions to promote a C-lean, A-ffordable and R-liable E-energy mix for social sustainability. Both the Euratom Treaty and Art 194.2 of the TFEU support the free choice of Member States willing to recourse to nuclear energy. Over the last two decades, nuclear has been sidelined in the Green EU policies driving the energy policy. The present combined geopolitical, climate, energy and social crisis rings an alarm bell. The time for change has come. As recently affirmed by eleven EU Member States in Stockholm, later joined by a number of others, weCARE also strongly believes that nuclear energy has to play a major role in the low carbon energy mix of the future, together with other low carbon sources. This needs to be properly reflected at EU level in policy and implementation documents.

## Objective of the event

The aim of the event was to offer an opportunity for an open discussion with civil society on the need for a balanced low carbon energy mix, where all sources are used in an optimised way, considering their strengths and weaknesses evaluated on a scientific and factual basis. This optimisation needs to be done at the energy system level and needs to aim at the well-being of the European citizen and society.

Experts were invited to discuss the contribution nuclear energy can make to such an optimised low carbon energy mix. Time was given for a constructive debate with the participants.

## Agenda

9.00 Opening: Welcome address and Objectives of the event

**Marc Deffrennes** – Founder of weCARE

9.10 Introductory Statements by weCARE and EESC

For weCARE: **Richard Ivens** – Partner of weCARE

For EESC: **Baïba Miltovica** – President of EESC TEN Section

9.30 Nuclear Energy from present to future: from technical and economic challenges to opportunities; Panorama by Nuclear Stakeholders worldwide and in Europe: what's going on

**Alec Mitchell** – Senior Analyst at World Nuclear Association

**Jessica Johnson** – Communications and Advocacy Director at Nucleareurope

**Jadwiga Najder** – Chair of European Nuclear Society Young Generation (lead N4C)

10.15 NEA's SMR Dashboard and Electricity System Costs Study

**Diane Cameron** – Head of Division Nuclear Technology and Economics – OECD NEA

10.45 Break

11.00 From cost to price: the needed Electricity Market Reform

**Claude Fischer-Herzog** – Report on the meeting of Entretiens Européens in Paris on 16 June

**Marc Deffrennes** – weCARE views expressed at the EESC Hearing of 20 April

11.15 Views by Civil Society on the role of nuclear energy in the low carbon future

Member of EESC – Rapporteur of EESC Opinions on Energy: **Alena Mastantuono**

Representatives of Associations Member of weCARE (**Elisabeth Huffer** for PNC/SLC, **Henri Marenne** for 100 TWh), **Elizabeth Neau** for CFE Energies

11.45 Open Discussion and Statements by participants leading to Conclusion by weCARE and EESC  
For weCARE: **Richard Ivens**, Partner and **Louka Lacroix**, Young Generation  
For EESC: **Pierre Jean Coulon** – Former President of EESC TEN Section

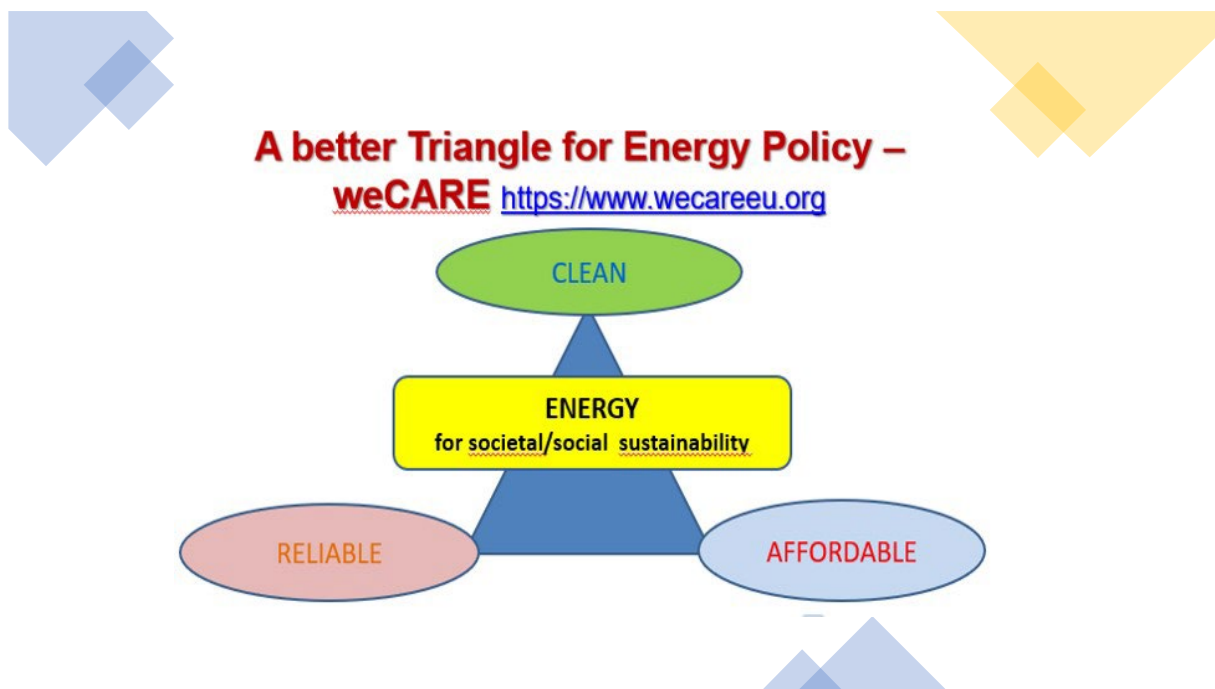
12.30 End

**Presentations of the event can be downloaded below:**

- [Nuclear today: opportunities and challenges a global overview](#) - **Alec Mitchell**
- [Global Perspective on the Role of Nuclear Energy in Pathways to Net Zero](#) - **Diane Cameron**
- [A View from Brussels](#) - **Jessica Johnson**
- [Youth in nuclear space](#) - **Jadwiga Najder**
- [Nuclear contribution for a balanced European low carbon energy mix](#) - **Marc Deffrennes**

## Main Messages

To open the event, after thanking the EESC TEN Committee and the Secretariat for hosting the event under the Partnerships framework, **Marc Deffrennes** recalled the importance of using the proper definition of “sustainability”. Too much focus has been put on the notion of “green” – directly connected to the protection of the environment. The crisis period (climate, health, Ukraine, energy) with major economic and social impacts, makes it necessary to develop an energy policy based on the equilibrium between 3 pillars: environment AND economy AND security of supply – reflecting the logo and moto of weCARE: Clean Affordable Reliable Energy for Social Sustainability – the aim being to maintain the welfare of European society as a whole. It is our society which needs to be sustainable, not “only” the environment.



**Richard Ivens** presented weCARE’s goals, membership and activities. The main aim is for an Alliance of European NGOs and Associated Members active in diverse EU Member States – weCARE does not have individual members – to interact with the EU Institutions in Brussels (Council, Parliament,

Commission, EESC) to promote a balanced very low carbon energy mix with an important contribution of nuclear energy, both for electricity and industrial heat.

**Baiba Miltovica**, as Chair of the EESC TEN Committee, welcomed the participants. She recalled the EESC Exploratory Opinion on the “Role of nuclear Energy in the stability of EU energy prices”, prepared by the TEN Committee upon request of the CZ Presidency<sup>1</sup> and published in September 2022. It was not an easy exercise to come to a consensus as there is a diversity of views among the members of TEN, as there is among the EU Member States. It is important to recall Art 194.2 of the TFEU, recognising the sole right of each Member State to choose its energy mix. The energy crisis has highlighted some limits of the (electricity) system with individual consumers facing escalation of prices while these prices do not always reflect true costs anymore. It is therefore necessary to look again seriously at opportunities that nuclear energy may bring to help set the system on the right track – keeping in mind the overall social dimension of the problem, which is very much in line with weCARE views.

**Alec Mitchell** indicated that after three decades of standstill, particularly in the EU, there are positive signs that things are changing (Taxonomy, Alliance, France, Sweden, ...). This is necessary – 25 years after Kyoto and having spent 5 trillion USD directly, and the same again in subsidies – we are still very far from success. The UNECE Report, to which WNA contributed, shows that nuclear energy is the best technology in terms of lifecycle emissions, and that it has the greatest potential to further improve. But most importantly UNECE concluded that nuclear has a lower lifecycle impact than all types of wind and solar. Today we still have globally the same number of reactors in operation as thirty years ago. Nuclear plants have been closed in the West (EU particularly) and new plants have come online in Asia. It is time for the EU to get its act together, first going into LTO, then building new GEN III plants seeking a reduction in costs and timelines and going further into innovative technologies and applications.

**Jessica Johnson** stated by noting a change in public opinion on nuclear. And that matters as it influences policy decisions in Member States. Even in countries with a nuclear phase-out law, as in Belgium, public opinion may see things otherwise. This then also has an effect on policies at EU level. To illustrate this, she gave updates on three main files: the EU Taxonomy for Sustainable Finance, Hydrogen and Renewable Energy Directive III, and the Net Zero Industry Act still under discussion. While the outcome on these three files is not 100% positive for nuclear, it is nevertheless better than it would have been two years ago, before the crisis. The battle for nuclear in Brussels and Strasbourg needs to go on, with all stakeholders involved, particularly civil society.

**Jadwiga Najder**, leading the Nuclear for Climate (N4C) actions at COP level, gave a young generation perspective. She showed the list of leaders and media N4C has engaged at the recent COPs meetings and the positive responses received, which is also an indication that things are changing. This would not have been possible a few years ago.

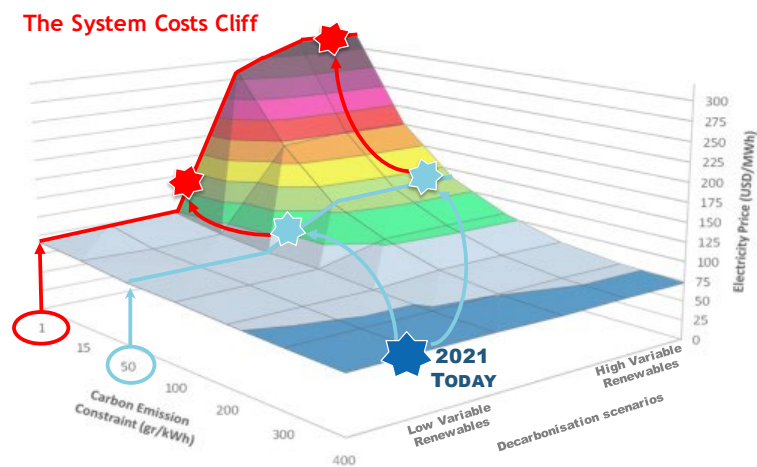
**Diane Cameron** first recalled the NEA view on the role nuclear energy has to play in the future low carbon energy mix. Nuclear is necessary, starting with LTO of existing plants, then new build Gen III

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.eesc.europa.eu/en/our-work/opinions-information-reports/opinions/role-nuclear-energy-stability-eu-energy-prices#:~:text=The%20EESC%3A%20Recognises%20that%20because%20of%20the%20current,mix%20includes%20a%20high%20share%20of%20low-emission%20sources.>

plants, Gen IV and SMRs and non-electric applications for hard to decarbonise sectors. NEA has recently launched an in-depth analysis of the status of SMR deployment and commercialization around the world. Over 80 concepts for SMRs exist, with some already deployed and operating, some close to demonstration, and others in earlier stages. The goal of NEA, via an SMR Dashboard<sup>2</sup>, is to track the progress of these concepts. A first set of 21 has been assessed and the methodology and results were presented. She then presented the NEA System Costs report of 2019<sup>3</sup>, explaining the methodology and the conclusions. It shows that, in case of strong decarbonisation (going below 50 gCO<sub>2</sub>/kWh) going above a certain percentage of variable renewable sources is not the most economic way to proceed. This is best illustrated by the slide below.

## Charting a Path to Net -Zero Electricity



**Claude Fisher-Herzog** reported on the outcomes of an event held by the Entretiens Européens in Paris on 16 June on the topic “Europe’s nuclear revival requires structural market reform with long-term contracts”. While there are still strong divergences between Member States on the role of nuclear energy, the recently created Alliance give a signal of revival. This should be a first step in the creation of a permanent structured cooperation between volunteer Member States. The Alliance declared a goal of 150GWe nuclear in 2050, which is 50% higher than the value cited in the last PINC and still the figure used by the European Commission. 150 GWe would correspond to 25% of the electricity demand in 2050 – roughly what nuclear contributes today. But for this to happen, investments will be necessary – estimated at 800 billion Euros. And then financing mechanisms need to be set up in a politically positive environment. Beyond this and to make it happen, it is also necessary to structurally reform the electricity market. Today the proposal of the Commission on CfDs and PPAs is a good signal (why not RAB which is even more effective for nuclear with its long lead times due to the construction), but practical ways forward still need to be clarified. It would be most

<sup>2</sup> [https://www.oecd-nea.org/jcms/pl\\_78743/the-nea-small-modular-reactor-dashboard?details=true](https://www.oecd-nea.org/jcms/pl_78743/the-nea-small-modular-reactor-dashboard?details=true)

<sup>3</sup> [https://www.oecd-nea.org/jcms/pl\\_15000/the-costs-of-decarbonisation-system-costs-with-high-shares-of-nuclear-and-renewables?details=](https://www.oecd-nea.org/jcms/pl_15000/the-costs-of-decarbonisation-system-costs-with-high-shares-of-nuclear-and-renewables?details=)

helpful if not essential to work together at EU level on this, using the tool of SGEIs – Services of General Economic Interest).

**Marc Deffrennes** briefly reported on his contribution to the 20 April EESC Hearing on the electricity market reform. He recalled his views that electricity is not a commodity but a public good. Delivering electricity is a service to the public. The market reform was launched in the early 2000s, at a time when electricity was provided by dispatchable sources called upon using the merit order. The inflow of more and more intermittent renewable sources, strongly subsidised, introduced a strong bias in the market and flawed the merit order, as it considers only the LCOE and not the full system costs (see presentation by NEA). As result a major structural change needs to happen, going much further than what is proposed by the Commission. One way to explain what it might mean, is to say that the “market” as organised today is not a market – because it mixes apples and oranges – dispatchable sources coupled with intermittent variable sources not paying the full costs they induce. Therefore the reform should go as far as admitting intermittent sources in the market only on the condition that they include the costs of managing their own intermittency. That would set a level playing field where all production means are on an equal footing. The merit order would then look quite different.

**Alena Mastantuono** explained the content of the EESC TEN Opinion on the role of nuclear energy in the stability of EU energy prices. She recalled that the stability and affordability of energy prices is essential for the households and enterprises, thus for the economy. This needs to be preserved at the same time we fight against climate change. The document recognises that existing nuclear plants are contributing to getting through the crisis, by providing baseload decarbonised electricity. The EESC proposes that the role of nuclear power in stabilizing energy prices is discussed within ENEF, and EESC is willing to be closely involved in the discussions representing civil society as a whole. The EESC also recommends reinforcing bilateral co-operations with international partners in the nuclear sector in order to share their findings in terms of innovation and advances in new technologies.

**Elisabeth Huffer** for PNC/SLC (weCARE Members in France), **Henri Marenne** for 100TWh (weCARE Member in Belgium), and **Elizabeth Neau** for CFE Energies (weCARE Associate Organisation) delivered statements from their national perspectives.

In France things are moving in the right direction, noting the strong role Minister Panier Runacher is playing in leading the pronuclear Alliance at EU level. PNC is investigating the opportunity to support the Commission against Austria in the European Court of Justice on the Taxonomy CDA file.

The case of Belgium is very complex. The nuclear phase out law is still in force but evolving political decisions are looming. Two plants will go the 10 years extension. 100TWh is fighting to keep more plants in LTO, including through a Court case based of the security of supply argument.

CFE Energies notes that once more nuclear energy might be excluded from the NZIA. The objective of strategic autonomy of the EU in the global world requires that one of the sole low carbon technologies that the EU fully masters be promoted. This needs to be complemented by a deep structural reform of the electricity market.

**Loula Lacroix** for weCARE Young Generation explained why he is supporting the role of nuclear while not being a scientist or an engineer, but as an informed citizen. This penultimate word is important – “to be informed”. Therefore, it would be valuable if weCARE and the EESC become more active in developing information means directed towards the young generation.

**Richard Ivens** concluded the event by thanking the speakers and those who attended.

**Pierre Jean Coulon**, former Chair of the EESC TEN Committee, Member of the Advisory Board of weCARE, and key person for the organisation of the event, concluded for the EESC making the following points:

- As the NEA System Cost Study has shown, it is necessary to have a broad look at system level. The simplistic view that renewables are cheap needs to be put in perspective taking account of all induced costs.
- There is a complementarity between renewables and nuclear, both being decarbonised. But new nuclear plants being expensive to build, they will have to operate under baseload to be economic. Therefore, the compatibility between renewables and nuclear is not a given.
- These facts need to be integrated in the reflection on the necessary deep structural reform of the electricity market/system. The price needs to reflect the true costs, and all costs. Subsidies should be discarded.
- It is time for the European Commission to become more responsible on the nuclear file – not hiding behind the Member States' divergent views. Nuclear is decarbonised, economic and reliable and should be promoted as per the Euratom Treaty.
- It is time for the Commission to issue a new PINC. This one should be much more strategic than the previous one of 2017 which was just a collection of views of the Member States, which lead to the target of 100 GWe nuclear in 2050. Today already the Alliance talks about 150 GWe. There is a need to have a serious prospective vision on this and build a strategy accordingly, at EU level or through a coalition of Member States.
- The EESC thanks weCARE for the work done and for the valuable informations shared during this event and looks forward to future collaboration, including within ENEF.

## For further contacts

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weCARE

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weCARE is a Brussels-based alliance of NGOs campaigning in Europe for Clean, Affordable and Reliable Energy. The weCARE website (<https://www.wecareeu.org/>) describes the aims and specific activities of the alliance and lists the current member organisations: Sauvons le Climat FR, Patrimoine Nucléaire et Climat FR, Terrapraaxis UK, 100TWh BE, Ekomodernist FI, Jihocesti TatKove CZ, Institute for Sustainable Energy PL, 18for0 IE, European Association for Energy Security SK, Stichting Energietransitie en Kernenergie NL.

weCARE is listed in the EU Transparency Register under number 473723535459-78.

<https://www.wecareeu.org>

## List of registered participants

(Not all were present at the event)

<b>NAME</b>	<b>SURNAME</b>	<b>NATIONAL</b>	<b>COUNTRY</b>	<b>ORGANISATION</b>
<b>COULON</b>	<i>Pierre Jean</i>	<b>FR</b>	<b>FR</b>	<b>EESC</b>
<b>IVANOVA</b>	<i>Ivelina</i>	<b>BG</b>	<b>BG</b>	<b>PR BG</b>
<b>GARBIL</b>	<i>Roger</i>	<b>FR</b>	<b>BE</b>	<b>EC</b>
<b>LACROIX</b>	<i>Louka</i>	<b>BE</b>	<b>BE</b>	<b>weCARE YG</b>
<b>RIZEA</b>	<i>Lavinia Sandra</i>	<b>RO</b>	<b>BE</b>	<b>PR RO</b>
<b>NEAU</b>	<i>Elizabeth</i>	<b>FR</b>	<b>FR</b>	<b>CFE-CGC Energie</b>
<b>BOSENS</b>	<i>Paul</i>	<b>BE</b>	<b>BE</b>	<b>STANDUP NUKE</b>
<b>FISCHER HERZOG</b>	<i>Claude</i>	<b>FR</b>	<b>FR</b>	<b>ENTRETIENS EUR</b>
<b>CAMERON</b>	<i>Diane</i>	<b>CN</b>	<b>FR</b>	<b>OECD NEA</b>
<b>MARENNE</b>	<i>Henri</i>	<b>BE LU</b>	<b>BE</b>	<b>100TWh</b>
<b>HUFFER</b>	<i>Elisabeth</i>	<b>FR</b>	<b>FR</b>	<b>PNC/SLC</b>
<b>MAIRY</b>	<i>Benard</i>	<b>BE</b>	<b>BE</b>	<b>100TWh SEII</b>
<b>CHARRY</b>	<i>Philippe</i>	<b>FR</b>	<b>FR</b>	<b>FO EESC</b>
<b>STOEV</b>	<i>Georgi</i>	<b>BG</b>	<b>BG</b>	<b>BCII EESC</b>
<b>MONTARNAL</b>	<i>Philippe</i>	<b>FR</b>	<b>BE</b>	<b>RP FR</b>
<b>MITCHELL</b>	<i>Alec</i>	<b>UK</b>	<b>UK</b>	<b>WNA</b>
<b>RUDNICKA</b>	<i>Barbara</i>	<b>PL</b>	<b>BE</b>	<b>PR PL</b>
<b>ESTEVES</b>	<i>Francisco</i>	<b>PT</b>	<b>PT</b>	<b>ISAVE EESC</b>
<b>BOUDINET</b>	<i>Lea</i>	<b>FR</b>	<b>BE</b>	<b>RP FR</b>
<b>VAN GOETHEM</b>	<i>Georges</i>	<b>BE</b>	<b>BE</b>	<b>RAOS</b>
<b>VANDERLINCK</b>	<i>Annie</i>	<b>BE</b>	<b>BE</b>	<b>100TWh</b>
<b>DEFFRENNES</b>	<i>Marc</i>	<b>BE</b>	<b>BE</b>	<b>weCARE</b>
<b>JOHNSON</b>	<i>Jessica</i>	<b>BE</b>	<b>BE</b>	<b>NuclearEurope</b>
<b>IVENS</b>	<i>Richard</i>	<b>UK BE</b>	<b>BE</b>	<b>weCARE</b>
<b>NAJDER</b>	<i>Jadwiga</i>	<b>PL</b>	<b>FR</b>	<b>ENS</b>
<b>MILTOVICA</b>	<i>Baiba</i>	<b>LV</b>		<b>EESC</b>
<b>MASTANTUONO</b>	<i>Alena</i>	<b>CZ</b>		<b>EESC</b>
<b>FRERE</b>	<i>Eric</i>	<b>BE</b>	<b>BE</b>	<b>100TWh</b>
<b>MUGNIER</b>	<i>Olivier</i>	<b>FR</b>	<b>FR</b>	<b>CFUP EESC</b>
<b>RONDEAU DU NOYER</b>	<i>Francois</i>	<b>FR</b>	<b>FR</b>	<b>OECD NEA</b>
<b>SHERMAN</b>	<i>Nicholas</i>	<b>USA</b>	<b>FR</b>	<b>OECD NEA</b>
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