



November 2022

European Nuclear Energy Forum

Message of weCARE

The present geopolitical and energy crisis requires a serious reconsideration of the European energy policy. For the last two decades, the leitmotiv has been “green”, as clearly shown by the label “Green Deal” strongly promoted by the European Commission and endorsed by the Member States and the European Parliament. The very recent communication campaign “You are Europe”, univocally associating fundamental European values (i.a. human rights, liberty, peace, diversity, unity, stability) with “green” intermittent renewable sources of electricity, just confirms it.

As weCARE many times stated already, a “green” only energy policy is not sustainable. The focus on environment alone is not enough. A more balanced approach is necessary. Economics and security of supply need to be fully integrated in order for societal sustainability to be respected (in line with the moto of weCARE: Clean, Affordable, Reliable Energy for Societal Sustainability).

The measures proposed till now, at EU and national levels, to reduce the effects of the energy crisis are helpful in the short-term but not sufficient in the longer term: taxing the excessive profits of energy companies (the inframarginal generators as called by the Commission), creating additional debt by distributing money, pleading for reducing consumption by lowering indoor temperatures during the winter, may help but will not solve the problem. We urgently need efficient and radical structural long-term reforms. Without these, dramatic economic and social consequences will be incurred. The EU Institutions have a central responsibility here. It will not be easy as it will require a change in the “software of the EU Energy policy”.

As elements of the needed EU energy policy reform, weCARE considers that:

- The open questions related to nuclear energy in the Complementary Delegated Act (CDA) of the Taxonomy for Sustainable Financing need to be swiftly clarified, easing access to financing and investment mechanisms for nuclear projects, from lifetime extension to new build and future technologies, as well as fuel cycle equipment and facilities. Sunset clauses should be revised or, better, removed, as many Member States are engaging in long term nuclear programmes, which require a stable conducive framework, also at EU level. Member States should not be allowed to oppose the choice of other Member States to resort to nuclear power, as that would be in violation of the Treaties. This might also be seen as being part of the solidarity principle.

- As nuclear energy is considered as sustainable under the Taxonomy, it is necessary to revisit all the EU financing mechanisms that have been set up under the Budget 2021-2027 and the Recovery Package. Indeed, most of these instruments have been excluding nuclear projects either explicitly or implicitly, while the discussions and decisions on the CDA were unduly delayed. Nuclear projects should now become eligible under these instruments.

- It is necessary to revisit REPowerEU, by including explicitly the important role of existing nuclear plants in overcoming the current electricity crisis, providing safe, low carbon, affordable and reliable energy. REPowerEU should include an EU appeal to keep all existing

nuclear plants in long term operation, if approved by the independent safety authorities.

- Objectives under Fit-for-55 should involve only decarbonization constraints, excluding targets on renewables. Indeed, each Member State is free to choose its energy mix according to Article 194.2 of the TFEU.

- A main endeavor needs to be launched to proactively reform the EU electricity system (the so-called market). The President of the Commission herself said that the electricity market is not functioning. Possible elements that should be considered include:

- Decoupling the price of electricity from the price of gas, and elaborating a price of electricity reflecting the true costs of the electricity production (but including system and external costs), with a margin for needed long term investments,
- Ensuring that the low carbon means with the lowest total costs are favored. For the short term, this directly points to the long-term operation of existing nuclear plants, as this is the cheapest way to produce electricity (OECD IEA reports).

While the non-paper prepared recently by the European Commission is a first step in the good direction, more will be needed for an effective in-depth reform. weCARE is willing to actively participate in the further discussions on structurally redesigning the internal electricity market with a focus on supporting a zero-carbon, robust, reliable, resilient and affordable system.

- Finally, the European budgets for nuclear research and innovation (i.e. the Euratom Research Programme) need to be significantly increased to reflect the long-term potential of nuclear energy to participate in the fight against climate change while contributing to the safe and reliable supply of energy. This includes not only the supply of low carbon electricity but also heat, for which there is an enormous need that intermittent renewable sources cannot fulfil.

weCARE proposes that the elements of the needed EU energy policy reform listed above constitute the background for a next PINC (Illustrative Nuclear Programme of the (Euratom) Community). So

much has changed since 2017, year of publication of the last PINC. A new one is urgently needed at this juncture to promote the role of nuclear energy in the low carbon energy future of the EU.

weCARE thanks the European Commission for supporting its participation to the ENEF 2022 Meeting and remains available for any further information/interaction and participation.

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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.