December 2023

Beyond the recent EC advertising campaign
"You are Europe"

Dear Vice President Sefcovic,
Dear Commissioner Hoekstra,
Dear Commissioner Simson,
Dear Commissioner Breton,

The European civil society alliance weCARE, campaigning for Clean, Affordable and Reliable Energy, would like to comment on the recent "You are Europe" advertising campaign of the European Commission.

This campaign, which highlights a number of the laudable benefits the European Union brings to its citizens, has been visibly portrayed in Member States using four posters with the following wording:

Freedom, Peace & Energy Independence – with a picture of solar PV panels

Democracy, Diversity & Climate Protection – with a picture of wind

turbines

Stability, Respect & Green Transition – with a picture of solar PV panels

Unity, Security & Renewable Energy – with a picture of a charging electric vehicle.

weCARE applauds the association of "You are Europe" with fundamental values of the European Union: Freedom, Peace, Democracy, Diversity, Stability, Respect, Unity, and Security. These values are indeed at the core of the European Endeavour and deserve to be recalled, particularly at times when geopolitical stability is under threat.

But we question why, of all the illustrations that could have been chosen to represent these noble themes, the Commission decided to illustrate the four posters with reference to or depictions of intermittent renewable energy sources. Allowing that energy policy does form part of the EU's benefits to citizens, why only intermittent renewable and not other low carbon sources such as nuclear? Nuclear does after all provide more of the EU's low-carbon electricity than any of the renewable sources[1].

Over recent years, "green" has been a central moto at EU level, as shown with the "Clean Planet for All" of 2018 becoming the "Green Deal" in 2019. The decarbonisation objective has been associated with ever increasing targets for renewable energy sources – the latest being 42,5% (even 45%) for 2030, laying the ground for further increases in the next steps. We believe that the decarbonisation objective should not be confused with the means to reach it, which should be a matter of national prerogative, as per the TFEU.

As weCARE already many times indicated, a sustainable energy policy should be balanced on the triangle environment, economics and security/reliability of supply. What matters is the sustainability of

[1] 2022 Share of EU electricity generation:
Fossil fuels 38.7%; Nuclear 21.9%; Wind 15.9%; Hydro 11.3%; Solar 7.6%
Ref: https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/infographics/how-is-eu-electricity-produced-and-sold/

our society and of welfare. This requires a balanced mix of decarbonised energy sources. Studies from the OECD[2] and MIT show that going beyond 30 to 40% of variable renewable sources in the electricity mix is not the most economical way to go and that higher penetration makes the problem worse. Intermittent renewable energy sources are not reliable, need large-scale backup means and are therefore expensive when considering the full system costs – something hidden by the slogan “wind and sunshine are free”. Therefore, they do not deserve the privileged visibility they get in the above-mentioned campaign by the European Commission.

Let us be clear, weCARE is not against the deployment of intermittent renewable energy sources. But this should be done in a reasonable way, in a socially sustainable way, at pace, ie only when cost-effective solutions to cope with system costs and effective and clean management of the intermittency are demonstrated. This is far from being the case today.

First signals, at EU level, for including nuclear in the portfolio of sustainable energy sources can be seen and are commendable, thanks lately to the action of the Alliance of pronuclear Member States. The impact is visible in the wording of the approved Taxonomy, and the proposals for the NZIA and the Electricity Market Reform. The final declaration of the COP28 also calls to accelerate the deployment of low emission technologies, including nuclear. Now is the time for the Commission to follow suit by ensuring that all future implementing instruments are aligned to allow equal treatment for all low carbon energy sources. This applies also to the revision of existing EU financial instruments.

Looking to the longer-term perspective, beyond the 55% binding decarbonisation target for 2030, which will be difficult to reach with only six years left, it will be important to keep a “path” towards an ambitious target for 2040, allowing 15 years for action. Such a timeline would allow EU Member States wanting to largely rely on nuclear energy to (re)build their fleet. Remembering that more than 100 nuclear plants have been built in the past over a period of 15

[2] https://www.oecd-nea.org/upload/docs/application/pdf/2021-10/system_costs_of_electricity_-_cop26_flyer.pdf

years, the same must be possible if a clear political signal is given, including at EU level. This is the responsibility of the European Commission as guardian of the Euratom Treaty and does not contradict the principle of freedom of choice of the energy mix by the Member States.

The combination of the existing nuclear plants in long term operation and newly built ones of generation III with a reasonable contribution of renewable sources, would greatly help the EU to reach an ambitious decarbonisation target in 2040, having in mind a contribution of the order of 200 GWe[3] of nuclear plants in 2050, starting by then to see also generation IV and more SMRs coming on-line, for heat and power production. weCARE hopes that this kind of vision will serve as the basis for a next PINC[4] of the European Commission, preferably to be published soon after the new Commission will come in place.

And, from there, a future "climate/energy" advertising campaign by the European Commission should also show pictures of nuclear and hydro power plants.

[3] 200 GWe is the double of the EU nuclear capacity of today. If one assumes that the electricity consumption will double between now and 2050, it means that with this 200 GWe, nuclear energy would provide, as of today, 25% of the power needs in the EU. It is a bare minimum, but also a challenge. Beyond 2050, more fast neutrons generation IV reactors should be built, providing a limitless access to energy with no dependence to outside sources of supply.

[4] PINC – Programme Indicatif Nucléaire de la Communauté – Illustrative Nuclear Program of the Community – to be published by the European Commission on regular basis under the Euratom Treaty Art 40. The last PINC dates 2017 and is outdated.

We remain at your disposal for any further information/interaction you would like to get from/with weCARE. We would be most honored to be invited to meet you or members of your Cabinet to discuss further the issues mentioned in this paper.

Yours faithfully,

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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, Terrapraxis 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.