



***November 2022***

## ***European Nuclear Energy Forum***

### ***Message of weCARE***

The present geopolitical and energy crisis requires a serious reconsideration of the European energy policy. Since 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 linking human rights, liberty, peace, diversity, unity, stability,... with intermittent wind and solar power, is another clear signal of propaganda.

But a “green” only energy policy is not sustainable. The focus on environment alone is not enough. Economics and affordability, security and reliability of supply need to be integrated, to seek for societal/social sustainability.

The short-term measures proposed till now, at EU and national levels, to reduce the effects of the energy crisis are not sufficient: taxing the excessive profits of energy companies, creating additional

debt by distributing money, pleading for reducing consumption by lowering the temperatures during the winter, may help but will not solve the problem. We need structural long-term reforms. It is not easy as it will require a re-founding of the EU energy policy, but it is urgent. Not starting to do it now will not help keeping the legitimacy of the European Union, at a time it is so needed. The EU Institutions have here a central responsibility to take.

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 clarified with a positive mind, easing the access to financing and investment mechanisms for nuclear projects, from lifetime extension to new build and future technologies. Member States acting in opposition to this should be penalized as violating the solidarity principle and the freedom of each Member State to choose its own energy mix.

- As nuclear energy is now considered as sustainable by the Taxonomy, it is necessary to revisit all the EU financing mechanisms which 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 must become eligible under these instruments.

- It is necessary to revisit REPower EU, by including explicitly the important role of existing nuclear plants in overcoming the actual electricity crisis, providing safe, low carbon, affordable and reliable energy. This immediately leads to an EU appeal to keep all existing nuclear plants in long term operation, if approved by the independent safety authorities.

- It might be wise to engage in a reflection on the elements of the Green Deal, renaming it Climate Deal instead. While it is necessary to have a target for decarbonization, one should analyse if minus 55% can seriously be achieved in 2030. If not, it might be better to come back to the former minus 40% as a binding target and keep the

minus 55% as an ambitious non-binding goal. At the same time, the target for renewables should be discarded since the recourse to renewables is a tool at disposal of Member States to help achieve the decarbonisation target. According to the Article 194.2 of the TFEU, each Member States is free to choose its energy mix. A target on renewables is therefore in contradiction with the spirit of this Article.

- A main endeavour 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. Since years knowledgeable people have been warning about the weaknesses of this market as, among other things, it was biased by subsidies for renewables and was not delivering the right signals for the necessary long-term investments in infrastructures. Some may dream about re-nationalization and re-regulation, but this might not be the best way as leading to more dis-union. Instead, ways need to be found to:

- Decouple the price of electricity from the price of gas,
- Elaborate a price of electricity reflecting the true costs of the electricity production (including global system costs), with a margin for needed long term investments,
- Ensure that the low carbon means with the lowest production costs are favored. This directly fingers to the long-term operation of existing nuclear plants, as this is the cheapest way to produce electricity (OECD IEA reports).

Diverse options to deeply reform the electricity market need to be developed and evaluated. One possibility might be the creation of an European (or regional) Agency acting as the sole central buyer of all the electricity produced before its distribution at more stable and balanced prices better reflecting the costs.

- Finally, the European budgets for nuclear research and innovation (ia the Euratom Research Programme) need to be drastically increased to reflect the long-term potential of nuclear energy to participate to the fight against climate change while contributing to the safe and reliable supply of energy. This includes the supply of low carbon electricity but also heat, for which there is an enormous need that renewables cannot fulfil. A part of the amount of money today promised for the Hydrogen hype could be used for that purpose, focusing on SMRs and GenIV Reactors.

weCARE hopes that the elements of the needed EU energy policy reform listed above will 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.

weCARE is keen to further contribute to the activities of ENEF, as a member of the Steering Committee. Ten years ago, in 2011, a representative of Greenpeace addressed the ENEF Plenary in Prague talking about nuclear as the industry of the past. Today, weCARE addresses ENEF talking about nuclear energy as a necessary solution for now and tomorrow.

weCARE remains at disposal for any further information/interaction.

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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.