

## Press Release

### **Critical Review published by the Austrian Institute of Ecology on the severe shortcomings of the EU assessment on nuclear in the taxonomy**

#### **Appeal to the EU Commission to return to evidence-based decision-making for nuclear power and taxonomy**

(Vienna/Brussels, June 15, 2021) Today the Austrian Institute of Ecology presented its Critical Review of the EU Joint Research Centre's (JRC) Assessment for the EU Taxonomy Regulation, the first comprehensive review of the report commissioned by the European Commission.

Lead author Gabriele Mraz sums up her evaluation of the JRC paper: "We call upon the European Commission and both Euratom Art. 31 Group and SCHEER Committees which are tasked with evaluating the JRC Report by taking an evidence-based approach. The JRC assessment provides an insufficient basis for decision-taking. Our Critical Review highlights the consequences of nuclear energy use that the report ignored and should be considered. It is not acceptable to simply leave out facts about nuclear energy that do not support the desired narrative." The facts that should be taken into account include:

- Severe accidents with catastrophic and long-term consequences have been downplayed by the JRC: the risk of chronic illness due to a severe accident, the risk of loss of agricultural areas due to severe contamination, and the disastrous social and economic impacts on people forced to live in contaminated territories. The JRC failed to include either of the major accidents – Chernobyl and Fukushima – in its comparison of fatality rates.
- After decades of research, there is still no final disposal for nuclear waste. The Swedish copper canister solution, which Finland also intends to use at its planned Onkalo disposal, has not yet been approved because copper appears to corrode under the expected underground conditions. There is currently no solution for the safe disposal of tons of high-level nuclear waste and spent fuel.
- JRC failed to discuss non-proliferation problems; the risk of more countries acquiring nuclear weapons via civil nuclear programs has been entirely omitted.
- JRC appears to believe that regulations alone will ensure nuclear safety, and that the achievable safety improvements identified during the EU stress tests have been implemented. The claim that the new Generation III+ reactors will guarantee safety are also incorrect; the only one (EPR) currently in operation is Taishan in China. Instead, the existing fleet of reactors will continue to operate beyond their planned lifespans, with outdated designs and increased risk associated with aging components.
- Nuclear energy significantly harms human health, even in the low dose range resulting from normal NPP operations and nuclear workplaces.

The JRC Report systematically downplays the risks and hazards specific to nuclear energy, omitting to mention many potential areas of danger. The residual risk of a severe accident at any plant, at any time, is ignored, although mankind has already experienced the outcomes of such events more than once. This is not only a serious omission, but also a clear failure to fulfil the task the JRC was set.

Patricia Lorenz, co-author of the Austrian Institute of Ecology's review: "The European Commission's choice of taxonomy as a tool to prepare for a sustainable future is a very valuable one. The process has started well and it should retain the trust it has built up thus far. We are aware of the nuclear industry's battle for survival, and that certain Member States are pressuring the EU Commission, urging them to overthrow the first assessment by the Technical Expert Group (TEG) and include

nuclear in the taxonomy. However, this is an insidious approach: attempting to push nuclear energy in through the backdoor based on the JRC assessment whose authors remain anonymous, and involving two review committees who are neither transparent, nor obliged to consult on or even publish their statements. We ask for a fully transparent and public discussion and consultation on all the relevant documents and the EU Commission's upcoming legislative proposal in September."

The *Critical Review of the Joint Research Centre's Assessment for the EU Taxonomy Regulation* report can be downloaded here: [http://www.ecology.at/taxonomie\\_atom\\_2021.htm](http://www.ecology.at/taxonomie_atom_2021.htm)

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