

EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

European Parliament resolution on the problem of nuclear safety fifteen years after the Chernobyl accident, and its health consequences

The European Parliament

having regard to its joint motion for a resolution B4-729/97 on the closure of the Chernobyl nuclear power plant,-

having regard to Euratom Directive 96/29 on basic radiation standards,-

having regard to the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) concerning the closure of Chernobyl between the G7 countries and the Ukraine, signed in Ottawa on 20 December 1995,

- A. whereas Chernobyl closed in December 2000, 14 years after the explosion at the reactor resulting in the world's worst civil nuclear disaster,
- B. whereas the Ukraine has complied with the MOU and closed Chernobyl, and the G7 and EU have agreed to fund the completion of two further nuclear reactors at Khmel'nitsky and Rivne, known as K2R4,
- C. whereas the accident in unit four of the Chernobyl nuclear power station on 26 April 1986 caused the immediate deaths of workers, heavily contaminated the whole region in today's Russia, Ukraine and Belarus and spread nuclear isotopes throughout Europe,
- D. noting that, although one of the most radioactive areas in the world, this region is still inhabited, and that cancers, particularly thyroid cancer, leukaemias and other serious and often fatal illnesses are still occurring there 15 years after the accident,
- E. whereas the accepted model of radiation was unable to predict the emergence of the illnesses now arising as a result of radiation,
- F. whereas Belarus alone is thought to have absorbed over 80% of the radioactive dust,
- G. having regard to the 5 years of negotiations between the Ukrainian Government and the G7 Group of industrialised countries and whereas the G7 and EU have agreed to a loan for reform of the Ukraine's power sector, stabilisation of the Chernobyl sarcophagus and completion of the half-built nuclear reactors Khmel'nitsky-2 and Rovno-4, known as 'K2R4', as part of a package of energy options for replacing power from Chernobyl,
- H. whereas the commitment of 1 billion by the EU and its Member States will constitute the largest single contribution towards compensating the Ukraine for decommissioning the Chernobyl plant,
- I. whereas the Chernobyl nuclear accident has already caused a considerable number of casualties and will still have disastrous effects on health for years to come, both for those exposed to radiation at the time of the accident and for future generations, and concerned by the fact that the workforce is migrating from contaminated areas to the clean ones, creating

labour and professional shortages and that the social and economic status of people living and working in the contaminated territories is heavily dependent on state subsidies,

J. drawing attention to the dependence of the Ukraine on oil and gas supplies from Russia and Central Asia and the plans to diversify sources of supply, in particular the construction of a gas and oil pipeline from Turkmenistan and Kazakhstan,

K. whereas strong public concern in the European Union remains with respect to the safety of other nuclear power plants in the countries of Central and Eastern Europe, and the lessons of Chernobyl should serve as a constant warning in this regard,

1. Welcomes unreservedly the closure of Chernobyl;
2. Stresses once more the absolute need for the Ukraine to have a long-term coherent and sustainable energy policy, in which efficiency and saving measures with tough targets, elimination of losses in energy transmission and distribution and the implementation of proper market mechanisms are to be of fundamental importance; considers that the EU, in particular through the TACIS programme, can help the Ukraine to achieve its much needed objectives in the energy field, namely by making more use of renewable energy sources
3. Asks the Commission to ensure that support is given to the construction of oil and gas pipelines from Turkmenistan and Kazakhstan;
4. Believes that the Chernobyl Shelter Facility must be turned into an ecologically safe system and notes the Commission's pledge of 100 m in July 2007 to the Shelter Fund to help rehabilitate the sarcophagus but further notes that the EBRD-managed project still requires much work to make the damaged unit safe;
5. Calls on the EU, in close cooperation with the national authorities of the candidate countries, as well as with the other countries concerned, to learn all the lessons from this disaster and give its full support to the precautionary principle, which dictates that it is essential to close and dismantle nuclear power stations at risk in these countries, and notes that Commission funding has been used to finance a Business Development Agency, the aim of which is to cushion the social impact of Chernobyl's closure on the local population;
6. Demands continuous measurement of radioactivity to enable the effects of radiation on soil, air, water, flora and fauna to be assessed scientifically, and hopes that the consumption of food from this region will be strictly prohibited;
7. Supports all efforts to research the long-term health and environmental impact of the Chernobyl disaster and projects to study, assess and mitigate the consequences of the Chernobyl accident; therefore calls for financial help to be made available to the Ukraine, Belarus and Russia, to enable them to cope with the enormous social/health consequences of the Chernobyl disaster, and stresses that mortality in the region will depend very much on the quality and intensity of the treatment given to the persons affected;
8. Appreciates, given that the health aspect of Chernobyl is now the crucial question, the fact that WHO is holding its own conference in June, and that it is not participating with the IAEA in the Chernobyl 15th Anniversary Conference;
9. Expresses its concern about the massive increase in thyroid cancers, especially in children, in the three countries most affected and about the significant increases in many types of health disorders;
10. Calls for continued and increased efforts to restore the environment in the most contaminated regions, utilising the information and expertise of the IAEA and other bodies,

and urges the G7 and the EU to give more consideration to management of the whole contaminated environment, especially forests and bodies of water, because of the interaction between them and agricultural land;

11. Based on new scientific evidence suggesting doubts about aspects of the radiation risk model, particularly as regards the effects of the Chernobyl fall-out, requests the Commission to arrange an epidemiological study of the effects of Chernobyl throughout Europe as a whole; also calls on the IAEA and UNSCEAR, as well as the ICRP and Euratom, to re-examine the risk model;

12. Believes that closer cooperation and dialogue between the Ukrainian and European Parliaments on energy-related matters is essential;

13. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council, the Commission, the Presidents and Parliaments of the Ukraine, Belarus and Russia, the Secretary-General of the UN, the IAEA, the WHO, the UNSCEAR and the ICRP.