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**TEN/842**

**Radioactive waste management: a civil society perspective**

Brussels, 23 October 2024

**RECORD OF THE PROCEEDINGS**  
European Economic and Social Committee  
  
**Radioactive waste management: a civil society perspective   
(own-initiative opinion)**

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591th plenary session  
  
Brussels  
23-24 October 2024

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Meeting of 23 October 2024  
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Agenda item 20

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**The president** moves that the Committee turn to agenda item 20 - adoption of an opinion on the

*Radioactive waste management: a civil society perspective*  
(own-initiative opinion).

The preliminary work had been carried out by the Section for Transport, Energy, Infrastructure and the Information Society (president: **Ms MILTOVIČA**). The rapporteur was **Ms Alena MASTANTUONO** and the co-rapporteurwas **Christophe QUAREZ**. The section adopted its opinion on 26 September 2024 by 70 votes to 3 and 4 abstentions.

**Mr RÖPKE** gives the floor to the rapporteur **Ms Alena MASTANTUONO**, who introduces the opinion. The Rapporteur briefly presents the legal framework, namely the Council Directive 2011/70/Euratom. All EU member states have a national policy for spent fuel and RWM and they draw up and implement national programmes for the management of these materials. In this year's progress report, the Commission considers that radioactive waste and spent fuel were managed safely in the Member States in the reporting period. The work on the Opinion is based on data from this progress report completed by the input provided by experts in the field that participated in the hearing organised during the Study Group. The Rapporteur explains that all Member States generate radioactive waste through various activities ranging from medical applications to electricity generation. 15 Member States with nuclear power programmes accounted for 99.5% in volume of the radioactive waste inventory in the EU. The recommendations are deeply rooted in the civil society's views that Member States should facilitate inclusive engagement, openness and transparency with civil society and that available funding should be used to increase the capacity of civil society groups. The co-rapporteurMr. **Christophe QUAREZ** highlights the importance to invest in R&D in order to recycle materials as much as possible. According to the IAEA, up to 96% of spent fuel can be recycled. Mr Quarez points out the RWM advancements of Finland and Sweden in comparison with other member states.

During the debate, the following members take the floor: **Mr. SÄKKINEN** (Group I), Mr. **DIRX** (Group III), Mr. **ULGIATI** (Non-attached), Mr. **TCHOUKANOV** (Group III), Mr **SCHWARTZ** (Group III), Mr **BARCELÓ DELGADO** (Group I), Mr **RIBBE (**Group III).The following points are raised:

* The visit to Onkalo spent nuclear fuel repository highlighted the key role of the civil society and local community;
* The importance of cross-border cooperation in RWM;
* RWM must not only be safe but also responsible, hence the need to avoid the transfer of RWM burden to future generations;
* The need to acknowledge that RW has a variety of sources besides power-generation, such as medical, research and other;
* Food contamination remains an issue even in EU;
* We need a reinforced civil society participation in RWM;
* RW has been accumulated during decades, therefore a long time is required to be properly dealt with;

Following the debate, the Assembly examines 4 compromises and 1 accepted amendment.

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| **Amendment 1** to **point 2.8** tabled by  Compromise is accepted by the Assembly.  **Point 2.8**  **Amend as follows** | BARBIERI Pietro Vittorio  BARTELS Holger  BÄUMLER Christian  BERGRATH Dirk  COMER John  DIRX Jan  DROBINSKI-WEIß Elvira  DUTTO Diego  GOBIŅŠ Andris  HERNÁNDEZ BATALLER Bernardo  KOLBE Rudolf  KOLYVAS Ioannis  KRUSE Andreas  KÜKEDI Zsolt  KUPŠYS Kęstutis  LEITĀNE Katrīna  LIBAERT Thierry  LOHAN Cillian  MASTANTUONO Alena  MENSI Maurizio  MESKER August  MOOS Christian  MOSTACCIO Alessandro  MURAFA BENGA Corina  NABAIS João  NIKOLOPOULOU Maria  PLAT Jacob  QUAREZ Christophe  RIBBE Lutz  SCHAFFENRATH Martin  SCHMIDT Peter  SCHWARTZ Arnaud  TCHOUKANOV Stoyan  WAGNSONNER Thomas |

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| ***Section opinion*** | ***Compromise*** |
| Countries are at different stages of managing their radioactive waste. While most EU Member States have near-surface and intermediate-depth disposal facilities to safely dispose of very low, low and intermediate-level waste, only Finland, France and Sweden have selected sites for the deep geological disposal of spent fuel and high-level waste. The first deep geological repository is likely to be operational in Finland by 2025, followed by ones in France and Sweden  . | Countries are at different stages of managing their radioactive waste. While most EU Member States have near-surface and intermediate-depth disposal facilities to safely dispose of very low, low and intermediate-level waste, only Finland, France and Sweden have selected sites for the deep geological disposal of spent fuel and high-level waste. The first deep geological repository is likely to be operational in Finland by 2025, followed by ones in France and Sweden ***– expected to be operational as of 2035 – and then by others in Germany and Belgium – expected to be operational as of 2050. Other Member States have signalled that they would need much longer to put such repositories in place. For example, Spain as of 2060, Czechia and Slovakia as of 2065 and the Netherlands not even before 2130 [1].***  ***[1]. Commission progress report - COM(2024) 197 final***. |

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| **Amendment 2** to **point 2.10** tabled by  Compromise is accepted by the Assembly.  **Point 2.10**  **Amend as follows** | BARBIERI Pietro Vittorio  BARTELS Holger  BÄUMLER Christian  BERGRATH Dirk  COMER John  DIRX Jan  DROBINSKI-WEIß Elvira  DUTTO Diego  GOBIŅŠ Andris  HERNÁNDEZ BATALLER Bernardo  KOLBE Rudolf  KOLYVAS Ioannis  KRUSE Andreas  KÜKEDI Zsolt  KUPŠYS Kęstutis  LEITĀNE Katrīna  LIBAERT Thierry  LOHAN Cillian  MASTANTUONO Alena  MENSI Maurizio  MESKER August  MOOS Christian  MOSTACCIO Alessandro  MURAFA BENGA Corina  NABAIS João  NIKOLOPOULOU Maria  PLAT Jacob  QUAREZ Christophe  RIBBE Lutz  SCHAFFENRATH Martin  SCHMIDT Peter  SCHWARTZ Arnaud  TCHOUKANOV Stoyan  WAGNSONNER Thomas |

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| ***Section opinion*** | ***Compromise*** |
| Member States have to submit their assessment of the implementation of the Radioactive Waste Directive in their national reports. In its last progress report[1], the Commission considers that radioactive waste and spent fuel were managed safely in the EU. ***Moreover,***  the national programmes ***are*** in place across the EU ***and according to the EC assessment were*** generally established in a transparent and participative manner. The main issues to be addressed are programmes’ control and funding. The Commission is of the opinion that Member States should accelerate reviews of and updates to their national programmes, taking into account the outcomes of self-assessments and international peer reviews.  [1] European Commission report on progress of implementation of Council Directive 2011/70/EURATOM and an inventory of radioactive waste and spent fuel present in the Community’s territory and the future prospects, May 2024. | Member States have to submit their assessment of the implementation of the Radioactive Waste Directive in their national reports. In its last progress report[1], the Commission considers that radioactive waste and spent fuel were managed safely in the EU.  ***The progress report further states that*** the national programmes ***put*** in place across the EU ***have*** generally ***been*** established in a transparent and participative manner***. However, it also notes that ‘several Member States [have] still... not further define[ed] national policies for the long-term management of all their radioactive waste, particularly intermediate-level waste and high-level waste. Furthermore, the targets set in some national programmes are not sufficiently ambitious and envisage long implementation periods that risk burdening future generations***.***’*** The main issues to be addressed are programmes’ control and funding. The Commission is of the opinion that Member States should accelerate reviews of and updates to their national programmes, taking into account the outcomes of self-assessments and international peer reviews.  [1] European Commission report on progress of implementation of Council Directive 2011/70/EURATOM and an inventory of radioactive waste and spent fuel present in the Community’s territory and the future prospects, May 2024. |

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| **Amendment 3** to **point 2.12** tabled by:  Compromise is accepted by the Assembly.  **Point 2.12**  **Amend as follows** | BARBIERI Pietro Vittorio  BARTELS Holger  BÄUMLER Christian  BERGRATH Dirk  COMER John  DIRX Jan  DROBINSKI-WEIß Elvira  DUTTO Diego  GOBIŅŠ Andris  HERNÁNDEZ BATALLER Bernardo  KOLBE Rudolf  KOLYVAS Ioannis  KRUSE Andreas  KÜKEDI Zsolt  KUPŠYS Kęstutis  LEITĀNE Katrīna  LIBAERT Thierry  LOHAN Cillian  MASTANTUONO Alena  MENSI Maurizio  MESKER August  MOOS Christian  MOSTACCIO Alessandro  MURAFA BENGA Corina  NABAIS João  NIKOLOPOULOU Maria  PLAT Jacob  QUAREZ Christophe  RIBBE Lutz  SCHAFFENRATH Martin  SCHMIDT Peter  SCHWARTZ Arnaud  TCHOUKANOV Stoyan  WAGNSONNER Thomas |

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| ***Section opinion*** | ***Compromise*** |
| Member States use different radioactive waste classification schemes based on their country-specific conditions, without following the Commission recommendation exactly, ***but*** still ***ensuring*** safe ***waste*** management. These differences might raise a problem for communication with regard to similar waste being treated or disposed of differently in different Member States or in terms of cross-border cooperation among Member States[1].  [1] IDOM Consulting and BGE TECHNOLOGY (2022), Study on radioactive waste classification schemes in the European Union, final report, ENER/2021/NUCL/SI2.853676. | Member States use different radioactive waste classification schemes based on their country-specific conditions, without following the Commission recommendation exactly, ***while*** still ***complying with Council Directive 2011/70/EURATOM establishing a Community framework for the responsible and*** safe management ***of spent fuel and radioactive waste***. These differences might raise a problem for communication with regard to similar waste being treated or disposed of differently in different Member States or in terms of cross-border cooperation among Member States[1].  [1] IDOM Consulting and BGE TECHNOLOGY (2022), Study on radioactive waste classification schemes in the European Union, final report, ENER/2021/NUCL/SI2.853676. |

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| **Amendment 4** to **point 1.4** tabled by:    Compromise is accepted by the Assembly.  **Point 1.4**  **Insert new point after 1.3** | BARBIERI Pietro Vittorio  BARTELS Holger  BÄUMLER Christian  BERGRATH Dirk  COMER John  DIRX Jan  DROBINSKI-WEIß Elvira  DUTTO Diego  GOBIŅŠ Andris  HERNÁNDEZ BATALLER Bernardo  KOLBE Rudolf  KOLYVAS Ioannis  KRUSE Andreas  KÜKEDI Zsolt  KUPŠYS Kęstutis  LEITĀNE Katrīna  LIBAERT Thierry  LOHAN Cillian  MASTANTUONO Alena  MENSI Maurizio  MESKER August  MOOS Christian  MOSTACCIO Alessandro  MURAFA BENGA Corina  NABAIS João  NIKOLOPOULOU Maria  PLAT Jacob  QUAREZ Christophe  RIBBE Lutz  SCHAFFENRATH Martin  SCHMIDT Peter  SCHWARTZ Arnaud  TCHOUKANOV Stoyan  WAGNSONNER Thomas |

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| ***Section opinion*** | ***Compromise*** |
|  | ***The EESC stresses that concerns remain regarding the lack of defined steps forward for the disposal of spent fuel and/or high-level waste in most countries and regarding the dates for the commissioning of the repositories, which are in the 2050s to the 2070s in the majority of countries, and in some even later. Extending storage of high-level waste for more than a century might increase risks and costs and will be a burden to future generations. The EESC strongly encourages Member States in identifying and implementing permanent disposal solutions or engaging in shared solutions, while always looking for a possibility of recycling to seek minimal amounts of waste for disposal, employing circular economy strategies. Assuming responsibility and not leaving a burden to future generations requires a broad dialogue and consideration of a variety of perspectives in the RWM project.*** |

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| **Amendment 5** to **point 1.4** tabled by:  Amendment is accepted by the Assembly.  **Point 1.4**  **Amend as follows:** | BARBIERI Pietro Vittorio  BARTELS Holger  BÄUMLER Christian  BERGRATH Dirk  COMER John  DIRX Jan  DROBINSKI-WEIß Elvira  DUTTO Diego  GOBIŅŠ Andris  HERNÁNDEZ BATALLER Bernardo  KOLBE Rudolf  KOLYVAS Ioannis  KRUSE Andreas  KÜKEDI Zsolt  KUPŠYS Kęstutis  LEITĀNE Katrīna  LIBAERT Thierry  LOHAN Cillian  MENSI Maurizio  MESKER August  MOOS Christian  MOSTACCIO Alessandro  MURAFA BENGA Corina  NABAIS João  NIKOLOPOULOU Maria  PLAT Jacob  RIBBE Lutz  SCHAFFENRATH Martin  SCHMIDT Peter  SCHWARTZ Arnaud  TCHOUKANOV Stoyan  WAGNSONNER Thomas |

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| ***Section opinion*** | ***Amendment*** |
| ***Given that a high share of used nuclear fuel can be reprocessed so as to recycle fissile materials and reduce the need for a supply of natural uranium to operate nuclear reactors, the EESC encourages the EU Member States to seek minimal amounts of waste for disposal, employing circular economy strategies to reduce*** radioactive waste ***generation to a minimum wherever possible***. | ***In order to reduce the amount of radioactive waste generated, a broad public debate should be launched on the advantages, disadvantages and availability of relevant technical processing technologies, such as reprocessing or transmutation, in order to enable civil society to gain a comprehensive picture and understand all the arguments for and against. This also includes the dialogue on the new facilities producing*** radioactive waste. |

The opinion is adopted by 172 votes for, 0 against and 6 abstentions.

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