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Background

In the framework of the Belarus – EU dialog, the European Commission received the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) report that was prepared for the new nuclear power plant in Belarus. The European Commission reviewed the report and prepared set of clarification questions in November 2011. JRC/IET has contributed to the review of EIA report and prepared set of clarification questions (see SPNR/CLEAR/11 12 006 Rev. 00). Consequently, the European Commission received answers from the Ministry of Energy of the Republic of Belarus in October 2012.

Objective

The aim of this report is to assess the answers provided to the European Commission clarification questions on environmental Impact Assessment report provided by the Ministry of Energy of the Republic of Belarus.

Results of evaluation

The Ministry of Energy of the Republic of Belarus provided answers to all clarification questions. In general, these answers provided new or complementary information to the initial EIA report. The answers are based on national regulations, documents and studies, which were not part of the EIA report; however the verification of supporting documents and studies is outside of EIA formal assessment.

The following formal comments are noted:

- The main reason why Ostrovec site has been selected is due to a "potential opportunity for activation of karstic-errosive process at Karasnopolye and Kukshinovo sites". The Ostrovec site has a bigger design and maximum earthquake point from among the other sites; however, the plant seismic design of MSK 8 provides greater seismic margin than actually required (Question 2).

Art. 4(1)(a) first indent [redacted]

- Because there are no operating experience from the NPP 2006 design (all units are currently in construction in India, and Russia), radiological protection and radiological data and consequences were estimated based on maximum permissive values. These values are typically much smaller during normal operation. However, in order to assess radiological impact to the environment in case of beyond design basis or severe accident and designed containment leak tightness 0,2 %, more detailed analysis is needed. There is the assurance that theses analysis will be performed during the construction phase, before commissioning the NPP (Question 7).

- Emergency planning and preparedness shows that in case of accident, the urgent protective action planning zone is 25 km, which collides with the Lithuanian borders (Question 14). The concern however is that the "Agreement between the Government of the Republic Belarus and the Government of the republic of Lithuania on Early notification of a nuclear accident, exchange of information and cooperation in the field of Nuclear safety and radiological protection" ***has not been reached yet.***

- Answers to design specific issues are considered satisfactory.

- Concerning the availability of qualified and experience personnel, it is obvious that the selection, recruitment, training, and licensing of number of personnel in all profession categories is underway. A site nuclear training centre will be built together with the NPP. There is an agreement in place between the Republic of Belarus and the Russian Federation, to provide initial training for licensed personnel (question 21).

- A regulatory framework to ensure licensing and oversight during all stages is in place in Belarus; in addition there has been a regulatory cooperation agreement signed with Russian Federation Rostechnadzor who will provide necessary assistance to Belarusian regulator (Questions 23-25). However, the completeness of regulatory context can only be assessed when reviewing respective documentation.

Conclusion

In generally, the answers provided to the European Commission clarification questions can be considered satisfactory.

With regard to plant location in the vicinity of Lithuanian borders, ***the concern however remains*** on a cross border emergency planning and preparedness. In particular, the "Agreement between the Government of the Republic Belarus and the Government of the republic of Lithuania on Early notification of a nuclear accident, exchange of information and cooperation in the field of Nuclear Safety and Radiological Protection" ***has not been reached yet.***