

From: VON DER LEYEN Ursula (CAB-VON DER LEYEN)
Sent: Thursday 1 April 2021 10:07
To: CAB VON DER LEYEN ARCHIVES
Subject: FW: Letter from NGOs and networks of NGOs: Nuclear power is in breach of the EU Taxonomy
Attachments: Letter from NGOs on Nuclear and DNSH 1 April 2021.pdf

Ursula VON DER LEYEN
President



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From: [REDACTED]
Sent: Thursday, April 1, 2021 9:55 AM
To: VON DER LEYEN Ursula (CAB-VON DER LEYEN)
Subject: Letter from NGOs and networks of NGOs: Nuclear power is in breach of the EU Taxonomy

Dear President,

Please find attached a letter from the directors of a number of NGOs and of networks of NGOs on the subject of nuclear power being in breach of the EU's Taxonomy Regulation.

We trust that you will give this matter your careful consideration, and we look forward to hearing from you at your earliest convenience.

Yours sincerely,

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED], Greenpeace European Unit
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Ms Ursula von der Leyen
President of the European Commission
European Commission

Ms Mairead McGuinness
Commissioner for Financial Services, Financial Stability and the Capital Markets Union
European Commission

Copies to:

Mr Frans Timmermans, Executive Vice-President for the European Green Deal
Mr Valdis Dombrovskis, Executive Vice-President for an Economy that Works for People
Mr Virginijus Sinkevičius, Commissioner for Environment, Oceans and Fisheries
Ms Kadri Simson, Commissioner for Energy

By electronic mail

1 April 2021

Re: Nuclear power is in breach of the EU's Taxonomy Regulation

Dear President,
Dear Executive Vice-President,
Dear Commissioners,

We, the undersigned NGOs and networks of NGOs, are writing to request that you follow the legal provisions established in the Taxonomy Regulation and **exclude nuclear energy from the EU's taxonomy delegated acts**, as including nuclear energy in the green finance rulebook is in conflict with the Do No Significant Harm principle enshrined in the Regulation. We would also like to request a meeting to discuss this with you at your earliest convenience.

The objective of the taxonomy¹ is to create a code that allows Europe to guide funding and investments towards the objectives of the European Green Deal and climate neutrality by 2050 in six specific areas. The Do No Significant Harm principle is the cornerstone that guarantees that activities that could inadvertently have negative effects in one of the six areas are not classified as green.

Nuclear power can not be considered taxonomy compliant, as it does not meet the Do No Significant Harm principle in any of the six areas:

- The transition to a circular economy
 - Nuclear power produces nuclear waste, and no strategies for waste prevention are currently available.
 - Current estimates of nuclear waste by industry do not take into consideration the full life cycle analysis (LCA) of the activity, where health- and environment-threatening waste is produced in significant amounts from the mining stage, until its end of life stage, where waste disposal is the norm for low- and mid-level waste, while there are no proven final disposal solutions available for high-level wastes.
 - High-level waste disposal strategies under development in, for example, Finland, Sweden and France still need to be proven to be safe and face technical complications. In addition, these are highly specific to a particular location and cannot be transferred to other Member States.
 - Spent nuclear fuel storage in wet storage – whether as waste or in temporary storage as a so-called resource – poses a [serious nuclear safety and security challenge](#).
 - The current solutions being proposed by the industry for the disposal of nuclear waste do not align with the circular economy principles of waste prevention, reuse or recycling. Neither do proposals for the [so-called re-use of nuclear waste](#) (including its reprocessing, the use of mixed oxide fuels of Uranium and Plutonium (MOX), the potential re-use of parts of reprocessed uranium, and the potential use of small fractions of depleted uranium) in either existing or newly-designed reactors.
- Pollution prevention and control
 - Accidents in nuclear power plants have devastating polluting impacts, as large quantities of radioactive substances are released into the environment. Given the polluting impacts already experienced after the nuclear accidents in Windscale (UK), Kyshtym (Soviet Union), Chernobyl (Soviet Union) and Fukushima (Japan), nuclear power must be considered an ultra-hazardous environmental activity.
 - Pollution control costs are high. French [estimates of a major nuclear power plant accident consider the cost of these accidents to be in the region of 400 billion euros, or more than 20% of the annual French GDP](#). In spite of the Vienna and Paris

¹ As described in the [Taxonomy Regulation](#)

Conventions, [none of the EU Member States is in a financial position to cover costs after a severe accident](#).

- Uranium mining, which is a prerequisite for the deployment of nuclear industry around the world, faces strong environmental and health concerns including in Europe, where countries like [Spain are banning it](#) due to high pollution levels, life-threatening health impacts and the lack of guarantees of workers' social standards. Legacies from former uranium mining operations in former [Eastern Germany](#) and the [Czech Republic](#) have required billions of euros of public funds for their elimination.
- The protection and restoration of biodiversity and ecosystems
 - The high temperature water released into rivers from the cooling of land-locked nuclear power stations locally raises the water temperature of the river, impacting fauna and flora and thus damaging biodiversity. This phenomenon, known as "thermal pollution" particularly affects fish, amphibians, and river plants.
- The sustainable use and protection of water and marine resources
 - Nuclear power uses significant amounts of water for cooling², which is warmer when returned to the aquatic environment, creating thermal pollution.
 - For nuclear power plants not located by the sea, [about 10% of the water withdrawn is not returned to the aquatic environment](#) due to evaporation in cooling towers.
- Despite being promoted by some as an effective carbon-neutral fuel, nuclear power does not even satisfactorily meet the criteria in the areas of climate change mitigation and climate change adaptation for the following reasons:
 - Nuclear energy is one of the most expensive forms of electricity generation today. [Renewable energy today has become so cheap that is below the basic operating costs of nuclear power plants](#).
 - According to the IPPC, we have fewer than [8 years to act to drastically reduce CO2 emissions](#), but [on average, 10–19 years are needed](#) between the decision to build a nuclear plant and its actual start-up. Investing in new nuclear plans diverts money and political attention from proven solutions such as energy reduction strategies like home insulation to low carbon energy sources like renewables.
 - The drop in the level of rivers and the rise in sea level induced by global warming disturb the much needed cooling process in nuclear plants and represent a real danger for their continued functioning. There is therefore an increasing trend of nuclear reactors [having to temporarily close down during summer periods](#) due to dwindling water resources.

² In France, for example, a 2016 [report](#) from the Ministry for the Environmental Transition highlights how the nuclear sector uses more water than the national agriculture sector, with a total of 15,7 billion m3 used for cooling purposes.

Lastly, we are concerned that the European Commission, when commissioning research on whether nuclear meets the Do No Significant Harm principle from the Joint Research Center, did not invite civil society to provide information and evidence to this process. This contradicts article 6 and 7 of the Aarhus Convention, to which the EU is a party.

We look forward to hearing from you about a possible meeting on this subject at your earliest convenience.

Yours sincerely,


Greenpeace European Unit


Climate Action Network (CAN) Europe



Climate & Company



Friends of the Earth Europe


Les Amis de la Terre France


NABU


Reclaim Finance


Réseau Action Climat France


WWF European Policy Office


Za Zemiata/FoE Bulgaria