



FIVE REASONS TO OPPOSE THE INCLUSION OF NUCLEAR POWER IN THE EU TAXONOMY

According to the European Commission, the EU must invest an additional €350 billion per year this decade in order to reach its 2030 climate targets⁽¹⁾. The EU Taxonomy was designed as a key instrument to guide private markets towards this target - but it will only succeed if it is built on science and follows expert advice. However, the Commission is proposing to classify nuclear power as ‘sustainable’ investments in a new taxonomy ‘Complementary Delegated Act’. It could divert billions of euros from cheap renewables, and other green technologies, which can be installed quickly, to expensive and slow nuclear energy, making the EU’s environmental targets harder to reach. WWF is concerned about the environmental impact of this decision.

In addition, **the war in Ukraine, and the energy price crisis it is causing, put the EU Taxonomy in a radically new context which requires rapid answers.** With this in mind, Europe has even less reason to label new nuclear plants and uranium imports as sustainable. It is important to remember that the Taxonomy does not block any investments, nor does it oblige anyone to invest in anything: it only clarifies which investments are environmentally sustainable. **MEPs can therefore reject the inclusion of nuclear power in the Taxonomy while leaving every Member State free to support it with public and private finance.** They will just be saving private investors and citizens from being deceived into putting their money into investments they believe are sustainable when, in fact, these investments threaten Europe’s energy security and its environment. **Here are five reasons the European Parliament needs to reject the inclusion of nuclear power in the Taxonomy ‘Complementary Delegated Act’.**

1- It risks deepening the EU’s dependence on Russian fuel imports.

The EU aims to reduce its imports of all Russian fuels dramatically this year, according to the RePowerEU communication published in March⁽²⁾. While in the short-term, the problem mostly relates to gas and other fossil fuels, Russia is also a major supplier of uranium, and provided over 20% of EU imports of this fuel in 2020⁽³⁾. In an almost unanimous resolution, the European Parliament called in April⁽⁴⁾ for “an immediate full embargo on Russian imports of oil, coal, nuclear fuel and gas”. **The EU Taxonomy must not undermine the EU’s efforts to end its energy dependence on Russia,** by promoting nuclear plants such as Hanhikivi I⁽⁵⁾ in Finland, which is due to be built by Rosatom, the Russian state-owned enterprise, or Russian uranium imports which have to be airlifted into Member States⁽⁶⁾.

2- It will not address high energy prices.

The energy crisis requires urgent solutions. As renewable prices fall dramatically, citizens’ energy bills will benefit from a faster transition to energy efficiency and renewable energy. New nuclear power plants take 15-20 years from planning to operation and are estimated to be 4 times more expensive than new solar and new onshore wind power⁽⁷⁾. **Promoting new nuclear plants will not bring any solution to high energy prices,** so investments should not be diverted from energy efficiency and renewables into these technologies. The Taxonomy must send a constructive signal that is aligned with this objective.

3- The European Parliament has been excluded from this debate.

The final criteria of the Complementary Delegated Act were written, behind closed doors, by Ursula von der Leyen's cabinet under intense pressure from a coalition of Member States led by France⁽⁸⁾. The European Parliament was completely excluded from these discussions but is now being asked to rubber-stamp the agreement between Commission and Council. **The Parliament explicitly asked the Commission to hold a public consultation and an impact assessment on the Complementary Delegated Act**, as it had done for the previous taxonomy Act on renewables⁽⁹⁾. The Commission ignored this request. On institutional grounds alone, the Parliament has a strong case to reject the Complementary Delegated Act.

4- Investors and banks have criticised it as counterproductive.

Labelling nuclear energy as sustainable would be counterproductive for investors and banks, who need reliable information about the environmental impact of the activities they consider financing. The current global green bond market excludes nuclear and the EU Taxonomy must not fall behind it. Significantly, many investors, banks and investors coalitions, including **the German Net-Zero Banking Alliance**⁽¹⁰⁾ and the **UN Principles for Responsible Investment (UNPRI)**⁽¹¹⁾ have criticised the idea of including nuclear power in the sustainable Taxonomy. The **European Investment Bank** also strongly condemned the Commission's proposal, with its President Werner Hoyer saying: 'If we lose the trust of the investors by selling something as a green project, which turns out to be the opposite, then we cut the feet on which we are standing'⁽¹²⁾. **The Complementary Delegated Act must not undermine the interests of investors and banks who the Taxonomy is supposed to help.**

5 - Nuclear power is not green, and labelling it as such breaks the Taxonomy's own law.

The law governing the EU Taxonomy requires its criteria to maintain 'technological neutrality' and to be based on 'conclusive scientific evidence'. However, the Complementary Delegated Act breaks these rules. Firstly, while renewable operators must meet the Taxonomy's requirements from 2022, the Complementary Delegated Act gives nuclear plants permission to produce radioactive waste until 2050 without having to find a definitive solution for its safe disposal. This is also a clear breach of the Taxonomy's legal requirement to do 'no significant harm', given the risks this radioactive waste poses. Secondly, Europe does not yet have a single 'deep geological repository' in operation - a storage solution for radioactive waste within a stable geologic environment. The first one is planned to open only in 2025. Given these facilities' complexity, Europe's lack of experience operating them, and a lack of observable data on their performance, a promise to establish them by 2050 does not meet the requirement for conclusive evidence. This could lead to billions of euros being sunk into nuclear projects on the basis of a green promise, which is then broken.

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