



**COUNCIL OF
THE EUROPEAN UNION**

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NOTE

from:	General Secretariat
to:	Delegations
Subject:	Nuclear power installations planned in the EU neighbourhood (Kaliningrad region and Belarus) - Information from the Lithuanian delegation

Delegations will find attached an information note from the Lithuanian delegation on the above topic, to be dealt with under "other business" at the meeting of the Council (Environment) on 20 December 2010.

**Nuclear power installations planned in the EU neighbourhood
(Kaliningrad region and Belarus)**

Information from the Lithuanian delegation

The Baltic Sea region has recently become one of the most active zones of nuclear power development. In this regard we must underline the importance of the internationally recognised principle of implementing nuclear power projects in complete and total compliance with the international regulations on nuclear safety, security and transboundary environmental impact assessment. However, this principle is sometimes not fully applied. We would like to draw the attention of the European Commission and the EU Member States to a number of worrisome issues relating to the implementation of the Baltic Nuclear Power Plant Project in the Kaliningrad Region of the Russian Federation and the new Belarus Nuclear Power Plant Project.

The Republic of Belarus, being a Party to the UN Convention on Environmental Impact Assessment in a Transboundary Context (the Espoo Convention), has carried out a transboundary environmental impact assessment for the construction of the nuclear power plant in the Republic of Belarus. On 7 May 2010, the Ministry of the Environment of Lithuania submitted to the Republic of Belarus Lithuania's negative position concerning the environmental impact assessment process and the preliminary EIA report. Lithuania concluded that the environmental impact assessment had not been carried out properly, as the provisions of the Espoo Convention on providing a description of reasonable alternatives were not fulfilled.

It should be noted, that up to now, there has been no official information from Belarus on the EIA report, nor have there been any answers on the site selection criteria or any other information requested. The bilateral meeting between Lithuania and Belarus, which took place in Minsk on 18 June 2010, is not regarded as bilateral consultations. At the meeting the Lithuanian side was unexpectedly informed of numerous significant updates to the EIA report, without any official notice having been presented to the Lithuanian institutions and public beforehand. The EIA report is more thorough, both in size and content, than the preliminary EIA report provided to the Republic of Lithuania in September 2009. Lithuania considers that the earlier preliminary EIA report, which has now been substantially amended, should be treated only as an EIA programme (scoping document) and a prerequisite for a final report to be developed later.

On 9 July 2010 Lithuania informed Belarus in writing about its position and requested that the final text of the EIA report be submitted officially and that public hearings and subsequent consultations be organised. In a note of 6 December 2010 the Lithuanian Foreign Ministry underlined that the Environmental Impact Assessment process had not yet finished. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs reminded Belarus that Lithuania is looking forward to receiving an official answer to the letter from the Ministry of the Environment of the Republic of Lithuania on 9 July 2010 which stated that the EIA procedure had not finished.

The Russian Federation has also initiated an environmental impact assessment procedure for the planned Nuclear Power Plant construction in Kaliningrad. The EIA documentation, which has been submitted to Lithuania for comments, is incomplete according to the provisions of the Espoo convention. The Ministry of the Environment of Lithuania, together with the authorities concerned, examined the EIA report and raised concerns relating to the assessment of the possible impact on Natura 2000 sites and the ecosystem of the Nemunas Lowland River and the Curonian Lagoon, and the radiological impact on the public of Lithuania both during normal operation and in the event of accidents, and requested access for the public in the Parties affected to the relevant procedures for environmental impact assessment of the proposed economic activities and asked for consultations in accordance with the provisions of the Espoo Convention in order to increase the clarity and transparency of the transboundary environmental impact assessment procedure.

In a note of 31 May 2010 the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation declared its readiness to organise consultations in accordance with the requirements of the Espoo Convention. Lithuania appreciates the Russian Federation's willingness to cooperate in the process of implementation of nuclear energy projects in the Kaliningrad Region, in accordance with the Espoo Convention, and looks forward to seeing the necessary steps taken to implement the projects in full. Article 2(6) of the Espoo Convention states that the Party of origin shall provide an opportunity for the public in the areas likely to be affected to participate in the relevant environmental impact assessment procedures regarding proposed activities and shall ensure that the opportunity provided to the public of the affected Party is equivalent to that provided to the public of the Party of origin.

On 20 October 2010 Lithuania stated in its official response to the Russian Federation that the Lithuanian public must be fully informed about the potential health and environmental implications of the proposed nuclear facility in its neighbourhood and that the organisation of a public hearing in Lithuania was therefore a necessary first step and it forwarded further questions to be answered, especially concerning information on the site selection criteria. Lithuania has not received any answer yet, although the permits for project implementation have already been issued and the construction work has started.

Taking into account the information given above, the potential environmental risks, the lack of transparency, and the unwillingness of Belarus and the Russian Federation to cooperate, Lithuania reiterates emphatically that the implementation of the nuclear power plant projects in the region should be exercised in a transparent, comprehensive and timely manner, because the safety of those projects is of regional significance as they are to be implemented very close to the EU external border. Bearing in mind the potential threat both projects might pose to public safety and environmental security in the neighbouring states in the Baltic Sea region, Lithuania invites the European Commission and EU Member States respectfully to call upon the Russian and Belarusian sides to pay the utmost attention to complete and total compliance with the international conventions and other international legal instruments on nuclear and environmental safety. The necessary steps have to be taken to comply with the requirements of the Espoo Convention when implementing the abovementioned projects.