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Promoting nuclear energy to maintain the EU's energy security and self-sufficiency

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Preamble:

Europe stands at a critical crossroads in its pursuit of a secure, sustainable, and independent energy future. The Russian aggression against Ukraine and the resulting disruptions in global energy markets have revealed the vulnerabilities of the European Union’s current energy system, particularly its dependence on external suppliers. As the EU accelerates its transition toward climate neutrality, it must also ensure that this transformation does not undermine energy security, industrial competitiveness, or citizens’ living standards.

Recognising that energy independence is not merely a technical or economic question, but a matter of strategic sovereignty, Europe must harness all available low-carbon technologies to maintain control over its own future. Nuclear energy, as a proven, stable, and carbon-free source of power, represents a cornerstone of this strategy — providing both base-load electricity and, in many cases, district heating for millions of European citizens.

At the same time, innovation in nuclear technology — including the development of small modular reactors and other advanced designs — offers new opportunities to reduce waste, increase safety, and decentralise energy production. The European Union has the scientific expertise, industrial capacity, and institutional framework to become a global leader in this new generation of nuclear technology.

As young Europeans, YEPP reaffirms its commitment to promoting a pragmatic and future-oriented energy policy that balances environmental responsibility with strategic autonomy. By supporting research, innovation,

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and the responsible deployment of nuclear energy, Europe can strengthen its resilience and ensure that the next generation inherits a continent that is both sustainable and sovereign.

Recognizing that:

- Power generation and district heating systems have major challenges ahead in some cases related to the energy transition, e.g. the need to ensure sufficient generation capacity, stability of supply and controllability of energy production
- Nuclear power plants (NPPs) are a clean and stable source of electricity, very important for not only many EU countries (1)
- In some cases, NPPs are also used as a source for district heating systems (2)
- After decades of quieter times comes the worldwide increase in investment in nuclear power and the development of evolutionary and innovative designs (EIDs) (3) (4)
- The EU, in particular some Member States, has strong roots in nuclear energy and should maintain its competitiveness and strive to become a leader in this technology (1)

Acknowledging that:

- There are several EIDs development companies based in the EU, some already at a high level of maturity (3) (4)
- NPPs are cast by negative impression by part of the EU population although modern reactors have passive safety features that significantly increase safety (4)
- The International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) is the main regulator of nuclear safety, but European institutions, e.g. through EURATOM and national authorities, supplement the IAEA Safety Standards with their local requirements
- Water-cooled small modular reactors are at a high level of maturity (with the anticipated start of construction of the first one within several years) and do not require significant changes in Safety Standards, as they operate with technology very close to current NPPs (5)

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- Other technologies (e.g. high-temperature gas-cooled reactors, molten-salt reactors or lead-cooled fast reactors) require a more significant change to the Safety Standards rules (4)
- EU has already spent billions of euros on developing EIDs reactors
- The first of a kind applications of new technology typically have higher costs
- The EURATOM Treaty continues to provide a robust legal basis for the peaceful use and development of nuclear technology in Europe (6)

YEPP calls on:

- the European Parliament to support activities leading to development and deployment of the 4th generation of nuclear power plants through a resolution
- the European Commission to continue and eventually increase financial support to development and deployment of EIDs nuclear power plants
- the European Commission to enable financing of deployment of EIDs nuclear power plants through funds allocated to energy transformation
- the European Commission and EURATOM to continue monitoring of needed safety standards change, if necessary, their adoption on a European basis and their enforcement within the IAEA

Resources:
1. Our world in data. *Electricity generation from nuclear.* https://ourworldindata.org/grapher/nuclear-energy-generation.
2. EUROSTAT. *Nuclear energy statistics.* 2024. https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=Nuclear_energy_statistics.
3. IAEA. *Small modular reactor catalogue 2024.* 2024. https://aris.iaea.org/Publications/SMR_catalogue_2024.pdf.
4. IAEA. *APPLICABILITY OF IAEA SAFETY STANDARDS TO NON-WATER COOLED REACTORS AND SMALL MODULAR REACTORS.* 2023. https://www-pub.iaea.org/MTCD/Publications/PDF/PUB2027_Web.pdf.
5. IAEA. *Applicability of Design Safety Requirements to Small Modular Reactor Technologies Intended for Near Term Deployment.* 2020. https://www-pub.iaea.org/MTCD/Publications/PDF/TE-1936_web.pdf.
6. EURATOM. *Consolidated version of the Treaty establishing the European Atomic Energy Community.* 2012. https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX:12012A/TXT.