Management of spent fuel and radioactive waste: EU legal framework

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The Commission presents the seventh situation report on radioactive waste management in the EU. It presents the status concerning waste generation, inventories and disposal capacities in the EU Member States, mainly in tabular form. The reference date for generation and inventories is end 2007, in line with the data available in the latest national reports provided by Member States.

The report states that annual generation of High Level Waste (HLW) / Spent Fuel, which generally depends on the size of the nuclear power programme, remains broadly constant, but some increases are seen or expected due to decommissioning activities.

Quantities of waste in storage have increased, especially HLW and long-lived low and intermediate level radioactive waste (LILW-LL) as there are as yet no disposal facilities in operation available.

In the case of Very Low Level Waste (VLLW) and short-lived low and intermediate level radioactive waste (LILW-SL) it is likely that almost all Member States with nuclear power programmes (and some 'non-nuclear power' States) will implement disposal solutions in the medium term i.e. by 2020. However, for HLW and spent fuel (for direct disposal) only a few Member States, i.e. those actively pursuing repository developments, can be said to have definitive policies in place.

The same situation exists for LILW-LL, since for these wastes also the preferred solution is geological disposal, whether in the same repository as HLW /spent fuel or separately. It is expected that Member States will take concrete decisions for the safe long-term management of spent fuel and radioactive waste, in implementing the Council Directive.