Nuclear decommissioning assistance programmes in Bulgaria, Lithuania and Slovakia 2014-2020

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The Commission presented a report on the implementation of the work under the nuclear decommissioning assistance programme to Bulgaria, Lithuania and Slovakia in 2015 and previous years.

Reminder of the objectives: upon their accession to the EU, Bulgaria, Lithuania and Slovakia committed to close down eight Soviet-designed nuclear power plants before the end of their scheduled lifetime. In exchange, the EU committed to provide financial assistance to the three Member States for decommissioning the designated power plants, namely:

- Kozloduy Nuclear Power Plant (NPP) units 1 to 4 in Bulgaria;
- Ignalina NPP in Lithuania; and
- Bohunice V1 NPP in Slovakia.

Since 2014, the scope of the nuclear decommissioning assistance programmes is to assist the relevant Member States in implementing the steady process towards the decommissioning end-state whilst ensuring that the highest safety standards are applied.

Management of the programme: the Commission recalled that it implements the assistance programmes through indirect management. Since 2001 implementation tasks have been entrusted to the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD), with contributions to three International Decommissioning Support Funds. In Lithuania since 2003 an increasing portion of the tasks have been entrusted to a national Central Project Management Agency (CPMA). In 2015, upon request of the Slovak Republic, the Commission services assessed the national Slovak Innovation and Energy Agency (SIEA) with the aim of establishing a new implementation channel for the Bohunice programme.

The report stated that the **detailed objectives and indicators** (proposed by the three Member States and approved by the Commission with the adoption of the procedures) enabled **precise monitoring of the work progress** based on quantitative information. Moreover, in cooperation with the beneficiaries, the Commission services introduced the earned value management methodology in the three programmes.

The assistance programmes are subject to regular audits and evaluations.

In 2015, the Commission services focussed their in-field monitoring on **radiation protection systems**, in line with the requirement to ensure application of the highest safety standards. The completion of this specific monitoring action is scheduled in 2016 and should bring additional indicators of safety related performance.

Budget and financing: the Commission adopted the 2014 and 2015 annual work programmes and the associated financing decisions on 30 October 2014 and 30 July 2015 respectively.

The relevant delegation agreements with the implementing bodies (EBRD, CPMA) were signed in June 2015. All funds earmarked for 2014 were committed under these agreements on 5 June 2015 (EBRD) and

on 5 October 2015 (CPMA). The 2015 funds earmarked for Bulgaria and Lithuania were committed in 2015. For Slovakia, the 2015 commitment is pending finalisation of the delegation agreement with the SIEA, currently under negotiation.

The financing needs for completion of the decommissioning programmes have been established, as gaps were identified between the needs and the already secured funds, for which the EU assistance programme is a major contribution. On the basis of the presently available information, **no financial shortfall is expected in any of the three countries until 2020**.

According to the Commission, the accomplishment of the objectives of the 2014-2020 financial framework will bring substantially improved safety conditions at all three sites. However, as at the end of 2014, **the constitution of the required additional funds in the long term (after 2020)** calls for a careful follow-up, especially in Lithuania.

Progress and performance: the report noted that **significant progress has been made**, not only in preparatory work and organisational changes, but also in the actual removal of buildings and equipment, and processing of radioactive waste. The following points were highlighted:

- all the reactors are shut down, with all but one core defueled (Ignalina NPP Unit 2);
- key milestones were reached, decommissioning licenses were issued in Bulgaria and Slovakia, in Lithuania the commissioning of the spent fuel and waste management infrastructures entered the cold trials stage. These achievements represent significant steps towards enhanced safety at the sites;
- substantial progress has been achieved for all three decommissioning programmes, this is especially noticeable where dismantling activities have generated significant amounts of materials, mostly for clearance and then recycling.

The Commission noted that at the reference date for reporting, 30 June 2015, the **performance was generally in line with expectations**, with some points of excellence and some residual risks.

Outlook: the report noted that the issuing of licences in Bulgaria and Slovakia opened the way to starting the dismantling of core systems. In Lithuania, the commissioning of the spent fuel interim storage facility enters into its final stage with the transfer of spent fuel to the dry storage facility starting in 2017.

In the coming years, the clean-up activities will generate an increased flow of materials being removed from the nuclear installations.

The mid-term evaluation - due by the end of 2017 - will provide a substantiated assessment of the overall progress, of the short-term outlook as well as of the planning up to completion.