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

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The Commission presented a report on the evaluation and implementation of the EU nuclear decommissioning assistance programmes in Bulgaria, Slovakia and Lithuania.

Context of the assessment: upon accession, Bulgaria, Lithuania and Slovakia committed themselves to shutting down eight nuclear reactors of Soviet design, before the end of their scheduled lifetime. For its part, the Union has agreed to provide financial assistance to these three Member States for the decommissioning of the reactors concerned:

- **Kozloduy nuclear power plant in Bulgaria, units 1 to 4;**
- **the Ignalina nuclear power plant in Lithuania;**
- **the Bohunice** V1 nuclear power plant in Slovakia.

Two Council Regulations were adopted on 13 December 2013 to provide support to these decommissioning programmes in the Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF) 2014-2020, continuing the assistance provided in previous periods.

During the MFF 2014-2020, the Commission has reported three times on this subject.

The present report, as set out in the mid-term evaluation roadmap, analyses and presents: (i) to what extent the Kozloduy, Bohunice and Ignalina programmes have achieved their objectives in terms of results and impacts; (ii) the efficiency of the use of resources; and (iii) EU added value.

Main findings: the report concludes that **Bulgaria, Slovakia and Lithuania have made effective and efficient progress towards decommissioning their reactors**.

The decommissioning operators are all fully working on decommissioning activities. Slovakia has advanced the most and is currently carrying out Dismantling & Decontamination (D&D) in the reactor building at the Bohunice site. Decommissioning and decontamination is well advanced in the auxiliary buildings at the Kozloduy and Ignalina sites.

The programmes are **generally on track to achieve the specific objectives** of the Regulations with the funding provided in this MFF.

In addition, long-standing issues that were carried over from the previous financial framework have finally been resolved. **Key infrastructures** for managing spent fuel and radioactive waste have either become operational or is in its final stages of commissioning, giving new impetus to decommissioning activities.

Funding requirements and indicators: the evaluation shows that the preparation and endorsement of the respective decommissioning plans in 2014 was a major milestone and defined the limits of the assistance programmes, with the financing needs to achieve the decommissioning end state eventually established.

At the mid-term stage, these **needs were confirmed** for the Bohunice and the Ignalina programmes; for the Kozloduy programme, the ongoing revision of the decommissioning plan may result in an increase in cost estimates post-2020.

In addition, the detailed objectives and indicators provided a good basis for measuring progress towards the achievement of the specific objectives. However, the analysis also showed that it would be opportune to **recalibrate these indicators** in order to ensure continued effective monitoring and possible comparability between the programmes.

No additional funding will be needed in the 2014-2020 MFF. However, the raising of additional funds needed in the long term (post-2020) for the **Ignalina programme** calls for a careful follow-up in Lithuania.

The national contribution levels achieved appear suitable for sustaining proper efficiency; however, they are not established in the legal basis, which creates residual uncertainties.

An **increase in national contributions** compared to those of the Union and the establishment of a clear and formal framework for co-financing (whether at programme or project level) would encourage greater national ownership and more economical management by beneficiaries.

Safety and security: the analysis also demonstrated that greatly improved safety levels will be achieved at the sites as a result of EU funding in this MFF.

Major expected developments in the field include:

- **in Bulgaria**: the steady progress of construction of the National Disposal Facility, the management of legacy waste and the start of major D&D works in the reactor building;
- **in Slovakia**: the final dismantling of the reactor cores;
- **in Lithuania**: the steady progress of defueling and the preparations for dismantling the irradiated graphite core, which is a first of a kind project of an unprecedented scale.

Perspectives: based on the results of this evaluation, the Commission deems that **these measures should not be amended or suspended in the current MFF**. The specific objectives remain valid while the implementation procedures should be preferably revised to benefit from the lessons learned. Any such update should aim to:

- reinforce the role of the Monitoring Committees and that of the Programme Coordinator;
- **further improve the governance system** by streamlining the programme management cycle, refining the content of programming and monitoring documents;
- update and sharpen targets and indicators for multi-annual measures that go beyond 2020.