Shipments of radioactive waste and spent fuel

2005/0272(CNS) - 17/12/2019 - Follow-up document

The Commission presented its third report on the implementation by Member States of Council Directive 2006/117/Euratom on the supervision and control of shipments of radioactive waste and spent nuclear fuel.

This report is based on the national reports covering the period 2015-2017. Compared to the period covered by the previous report, the majority of Member States submitted their national reports in time for 25 December 2017. One month after the deadline, four countries had still not submitted their reports; however, they submitted them within six months of the deadline.

The report provides an overview of (i) shipments of radioactive waste and spent fuel in the European Union, (ii) recent trends and challenges with regard to import, export and transit of radioactive waste and spent fuel, (iii) reported refusals and failed shipments as well as proposed actions.

Supervision and control of shipments of radioactive waste and nuclear fuel

Council Directive 2006/117/Euratom establishes a Community system for the supervision and control of transboundary shipments of radioactive waste and spent fuel, so as to guarantee an adequate protection of the population. It ensures that Member States concerned are informed about shipments of radioactive waste and spent fuel to or via their territory with the obligation to give either their consent or reasoned refusal to the shipments.

For all shipments (including imports, exports and transits between Member States and from/to outside the Community) within the scope of the Directive, the Directive requires the use of a standard document.

The report concluded that the implementation of the Directive ensures that all transboundary movements of radioactive waste and spent fuel within the Community take place only with the prior informed consent of the competent authorities of all involved Member States (including transit countries), through the use of the standard document. The information related to all authorised shipments within a defined reporting period (three years) is regularly transmitted by all Member States to the Commission. Supervision and control of shipments of radioactive waste and spent nuclear fuel is thus guaranteed, throughout the Community.

Overall, the Commission considered that the current EU legal package, which includes Directive 2006/117 /Euratom, Directive 2011/70/Euratom and Directive 2013/59/Euratom, ensures high safety standards with regard to the risks of ionising radiation in the EU in the context of transboundary shipments.

Observations, trends and statistics

In general, and in comparison with previous reporting periods, a lower number of authorisations were reported in the current reporting period, in particular for spent nuclear fuel.

The 146 authorisations declared by 14 Member States during the period 2015-2017 correspond to 1834 actual shipments (total number of shipments). Some authorisations cover several shipments (12-13 on average) and may exceed the period of time covered by this report. 86% of the authorisations concern shipments of radioactive waste and the remaining 14% of the authorisations concern spent fuel.

The report also noted the following:

- 120 authorisations (82% of the total 146) concern intra-Community shipments;

- 26 authorisations (18% of all authorisations) are extra-Community authorisations. 17 were related to exports to third countries (12% of all authorisations) and 8 (about 5% of all authorisations) were related to imports from third countries;

- as regards imports of radioactive waste from third countries in the period 2015-2017, 5 authorisations representing 14 shipments of radioactive waste were issued by 3 Member States;

- as regards exports of radioactive waste from the Community to third countries, six Member States issued a total of 13 authorisations representing 35 shipments;

- only one transit origination from a third country was authorised during the period 2005-2017.

No non-execution of transfers has been declared by Member States for the period concerned. Two refusals of consent have been reported, together with their corresponding justification. One retransfer was reported, due to the unsuitability of certain radioactive waste at a treatment site.

No shipment failures were reported by Member States under the current reporting period. Two refusals to grant consent were reported together with their underlying justification. One reshipment was reported, due to the unsuitability of some radioactive waste for a processing site.

Improving the quality of reports

The report noted that the overall reporting quality has improved significantly over the period covered by the three reports. Nevertheless, the Commission has identified some residual inconsistencies in the reports, which have been corrected following ad hoc requests from the Commission services.

In addition, the Commission detected some inconsistencies when cross-checking Member States' reports, due mainly to inaccuracy of the provided information. Thanks to the assessment carried out by the Commission, Member States’ awareness of reporting all shipments has been improved. In addition, the Commission observed that consent/transit Member States have not always been informed when shipments had been withdrawn.

The Commission has worked closely with the EU Member States to improve the reporting template. It is the objective of the Commission to have a common agreement with all Member States about the required information to be provided to facilitate the supervision and control of shipments of radioactive waste and spent fuel for the upcoming reporting period (2018-2020).