Resolution on the safety of nuclear power plant in Ostrovets (Belarus)

2021/2511(RSP) - 11/02/2021 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

The European Parliament adopted by 642 votes to 29, with 21 abstentions, a resolution on the safety of the nuclear power plant in Ostrovets (Belarus).

Parliament expressed concern about the location of the Ostrovets nuclear power plant which is located 50 km from Vilnius (Lithuania) and at close proximity to other EU countries such as Poland, Latvia and Estonia. It noted with concern that the plant is being implemented as a geopolitical project of Belarus and Russia and that its construction and future operation is a source of possible threat to the EU and its Member States regarding safety, health and the protection of the environment.

Parliament remained concerned about the hasty commissioning of a nuclear power plant which does not comply with the highest international environmental and nuclear safety standards, including the IAEA recommendations. The resolution also deplored the persistent lack of transparency and official information regarding recurrent emergency shutdowns of the reactor and equipment failure during the commissioning stage of the plant in 2020.

Members stressed the need to build up and maintain an early warning system for the measuring of radiation in EU countries located in the vicinity of the plant.

Belarus is urged to:

- ensure full respect for international nuclear and environmental safety standards, and transparent, inclusive and constructive cooperation with international authorities without further delay;

- discontinue the selective application of the IAEA standards and peer review recommendations.

Members deeply regretted the hasty commercial start of the plant scheduled for March 2021 and stressed that all European Nuclear Safety Regulators Group’s (ENSREG) safety recommendations must be implemented before the nuclear power plant can start its commercial operation.

The Commission should:

- work closely with the Belarusian authorities in order to suspend the starting process until all EU stress test recommendations are fully implemented and all necessary safety improvements are in place, and after Belarusian society and neighbouring countries have been duly informed of the measures taken;

- assess and propose measures to suspend electricity trade with Belarus in a manner that is compliant with the obligations under international trade, energy and nuclear law, in order to ensure that electricity produced in the Ostrovets plant does not enter the EU energy market while Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania are still connected to the Belarus, Russia, Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania (BRELL) network.

Lastly, Parliament expressed its full solidarity with Belarusian citizens and the citizens of EU countries directly concerned by the construction and operation of the Ostrovets plant and called for a further high-level involvement of the EU and its institutions in this issue of ultimate European importance.