Nuclear industries in the Union

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The publication of the Draft Illustrative Nuclear Programme is welcomed. The extent of public concern, the deregulation and opening up of (in most Member States) a hitherto secure market which has been conducive to long term capital intensive investments, plus the arrival of competitively priced natural gas produced in smaller, more efficient and cheaper generation plants, are crucial factors which make it unlikely that nuclear generation will be continued in most Member States when existing plants come to the end of their operating lives in the years after 2005-2010. The prospect of such a development must raise serious strategic questions for EU energy policy. For, the loss of most of its nuclear generation would not only compromise the EU's ability to ensure satisfactory security of supply conditions in respect to the future import of fuel for electricity generation, it would also powerfully counteract the EU's efforts to reduce its CO2 emissions. It is a serious omission that the Commission's document fails to bring out the importance of the above strategic issues, or to assess adequately their likely impact on the EU's energy policy. The Commission is called upon to address these issues specifically in its final version of the Illustrative Nuclear Programme, to reach clear conclusions, and to give guidance to the parties involved, as well as to the public, about the realities ahead. Regarding the dangers which may arise from nuclear facilities to the east of the EU, there should not be any doubt as to the deeply damaging effect on public attitudes if there were to be another major nuclear accident. The PHARE and TACIS programmes have been valuable, but they are coming under increasing criticism. In so far as these programmes deal with nuclear safety, the Commission is urged to review them as a matter of urgency, and then to publish the results. The Commission is also asked to consider including attention to dangerous nuclear military installations within the scope of its activities.