Euratom Safeguards Office. Report 1999-2000

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The committee adopted the report by Paul RÜBIG (EPP-ED, A) on the Commission's report for 1999-2000. It began by praising the work of the ESO during the period in question and said that the office should continue to be directly responsible for safeguards activity after EU enlargement. The ESO's budget should therefore be increased to enable it to maintain its high standards despite the new challenges and increased workload it would face in the run-up to enlargement. In particular, it should be allocated enough money to give its inspectors adequate training. Another of the committee's concerns was the issue of data security and cyber-crime. Given that some data was already being transmitted from monitored sites to ESO headquarters, and in view of the technical differences between the individual national data security systems, the committee called for a harmonised regulatory framework at Community level in the fields of data security and secured data transmission. It also wanted to maintain the current system whereby the ESO data network was physically isolated from the outside world. The committee also made a number of recommendations for improving safety and security, in particular in the wake of the terrorist attacks of 11 September 2001. The Commission was urged to put forward a directive guaranteeing a high level of security during the transport, loading and unloading of nuclear materials. MEPs further pointed out that, unlike nuclear safeguards, the safety and security of nuclear plant and nuclear material in general were currently the responsibility of the Member States, and called for the Convention (on reforming the Community institutions) to modify the Euratom Treaty in order to bring these two areas under the responsibility of a Community authority. To that end, consideration should be given to setting up an independent Nuclear Safety and Security Office which would directly supervise nuclear operators in the Member States, in close collaboration with the IAEA, as the ESO was currently doing in the field of nuclear safeguards.