

Energy intelligence for Europe

The Euratom Treaty and future energy options: Conditions for a level playing field in the energy sector

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Transcript of the Conclusions and closing of Dr. Lutz Mez, Environmental Policy Research Centre, Berlin, on behalf of Dominique Voynet, French Senate member and former Minister of the Environment

Thank you, I had the opportunity to use the coffee break to have a feedback with Dominique Voynet, so I am telling with respect to the conclusions what she would have said. I am only the speaker of this. Let me also do some final remarks to conclude this conference. First of all, I am very grateful to Antony (Froggatt) who made such a good summary that it is not necessary for me to do this. Normally, after such a conference the level of confusion is higher than before you entered the room. I think that this is not the case today. It is interesting that consensus between the different parties in this room with respect to renewable energy sources and also to energy efficiency was there. I couldn't see any controversy. The controversy was – and I have been in this business for thirty years, that is the old one, nuclear and gas – which is exactly the basic question: Shall we go nuclear and use the gas as transition? What is the technology strategy? This is still the real debate as far as I understand.

I think there were some quite conflicting hypotheses regarding the sources of uranium. (Unfortunately) the people who stated some of this – (Nina Commeau-Yannoussis) from the Commission and also Dr. Bertrand Barré – are no longer in the room. I want to quote the German Agency for Resources. That is a Federal Agency, not very anti-nuclear. They made a report two years ago on all resources, among others a chapter on the nuclear resources¹. The world resources of uranium are 1,57 million tons and the annual consumption is 65,000 tons. You can figure out that this is exactly 40 years (of consumption), not more². What wasn't mentioned today is that half of the consumption is covered by military inventories. 30,000 tons every year are from former nuclear bombs to be used in the nuclear power stations. Maybe the Germans have the wrong figures, but the resources will not be doubled or tripled and last for another 120 years. The other thing is the fast breeder reactor. Klaus Traube who was in charge of the German fast breeder program will tell you a whole other story about the fast breeder.

I think we heard a little bit about the vested interest and the banking sector involved in creating interest in the (nuclear) sector. The problem is if the interest is vested it stays in this sector for

¹ The Federal Institute for Geosciences and Natural Resources, *Energiestudie 2002: Kernbrennstoffe*. According to this study, there is 1,57 million tonnes of uranium available for the world's nuclear power plants. With a total generation of 354 GWe, the nuclear power plants consumed approximately 64,400 tonnes of uranium in 2001. At this consumption level, the global uranium resources would last in the order of 25 years, if there were no military inventories to support the production of nuclear fuel. A brief summary of the study can be found at http://www.bgr.bund.de/cln_029/nn_454936/DE/Themen/Energie/Kernbrennstoffe/energiestudie_kernbrennstoffe.htm

² Comment of the organisers: If you divide the figures, the result is more like 24 years.

probably forty years and this makes it very difficult to change it. What we didn't talk so much about was how can public opinion and policy decisions have an influence on this. This belongs to the part where I draw the conclusions and what we had as ideas what we could do together. I will just briefly tell you another thing, which I had in mind: I would stress that we had quite some nice scenarios again, but scenarios are scenarios and the policies and measures something different. It is clear that traditional energy policies are connected with primary energy sources. This is also easy (to understand), because earlier there were monopolies, so the state could deal with these monopolies. The style of doing this and also to regulate this has shaped the industry for a hundred years and even more in the countries that went nuclear. What we talked about is final energy and the point is energy efficiency. There are very few countries in this world that have experience in this field. Denmark is one of them. You can look with very sharp glasses and you will not find many of them. That is because we have forty different types of end energy use and we have to develop policy instruments, which are working to stimulate innovation and change behaviour. Here we are on the ground floor and not in the same way as with stimulating renewable energy. That we can do. It is quite easy compared to the other thing.

Let me come to the conclusion. Unfortunately, not all members of Parliament who have been in the room are still here, but I hope that the message will be passed on by the organisers and that Anne Grete (Holmsgaard, the afternoon chair) will also do this, because we had the idea and we were also asked by Mette Gjerskov (MEP for the Social Democrats) this morning: What can we do? And I think one very good thing to do as a conclusion from this conference would be, if the parliamentarians not only from Denmark but also in the other parliaments could start parliamentary initiatives to look at this question of the Euratom Treaty and also put this question before the governments and in the second stage raise the issue in an inter-governmental conference. However, that is not within the next two years. That is later on. This could be done. It could also be done in a feedback to or in cooperation with the European Parliament. If this is the output of the conference, then this was a very useful conference. Dominique Voynet is also willing to do this on the French side. That is my conclusion and I hope you can enjoy the sun the rest of the day and in the weekend and think about the heavy involvement of nuclear power in your life. Thank you.