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## TEXTS ADOPTED

*Provisional edition*

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### **P9\_TA-PROV(2021)0052**

#### **Safety of the nuclear power plant in Ostrovets (Belarus)**

#### **European Parliament resolution of 11 February 2021 on the safety of the nuclear power plant in Ostrovets (Belarus) (2021/2511(RSP))**

*The European Parliament,*

- having regard to the European Council conclusions of 10-11 December 2020,
  - having regard to the question to the Commission on the safety of the nuclear power plant in Ostrovets (Belarus) (O-000004/2021 – B9-0000/2021),
  - having regard to Rules 136(5) and 132(2) of its Rules of Procedure,
  - having regard to the motion for a resolution of the Committee on Industry, Research and Energy,
- A. whereas nuclear safety is a key priority for the European Union both within and beyond its external borders;
- B. whereas the European Nuclear Safety Regulators Group (ENSREG) brings together the extensive expertise acquired from peer reviewing nuclear power plants located both within and outside the EU;
- C. whereas an ENSREG peer review team visited Belarus and the Ostrovets nuclear power plant in March 2018, following the necessary preparatory activities, including the receipt of responses to the peer review team's written questions, and published its final report in July 2018;
- D. whereas ENSREG called on the Belarusian authorities to develop a National Action Plan, in order to ensure the timely implementation of all safety improvement recommendations identified in the peer review report, subject to a future independent review, as is the case for all EU and non-EU countries which participate in the stress test process;
- E. whereas Belarus published its National Action Plan in August 2019 but only agreed to a further peer review by ENSREG in June 2020, following repeated demands and considerable high-level pressure from the EU side;
- F. whereas this further peer review process is ongoing and ENSREG will complete and publish its findings concerning the safety of the plant in the coming months and aims to

have a preliminary report issued by the ENSREG plenary and transmitted to Belarus before the commercial start of the plant, which is planned for March 2021 by the Belarusian authorities;

- G. whereas the plant started to generate electricity on 3 November 2020 despite multiple remaining safety concerns and without evidence of the degree of implementation of the recommendations by the EU peer review of 2018 and by the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA);
- H. whereas the physical start-up of the plant was carried out in the absence of an operating licence, since the licencing procedure was changed in July 2020;
- I. whereas electricity trade between Belarus and the EU has stopped as of 3 November 2020, when the Ostrovets plant was connected to the electricity grid, following the joint decision of the Baltic States in August 2020 to cease commercial exchanges of electricity with Belarus once the Ostrovets plant had started producing electricity;
  - 1. Expresses its concern about the location of the Ostrovets nuclear power plant at 50 km from Vilnius (Lithuania) and at close proximity to other EU countries such as Poland, Latvia and Estonia;
  - 2. Deplores the fact that the project is being implemented despite protests from Belarusian citizens and that members of Belarusian NGOs seeking to raise awareness regarding the construction of the plant in Ostrovets have been persecuted and unlawfully arrested;
  - 3. Notes 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 European Union and its Member States with regard to safety, health and the protection of the environment;
  - 4. Remains 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;
  - 5. Deplores 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, including the breakdown of four voltage transformers and the malfunctioning of cooling systems, while there were eight known incidents during the construction stage of the plant, including two incidents related to the reactor pressure vessel;
  - 6. Notes that the EU peer review in 2018 revealed numerous deficiencies, that only a limited number of its recommendations have reportedly been implemented so far, and that implementation needs to be verified by the EU experts;
  - 7. Notes that the quantity and frequency of safety incidents raise major concerns regarding the poor quality assurance and control in the plant's design, manufacturing and assembling phases and its low operational safety, which need to be properly addressed in the EU peer review;
  - 8. Urges Belarus to ensure full respect for international nuclear and environmental safety standards, and transparent, inclusive and constructive cooperation with international

authorities without further delay; invites Belarus to discontinue the selective application of the IAEA standards and peer review recommendations;

9. Notes that nuclear safety standards must be given the highest priority not only during the planning and construction but also during the operation of the nuclear power plant, and must be constantly overseen by an independent regulator;
10. Is concerned that the current regulatory authority in Belarus (Gosatomnadzor – Department of Nuclear and Radiation Safety of the Ministry for Emergency Situations) is under constant political pressure and lacks sufficient independence both in form and in substance; stresses, therefore, that a transparent and attentive peer review is also crucial during the operational phase of the plant;
11. Notes the decision of the parties to the UN Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) Convention on Environmental Impact Assessment in a Transboundary Context (Espoo Convention) of 11 December 2000 on compliance by Belarus with its obligations under the convention in respect of the Belarusian nuclear power plant in Ostrovets, and urges Belarus to ensure full implementation of the Espoo Convention;
12. Stresses 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;
13. Urges the Belarusian authorities to fully cooperate with ENSREG in the stress test process, including a formal review and urgent implementation of Belarus' National Action Plan;
14. Regrets that an ENSREG peer review mission to the Ostrovets plant, which was originally planned to take place in December 2020, had to be cancelled due to organisational reasons on the host's side, as well as due to the COVID-19 pandemic;
15. Welcomes the first phase of the current EU peer review consisting of a site visit in early February 2021; stresses the importance of the timely completion of the peer review process and the publication of its findings, and that at least a preliminary report should be transmitted to Belarus already before March 2021 when the commercial start of the plant is planned by the Belarusian authorities; notes that all safety issues are equally important and must be addressed before the commercial start of the plant;
16. Deeply regrets the hasty commercial start of the plant in March 2021 and stresses that all ENSREG safety recommendations must be implemented before the nuclear power plant can start its commercial operation; encourages the Commission to 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;
17. Urges the Commission and ENSREG to continue a transparent and attentive peer review of the plant, to insist on the immediate implementation of all recommendations and to ensure effective monitoring of the implementation process, including regular visits by the peer review team to the Ostrovets site, including during the operation of the facility; stresses, in that regard, the importance of effective cooperation with the IAEA;

18. Notes that, despite the common agreement between the Baltic countries to cease commercial exchanges of electricity with Belarus, is it still possible for electricity from Belarus to enter the EU market via the Russian grid;
19. Recalls the European Council conclusions of 10-11 December 2020, and supports the efforts to investigate possible measures preventing commercial electricity imports from third countries' nuclear facilities that do not fulfil EU recognised safety levels, including the nuclear power plant in Ostrovets;
20. Invites the Commission to 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 BRELL network;
21. Stresses the strategic importance of accelerating the synchronisation of the Baltic electricity grid with the Continental European Network and underlines that the future operation of the Ostrovets nuclear power plant should not in any way hinder the desynchronisation of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania from the BRELL network and that the European Union should continue the integration of the three Baltic States into the EU electricity grid;
22. Expresses its full solidarity with Belarusian citizens and the citizens of EU countries directly concerned by the construction and operation of the Ostrovets plant and calls for a further high-level involvement of the EU and its institutions in this issue of ultimate European importance;
23. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Commission, the Council, and the governments and parliaments of the Member States.