R10 Nuclear Energy Stands Against our Values

Proposer:	Les Jeunes Ecologistes
Agenda item:	7. Resolutions
Status:	Withdrawn

Motion text

The popularisation of the climate issue over the last twenty years has provided a window of opportunity for the pro-nuclear camp to make significant progress in the cultural battle around this question. At the same time, the anti-nuclear struggle is running out of steam in some European countries, and the pro-nuclear fable is even taking root among some parties claiming to be green.

Far from being an inescapable situation, it is possible to resist this by reorganising the anti-nuclear fight around its political implications. The aim of this resolution is to highlight the political dimension of the rejection of nuclear power, by shifting the framework of the debate and demonstrating its incompatibility with the values of political ecology. This resolution is set in the continuity of a previous FYEG resolution “for an end to nuclear power”, adopted during the 2011 General Assembly.

The pro-nuclear lobby has developed an imaginary view presenting this source of energy as deterrestrated (Pottin, A. 2024), i.e. out of touch with the concrete, material realities of its production. This myth makes it possible, for example, to ignore the dependence of nuclear energy on imported uranium, the problem of nuclear waste and its burial, and the difficulties involved in dismantling power plants.

The architecture, mode of governance and inertia associated with the use of nuclear energy need to rely on a fundamentally centralised state model. It's no coincidence that it has been able to develop so widely in a country like France. Through the way it is developed, its links with military nuclear power, its violence against the Global South, and its relationship with State secrecy, civil nuclear power is inherently linked to a nationalist and sovereignist logic. France for instance used some of its former colonial empire’s territories to test out nuclear weapons, such as in Algeria or Polynesia, contaminating both the environment and the people through radiation and nuclear waste. This is a reminder that what is needed to develop nuclear technology comes at a cost, which is always paid by the most vulnerable populations and environments. Moreover, the contemporary pro-nuclear discourse doesn’t take into account the

impact of such energy production in certain parts of the Global south, where crucial resources for nuclear energy such as uranium are extracted, contributing to a neo-colonialist approach of the “green” transition, a path that Europe is sadly already taking.

Thus, the choice of nuclear power is intrinsically incompatible with a federalist and democratic political organisation on a national and European scale, which FYEG is calling for. On the other hand, renewable energies - in terms of the infrastructure required, the timelines of projects implementation and the decision-making scales involved - are far more decentralised and compatible with a commons-based logic, the implementation of which can be thoroughly debated and accepted.

In a broader European context, the inclusion of nuclear power in 2022 in the EU Taxonomy for sustainable activities is a clear success for the pro-nuclear lobby and the progression of its agenda. This is an alarming signal that should encourage us to take up the anti-nuclear fight once again. The war in Ukraine led by Russia made us realise the deeply rooted dependencies that our different energy systems have with this regime. It opened a breach, and new voices started to stand for nuclear energy on the grounds of our common energy sovereignty. But, would it be acceptable to trade one dependency for another ? While we understand how complex the situation is, especially for countries in the Eastern part of Europe, we believe there is another way possible, than building a society which relies on the nuclear power system. This is not a desirable future. On the contrary, we believe that this crisis underlines the need to build solidarity between every region of Europe and to outline new paths towards post-growth.

To ensure the acceptability of the development of nuclear energy and to silence dissenting voices, a particularly violent security apparatus, comparable to that used in the fight against terrorism, has been deployed all over Europe. In the aftermath of Chernobyl’s disaster (1986), the use of lies and figures manipulation was the preferred choice of different regimes, such as the USSR or France. In Spain or Denmark, radical green organisations have been considered terrorist organisations for opposing nuclear energy; in France, some activists have been killed, such as Vital Michalon in 1977. The repression of the anti-nuclear movement even seems to have been a testing ground for the repression and criminalisation of the rest of the environmental movement, which is on the rise nowadays with the “environmental backlash”.

Nuclear energy is extremely expensive for the EU member states where it is developed, and thus for taxpayers and its population as a whole. The costs range from the construction of plants to their dismantling, also including waste management and catastrophe prevention. Nuclear power plants’ constructions lack reliability both in terms and costs and duration: for Olkiluoto nuclear plant in the city of Eurajoki in Finland, it went from €3 to €11 billion (Schneider, M. &

Froggatt, A. 2019); for the one in Flamanville in the north of France, the costs were multiplied by 6, from €3,3 to €19,1 billion, and the duration of the construction by 4, from 5 to 17 years (Breteau, P. 2024). While austerity policies are methodically devastating whole branches of its public services, some European countries are blindly spending billions of euros on opening new nuclear power plants, which take several decades to actually start producing energy. Opting for nuclear power therefore means taking an exceptionally significant budgetary decision, both for current and future generations, without offering a truly democratic and transparent debate.

The development of the aforementioned ‘deterrestrated imaginary’ has enabled pro-nuclear energy companies and the defenders of the so-called “green growth” to make people think that “green capitalism” is possible, thanks to nuclear power. Through a climate-centric prism, and ignoring the concrete implications in terms of infrastructure, waste management, the safety of this energy, as well as biodiversity and adaptation to climate change; we are told that it is possible to maintain our standard of living and of producing by relying on nuclear energy. This way of reasoning, similar to the ‘There Is No Alternative’ logic, shuts the door on any true post-growth horizon.

Nuclear energy is only draped in environmental qualities because of the now rather-acknowledged climate crisis. Presenting nuclear energy as a “green opportunity” is not happening out of any sincere concern for environmental issues, but because it offers a convenient reprieve to capitalism.

In reality, nuclear energy is a techno-solutionist delusion, likely to steal away from us a lot of -extremely precious- time to tackle the environmental crisis adequately. We therefore believe it is necessary to go beyond nuclear power and to move away from it, if we are to achieve our political and social vision for the future.

Therefore, we, the Federation of Young European Greens, and Young Green political organisations all over Europe:

- Wish that the European parliament moves backward on its decision not to object to the inclusion of gas and nuclear activities in the EU taxonomy for sustainable activities.

- Ask the European Green Party to better invest in the anti-nuclear battle and to fund initiatives to win the ideological battle against the defenders of nuclear power as a sustainable and environmentally-friendly energy source.

- Demand that Green parties in Europe keep on respecting the Charter of the European Greens (2006) by standing firmly against the “green nuclear energy” myth, and clearly distantiating themselves from organizations

promoting the further development of nuclear power plants.

- Strive to, as FYEG, shift back the debate on the use of nuclear energy to a political level and not only a technical one, by communicating on it and actively partaking in the societal battle against nuclear energy.

- State that FYEG will work towards creating more connections between anti-nuclear local battles and actively partake in the rebuilding of a strong European network opposing the development of nuclear power plants all over the continent.

- State that FYEG will engage in campaigns to promote truly sustainable and renewable sources of energy, while educating on energy efficiency practices.