



EUROPEAN COMMISSION

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*Dear President,*

*The European Commission would like to thank the Austrian Nationalrat for its opinion concerning the Communication Energy 2020 - A strategy for competitive, sustainable and secure energy {COM(2010) 639 final} and would like to apologise for this very late reply. The Commission would nevertheless like to provide the following comments on the issues raised therein.*

*Regarding nuclear energy, the Commission underlines that this source is mentioned in the strategy as a significant component of the energy mix in Europe and in particular as a large part of the low-carbon electricity generated in Europe. However, it follows from Article 194 TFEU that the strategy may not seek to prescribe what the national energy mix should be. Union measures based on Article 194 TFEU may not affect Member State's decision on its choice between different energy sources.*

*According to the European Atomic Energy Community (Euratom), EU action in the field of nuclear power consists of furthering cooperation in the field of research, protecting the public by establishing common safety standards, ensuring an adequate and equitable supply of ores and nuclear fuel, monitoring the peaceful use of nuclear material, and cooperating with other countries and international organisations.*

*The accident at the Fukushima nuclear power plant in Japan triggered the need for an immediate and coordinated response from the EU, aiming to identify potential further improvements, in line with the fundamental principle of the continuous improvement of nuclear safety. On 25 March 2011, the European Council concluded that the safety of all EU nuclear plants should be reviewed, on the basis of comprehensive and transparent risk and safety assessments. The Commission is currently working together with relevant stakeholders in view of fulfilling this mandate of the European Council.*

*Ms. Barbara PRAMMER  
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*Regarding research related to nuclear energy, the European Commission takes note of the Austrian Nationalrat's position. Fifty years ago, the Euratom Treaty was drafted to coordinate Member State research programmes for the peaceful use of nuclear energy to help maintain the right level of investment in research while also optimising cooperation between the EU and its Member States. The Seventh Programme for nuclear research and training activities (2007-2013) adopted by decision of the Council<sup>1</sup> aims at promoting a sustainable development of fusion energy and meeting the requirements of the nuclear fission sector in terms of safety, waste management, cost-efficiency and competitiveness.*

*In addition, one of the six European Industrial Initiatives of the Strategic Energy Technology Plan which was endorsed by the Council in March 2010 to accelerate the development of low-carbon technologies relates to nuclear energy. The European Sustainable Nuclear Industrial Initiative was launched in November 2010 to develop advanced nuclear technology towards new generation reactors which will make the use of nuclear energy more sustainable through more efficient use of uranium resources and by the reduction of the radio-toxicity and of the potential impact of the ultimate radioactive waste.*

*Nuclear energy remains a technology of choice for many EU Member States, so the European Commission will maintain and develop research in this area with a continued focus on safety and security issues.*

*The European Commission agrees with the Austrian Nationalrat on the importance and the added-value of ECURIE (European Community Urgent Radiological Information Exchange), the system in place for emergency preparedness and response at EU level in case of nuclear accident. ECURIE has recently proven its reliability and its efficiency in the immediate aftermath of the Fukushima accident. The European Commission transmitted the alert message received from IAEA on 11 March and established an emergency team on 12 March. This was active on a 24h/7day basis for a period of three weeks. The Commission now continues to transmit relevant information to national ECURIE contact points.*

*Finally the European Commission welcomes the call from the Austrian Nationalrat to reinforce energy efficiency policies. In its national reform programme, Austria has set its national energy efficiency target to stabilise its final energy consumption at the level of 2005. This would lead to some 7.2 Mtoe primary energy savings by 2020 and contribute strongly to reaching the overall European energy efficiency target.*

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<sup>1</sup> Council Decision 2006/970/Euratom of 18 December 2006 concerning the Seventh Framework Programme of the European Atomic Energy Community (Euratom) for nuclear research and training activities (2007 to 2011) [Official Journal L 400, 30.12.2006]

*A new Energy Efficiency Plan was presented by the European Commission in March 2011 {COM(2011) 109} to support Member States' efforts in developing stronger policies. On 22 June a proposal for a new Directive on energy efficiency {COM(2011) 370} was adopted translating the key aspects of the plan into concrete measures with a view to triggering untapped efficiency gains needed to achieve the EU's 20% energy saving objective for 2020.*

*I look forward to continuing our political dialogue in the future.*

*Yours faithfully,*

*Maroš Šefčovič  
Vice-President*