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## The stress test fig leaf – EU summit should discuss nuclear phase out

This briefing shows that Europe can rapidly phase-out nuclear power while also increasing its climate target to a 30 percent emission cut. It also criticises voluntary stress tests proposed for European nuclear power stations and makes policy recommendations to EU leaders.

**Greenpeace energy campaigner Louise Hutchins said:** *“Governments confronted by soaring energy prices and nuclear risks are right to revise their energy plans. Europe can rapidly replace scores of reactors with safe, clean renewable power and energy efficiency without the need for a dash to coal. Stepping up Europe’s 2020 climate target to 30 percent would further boost a competitive renewable industry and drive the creation of tens of thousands of much-needed European jobs.”*

She added: *“Nuclear stress tests are increasingly looking like a fig leaf. Since when did nuclear safety checks become voluntary?”*

### Nuclear phase out – how fast can Europe go?

Nuclear energy provides 16 percent of global electricity and less than six percent of all energy consumed. In the EU, nuclear capacity has declined by 7.6GW in the last decade, while more than 100GW of renewable energy has been installed.

The Energy [R]evolution study<sup>1</sup> from the German Aerospace Centre shows that most of the 48 nuclear reactors built in the EU before 1980<sup>2</sup>, with a total capacity of 34.7GW, can be closed by 2015. The shortfall in energy can be filled by boosting renewable energy and improving energy efficiency. By 2020, 73GW of old nuclear reactors can be closed without compromising CO<sub>2</sub> emission reductions of 30 percent compared to 1990 levels.

Following the Japanese nuclear crisis, there has been an immediate closure of seven reactors in Germany. The German Environmental Agency (UBA) has said that the short-term phase-out of these seven reactors can be achieved without any increase of CO<sub>2</sub> emissions or using more coal power plants. The UBA estimates that a total German nuclear phase-out is possible by 2017<sup>3</sup>. The German Renewable Energy industry body Bundesverband Erneuerbare Energie (BEE) says renewable energy would be ready to provide 47 percent of German power by 2020, more than compensating for the nuclear withdrawal planned by 2021 at the latest.

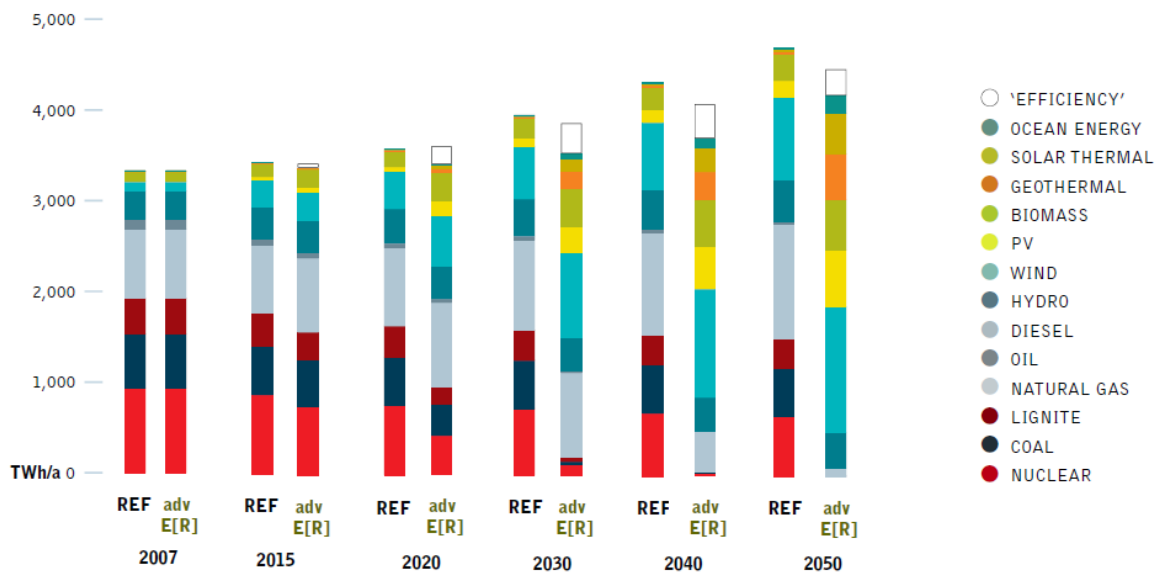
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<sup>1</sup> [www.greenpeace.org/eu-unit/press-centre/press-releases2/Green-Energy-can-win-EU-technology-race](http://www.greenpeace.org/eu-unit/press-centre/press-releases2/Green-Energy-can-win-EU-technology-race)

<sup>2</sup> Figure based on data of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA)

<sup>3</sup> [www.focus.de/panorama/welt/tsunami-in-japan/energieversorgung-bundesumweltamt-schaetzt-akws-als-ueberfluessig-ein\\_aid\\_609486.html](http://www.focus.de/panorama/welt/tsunami-in-japan/energieversorgung-bundesumweltamt-schaetzt-akws-als-ueberfluessig-ein_aid_609486.html)

The graph below compares the energy mix on the basis of the International Energy Agency “business as usual” reference scenario with a rapid increase of electricity production from renewable sources and energy efficiency, labelled ‘adv [ER]’



[“EFFICIENCY” = REDUCTION COMPARED TO THE REFERENCE SCENARIO]

A record amount of renewable electricity capacity was installed in the EU last year, 22.6GW (compared to 17.3GW in 2009 and 13.3GW in 2008). EU governments expect the share of renewable energy to reach 20.7 percent of gross final energy consumption by 2020, which translates into approximately 34.3 percent of electricity consumption<sup>4</sup>. It is expected that 16 countries will exceed their 2020 renewables targets - Austria, Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Denmark, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Latvia, Malta, the Netherlands, Poland, Slovenia, Slovakia, Spain and Sweden.

### Green energy creates jobs and saves money

A fully renewable European energy system would require a total of €1.8 trillion additional energy investments until 2050, but would deliver total fuel costs savings of €2.6 trillion and yearly electricity savings of €132 billion compared to a business as usual scenario with nuclear power and coal, according to the *Energy [R]evolution* report. Such investment would give Europe a global competitive advantage in green technology and hundreds of thousands of additional European jobs. By 2020, there could be 940,000 new green jobs, increasing to 1.2 million new jobs in 2030. Job losses in the nuclear and fossil fuel sectors are more than compensated by growth in green sectors.

### Stress tests a fig leaf?

At the March EU summit, European leaders will discuss voluntary stress tests for Europe’s nuclear plants. Greenpeace argues that for the tests to amount to anything more than a fig leaf, the EU should ensure that they are compulsory, transparent, independent and lead to the rapid closure of plants which fail. European

<sup>4</sup> [www.erec.org/fileadmin/erec\\_docs/Documents/Press\\_Releases/EREC%20Press%20Release%20-%20Member%20States%20to%20Exceed%202020%20Targets.pdf](http://www.erec.org/fileadmin/erec_docs/Documents/Press_Releases/EREC%20Press%20Release%20-%20Member%20States%20to%20Exceed%202020%20Targets.pdf)

leaders are set to ask national authorities to carry out the tests. But to be transparent and rigorous, they should also be peer reviewed by other members of the European Nuclear Safety Regulators Group (ENSREG) and independent experts. Furthermore, Greenpeace believes that it should not be the taxpayer which pays the bill for nuclear disasters. The industry should be made to bear all costs of decisions to build nuclear plants.

**Greenpeace urges summit leaders to:**

- Support a 100 percent renewable energy vision for 2050, while rapidly phasing out nuclear power and boosting energy efficiency.
- Support an unconditional 30 percent domestic climate target for the EU. The knock-on effect of a strong carbon price will support investments in renewable energy.
- Implement the Renewable Energy Directive so that the binding 2020 renewables targets are met. European governments must also drastically increase the ambition of their efficiency policies. There is no room for complacency.

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