

## **Radioactive Waste: Large majority of citizens in favour of European legislation**

*The European Commission has published today a Eurobarometer survey showing that an overwhelming majority of Europeans would find it useful to have European legislation on radioactive waste management. The concern for the safety risk related to radioactive waste is shared both in countries with nuclear power plants and those with no nuclear energy.*

Günther Oettinger, Commissioner responsible for Energy said: *"People throughout Europe share the same concerns, whether have nuclear power plants in their country or not. We have to take these concerns seriously and make sure that radioactive waste is disposed safely, for our people and for our environment."*

### **Radioactive waste management**

An overall majority of 82% European citizens say nuclear waste management should be regulated at EU level, according to the Special Eurobarometer survey "Europeans and Nuclear Safety". This belief is extremely consistent all across the European Union. Agreement is almost unanimous in Cyprus (93%), Hungary (90%), the Netherlands (90%) and Slovenia (90%). On the other end of the spectrum – in those countries where the smallest number of people share the view – a consistent majority exist (Austria 59%, UK 60%, Malta 62%).

### **Safety of nuclear plants**

While citizens also have concerns towards wrong use of nuclear materials and terrorism, a large majority of 59 % believe that nuclear power plants can be operated in a safe manner. This EU average remained stable compared to the 2006 survey. National results show some significant changes: in 14 countries agreement with the statement shows a progression which is more striking in Ireland (+11), Poland and Luxembourg (+ 9), as well as in Malta, Estonia and Italy (+6). Agreement levels decreased in Bulgaria (-9), Germany (-7), France and Romania (-5).

### **Background:**

It is up to the Member States to decide whether they use nuclear energy or not. At present, 15 out of 27 EU States have nuclear power plants, but there are only a few projects for final repositories for the most hazardous radioactive waste category. The European Commission will propose European legislation on radioactive waste management in the second half of 2010 and is currently conducting a public consultation on such a legislative proposal. While the EU Commission respects fully that the energy mix is a national competence, the EU is engaged in creating the most advanced EU legal framework for nuclear safety, security and the management of radioactive waste. This Community competence to establish basic safety standards at EU level is explicitly regulated in the Euratom Treaty.

The full report will be available on

[http://ec.europa.eu/energy/nuclear/safety/safety\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/energy/nuclear/safety/safety_en.htm)

Public consultation

[http://ec.europa.eu/energy/nuclear/consultations/2010\\_05\\_31\\_fuel\\_waste\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/energy/nuclear/consultations/2010_05_31_fuel_waste_en.htm).

[IP/09/1039](#) (25/06/2009): The EU establishes a common binding framework on nuclear safety

Council Directive [2006/117/Euratom](#) of 20 November 2006 on the supervision and control of shipments of radioactive waste and spent fuel

DG ENERGY Website: Nuclear energy and waste management :

[http://ec.europa.eu/energy/nuclear/index\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/energy/nuclear/index_en.htm)