

Eerste Minister Alexander de Croo
Beleidsorganen en Secretariaat van de Eerste minister
Wetstraat 16
1000 Brussel
Belgium

Date: 31 March 2022

Subject: Nuclear energy has no place in EU taxonomy

Dear Mr. De Croo,

I am writing to you as the chairman of Cities for Nuclear Free Europe (CNFE). CNFE is a network of cities – some of them capitals or regional capitals – and big local authorities in Europe, who are committed to a CO₂-neutral, nuclear-free future. With 33 member cities, we are representing a total number of more than 14 million inhabitants.

We have learned that the Belgian federal government postponed a planned phaseout of nuclear power last, citing "a chaotic geopolitical environment" as the war in Ukraine disrupts energy markets across the European Union.

Belgium wants to extend the life of Doel 4 and Tihange 3 for another 10 years to keep them in operation until 2035. Both reactors already started in 1985. Belgium had previously declared it would phase out nuclear power by 2025.

"This extension will strengthen our country's independence from fossil fuels in a chaotic geopolitical environment," you stated in a press release.

Immediately the operator of the Doel and Tihange plants, Engie, has expressed strong reservations about the policy change.

"The decision to extend the Doel 4 and Tihange 3 power plants raises significant safety, regulation and implementation constraints, especially since this extension would take place even though the dismantling activities on neighbouring units will have started," Engie said in a press release: "It therefore presents a risk profile which, by its unpredictability and its scale, exceeds the normal activity of a private operator."

Both Doel and Tihange are infamous due to many technical disruptions and security issues. Doel is located in a densely populated area: in a 75 km radius live more than 9 million people. More than around any other nuclear plant in Europe.

We as CNFE do understand that you, in an insecure situation, want to keep all energy options open. What we should learn from the "chaotic geopolitical environment" is the fact that nuclear plants are not safe in unusual situations. And certainly, old and worn-out nuclear plants are not safe at all and should be closed as soon as possible, to avoid that they contribute to a "chaotic" situation even more.

The legislation for phaseout in Belgium dates from 2003. And after 20 years of considerations and deliberations, apparently everything has changed within one week. Obvious that the operator of the plant Engie is hesitating and avoiding responsibility for this sudden step.

On behalf of the members of our network, I appeal to you to follow your own carefully considered phaseout policy consequently, and close Doel and Tihange as planned in 2025 at the latest. In densely populated Europe there is no room for nuclear energy. Renewable energy solutions and energy efficiency strategies are at hand to fill the gap.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in green ink, appearing to read 'J. Czernohorszky', with a long, sweeping flourish extending upwards and to the right.

Jürgen Czernohorszky,
Chairman Cities for Nuclear Free Europe
Executive City Councillor for Climate, Environment, Democracy and Personnel of Vienna

www.cnfe.eu

Please send your reply to:

Mr. Jürgen Czernohorszky
Executive City Councillor for Climate,
Environment, Democracy and Personnel,
Cities for Nuclear Free Europe
Rathaus
1010 Vienna
Austria