

EUROPEAN AFFAIRS IN 2024

Cooperation with the EU and the European Atomic Energy Community

In the context of Slovakia's membership in the EU and in the European Atomic Energy Community (Euratom), in 2024, the ÚJD SR performed the tasks and fulfilled the obligations arising from this membership. Representatives of the ÚJD SR actively participated in the discussions of the working groups of the Council of the EU, as well as in the meetings of the working committees and groups of the EC, defending the interests of the Slovak Republic as experts in the areas related to the competences of the ÚJD SR, in particular in relation to the obligations and activities arising from the Treaty establishing the European Atomic Energy Community (Euratom Treaty).

One of the most important working groups of the Council of the EU in terms of nuclear safety is the Working Party on Atomic Questions (WPAQ). In the first half of 2024, the Council of the EU was chaired by Belgium (BE PRES) and in the second half of the year by Hungary (HU PRES). Experts of the ÚJD SR participated in the meetings of the WPAQ as needed, while the position of the SR was prepared for each meeting in close cooperation with the Ministry of Economy of the SR and the Permanent Representation of the SR to the EU in Brussels. The main topic during BE PRES was the proposal for a Council Decision approving the EC (Euratom) Regulation on the application of the Euratom Community safeguards system to nuclear materials. This Commission initiative was intended to replace the currently applicable Commission Regulation (Euratom) 302/2005. The ÚJD SR, as the responsible authority of the Regulation, cooperated closely with the NM holders (SE, a. s., JAVYS, a. s., JESS, a. s.) in promoting the interests of the SR. In June 2024, deliberations on the above proposal within the WPAQ were concluded with the adoption of a presidential compromise text - the Political Agreement. At the same time, the Council Conclusions on the security of supply of medical radioisotopes for medical purposes were adopted during BE PRES. During both BE PRES and HU PRES, the current security situation in Ukraine (UA), in particular the report on the Commission and the IAEA activities carried out in relation to UA and the impact of Russia's military aggression on UA nuclear facilities, resonated during the negotiations.

At the meetings of the European Nuclear Safety Regulators Group (ENSREG) the current safety situation in UA nuclear facilities and the account of the implemented activities for UA performed in cooperation with the IAEA were discussed. Furthermore, ENSREG activities in the past period focused mainly on the preparation of the 2nd Peer Review, Stress Tests in third countries, information on the activities of the ENSREG subgroups, the need for communication between the regulators and the industry in the framework of the Industrial Alliance on Small Modular Reactors and the coordination of the 8th Review Meeting on the Joint Convention on the Safe Management of Spent Fuel and on the Safe Management of RAW.

The 7th ENSREG Conference on Nuclear Safety in Europe was held in Brussels in June 2024 under the auspices of ENSREG and in cooperation with the Commission. The conference reflected the growing interest in nuclear energy, in particular with regard to the decarbonisation of the industrial sector through the introduction of new technologies, such as small modular reactors, and the response of nuclear regulators to the need for licensing of new technologies and international cooperation and coordination of the approach to licensing in the new context.

There were also discussions on strengthening regional nuclear capacities, building trust and transparency towards the interested public, and the use of artificial intelligence in nuclear energy sector.

During 2024, a second topical review on the protection of nuclear installations against fire was conducted pursuant to Article 8(e) of Council Directive 2014/87/Euratom to share operational experience, review fire protection measures for nuclear installations, identify good performance and areas for improvement. The process started in the previous year with a self-assessment and a National Assessment Report on Fire Protection of Nuclear Installations in Slovakia, which was reviewed by other Member States and the Commission, followed by a discussion at the autumn workshops in Luxembourg, where the National Report was defended and additional questions were answered. The result is a draft Final Assessment Report, as well as a report for the SR, based on the findings of which an Action Plan will be prepared in 2025. No new findings beyond those identified by the SR in the self-assessment have been identified.

During 2024, tasks were coordinated and obligations under Article 37 of the Euratom Treaty were fulfilled. In February 2024, notification was made to the Commission of the general data pursuant to Article 37 of the Euratom Treaty concerning the phase V of decommissioning of the A-1 NPP and the subsequent release of the A-1 NPP site from administrative control. In May 2024, the Commission sent additional questions on the text and asked for answers. In July 2024, the answers were forwarded to the EC. Subsequently, on 18 December 2024, the Commission's Opinion was published in the Official Journal of the EU under C/2024/7439 and the process was closed.

In May 2024, the Commission published the Third Report from the Commission to the European Parliament and the Council on the progress in the implementation of Council Directive 2011/70/EURATOM and the inventory of radioactive waste and spent fuel present in the territory of the Community and on the forecast of future developments in the shipment of RAW and SNF by the Member States, which the Commission prepared based on the National Reports of the Member States, including SR. The report covers the years 2018-2021. The conclusions state that radioactive waste and spent fuel was managed safely in the Member States during the period under review and that the system of self-assessment and international peer reviews is in line with the needs and leads to continuous improvement in waste management. The main issues to be addressed are the control and financing of the programmes, as well as the review and updating of the national programmes.

At the same time, in August 2024, the 4th National Report of the Slovak Republic in accordance with the relevant provisions of Council Directive 2011/70/Euratom establishing a Community framework for the responsible and safe management of spent fuel and radioactive waste was sent to the EC. The SR fulfils all its obligations under this Directive.

In the course of 2024, the Inter-Ministerial Coordination Group for the coordination of tasks arising from the articles of the Euratom Treaty, which was established at the ÚJD SR based on the Government Resolution No. 442/2006, continued its activities. Two meetings were held during the year, in June and November 2024. Topical issues such as the preparation of the Report under Council Directive 2011/70/Euratom, the activities of the Nuclear Alliance, the results of the INEX 6 exercise, the ENEF meeting, as well as the topic of small modular reactors (PHOENIX, NEXT) were discussed at the meetings, while recommendations for the implementation of the Euratom Treaty were also adopted.