

TACIS Annual Report from the Commission: extract on Nuclear Safety (28 July 1993)

Caption: In its Annual Report on the TACIS programme for the years 1991 and 1992, the Commission emphasises the importance of the technical support provided by the European Communities in helping the countries of the former Soviet Union to stabilise their civil and military nuclear structures.

Source: TACIS - Annual Report from the Commission - 1991 and 1992. 28.07.1993, No COM(93) 362 final. Brussels.

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URL: http://www.cvce.eu/obj/tacis_annual_report_from_the_commission_extract_on_nuclear_safety_28_july_1993-en-e79b15b4-cf12-4307-b7f1-0b8adc552b3e.html

Publication date: 07/09/2012

TACIS Annual Report from the Commission – 1991 and 1992

[...]

Nuclear Safety

The largest component of the 1991 Technical Assistance Programme in the energy sector is in the field of nuclear safety, to which 54.5 MECU have been allocated for the financing of 35 projects. The primary objective of the 1991 nuclear safety programme is to analyse Soviet nuclear installations and activities and upgrade safety standards to the maximum possible degree. The programme will therefore also provide training programmes, and strengthen regulatory authorities. The programme was elaborated in close cooperation with the authorities in the NIS. Moreover, the work was coordinated with the PHARE nuclear safety programme already under way.

40 MECU have been allocated to a set of key studies which will determine the safety characteristics of all of the nuclear reactor types in the NIS, and 14.5 MECU to support the institutions in charge of the inspection and licensing of nuclear power plants.

Most of the projects included in the programme are generic. The studies cover safety issues which are typical to particular reactor designs and are thus not site specific. The choice of a generic approach was based, inter alia, on the fact that the reactor park is composed of only a few basic reactor designs: the WWER (pressurised water reactor) and the RBMK (light water graphite moderated reactor). Reactor specific work would have resulted in an unmanageable workload and entailed unacceptably high costs.

By the end of 1992, 6 projects were nearing completion for a total value of 7 MECU. This package of projects consists mainly of training actions for the personnel of NPPs. Two projects consisting of the safety assessment of RBMKs for the Safety Authorities (4 MECU) and of the safety assessment of VVER 213 and VVER 1000 (1 MECU) are presently being carried out. One other project consisting of a training action in vessels inspection (0,3 MECU) is also being carried out.

As regards the projects directly aimed at the enhancement of Russian and Ukrainian Safety Authorities, considerable delays have been experienced due to the complexity of negotiations with the Russian entities, namely on the question of the equipment to be provided. Nevertheless, exploratory missions have been carried out in Russia and Ukraine in order to start in the near future the project "Transfer of Western Methodology to the Safety Authorities of Russia and Ukraine" (1,5 MECU).

In this package of "non industrial" projects, two other projects remain to be contracted for a total value of 5 MECU. One of them is aimed at the enhancement of Safety Authorities (3,2 MECU), and the other one is designed to improve the supply of information of the public (2,9 MECU). Both are presently being finalised and should be contracted by the end of August.

The tenders for all of the outstanding 23 projects (i.e. the "industrial" part of the 1991 Nuclear Safety Programme) with a total associated budget of 36.6 MECU will soon be launched. The objectives and content of these activities are closely interrelated. A decision was therefore made to group the projects according to common salient characteristics. One such group includes, for instance, safety studies dealing with the primary circuit of the VVER 230 reactor line. The call for tender methodology has been adapted appropriately and the actual call for bid will thus involve only a limited number of 'batched' projects. Instead of launching 23 separate calls for tender, fewer than ten such operations are presently foreseen. For instance, Commission services will launch one call for all of the related projects covering the primary circuit.

The decision to adopt this approach has resulted in some delays because of the necessity to wait for the completions of the terms of reference for all of the outstanding projects. However, it is expected that time lost can be recovered because this technique will facilitate companies invited to quote to draft coherent proposals which cover all the key interfaces of certain safety areas. Moreover, it will allow for a streamlining of tender evaluation modalities and procedures. Both factors mentioned will accelerate project

implementation.

In parallel to the Commission's purely operational efforts in the area of nuclear safety technical assistance, TACIS participated and played a leading role in the other international institutional developments. The accident at the Saint Petersburg nuclear power plant in early spring of 1992 highlighted the need to coordinate international action to resolve the pressing safety issues associated with the continued operation of a number of reactor designs considered to be particularly unsafe. Increasingly, it was felt that there was poor coordination and a lack of information, translated into the duplication of scarce financial and human resources. The fact that the subject of nuclear safety in the former Soviet Union was included in the agenda of the G7 summit of July in Munich signalled the beginning of a collective international effort to launch adequately coordinated remedial action. The subsequent G7 communiqué summarised and outlined the main course of action designed to achieve a number of immediate and medium-term objectives.

On the basis of these recommendations, the existing G24 coordinating mechanism on nuclear safety was extended to include the relevant new states of the former Soviet Union. In late summer of 1992, the Commission thus convened a number of follow-up meetings of the G24, and working groups were set up to improve the exchange of information about ongoing multilateral and bilateral assistance. The G24 Secretariat thus intensified efforts to upgrade an already existing database concerning technical assistance programmes with a view to allow donors to report in more detail on their initiatives. TACIS provided extensive information to include in the G24's evolving database. The International Atomic Energy Agency was requested to assist the G24 as a technical advisor on the database and other nuclear safety matters concerning Soviet designed nuclear technology.