

***Welcome address***  
***8<sup>th</sup> IGD-TP Exchange Forum***

*Federal Ministry for Economic Affairs and  
Energy, Berlin*

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Mr Martin,  
Mr Davies,  
Members of the IGD-TP,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

I would like to welcome you to this year's Exchange Forum of the IGD-TP on behalf of the Federal Ministry for Economic Affairs and Energy.

This is already the eighth Exchange Forum, but the first to take place in Germany. I am delighted that over 120 participants from 21 countries have made their way to Berlin and are here today on the premises of our Energy Ministry.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The Federal Government's 7<sup>th</sup> Energy Research Programme was recently published under the aegis of our ministry. The programme sets out guidelines for energy research funding at the federal level over the coming years. As you all know, Germany is phasing

out nuclear power production until the end of 2022. However, we see a clear need for further research in nuclear safety beyond that date. Continued funding of research into reactor safety and safe waste management is essential for preserving and extending technical and scientific expertise in the long term. Not only to retain the specialist personnel needed for the safety of reactors inside and outside our country, for the decommissioning of nuclear power plants and for interim storage. But also to train a new generation of scientists and specialist professionals to tackle the task of radioactive waste disposal.

We are convinced that European networks – such as the IGD-TP – and European research collaboration – such as the future European Joint Programme on Radioactive Waste Disposal – are powerful instruments to support and complement national research activities and add value at a European level.

The Energy Ministry is acting as Programme Owner in the European Joint Programming, together with the Federal Ministries for Research and for the Environment. As such we acknowledge the excellent work of the Core Group and everyone involved in the preparation of the proposal for the European Joint Programme on Radioactive Waste Management and Disposal, which was submitted in September.

Setting up the first European Joint Programme in the field of radioactive waste disposal not only involves the planning of relevant, well defined and scientifically excellent research activities. It also requires the implementation of an effective, fair and transparent governance structure which respects the independence of the different actors. Last but not least, a joint programme needs a common vision – a vision that is shared by all participants and integrates the different member states' needs.

EURATOM is one of the foundation stones of European integration. The Member States' commitment to these joint research activities is a great example of the added value of European cooperation.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

What are the current and future tasks of radioactive waste disposal in Germany?

During the last parliamentary term, we succeeded in taking major steps forward in defining the legal and organisational framework for the safe disposal of radioactive waste. These included modifying the site selection procedure for identifying a suitable final repository for highly radioactive waste, and restructuring the funding for storage and disposal. The Act “Reorganising Responsibility for Nuclear Waste Management” was drawn up under the leadership of our Ministry. It has set out a new organisational structure: financing, decommissioning and dismantling of nuclear power plants remains the responsibility of power plant operators, whilst the financial and operational responsibility for interim storage and final disposal now lies in the hand of the state following the payment of 24 billion euros by operators into a new state-owned fund, called “Entsorgungsfonds”. The Act entered into force on 16 June 2017. It will prevent any situation whereby costs would be shifted towards society, whilst also avoiding any undue economic burden being placed on operators.

The Environment Ministry was in charge of further developing the Site Selection Act, which stipulates the site selection procedure and related organisational issues. This Act entered into force on 16 May 2017. Germany has thus paved the way for starting the unbiased selection of a suitable site for a repository for high-level radioactive waste. This is being done from scratch, starting with a blank map. In a multi-phase approach, scientific exclusion, minimum and assessment criteria are being applied. Public participation is an integral element of the siting process.

Reorganising responsibilities and ensuring the independence of the regulatory authority were further key issues. These included setting up the Federal Office for the Safety of Nuclear Waste Management – or BfE – in 2014, which commenced its work as a regulatory authority in 2016. It also involved the amalgamation of Asse GmbH, DBE, and parts of the Federal Office for Radiation Protection to create the state-owned repository operator, the Federal Company for Radioactive Waste Disposal – or BGE – in 2016. The responsibilities for operating interim storage facilities have also been reassigned. What used to be a task for the nuclear power plant operators themselves is now handled by the Federal Company for Interim Storage – the BGZ, which was founded as a spin-off of the Nuclear Service Company GNS in 2017. The BGE and the

BGZ are subordinate to the Federal Ministry for the Environment, Nature Conservation and Nuclear Safety.

In adopting these laws and reorganising the responsibilities, Germany has taken care of the financing of the entire disposal process, starting from the dismantling of nuclear power plants, through to final disposal. Moreover, by adopting these measures Germany has taken important steps towards the safe disposal of nuclear waste.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

A key issue in this context is the question as to which role is foreseen for research and development in this process? The advancement of state-of-the-art research and the completion of the scientific and technical basis for constructing and operating a final repository will continue to be of high priority. This means that we need to continue to do work in these fields, build new skills, and train and educate the next generation of researchers. It also means that our national research activities will continue to be complemented in the form of international collaboration, through networks and the sharing of experience.

The institutional funding of fundamental research by the Research Ministry and the project funding of implementation-related, site-independent research by the Energy Ministry will continue to build the scientific and technical basis for radioactive waste management in Germany – independent of and accompanied by the site-specific and site selection specific investigations by BGE and regulatory activities by BfE.

The amended regulation governing Germany's site selection procedure for particularly high-level radioactive waste provides for equal consideration to be given to different host rock options – clay, crystalline and salt rock. We are convinced that the international – and especially the European – collaboration makes a considerable contribution to supporting the national research into the various host rocks, as well as further issues of common interest.

The Exchange Fora of the IGD-TP have proven their value as platforms for a fruitful exchange of experience and ideas and for successfully defining multilateral research

collaboration. This demonstrates the benefit of a joint effort by different actors, working together to advance in research and to create a common understanding of the safe management and disposal of radioactive waste. The fruitful scientific exchange between the European partners will continue to be highly important, not least in the tasks of nuclear waste disposal that lie ahead of us.

Ladies and gentlemen,

I wish you a pleasant stay here in Berlin, active and constructive discussions and a very successful meeting.