



Nuclear energy: a secure source of electricity supply



The majority of NEA member countries agree that nuclear energy has a role to play in contributing to security of electricity supply. This was one of the conclusions of the NEA Steering Committee policy debate held in October 2005. Member countries also agreed that governments have a role to play in ensuring security of energy supply, as a complement to market forces. But ensuring such security is not a simple matter, and includes economic, technical and socio-political dimensions. Recent events reinforce this notion – notably in terms of potential impacts on national economies and international political relations – thus highlighting the various dynamics that can influence a given situation. The lead article on page 4 describes some of the main issues to be considered when addressing security of supply questions, and the role of nuclear energy therein.

Security of energy supply for electricity generation was also the theme of a joint workshop organised in 2005 by the NEA and the International Energy Agency (IEA). On that occasion, discussions addressed the full range of energy options. After having sought to shift the balance towards greater reliance on domestic sources of energy following the 1970s oil crises, OECD countries are now tending to adopt security of supply strategies which rely upon a diversification of energy dependence among several types of sources and suppliers. The United States is among those countries that are stressing a wider combination of policies. In the US case, efforts are also being made to improve energy efficiency and to carry out research and development activities in science and technology to provide for the long term. Regarding the specific role of



nuclear, workshop participants maintained that nuclear energy is often considered as forming part of secure energy supply mixes.

Yet for nuclear energy to form part of the energy supply mix of OECD/NEA member countries, it must be produced within appropriate and accepted safety levels, and without undue burdens being placed on future generations in terms of either radioactive waste management or the decommissioning of nuclear installations. Mirroring the comprehensive range of activities carried out by the NEA, this issue of NEA News offers several articles on subjects of high current interest. Readers may be particularly interested to note the article on "Funding the decommissioning of nuclear power plants". This article provides an overview of the funding principles and mechanisms in place across the OECD area. Specific details regarding prevailing policies in OECD/NEA member countries will be available in the NEA report to be published on this subject in mid-2006.

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