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The international conventions

Most EU Member States are contracting parties to a number of international safety conventions. These are:

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EU instruments

What EU instruments support safety?

Euratom Treaty

In 1957, two treaties were signed in Rome. The first was the treaty establishing the European Economic Community that has evolved into the European Union of today. The second ?Treaty of Rome? established a European Atomic Energy Union ? better known as Euratom Treaty.

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Prevention of accidents

Defence in depth

The concept of defence in depth is fundamental to the safety of nuclear installations. Nuclear safety does not rely on one line of defence but is achieved using a range of complementary means. These factors start with the design and building of a nuclear facility which requires choosing a good design and appropriate site, use of high-quality construction materials and testing before operation. They also cover the whole range of organisational and behavioural issues that are critical to operating a nuclear installation.

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Regulating for safety

The basic objective of nuclear safety is to protect the public, workers in the nuclear industry and the environment from hazards arising from the nuclear industry. To protect against these risks, nuclear installations must comply with national, EU and international standards which ensure that the established radiation dose limits are not exceeded and that the probability and consequences of nuclear accidents are reduced to an acceptable level.

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Public involvement in nuclear safety issues

All institutions that contribute to in some way to regulating nuclear safety, at international, EU and national levels, are also committed to transparency. This means making different kinds of information available to the public: from general information on how a country manages the safety of its nuclear activities, to specific information, for example on plans for a proposed new power plant. By giving high priority to transparency, public involvement in nuclear issues is encouraged, for example through consultations and information campaigns.

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What is nuclear safety ?

Nuclear power plants use fissile materials to produce energy in the form of heat, which is converted to electricity by conventional generating plant. Radioactive materials are produced as a by-product of this process. Whilst radioactive materials can have beneficial uses, such as in cancer therapy, they are generally harmful to health. Their use, and the process by which they are produced, must be strictly regulated to ensure nuclear safety.

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Nuclear energy in the EU

There are 129 nuclear power reactors (April 2016) in operation in the EU. Some reactors are being decommissioned, others are having their working lives extended, and several new units are planned or under construction. In addition to power reactors, a full range of fuel cycle plants (from enrichment to waste storage and recycling) are in operation in Europe. It is the responsibility of each EU Member State to decide on its preferred choice of energy mix. Currently 14 EU Member States out of 27 use nuclear energy for power generation.

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The role of ENSREG

All EU Member States that operate nuclear installations follow the basic principles set internationally for assuring nuclear safety and the safe management of radioactive waste and spent fuel.

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ENSREG at a glance

ENSREG is an independent expert advisory group, in which all EU Member States are represented by senior officials from their national regulatory authorities or nuclear safety authorities. **Senior representatives** of the European Commission are also part of the group. In addition, Council of the European Union, Switzerland, Norway, and the International Atomic Energy Agency, have observer status in the group.

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