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Austria

Nuclear regulatory authority

The Constitutional Law on a 'Nuclear-free Austria' prohibits the construction and operation of installations for the production of energy by means of nuclear fission as well as - with some exemptions - the transport of fissile materials in Austria.

The legislative and regulatory framework regarding nuclear safety comprises the legal areas of radiation protection, installation safety, safeguards and physical protection of nuclear material and nuclear facilities as well as radioactive waste management. As Austria constitutes a Federal State, a number of federal (Bund), provincial (Länder) and district authorities (Bezirksverwaltungsbehörden) are involved in the regulation of these matters.

The Federal Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry, Environment and Water Management (BMLFUW) is responsible for radiation protection, whereas the Federal Ministry of Health and Women's Affairs (BMGF) is responsible for radiation matters in the medical field and with regard to foodstuff. BMLFUW is also responsible for issues relating to the long-term storage of radioactive waste, including the siting, construction and operation of storage facilities. Finally, the BMLFUW is responsible for general affairs of nuclear co-ordination.

For the single Austrian research reactor, the TRIGA Reactor of the Institute of Atomic and Subatomic Physics (Atominstitut - ATI), the Federal Ministry of Science, Research and Economy (BMWFW) is the competent authority. Likewise, the competent authority for the Austrian radioactive waste management facility 'Nuclear Engineering Seibersdorf' is the BMLFUW.

BMWFW is also responsible for the implementation of Austria's international safeguards undertakings, in particular where they go beyond the system of Euratom safeguards, and for export controls regarding nuclear material, equipment, technology and non-nuclear material.

The competent authority for the physical protection of nuclear material and facilities in use is the Federal Ministry of Interior (BMI).

Nuclear activities

Austria has no nuclear power plants. As a result of a public referendum in 1978, Austria follows a strictly non-nuclear energy policy.

There is one operating research reactor (TRIGA Mark II, owned by the Technical University of Vienna).

Radioactive waste and spent fuel management

Austria operates one central radioactive waste management and interim storage facility ? Nuclear Engineering Seibersdorf GmbH (NES) ? for pre-disposal management including treatment, conditioning and interim storage of all low and intermediate level radioactive waste (LILW) of Austria. Waste originates primarily from medicine, research, industry and decommissioning in Austria. The fuel used in the TRIGA Mark II reactor constitutes a loan from the US Department of Energy (DoE) as stipulated in a treaty between the Technical University of Vienna, Euratom and the DoE. These fuel elements are to be returned to the USA. Apart from that, high-level radioactive waste does not arise in Austria. There is no final repository for disposal of radioactive waste currently in operation. Austria considers an international or regional cooperation as a possible option for radioactive waste management.

Main legal instruments

The main legal texts, the Radiation Protection Act (BGBl. No. 227/1969: Strahlenschutzgesetz), with major amendments in 2002 and 2004 and further amendments in 2006, 2013 and 2015 taking into account recent EU legislation and the corresponding ordinances on radiation protection and nuclear safety (e.g. the General Radiation Protection Ordinance) contain detailed provisions concerning radiation protection, installation safety, emergency preparedness and the handling of radioactive waste.

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