

Nuclear Energy in the Enlarged European Union

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In January 2006 and again in January 2009 gas supplies to central and eastern member states of the European Union were disrupted as a consequence of dispute between Russia and Ukraine. Interrupted heating in European cities on cold winter nights adds a new dimension to concerns for Europe's energy security. As citizens in these countries shift to electric heating, the electricity system comes under pressure. Policy makers are looking for ways to provide secure electricity generation free of geopolitical difficulties and using technologies which help maintain the European momentum to lower greenhouse gas emissions. It comes as no surprise therefore that there is much renewed interest in central and eastern Europe for nuclear power. This working paper notes that with the addition of 12 new member states in central and eastern Europe the balance of EU member state opinion has shifted significantly in favour of nuclear power. Furthermore several of these central and eastern EU countries have prior experience with nuclear power and hence the proportion of EU member states familiar with nuclear energy has also increased markedly in recent years. Two contrasting examples of nuclear experience from new member states (Lithuania and Romania) are presented in detail. These examples are of possible benefit to those considering new nuclear build projects including in the western EU-15 states.

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