

IAEA concludes review of German nuclear regulatory body

Ministers Gabriel and Gönner: Important impetus

Federal Environment Minister Sigmar Gabriel and Tanja Gönner, Environment Minister of Baden-Württemberg, have given a positive assessment of the review of the German nuclear regulatory body carried out by an expert team of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA). First results of the two-week mission, which was carried out upon the initiative of both Ministers' authorities, showed that the IAEA's report will provide important impetus for the work of the regulatory body in Germany.

The Ministers highlighted that the review by the international expert team was intended to assess the standard of the German nuclear regulatory body in an international context and to offer advice on how to further improve the supervision of nuclear installations by the Federation and the Länder. The IAEA expert team, which consisted of 14 high-ranking members of regulatory bodies in other countries, scrutinised the activities of the German regulatory body to an unprecedented level of detail. "As an overall result, the review confirms that the nuclear regulatory body in Germany meets international standards", Minister Gabriel said.

According to the IAEA's preliminary report, Germany even exceeds international standards in certain areas. The rule-setting process of the Nuclear Safety Standards Commission (Kerntechnischer Ausschuss, KTA) was identified as good practice to be followed by other countries, as was the safety culture in Baden-Württemberg, which considers man to be an important safety factor next to technology and organisation. "Our expectations that this review would provide impetus for the continuous improvement of the work of the regulatory body have been fulfilled", Minister Gönner stated.

In their final report, which will be presented within the next two months according to IAEA information, the experts will make recommendations and suggestions for the further optimisation of supervisory activities at both federal and Länder level. The Ministers affirmed that they would act upon these recommendations. Public information will be further improved by enhancing the presentation of activities and results of nuclear supervision on the Internet. There will also be discussions on how communication between the Federation and the Länder can be intensified and conducted more smoothly.

Another conclusion drawn by the reviewers was that adequate staffing must be ensured in order to meet the requirements of effective supervision, as Federal Environment Minister Gabriel underlined. Minister Gönner explained that it was becoming increasingly difficult to recruit highly qualified personnel, which was a cause for concern. "Particularly when it comes to technical professions, we are competing with industry, but we can hardly keep up with industry when it comes to the conditions we offer." Both Ministers welcomed the experts' proposal to adapt the current nuclear safety regulations to the state of the art. "We should implement this proposal quickly", Minister Gabriel said.

The IAEA will carry out a follow-up review in two years. Ministers Gabriel and Gönner were confident that they would be able to complete the tasks derived from the first mission. They pointed out that the focus was on the safety of nuclear power plants, regardless of the political discussions about energy policy.

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