

PRESS RELEASE
by the
Chairman of the STOA Panel, Professor A. TRAKATELLIS, MEP

The aim of this press release is to inform the press and the public in a correct and responsible manner on the decision taken by the STOA Panel on 23 October 2001 concerning the study "Possible toxic effects from the nuclear reprocessing plants at Sellafield (UK) and Cap de la Hague (France)". This has become urgently necessary, as there have been a number of reports in the press, which have misrepresented this decision of the Panel.

The study was prepared by an external contractor, WISE-Paris, in the context of the STOA Workplan 2000, on the basis of a request submitted by the European Parliament's Committee on Petitions. At its meeting of 23 October 2001, the STOA Panel, which is responsible for all political decisions related to the work of STOA, took note of the study submitted by the contractor and agreed to publish it as a first contribution to the scientific debate on the possible toxic effects from the nuclear reprocessing plants in Sellafield and Cap de la Hague.

According to the decision of the Panel, the study will be published together with a letter from the Chairman of the STOA Panel explaining the decision, as well as the evaluation reports of experts, whose opinion was formally requested by the STOA Panel. The Panel decided on 21 June 2001 to request the opinion of independent experts after discussing the concerns expressed by some Members of the European Parliament in relation to the possible lack of objectivity of the study by WISE-Paris. On 23 October the Panel took note of the opinions expressed by the reviewers and found it appropriate to communicate this information to the public, if so agreed by the reviewers.

I would point out that, as is the case with all studies commissioned by STOA, publication of this study does not imply adoption of its contents and these do not necessarily reflect the views of members of the STOA Panel, or the European Parliament.

In the context of its open approach, the Panel is prepared, if requested by a parliamentary committee, to proceed to a supplementary study, which will take due account of the opinions of political and social groups concerned, as well as of a wide range of prominent scientists in the fields relevant to the subject. The new study should be seen as an additional contribution to the effort of STOA to enrich the political debate with the most objective and comprehensive scientific and technical information possible on this subject.

The STOA Panel further agreed to encourage the Petitions Committee to organise a public hearing on the subject, at a time that the committee will consider appropriate, in collaboration with STOA, as well as, if the committee so decides, with other interested committees of the European Parliament. Such a hearing would give an opportunity to all interested parties to formulate their positions and provide all data necessary to support them. The Panel places great value in an open event of this kind, as the best way of treating a subject on which significantly divergent opinions may exist.

Finally, the STOA Panel expresses regret that WISE-Paris saw fit to break the confidentiality clause in its contract with the European Parliament by making public parts of the study prior to publication. This behaviour of WISE-Paris is not in line with the long-standing tradition of STOA, which has always endeavoured to associate its work with the highest scientific and ethical standards.

Brussels, 30 October 2001
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