

Fessenheim Nuclear Reactor Permanent Shutdown - An Immense Waste for the Climate and for the Country

With its decision to permanently shutdown reactor number 1 at the Fessenheim nuclear power plant, France has chosen to deprive itself of a dispatchable, carbon-free, operational electricity production unit: the reactor had the potential to last another ten years or more; no other carbon-free source of electricity production capable of compensating for this shutdown has been put in place prior to the closure. Yet, the President of the French Republic has stated loud and clear that France aims to be exemplary in the struggle against climate warming...

Terminating this reactor represents at least a triple penalty for the country.

Whether the electricity produced by Fessenheim was consumed in France or was exported, its absence has to be compensated by electricity produced elsewhere in Europe seeing as no replacement source is being brought into operation. The reactor's production, about 5 TWh per year of electricity with practically zero carbon emissions, will thus be replaced by electricity with a carbon content of about 460 g CO₂ per kWh (European mean). The French government's decision will lead to the emission of more than 2 million tonnes CO₂ per year, equivalent to the emissions from half a million households with oil-fueled or gas-fueled heating, or from over a million vehicles. For the climate, shutting down just one reactor at the Fessenheim power plant amounts to replacing all the electric vehicles currently in use in Europe by gasoline-fueled vehicles.

Terminating the reactor at Fessenheim is a serious rollback in the struggle against climate change and an appalling message sent to the international community.

Fessenheim contributes to providing France with electricity which, in addition to its very low CO₂ emissions, is abundant and competitive. That is exactly what the energy transition is about all over the world. To deprive ourselves of this reactor is total nonsense. The production units currently being built, together with those that will be built in the future, will suffer production costs far beyond those of Fessenheim.

To terminate the reactor at Fessenheim is to abandon an essential economic asset.

Fessenheim provides France and Europe with reliable and dispatchable electricity, a must for the security and the continuity of supply. Only nuclear reactors and dams have this capacity (fossil-fueled thermal reactors too are dispatchable but they have to be closed if our climate goals are to be satisfied). With rising awareness that continuity of supply is at risk, we are told that closing the coal-fired Cordemais plant will have to be postponed several years, in spite of its being written into law.

Terminating the reactor at Fessenheim puts the continuity of supply in France and in Europe at serious risk

Add to this triple penalty the cost incurred with the termination of an operational facility which the French tax payer will have to cover, the economic activity loss for the Alsatian territory, and the socioeconomic impact on the Fessenheim reactor employees.

Regarding the technical arguments put forward in defense of the reactor shutdown, note that the French Nuclear Safety Authority had recently confirmed that the reactor boasts an excellent safety rating. As for the nuclear waste issue, an issue used as a pretext to reject nuclear power, proven technical solutions are available, they are currently in use in the Scandinavian countries.

Terminating the Fessenheim reactor is an across the board losing operation.

Where is the concern for the public interest which is supposed to guide political decisions?