

25 September 2024

Subject: Ensuring Meaningful Local Engagement in Nuclear Projects

Dear Sir/Madam,

We are writing this letter in our capacity as Steering Committee of the **Group of European Municipalities with Nuclear Facilities (GMF)**. GMF represents local communities across 16 European countries - Belgium, Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Finland, France, Hungary, the Netherlands, Norway, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Ukraine and the United Kingdom - hosting or living near nuclear facilities.

As a politically neutral organisation, GMF upholds the **principles of access to information, respect and honesty, participation and transparency in nuclear matters**. While GMF neither supports nor opposes nuclear power, we advocate for an **energy system** which prioritises **sustainability, security and affordability**. Our organisation is also a member of the Steering Committee of the European Nuclear Energy Forum (ENEF) and our executive director, Dr. Martell, currently chairs the Technical Working Group on Public Engagement of the European Industrial Alliance on Small Modular Reactors (SMRs).

Looking ahead, we anticipate that siting decisions for new nuclear facilities will become increasingly contentious. GMF members are deeply concerned about the ongoing disregard by some **national governments for the views and concerns of locally elected representatives**. This neglect not only contravenes the principles of the Aarhus Convention but also undermines the trust that is essential for the success of nuclear projects.

At the European level, there is a concerning lack of clear guidance on how governments and the nuclear industry should engage with local communities in a meaningful and timely manner. With over 20 years of experience, GMF understands that establishing strong relationships between local communities, implementers and the regulatory authorities is crucial for building trust and advancing nuclear projects effectively. Although the Environmental Impact Assessment process includes opportunities for consultation, we, as local authorities representing residents in nuclear areas, believe these measures are insufficient to ensure that citizens' voices are adequately heard throughout the decision-making process. A stronger guarantee that the concerns of the local community will be fully considered is essential.

Therefore, we urge the European Commission and EU Member States to clarify the mechanisms by which national governments will ensure local stakeholder engagement in nuclear projects. A prime example of practice local engagement is the initiative launched in 2023 by one of our members of GMF, the municipality of Borsele in the

Netherlands. Borsele initiated a unique participatory process with its residents to develop a package of conditions for major national energy projects, including the construction of two nuclear power plants. This process should not be seen as an endpoint but as the beginning of a collaborative effort with governmental authorities in charge of large-scale energy decisions.

We appeal to European institutions and national governments to respect and consider local authorities as they pursue the goal of decarbonising the economy, particularly in the context of promoting nuclear energy as part of a just and fair energy transition.

Several GMF representatives are available to meet with a senior representative of your institution to discuss how European institutions and national governments can better serve European citizens. By actively listening to local authorities - the level of government closest to the citizen and directly responsible for addressing vital challenges – we can foster greater trust and collaboration in the nuclear sector.

We look forward to the opportunity to discuss this further.

Kind regards,

Meritxell Martell
GMF Executive Director