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Nuclear power

# Help nuclear reactors Tihange 2 and Doel 3 final closing

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**Since the very beginning the SAP has participated actively in the struggle for the closure of the nuclear power stations at Tihange and Doel We stand for a nuclear phase-out, both because of the immediate risk posed by some reactors, as well as the long-term threat posed by nuclear waste. We will not be fooled by the interests of the 1% of the population or by the governments which together possess almost all the shares of Electrabel.**

This government is anti-social and pro-nuclear. They only think of making the rich richer, as quickly as possible. In addition, they take no account of the security of the population or the long-term consequences. They hide behind the studies from the FANC, which should be the watchdog of citizens against the dangers of nuclear power, but behaves in reality as a poodle of the energy sector.

We call on everyone to support the actions against nuclear energy, including financially supporting the legal case filed by the Stop Nuclear power association. All donations are welcome.

The reactor number 3 (abbreviated D3) of the nuclear power station at Doel, started up in 1982, was first shut down in June 2012 after the discovery of thousands of microscopic cracks in the reactor vessel. In August 2012 similar defects were detected in the reactor vessel of reactor No. 2 of the nuclear plant at Tihange (abbreviated T2) during checks causing the stoppage of the reactor, also in 1983. [1]

Almost a year later, in May 2013, the FANC [2] gave permission to Electrabel to restart the reactors, a license subject to completion of obligations in the field of testing and trials in the year after the restart.

In March 2014, Electrabel decided to bring forward the planned closure of the two reactors as an irradiation test shows excessive embrittlement in a control sample of steel similar to the steel of the reactor vessels. [3]

To try to explain this unexpected result, Electrabel subsequently conducted further research and analysis. Meanwhile, reactor vessels were re-examined with an improved procedure. This study revealed a much larger number of defects to light than the previous survey: more than 13,000 for Doel 3 and more than 3,000 for Tihange 2. Finally, after twenty months of consultations and analysis, the FANC gave permission again in November 2015 to restart the two reactors.

## Interpretation

What can we conclude from this? Let us first of all remember that the reactor vessel is the essential component of a nuclear reactor for which no shortcoming can be tolerated. A crack in the reactor vessel is an incident that makes the reactor uncontrollable which would inevitably lead to the melt down of the reactor core and an absolute disaster like the disaster of Chernobyl or Fukushima. This standard of zero tolerance for a reactor is what is imposed in all specifications for the construction of a nuclear reactor. [4]

The vessels T2 and D3 do not comply with these maximum quality standards. If a reactor vessel with these known defects would be delivered on a new construction site, it would undoubtedly be refused, as would also be the case in any country in the world. [5]

This first observation is obvious to everyone, but not for the FANC. That raises questions about the legitimacy of this agency and its ability to ensure the safety of the operation of Belgian nuclear reactors.

The way in which Electrabel and the FANC have dealt with this issue shows many deficiencies that threaten the security of citizens either in Belgium or in neighbouring countries, as demonstrated relevant by the recent study by Mrs. Ilse Tweer, an internationally recognized consultant for her expertise in materials science. [6]

We particularly draw attention to a general approach which flouts the rules of good scientific practice. There is also the lack of certainty about the origin of the cracks that in itself should prevent a restart.

Last but not least, citizens can only ask themselves about the absence of political input in this decision. Jan Jambon, Minister of Security and Interior responsible for nuclear safety, Marie-Christine Marghem, Energy Minister Charles Michel, Prime Minister and all other ministers of his government are hiding themselves away behind the all-encompassing ability of the FANC, shifting their decision making responsibility onto it and so by doing closing the door to any consultation with the population.

## Legal proceedings

Faced with this scientific and political failure and the incredible risks taken, private citizens from all regions of the country have decided to bring the case to court with a view to close the two reactors permanently and disconnect them from the national grid.

A first step therefore was taken on December 20, 2015 was with the filing of a petition for an injunction by the Nucléaire Stop Nuclear association. In it, the court is requested to order the two reactors to be immediately stopped and to call on independent experts to decide on a definitive closure. The oral arguments take place before the Brussels Court of First Instance in public session on February 8, from 9 to 12 hours. The verdict is expected about three weeks later.

A second petition on behalf of individual applicants is in preparation and will likely be submitted between February 25th and March 10th. It will only concern the merits of the case and will complement the first procedure. In fact a legal procedure for the benefit of individuals cannot be used by a non-profit organization.

The combined cost of these two procedures is difficult to estimate, because anticipating their development and their respective timeframes is not easy. In addition to the court costs and the fees of the lawyers, there are the costs of the experts who could reach already to tens of thousands of euros. This could run up to an expenditure of Euros 50,000, which the applicants are preparing themselves for.

## How can you help?

§ By making a donation to support our fund, however small, to the bank account we have opened specially for it (see below).

§ By spreading this initiative in your networks.

§ If you represent an organization, we would be grateful if your association could support us officially: the name of your organization will appear on the Associations page.

§ To write to us or send us a support message [here](#)

### Bank account

Account name: Stop Nuclear Nucléaire VZW

IBAN: BE98 5230 8078 3493

BIC: TRIOBEBB

Address: Blegny, Belgium

Communication: an email address (which will allow us to contact you easily).

## Other actions and support fund

In parallel with our case against the D3 and T2 reactors BBL (Bond Better Environment) and IEW (Inter-Environnement Wallonie) are starting legal proceedings for two other reactors to close, namely Doel 1 and Doel 2. This procedure will also be accompanied by a call for donations. IEW and BBL have an action for annulment before the Constitutional Court filed against the Law of June 28, 2015, making it possible once again to extend by 10 years the period of operation D1 and D2. That would put their life at 50 years, while the life was envisaged as being 30 years during construction. See their websites for more information [here](#) and [here](#).

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[1] These two reactors each have a capacity of 1,000 MWe (megawatts electric). A law voted in 2003 made it possible to extend the operation time of the two reactors to 10 years, such as those of the five other Belgian reactors, as if by magic from 30 to 40 years. According to this law, the reactor Tihange 1 had to close in 2015, but in 2012, again by magic, the government proposed the closure up to 2025. The reactors of Doel 1 and Doel 2 have the same fate assigned to them by a convention signed on November 30, 2015 by Engie / Electrabel and the Belgian State, represented by Prime Minister Charles Michel and Energy Minister Marie-Christine Marghem. A procedure for the annulment of this agreement is currently being pursued by BBL and IEW, see "Other actions and support fund".

[2] FANC: Federal Agency for Nuclear Control [www.fanc.fgov.be](http://www.fanc.fgov.be)

[3] The embrittlement of the control sample with radiation was more serious than predicted. The control sample in question was delivered by Areva and was of a similar type as the steel of the reactor vessels with similar defects.

[4] Note that a reactor cannot be repaired or replaced.

[5] Jan Bens, director of the FANC, has recognized this during a meeting with Camille Gira, Secretary of State for Sustainable Development of the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg. See [www.rtf.be/info/](http://www.rtf.be/info/) ... (On January 19, 2016).

[6] Flawed Reactor Pressure Vessels in the Belgian NPPs Doel 3 and Tihange2 (Lack of reactor pressure vessels in the Belgian nuclear power stations Doel 3 and Tihange 2), published in January 2016. This study will be available later in French and in other languages.