

Report on ENYGF 2009

The third European Nuclear Young Generation Forum (ENYGF 09) took place in Cordoba, Spain, during 19-23 May 2009. Under the guideline: “Maybe we cannot build the future for us now, but we can build us for the future now”, the Spanish Young Generation organized this major event, dedicated to young and senior professionals from the whole of Europe. The location of the conference was the University of Cordoba, which has been recently renovated in a traditional Spanish style, with Moorish influences.



The goal of ENYGF09 was training and learning in order to prepare tomorrow’s leaders in the nuclear field and also creating a platform of communication between the old and the young generation with the purpose of knowledge transfer.

Nowadays, nuclear energy faces three major challenges, according to Mr. Jose Emeterio Gutierrez, the chair of the Spanish Nuclear Society: the revitalization of the industry, the transfer of knowledge and nuclear safety of the present fleet of reactors. In order to face these challenges, nuclear power must benefit from political and social consensus in the countries that wish to develop a nuclear program.

The Forum had two days of conference divided by a technical tour to El Cabril waste repository. On Wednesday, the 20th of May, the conference brought to the attention of the public the question of the necessity of nuclear power and its major role in the future. The conference was opened by keynote speakers such as David Bonser, the Chair of the European Nuclear Society, Jose Manuel Roldan, from the Cordoba University and Jose Emeterio Gutierrez, the Chair of the Spanish Nuclear Society. Through their speeches, they pointed out the importance of a common platform for nuclear power and renewable energy sources in order to ensure the energy future of Europe.

The first plenary session, chaired by Mr. Luis Echavarri from the OCDE-NEA, was dedicated to the role of stakeholders in the deployment of Nuclear Energy in Europe, with presentations from the main sponsors and promoters of ENYGF09, who shared their experience and view of the issue. Mr. Alejo Vidal-Quadras from the European Parliament underlined the fact that energy is beneficial for everyone and is the answer to global warming, security of energy supply, and European competitiveness. Nuclear energy ensures almost 16% of the actual electric power mix and it is foreseen that by 2030, about 500 GWe will be generated by nuclear reactors, according to Tony Granda from AREVA. The main conclusion of the first session was that in order for the nuclear to have a bright future and increase its capacities, the existing fleet of reactors must be safely operated, without any incidents.



The afternoon session concentrated on the “drivers of nuclear energy acceptance”, and the connection between public information and public acceptance. The papers presented from Fennovoima, SKB, FORATOM, SCK-CEN and the Spanish Young Generation pointed out that public perception of nuclear safety is influenced by the nuclear plant safety track record and by the commitment to resolve the nuclear waste issue. According to the presentation of Mrs. Berta Picamal from FORATOM, nuclear energy is a back of the mind issue and this is the reason why public opinion on nuclear can be easily influenced. The Spanish Young Generation President gave a presentation about hands-on activities dedicated to gaining public support for nuclear in Spain. Spain and Romania are the only two countries in the UE that have nuclear power stations and a low acceptance of nuclear power of 24%, respectively 35%. In order to obtain public trust, it is important for the Young Generation chapters to separate their interest from the interest of their companies. Also, information must be made reliable and friendly and answer to people’s concerns.

The day was closed by a visit of the Cordoba Mosque and dinner accompanied by flamenco guitar in a winery.

On Thursday, the organizers provided a technical tour to El Cabril Low and Intermediate Level Radioactive Waste, a subsidiary of Enresa company. This repository receives approximately 2000 m³ of radioactive waste/year from Spain and can ensure the deposit of waste until 2020, after which the natural background will be restored and protection provided for 300 years. The visit was followed by a horse exhibition and dinner at an oil mill, that introduced the participants to the relevant aspects of the Spanish culture.

The last day of conference was marked by the poster session that took place in the hall of the venue and by the awarding of Jan Runemark Award to a respected and successful promoter and supporter of Young Generation activities. I had the pleasure of talking to Mr. Marcel Maris while walking on the streets of the old city center in Cordoba, without knowing that he will receive this award and he left me with the impression of a young and energetic spirit. The Jan Runemark Award was created by ENS Steering

Committee in 1995 in the memory of the initiator of the Swedish Young Generation Network. This year's winner of the award, Mr. Marcel Maris has intensively supported the Belgium young generation while he was the Chairman of the Belgium Nuclear Society during 2006-2007. Currently, he is leading the recruitment and training process for Bel V. Through the principles he has developed and implemented which were designed to create competence, he brought a strong contribution to the transfer of knowledge.

The plenary session "Getting stronger: Crucial lessons" presented the cases of challenging tasks and how they were resolved by the industry: CEZ, EDF and also by organizations such as CEA and EPRI. The candidate technologies for ensuring the future of nuclear energy in Europe appear to be EPR (AREVA), AP 1000 (Westinghouse) and APWR (Mitsubishi), according to a presentation given by Mr. Franck Carre from CEA. He also mentioned the Sodium cooled fast Reactors of which there are 18 experimental prototypes. Mr. Petr Stulc from CEZ stressed on the advantage of the price stability of nuclear energy as a key element in promoting this type of energy.

The last session presented a debate on the ethics and physics of the linear non-threshold hypothesis, in the perspective of university professors. This theory was created by Herman Muller, to show that there is a threshold between the positive and negative impact of radiation. Low dose radiations stimulate the protective mechanism that contribute to the repair of harm and elimination of seriously damaged cells. The participants in this session concluded that if proper communication were used, this hypothesis could contribute to dissolving the myths about radiation effects.

The farewell dinner was hosted on Friday, in the beautiful scenery of the Almodovar Castle.

On Saturday, we visited the Alhambra castle, a footprint of the Moorish presence in Spain, from the 7th to the 15th century.

On the 24th of May, there took place the Core Meeting of ENS Young Generation during which the participants elected the new Chairman in the person of Edouard Hourcade, from CEA (France) and the new Vice-Chair – Andrei Goicea from SN Nuclearelectrica SA (Romania).

In my opinion, the European Nuclear Young Generation Forum 2009 has been a professional and social success, due to the exchange of information between the young generation and the senior generation, the focus on the communication strategies applied by different companies and the networking possibilities offered by the forum, during the social events.

And, it wouldn't be fair to forget to mention the Cordoba Fair, which took place during the Forum and that gave us a glimpse of the Spanish lifestyle, energy and enthusiasm.

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