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Nuclear Energy and Europe's Energy Crossroads

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The EU stands at an energy crossroads. The past few years have made one thing clear: energy security is an important element of overall security. The European Union's industrial and geopolitical stability has long been exposed to external shocks and dependencies. Today, as the bloc seeks to rebuild its industrial base and assert strategic sovereignty, nuclear energy has re-emerged as a promising cornerstone of a resilient and clean energy future.

This theme was at the heart of the Executive Dialogue on “Nuclear Energy: Powering Central and Eastern Europe's Industrial Resilience and Strategic Sovereignty,” held during the Warsaw Security Forum and co-hosted by Clean Air Task Force and Third Way. The session gathered senior policymakers, industry leaders, and experts—including Sebastian Burduja, Michael Goff, and Malwina Qvist,—for a frank discussion on how to translate political will into coordinated action.

A Strategic Imperative

Participants agreed that Europe's energy debate is no longer about preference, it is about the ability to sustain a thriving economy. The high social, political, and economic costs of moving away from nuclear energy, seen in the past decades, are now obvious. Recognising this, the EU must treat nuclear energy as a strategic technology and develop a cohesive, Union-wide framework for its deployment. Strategic alignment in this regard is a necessity.

Four Priorities for Collaboration

The discussion identified four areas where cooperation can turn ambition into results.

1. Financing Innovation

Europe needs new financial tools to bring nuclear projects to market quickly and affordably. The *orderbook* model—pooling demand to achieve economies of scale—was highlighted as a promising mechanism. State aid remains essential for large projects, but EU approval must be faster, more predictable, and provide legal certainty. Above all, nuclear must be recognised as a clean baseload investment critical to energy security.

2. Regulatory Alignment

Licensing and approval timelines must be streamlined. Regulatory cooperation among the EU, UK, US, and other partners will be key to sharing expertise and enabling advanced reactor deployment across borders. Alignment can reduce costs, avoid duplication, and prevent delay.

3. Supply-Chain Resilience

Europe must rebuild its nuclear supply chain to reduce dependencies on single unreliable suppliers. Central and Eastern European countries are uniquely positioned to become regional hubs—producing components, building localised value chains, and supporting skilled jobs. Greater integration across national supply chains could also unlock new financing from export credit agencies, especially if partners coordinate on standards and risk criteria. Uranium should also be recognised as a critical mineral.

4. Workforce and Education

No technology succeeds without people. Europe needs a new generation of nuclear engineers, operators, and innovators. Investment in education, vocational training, and career mobility will be the foundation of any enduring nuclear resurgence.

Regional Leadership and Security

Central and Eastern European countries are already demonstrating leadership and enthusiasm for nuclear energy. The projects they have ongoing in this area are not only energy initiatives—they are strategic security assets. Strengthening intra-regional cooperation can be instrumental in boosting the EU’s strategic autonomy.

The Path Forward

The dialogue in Warsaw made one thing clear: Europe is at a pivotal moment. The foundations for a clean, sovereign, and secure energy system are within reach—but only if we move with coordination, investment, and regulatory pragmatism. The region’s momentum must now translate into tangible progress.

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- ALL TOPICS
- NUCLEAR 265

