

EU tightens nuclear waste disposal rules

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Police watch a CASTOR train with radioactive waste making a brief stop near Ludwigslust, eastern Germany, 2010. The European Union tightened rules on the disposal of radioactive waste with strict conditions on exporting it outside EU borders.

The European Union on Tuesday tightened rules on the disposal of radioactive waste with strict conditions on exporting it outside EU borders.

The new legislation requires EU governments to present by 2015 plans to dispose of waste produced by nuclear reactors as well as other sources including [electricity production](#), medicine, research, industry and agriculture.

"This is a major achievement for [nuclear safety](#) in the EU," said EU energy commissioner Guenther Oettinger. "After years of inaction, the EU for the very first time commits itself to a final disposal of nuclear

waste."

Governments will have to present a timetable for the construction of disposal facilities, which most states do not have today. Two or more countries can otherwise agree to use a single facility located in one of them.

Information on spent fuel and [radioactive waste](#) management must be made available to the public and local populations near the facilities must be allowed to participate in the decision-making process.

The export of radioactive waste is still authorised but under much stricter rules. A nation receiving highly radioactive waste must have a deep underground repository.

Such deep geological repositories do not exist anywhere in the world, the commission said, adding that none is under construction outside the EU. It takes at least 40 years to build one.

EU directives ban radioactive exports to Africa, the Caribbean and Pacific nations, as well as Antarctica.

Rebecca Harms, deputy chief of the European parliament's Green party, said the agreement did not go far enough because it still allows "the transfer of the European problem of nuclear waste to other countries."

The European Commission had suggested a total export ban in a proposal that the parliament backed in June, but governments had the last word.

The EU has 143 nuclear reactors spread across 14 of the bloc's 27 states.

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