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Eesti Energia considers Estonia's first nuclear plant

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Eesti Energia may build a 400-megawatt nuclear reactor in Estonia- according to the company's CEO Sandor Liive.

Bloomberg reported today that state-owned Eesti Energia has sought to participate in a project for a new reactor at Ignalina- Lithuania- which has been delayed by disputes between Baltic and Polish energy companies. The utility has also asked to help build a new reactor in Finland.

"If the project in Lithuania is delayed and the Finns say We do not have room for you- then what other options do we have than building our own?" Liive said yesterday in an interview in Prague.

European utilities are seeking to shift power production away from fossil fuels to lower the financial and environmental costs associated with carbon dioxide emissions. Eesti Energia will invest in projects such as offshore wind farms as part of plans to boost clean-energy generation to about half its installed capacity within 10 to 15 years- Liive said.

Estonia's first reactor may be operational no sooner than in 2025 because the country has less technological expertise than those with nuclear facilities already in place- he said.

Generating electricity from atomic fission has to be considered as a serious option- Estonian Economy Minister Juhan Parts said in an interview today on Eesti Televisioon. "We can make an initial decision this year whether we move along this road- but it certainly can't be a decision on construction yet."

The European Union's alternative-energy goal in its current shape is raising serious doubts about the economic viability of the Baltic country's industry for extracting oil from shale- Parts said.

Eesti Energia gets more than 90 percent of its electricity from burning fuel extracted from local shale reserves- which have higher costs for environmental protection and permits to release carbon dioxide than most other forms of generation.

Oil shale is a rock from which petroleum-like chemicals can be extracted. Estonia is the only country where oil shale is the primary source of energy.

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