



Nuclear waste from Urenco and Eurodif left behind in Russia "Ecodefence!"

Part of: [Import of nuclear fuel to Russia](#)

The Russian environmental group "Ecodefence!" on August 2nd presented its research on one of the dimmest areas of the nuclear businesses - import of radioactive waste from EU to Russia for enrichment.

[Vera Ponomareva](#), 04/08-2005

"Although this business is flourishing in Russia, there is no access to information about it. According to the ecologists, since 1996 European companies [Urenco](#) and [Eurodif](#) have been sending radioactive waste (so-called uranium tailings) for reprocessing. The result of the process is uranium, similar to the natural one, which is sent back to the Western Europe. Radioactive waste generated during the reprocessing remain in Russia," the ecologists state in their news-release.

According to the research data, the decisive reason for sending nuclear waste to Russia for re-enrichment is that Rosatom and its plants are ready to leave uranium tailings in the country. If Urenco and Eurodif were decommissioning nuclear waste themselves, the cost of their product would become approximately 5 times higher.

Such costs are unacceptable for the German branch of "Urenco", as they would make up nearly one half of their profit from reprocessing business. That is the reason why "Urenco" so readily gets rid of its uranium tailings by sending them to Russia. Otherwise the company wouldn't survive in the market.

According to "Ecodefence!", this business involves three Russian plants: the Urals Electrochemical Integrated Plant near Ekaterinburg, the Siberian Chemical Combine (Tomsk-7) and Angarsk Electrolysis Chemical Combine in the Irkutsk district.

The "Ecodefence" news-release provides the following facts about the outcome of Rosatom's activities:

From 1996 to 2001 9740 tonnes of nuclear waste arrived in Russia from Germany alone. In the period from 2001 to 2005 radioactive waste imports continued at approximately the same level, but the precise information remains unpublished.

Consequently, the volume of nuclear waste accumulated during enrichment from 1996 to 2005 makes up approximately 14 to 15 thousand tonnes. Western European countries pay only for the enrichment service at prices that are much lower than world standards.

"We have been dealing with the enrichment of imported uranium for a long time, there is no secret about it," Nikolai Shingaryov, director of the Rosatom information center, said to Bellona Web. "There is nothing illegal in this business."

According to Shingarev, the imported uranium tailings are not classified as nuclear waste, as they are subject to further reprocessing and do not need to be stored. The outcome of this technological process is triuranium octaoxide (U₃O₈), which is safe for storage and can be used in fast neutron reactors. Therefore, according to Shingaryov, what Russia receives is not waste but precious reprocessing material.

The "Ecodefence!" group expressed another opinion: "Nuclear waste enrichment is another dirty secret of Rosatom, which finally became known to public. The nuclear industry keeps using Russia for the storage of radioactive garbage. The profit from the enrichment goes to the foreign companies and high-ranking officials of Rosatom, while nuclear waste becomes a burden for the taxpayers."

"Ecodefence!" will fight to put an end to the foreign nuclear waste enrichment in Russia by all possible means," said "Ecodefence!" co-chairmen Vladimir Slivyak.

On August 6th, "Ecodefence!" opens its 6th Antinuclear Camp near the Urals Electrochemical Integrated Plant. The camp will be open for one week.

"Ecodefence!" is also planning to address the Prosecutors' Office in hopes that it will interfere to stop the allegedly illegal activity of Rosatom. "At the moment we are gathering the necessary papers," Slivyak told Bellona Web.

[Back to normal view](#) [Notify a friend](#)

Copyright © Bellona -- Reprint and copying is recommended if source is stated

Support Bellona's work for the environment - Phone +47 23 23 46 00 | E-MAIL: info@bellona.no



www.urencio.com

Related articles

[Roundtable discussion of uranium tail transports through St. Petersburg provides no reassurances on city's safety](#)
[Russian environmental activists to greet German nuclear waste ship](#)
[Frame-up, Angarsk style: 90 days later](#)