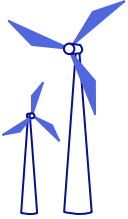


# WHAT PLACE DOES NUCLEAR POWER HAVE IN THE FRENCH ENERGY MIX?

## Testing the method for clarifying controversies

STUDY - JUNE 2022



*Ahead of the forthcoming debates on the French Strategy for Energy and the Climate, the EESC's work is fully in keeping with its tradition of seeking constructive dialogue that goes beyond posturing and divisions.*

*With its 80 civil society organisations, the EESC wishes to contribute to promoting informed and conflict-free civic participation.*

*A broad understanding of the issues and challenges, in addition to sharing the implemented solutions, are both factors essential to the success of the decisions and the public policies to which they give rise.*

### Nuclear power is today at a crossroads

Nuclear power raises many questions, including the safety of the oldest power plants, the implementation and cost of EPRs, uranium resources, or the storage and environmental impacts of nuclear waste, etc. In the context of the French Strategy for Energy and the Climate, the question of decisions regarding the energy mix and the place of nuclear power arises. **Promoting public interest in issues related to the choice of the energy mix is essential**, but the subject of nuclear power is one of the most divisive, and a source of intense controversy.

ABOUT  
**70%**  
OF THE  
ELECTRICITY MIX,  
i.e. 20% of total energy,  
is of nuclear origin  
in France



### Analysing controversies for a more informed debate

How can we objectify and discuss this topic calmly? What are the arguments involved? To deal with this complex subject, the EESC has chosen to trial the so-called **"controversy analysis"** method (defined in a study drawn up within the EESC in 2020), to enable organised civil society to express its views on these issues. The aim of the study is to identify the key points of a controversial issue, and to clarify the arguments in order to facilitate effective participation in the debates by the stakeholders concerned, by making them as accessible as possible. As the method dictates, it is not intended to take sides in favour of one solution over another, but could serve as a working basis for a future EESC opinion.

ABOUT  
**60%**  
OF THE  
ENERGY  
consumed in  
France is of fossil  
origin (oil and gas)

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After drawing up an initial list of some thirty themes, **seven questions were selected**, in accordance with methodological principles which tend to favour closed questions, calling for yes or no answers, making it possible to formulate the most precise questions possible and to avoid those containing underlying biases:

- Is the risk of a nuclear accident in our country a reason to give up nuclear power?
- Is the production of nuclear power reliable?
- Does nuclear power make France energy independent?
- Is the waste management programme compatible with a revival of nuclear power?
- Is nuclear power more competitive than other decarbonised energies?
- By 2050, is a decarbonised energy mix without nuclear power possible?
- Does France have a robust and safe information and protection policy for local populations in the event of a nuclear accident?

This exercise, which is intended to **put the spotlight on controversies** by identifying arguments about the future place of nuclear power within the energy mix, seeks to **break free from preconceived ideas and fake news** and to bring out the key points underlying the subject. While this work does not claim to be exhaustive, it can help the public to better understand the issues, allowing for informed debate between stakeholders and thereby facilitating decision-making by the public authorities.

The task of identifying the sourced arguments involved members of the EESC's Environmental Committee and those of its Economy and Finance Committee. An external contribution from stakeholders specialising in civil nuclear issues, both in favour of and against this energy source, was taken into account to complete this task of identifying arguments. **A summary of the main arguments was produced for each of the issues considered.**

The EESC drew on its expertise in organising **constructive dialogue**. It's possible to move beyond entrenched positions and major divisions, to learn to listen to each other and to work towards a convergence of viewpoints. As the Commission Nationale du Débat Public (National Commission for Public Debate) points out, the EESC can usefully contribute to and participate in the organisation of future debates. This preparatory work by the EESC helps promote informed debate and facilitates public decision-making.

