

WENRA Strategy



As approved at the 14 November 2023 WENRA plenary meeting to be effective from 2024

What is WENRA?

WENRA is the independent association of European national nuclear regulators.

WENRA's Vision

Consistent high levels of nuclear safety in Europe, protecting people and the environment now and in the future.

WENRA's Mission

Working together as national nuclear regulators to continuously improve and harmonise nuclear safety to as high as reasonably practicable levels.

A new context

Over the last few years, the international environment for nuclear has changed significantly, and new challenges and opportunities have emerged. In particular legal frameworks and national nuclear regulatory bodies will have to be prepared for and be able to respond to:

- **An increasing concern about the balance between electricity generation and consumption growth.** In this context, together with the availability of low-carbon and affordable energy, it is possible that ensuring nuclear safety may be called into question more visibly and more frequently than before. In view of the ageing fleet of reactors operated in Europe, it is crucial to anticipate potential safety issues and to share experiences in order to maintain their safe operation.
- **A growing support for nuclear energy by national governments and the public.** As part of the solution to energy security and the decarbonisation of energy supplies, many countries are considering extending the operation of their existing nuclear power plants and/or expanding their nuclear program with new units. Some countries that currently do not have a nuclear program are considering or developing a program for the first time.
- **An increasing attention on solution for waste treatment, management and disposal.** While some countries have made significant progress in the selection of final waste repository sites for all types of waste, including spent fuel, others are still in the process of development and societal debate to define an acceptable solution. The large dismantling programme of old facilities in many countries now also urges to better elaborate on the safe treatment and interim storage solutions acceptable to the population.

- **The increasing use of innovative solutions and technologies by the nuclear industry.** This ranges from new systems and processes to modern component manufacture and development of advanced reactor designs. Advanced technologies can also be used for applications other than electricity generation, such as producing heat or hydrogen, or desalinating water. Regulatory frameworks, including licensing processes and safety requirements, may need to be adapted for these new technologies.
- **The emergence of inexperienced vendors and developers.** There are many organisations working hard to deploy their reactor technologies who have little nuclear sector knowledge or experience, minimal understanding of the legal frameworks or regulatory requirements, and seeking to gain access to accelerated regulatory approvals and licensing processes.
- **The prevalence of a new geopolitical context.** The sharing of experience and best practices between stakeholders in the nuclear sector has always been an important factor in maintaining high levels of safety at national and international level. The new geopolitical context reinforces the need to enhance cooperation and mutual support between WENRA members.
- **An increasing call for better collaboration, harmonization and standardization.** With vendors and developers seeking global deployment of their technologies, the industry and regulators are actively seeking opportunities for greater collaboration, harmonisation and cooperation, with the aim of becoming more efficient and consistent when assessing new designs, and of achieving high nuclear safety standards.
- **The increasing influence in nuclear energy of some countries outside Europe.** For a long time, Europe held one of the central positions in the nuclear field, with several countries developing major nuclear power programs. In recent years, however, there has been a shift towards other geographical areas, with newcomers seeking access to nuclear energy and non-European countries exporting their technologies and safety standards.

In this context, WENRA has approved at its 2023 November plenary meeting hosted by ASN in Paris the following strategic objectives.

WENRA's Strategic Objectives

<p>Strategic Objective 1</p>	<p>Establish common safety requirements on major issues to be applied by each WENRA member:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Determine safety objectives for new and innovative reactor technologies. • Define common criteria for long term operation of existing European nuclear power plants. • Maintain, continue to develop and implement a common set of up to date safety reference levels that establish high levels of safety in WENRA members national regulatory frameworks and benchmark their implementation.
<p>Strategic Objective 2</p>	<p>Establish and adopt good practices to regulatory cooperation for the review and assessment of new technologies:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • On the basis of understanding other international approaches to regulatory cooperation. • Ensure consistent safety reviews for similar technologies and safety issues. • Establish a pathway that enables interested WENRA members to endorse a design approval/acceptance issued by another WENRA member. • Identify possibilities to share resources and skills.
<p>Strategic Objective 3</p>	<p>Develop a common understanding or a WENRA position on challenging issues.</p> <p>The current and foreseeable context will include challenging issues where a common WENRA position would benefit nuclear safety.</p> <p>Examples of such issues are: approaches to dismantling and end state, the use of high-quality industrial grade items in nuclear applications, range of near surface and deep waste disposal options being developed and implemented by WENRA members, the impact of climate change on safety and how this is being considered by WENRA members, skills and capability demands and the challenges these present to safety, how innovation is being considered and enabled by WENRA members, and threats and opportunities of artificial intelligence to safety.</p>