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German Parliamentary Committee Considers ITER Site Proposal

A committee of the German parliament is considering a proposal for an area in the east of the country to be recommended as a candidate site for the International Thermonuclear Experimental Reactor (ITER) project.

The proposal has been made by the Conservative CDU and CSU bloc – the main political opposition grouping to Chancellor Gerhard Schröder's Red-Green coalition government. The CDU/CSU is urging that the parliament (Bundestag) asks the government to propose that ITER be constructed in the Greifswald/Lubmin area.

Following a formal debate earlier this month, the issue was referred to parliament's permanent Committee on Education, Research and Technology Assessment. The committee looks into issues considered to be too wide-ranging to be dealt with in usual plenary sessions of parliament. The committee will then recommend a decision to be taken by parliament, although it is not known when a recommendation will be made.

The area suggested was home to the former Greifswald nuclear power plant, comprising five Russian-design VVER-440 units, that was closed in 1990 – the year of Germany's reunification.

Currently, there are only two EU countries (France and Spain) that are potential candidates to host ITER. The European Commission is recommending that a single EU candidate site be identified "as soon as possible" – and for a consensus to be reached later this year [see Insider No. 5, 13th May 2003]. The other potential host countries for ITER are Canada and Japan.

Since the narrow re-election victory of Germany's anti-nuclear coalition government towards the end of last year, there has been pressure from within the country to ensure the continued promotion of German technical and scientific academic positions in the field of nuclear technology. In April, the government finally approved the commissioning of the country's Garching FRM-II high-flux neutron research reactor near Munich [see News No. 146, 16th April 2003].

Source: German parliament / Various

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