

Russia Joins EU's Nuclear Stress Tests

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BRUSSELS — Russia and Ukraine are among seven nations that will join an EU nuclear stress test program to examine whether nuclear power plants can withstand accidents and disasters.

The 27 EU nations agreed on such a program last month and had called on other countries to join the plan. But the announcement late last week was a first big breakthrough to expand the program.

Under the tests, "experts from other countries will evaluate the assessment carried out by their national experts," the EU said in a statement.

Armenia, Belarus, Croatia, Switzerland and Turkey are the other nations joining the program.

"This is a huge joint step forward, for us, and for the neighbors on the European continent," EU Energy Commissioner Günther Oettinger said.

Russia also applauded the move and wanted more countries to join.

"We urge them to conduct the tests and ... exchange results," Rosatom chief Sergei Kiriyenko

said in a statement.

The EU test should last through much of the rest of the year, and the final results will be announced publicly by April.

The EU itself has 143 nuclear reactors. Russia has 32 and another 11 under construction. Ukraine, site of the 1986 Chernobyl nuclear disaster, has 15 with two under construction.

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