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## **THE CZECH REPUBLIC AND HUNGARY JOIN THE OECD NUCLEAR ENERGY AGENCY (NEA)**

On 27 June 1996, the OECD Council approved the membership of the Czech Republic and Hungary in the OECD Nuclear Energy Agency (NEA), and its Data Bank. The Czech Republic and Hungary had previously become Members of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) on 21 December 1995, and 7 May 1996, respectively. The membership of these two countries brings the membership of the OECD Nuclear Energy Agency (NEA)\* to 27.

The enlargement of the NEA takes particular significance as the Czech Republic and Hungary are the first countries from the former Soviet Bloc to join the Agency, and the first NEA Members whose nuclear power programmes involve only Soviet-designed reactors. Their membership will further enhance international co-operation in the areas of nuclear safety and regulation, as well as the development of nuclear power, and also testifies to the extent to which these countries have adapted their safety standards and legal frameworks in recent years.

The Czech Republic's nuclear power programme presently provides about 32% of the country's electricity, and this figure will soon increase to 45%. In Hungary, nuclear energy provides 42% of the country's electricity requirements. Both these countries have set up modern nuclear safety and regulatory authorities. They also have nuclear research and training facilities, as well as active programmes in the radioactive waste management field.

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\* The NEA membership now includes the Governments of Australia, Austria, Belgium, Canada, Czech Republic, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Korea, Luxembourg, Mexico, Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Turkey, United Kingdom and United States.

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The OECD Nuclear Energy Agency was established in 1972, replacing the former European Nuclear Energy Agency which had been set up by the OECD's predecessor, the Organisation for European Economic Co-operation. At the outset, the Agency pioneered research and development on reactor and nuclear fuel cycle technologies, notably through the setting-up of international research projects and the creation of joint undertakings, and took the first steps towards the development of an international nuclear law framework.

Since then, the mission of the Agency has expanded. The NEA's primary objective is to promote co-operation among the governments of its participating countries to ensure that nuclear power is a safe, economically competitive and environmentally acceptable energy source. In pursuit of its mission, the Agency evaluates the scientific, technical and economic aspects of nuclear power growth and encourages, through consultation, the harmonization of safety and regulatory policies and practices in Member countries. Major co-operation areas include nuclear safety, radiation protection, and radioactive waste management, as well as nuclear science, economics and technology of the nuclear fuel cycle, nuclear information and international nuclear third party liability.