



Why to join ETSON

The European Technical Safety Organisations Network
(**ETSON Association**)

An expanding force to be reckoned with

Partner:

Bel V

Rue Walcourt 148
1070 Bruxelles – BELGIUM
Pieter De Gelder
pieter.degelder@belv.be
Phone : +32 2 5280-260

ÚJV

Husinec-Rez cp. 130
25068 Řež – CZECH REPUBLIC
Zdeněk Kříž
krz@ujv.cz
Phone : +420 266 173428

GRS

Schwertnergasse 1
50667 Cologne – GERMANY
Ulrich Erven
ulrich.erven@grs.de
Phone : +49 221 2068-651

VUJE a.s.

Okružna 5, 918 64 Trnava,
SLOVAK REPUBLIC
Jan Bahna
bahna@vuje.sk

IRSN

B.P. 17
92140 Clamart – FRANCE
Edouard Scott de Martinville
edouard.scott-de-martinville@irsn.fr
Phone : +33 1 5835-8202

VTT FINLAND

P.O. Box 1000
02044 VTT – FINLAND
Seppo Vuori
Seppo.vuori@vtt.fi
Phone : +358 20 722 5067

JNES

Tokyo Reit Toranomom Building
17-1.3-chrome Toranomom
TOKYO 105105-0001 - Japan

SSTC NRS (Associated member)

35/37, Vasylaya Stusa st., Kyiv, 03142,
UKRAINE
Stanislav Sholomitsky
se_sholomitsky@sstc.kiev.ua

LEI

Breslaujos str. 3
44403 Kaunas – LITUANA
Eugeijus Uspuras
uspuras@mail.lei.lt
Phone : +370 37 401924

Contact:

ETSON Secretary

Hans Steinhauer, GRS
Hans.Steinhauer@grs.de

ETSON Office

Mansour Aalam, GRS
etson@grs.de

Background

In 2006, IRSN (FRA), GRS (GER) and AVN (BEL) (now Bel V) formed the European Technical Safety Organisations Network (ETSON) to consolidate further their already highly successful co-operation and start an initiative to pool nuclear safety expertise in one single network of competent and highly-skilled nuclear safety organisations. The network has been extended to UJV/NRI (CZE), VTT (FIN) and LEI (LTU) and has formed an Association according to French law in August 2010. In November 2011 VUJE (SVK) joined the ETSON Association as a member and SSTC NRS (UKR) joined the Association as an associated member. In addition JNES (JPN) joined ETSON as an associated member in July 2011.

The aim of this network is to promote and develop European scientific and technical co-operation between the TSOs in the field of nuclear safety. This will be achieved in particular by systematically exchanging R&D results and experience in connection with the operation of nuclear facilities and safety assessments, by promoting a harmonisation of nuclear safety assessment practices in Europe, and by encouraging initiatives to define and implement European research programmes. This way, the international state of the art in science and technology will be developed in an on-going process by using common resources and synergies in all working areas.

The partners of the Association are highly competent in nuclear safety assessments and are aware that a high level of nuclear safety and radiation protection is a priority for the countries of Europe. They see a need for a reinforcement of the European dimension in the technical, economical and societal challenges which nuclear safety has to face and take note that nuclear safety expertise plays a major role in attaining as well as maintaining a high level of nuclear safety and radiation protection.

Furthermore, they acknowledge that the organisations competent in nuclear safety expertise develop appropriate approaches to safety issues as part of their assessments and research activities and recognise the need for increased co-operation and reinforced sharing of experiences between organisations competent in nuclear safety expertise.

Looking for new partners

It was clear from the start that the network was to be enlarged by and by as many TSOs were already co-operating in various forms, among others within the framework of the EUROSAFE Approach. While this co-operation is taking place on a rather more informatory and educational level with the exchange of experiences and the joint training of young nuclear scientists, the ETSON is also pursuing more "aggressive" goals - the Network wants to speak as one voice on the European stage and preferably act as one bidder consortium in international tenders.

The Network has given itself the following objectives:

1. Formation of a suitable forum for exchanges on analyses and R&D in the field of nuclear safety, sharing of experiences and exchange of technical and scientific opinions.
2. Contribution to fostering the convergence of technical nuclear safety practices in Europe.
3. Furtherance of the definition and the implementation of nuclear safety research programmes.
4. Promotion of the formation of a European scientific and technical network in the nuclear safety field.

Subject to agreement by its members, the Network may interact with the European Union Institutions, national institutions of countries not represented in the European TSO Network, the IAEA, NEA, and non-governmental organisations about specific issues or findings generated by the European TSO Network on a case-by-case basis. It may furthermore consider requests from these institutions and states for advice on technical nuclear safety matters and meet with other organisations having capabilities in the field of nuclear safety research or assessment to discuss specific issues.

ETSON Membership is by application and acceptance by the current members only and restricted to organisations which perform safety assessments in support of their national nuclear safety authorities or in that role, with a global regulatory vision, on a regular basis and with a broad scope.

What is to be gained from ETSON membership?

Referring to the Network's objectives outlined in the section above, there are clear advantages that ETSON membership will bring:

1. As regards the exchange of experiences and information, members have access to a whole range of information they otherwise would find more difficult to obtain. The ETSON partners share methods, research results, data and tools not directly available to third parties.
2. Regarding the convergence of technical nuclear safety practices in Europe, ETSON members work together to develop accepted common approaches as well as common technical and scientific positions. One result of such joint activity has been the Safety Assessment Guide, a document that is continually amended and updated and which the current ETSON partners have committed themselves to applying in their safety-related assessments of nuclear installations.
3. ETSON members have the chance to actively contribute to the SNE-TP, which means that they can influence research strategies and point them in the direction where they should be heading from a point of view that is driven not by profit but by the highest possible level of safety.
4. Being part of a growing network of nuclear safety specialists will increase each individual partner's weight in dealing with both domestic and foreign organisations, institutions and authorities. The Network as a whole will in turn benefit from having many competent TSOs as its members.
5. ETSON members receive the opportunity to pool their training initiatives for their own staff with those of the other ETSON members. This means that ETSON members can actively contribute to the development of training courses of common interest, propose lecturers and topics for group work, and send staff to be trained in the European Nuclear Safety Training and Tutoring Institute (ENSTTI) which is operated by presently four ETSON partners.

6. ETSO members also receive the possibility to join a Junior Staff Programme (JSP). This allows their young engineers to be part of a dynamic network whose objectives are:

- to improve co-operation between the TSOs in the long run by favouring exchanges between young engineers from the member organisations,
- to improve the long-term partnership and prepare for mutual personnel assignments,
- to reinforce the joint impact of the member organisations in Europe.

Last but not least, all partners benefit from the competitive advantage the Network offers in connection with projects tendered by the EU and by national authorities. For example, bids can be made by consortia of different Network partners who on their own might not be able to provide all the services required. The larger the Network, the broader will be its range of competences and capacity.

Also, individual TSOs bidding for complex projects may offer complete packages of services of which some lots may not be originally contained in their own scope of activities but can be assumed by experts from other Network partners. By sharing knowledge and "helping each other out", all Network partners will have an essential advantage over other bidders.

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