

Comenius Project "The Consumer Society and Youth in Europe"

Essay

PROS AND CONS OF NUCLEAR ENERGY

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Due to the recent events happened in Japan, nuclear energy has been the heart of many arguments all around the world. It has been discussed whether this energy can bring some advantages to the world economy or whether it is only a waste of time and most importantly, it is dangerous.

To discuss this matter there are several aspects to take into consideration: e.g. the safety of human beings and the environment and what might happen to future generations in case of an explosion or problems to the plant.

If we consider environmental issues such as carbon emission from burning fossil fuels, nuclear energy could be a good solution because it is a clean energy with a very low carbon footprint. In addition, it must be said that oil and gas reserves are shrinking worldwide.

According to recent researches another important advantage is the safety of the latest reactors, which are more sophisticated than the older ones like in Chernobyl.

Moreover, uranium that is used to produce nuclear energy is a highly concentrated source of energy, easier and cheaper to transport than coal and oil.

But lots of people reckon that reactors are not safe enough or at least as safe as we are told. The disaster in Japan, one of the most developed countries, rich and with the most modern and technological nuclear power plants, reminds us of the dangers of atomic energy. The consequences of the accident are not clear yet, but scientists predict that radioactivity will be very high for years in that area with dangerous influences on people's health. What is in any case sure is that even the highest technology is not able to control these systems when something goes wrong.

Anti-nuclear supporters claim that there are other alternative energy systems like solar energy, biomass energy, hydropower and wind turbines, which are clean, safe and so far have not been completely exploited.

They are also convinced that, although the supply of nuclear energy is cheaper than other types of energy, the construction of a new plant requires massive capitals.

In conclusion, we can say that, even if nuclear energy could be a valid alternative to oil and gas, we and above all our governments and utility companies should discuss the pros and cons and come to a common decision which has to consider both environmental concerns and the price in terms of life safety.