

(English version)

**Priority question for written answer P-002028/24
to the Commission
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(11 October 2024)**

Subject: Future of the JET (Joint European Torus) facility in Culham (UK)

The JET (Joint European Torus) facility in Culham (UK) started out as a joint European project. It plays a crucial role in European fusion research and the development of nuclear fusion as a sustainable energy source.

Due in part to Brexit, the UK became the owner of the JET facility. It has decided to decommission JET because of its high cost.

Unfortunately, this entails the risk of losing considerable expertise in the EU and missing out on very significant EU investments. It would also result in the loss of essential knowledge for the construction of the next-generation nuclear fusion reactor, the International Thermonuclear Experimental Reactor (ITER), which will not be operational for some time.

1. What steps has the Commission taken to negotiate with the UK to keep the JET facility open, and do these include considering the joint continuation of the JET facility's activities?
2. How will the Commission, in the meantime, prevent the EU from losing expertise and established academic cooperation in the field of nuclear fusion, particularly in working towards the full functioning of ITER?
3. Competitiveness and affordable, sustainable energy are rightly two of the Commission's priorities. Does the Commission have a strategy to support nuclear fusion research so that EU researchers can stay competitive with their non-EU colleagues?

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**Answer given by Ms Ivanova on behalf of the European Commission
(22 November 2024)**

With the United Kingdom withdrawal from the EU, the Commission assessed options to extend the operation of the Joint European Torus (JET) to validate the latest International Thermonuclear Experimental Reactor (ITER) ⁽¹⁾ design evolution. However, due to budget constraints it was not possible to finance the required JET upgrades ⁽²⁾.

A possible internationalisation of JET was also explored with some countries but the proposal did not garner the necessary support and Europe alone could not continue to provide the required funding.

The EU nevertheless ensured financial support to JET until 31 October 2021 and technical support to JET exploitation until 2023 through EUROfusion ⁽³⁾.

In addition to ITER, the EU supports the construction of new facilities in Europe, namely International Fusion Materials Irradiation Facility — Demo Oriented Neutron Source (IFMIF-DONES) ⁽⁴⁾ and Divertor Tokamak Test facility (DTT) ⁽⁵⁾, and the scientific exploitation of newly collaborative fusion devices such as the Japan Tokamak 60 Super Advanced (JT60-SA) ⁽⁶⁾ inaugurated on 1 December 2023.

The Commission has launched two calls to: i) design and implement a strategy to attract, train and retain the workforce in the EU to acquire the necessary fusion skills with a focus on cross-sector, cross-border mobility, skills transferability, and digital skills; and ii) further engage the private sector through the preparation for a Public-Private Partnership (PPP) on Fusion Energy ⁽⁷⁾.

The PPP could help bridge the gap between public research, academic institutions and industry, creating a pipeline for technological innovation and workforce development.

⁽¹⁾ <https://www.iter.org/>

⁽²⁾ ca. EUR 1 billion.

⁽³⁾ <https://euro-fusion.org/>

⁽⁴⁾ <https://ifmif-dones.es/>

⁽⁵⁾ <https://www.dtt-project.it/>, Divertor Tokamak Test facility in Frascati, Italy.

⁽⁶⁾ <https://www.jt60sa.org/wp/>

⁽⁷⁾ https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/docs/2021-2027/euratom/wp-call/2023-2025/wp_euratom-2023-2025_en.pdf