

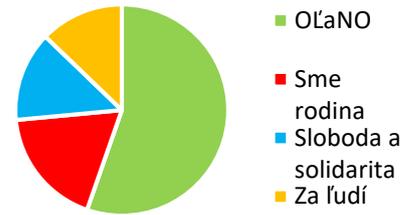


Where do new government parties stand on nuclear in Slovakia?

Factsheet by 'CEPTA - Centre for Sustainable Alternatives', April 2020



After the elections held on 29 February 2020, the new Slovak government is composed of four new political parties. With exception of the party *Sloboda and solidarita* (in the Government 07/2010 – 04/2012), the remaining three political parties have not yet been part of the government before. All four parties support the completion of the Mochovce nuclear power plant (Mochovce NPP), but have mixed positions about further new nuclear projects. The strongest party, OĽaNO, aims to amend the current 'non-transparency particularly/only in the nuclear sector'.



	<i>New nuclear builds</i>	<i>Spent nuclear fuel final solution</i>	<i>Transparency</i>
OĽaNO	General pro-nuclear position with a focus on safety increase	Focus on safety of a national solution, with explicit awareness of high costs.	Explicit pro-transparency (and "pro-EIA") position.
Sme rodina	Strong pro-nuclear position with a focus on fusion and Generation IV reactors	Declared interest in an international solution, i.e. shared repository	Unclear position.
Sloboda a solidarita	Neutral / sceptical position. Strictly against public sector interventions.	Focus on role of geologic investigations in site selection. Not against reprocessing.	Assumed pro-transparency position
Za ľudí	Strong "pro-renewables and pro-savings" position, without explicit position on nuclear.	The only reference concerns cooperation with neighbouring countries.	Assumed pro-transparency position.

The only explicit statement related to the commercial nuclear sector in the pre-election programme document of the party **Obyčajní ľudia a nezávislé osobnosti (OĽaNO)** [1] concerned transparency: *We will propose the abolishment of the currently existing legal possibility to classify all documents in permit procedures in the commercial nuclear sector on a "flat-rate basis", because it is in conflict with European law and the Constitution. Only those selected parts of these documents that contain confidential or very sensitive information should be classified* [2]. It is a part of declared intentions to amend the Slovak EIA laws in favour of more transparency and better access to justice for citizens [3].

According Mr. Mičovský (who became the Minister of Agriculture and Forestry), *at today's level of knowledge, OĽaNO recognizes the need for further use of commercial nuclear power, and hence the construction of new nuclear power plants, with the condition of significantly increasing their security, particularly against the threats of sophisticated terrorist attacks* [4]. This contrasts with the opinion of Mr. Heger (who became the Minister of Finance), according to whom new nuclear build after the Mochovce NPP finalisation would not be needed [5]. With regards to spent nuclear fuel (SNF) final solutions, Mr. Mičovský stated that a *suitable SNF final facility location should be selected on the basis of an analysis with priority of maximum safety effects for the population and with minimization of the burden on the environment* [4].

The pre-election programme document of **Sme rodina** [6] explicitly mentions support to new nuclear: *In this period, it is necessary to start constructing new modern power plants which would no longer bear a carbon footprint, guarantee self-sufficiency and stability, but also a change of the system management at the level of consumption. New, yet untested sources of great potential, such as hydrogen-based fusion reactors, which will have a significant impact on carbon footprint in implementation, have to be taken into account in this concept. Slovakia has the potential to build a system of distributed energy. It could be based on small 'generation IV' nuclear reactors that use spent nuclear fuel and could contribute to sustainable energy prices. Such new nuclear power plants have the advantage that, in addition to electricity generation, they would be an excellent and affordable source of heat for cities and municipalities; and, with the right technology, a source of cooling* [7]. In this regards, the document stressed *significant impact on employment and the environment, as nuclear power plants have a zero carbon footprint and, in the future, SNF can be reused as a nuclear fuel after its reprocessing* [8].

According to the opinion formally endorsed by Sme rodina political leader Boris Kollár, published by Aktualty.sk in October 2019, the public debate about the future of the commercial nuclear sector in Slovakia has not yet started. Therefore, it should be initiated by the public sector by means of procuring and disclosing relevant studies. Apart from the positions already quoted in the table, this party defended a new nuclear project already planned by the previous government in Jaslovské Bohunice, with the justification that it concerns a Generation IV reactor in "a certified location" [4]. This party also presented support for small modular reactors [5]. With regards to the final solution for SNF, this party *pointed out researchers' efforts to reprocess spent nuclear fuel, as well as possible cooperation with foreign countries* [4]. Representatives of this party are *not aware that the export of radioactive waste would be explicitly prohibited and should therefore be counted as one - preferred - option. It is necessary to start discussions with other countries outside the EU on the possibility of disposing radioactive waste outside of Slovakia. The aim is not to get rid of the waste, but to find a suitable repository site, for construction of which Slovakia would contribute financially* [4].

The pre-election programme document of **Sloboda a solidarita (SaS)** [9] is very factual and detailed with regards to the Mochovce NPP completion. This party advocates for administrative support for this plant's completion and commissioning, primarily in response to specific risks of huge financial losses and challenges for the Slovak public sector/finance in consequence of the relevant controversial measures taken by previous governments, which are clearly detailed in the document. This party calls for a strict legal and financial liability of the subjects responsible for the to the Mochovce NPP completion related delays and cost escalations. This party considers the problems related to the Mochovce NPP finalisation as one of the most crucial 'landmines' left by the previous governments lead by the SMER party [13].

With regards to new nuclear builds, the party SaS is against any role of the state, but has no objections on condition that the private sector would take full responsibility of construction, financing and operation [10]. This part calls for the elimination of public sector interventions in electricity pricing, inclusive of those introduced in relation to an assumed deficit in the National decommissioning fund [11]. In general, this party advocates for the use of Total Cost of Ownership (TCO) analyses for all investment projects of € 10 million or more in order to include the complete public sector costs assessment into political decision-making. With regards to the spent nuclear fuel final solution, the representative of this part, Mr. Galek, stressed the importance of geological investigations [4].

The author of this factsheet was unable to find a single sentence related to the commercial nuclear sector in the pre-election programme document of **Za ľudí** [12]. Both in this document and in media, this party advocated strong support for energy savings and promotion of renewables, claiming a strong focus on 'regional tailor-made solutions'. This party does not support already ongoing activities from the previous governments fostering new nuclear build in Jaslovské Bohunice [4] [5]. With regards to the final solution for spent nuclear fuel, this party's representative, Mr. Meravý, mentioned the importance of dialogue and cooperation with the neighbouring EU members, i.e. the so called Visegrad 4 countries Poland, Czech Republic and Hungary [4].

The key opposition party, **SMER**, can be characterised by strong pro-nuclear and anti-transparency measures, by means of which it provided enormous institutional political support for the Mochovce NPP completion [14]. The political orientation of the remaining opposition party, the xenophobic populist **ĽSNS**, can be characterised by strong antipathy towards the EU and NATO. Its pro-nuclear opinions might be a result of their strong pro-Russian political orientation [4].

The **Manifesto of the Government**, approved by the Parliament on 30 April 2020, does not contain specific clauses regarding support for new nuclear power projects. The part of the text about the **Mochovce NPP finalisation** contains only statements that the Government will (i.) foster educating responsibility and accountability for delays and high costs rise, and (ii.) will be prepared to take the necessary measures to protect the assets of Slovenské elektrárne company in response to imminent economic threats caused by the difficulties with this NPP construction [16].

The only other commercial nuclear sector specific part of the Government's Manifesto concerns the **nuclear back-end final solution**. It announces the start of "a formal and expert discussion" on the issue of a final repository of "spent nuclear waste, including fuel", and support for the preparation of a "study about a future solution for nuclear waste disposal, incl. spent fuel" [17]. The other parts of the Manifesto's section on the Energy policy contain rather general phrases about fostering competition and financially less demanding modes of support for the use of renewable energy sources; fostering transparent and fair rules of pricing; the commitments already made to the EU (for example with regards to subsidising electricity generation from domestic coal by 31 December 2023; dealing with energy poverty; etc.

Note: the historical and political context relevant for this factsheet has been summarised in English in the journal paper *Understanding political institutional support for completing the Mochovce nuclear power plant* [14] and in the chapter of the book *Challenges of Nuclear Waste Governance, Vol. 2 titled Delays in Finding a Solution (The Governance of Nuclear Waste Disposal in Slovakia)* [15].

References:

[1] https://www.obycajniludia.sk/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/OLANO_program_2020_FINAL_online.pdf

[2] Ibid., p. 109, item 11.

[3] Ibid., items 8 – 10.

[4] <https://www.aktuality.sk/clanok/732513/kiskovci-ci-kotlebovci-nacrtli-ako-chcu-zabezpecit-elektricku-energiu-a-co-s-palivom-z-atomiok/>

[5] <https://euractiv.sk/section/klima/linksdossier/slovensku-opoziciu-rozdeluje-nazor-na-jadrovu-energiu-aj-zemny-plyn/>

[6] <https://hnutie-smerodina.sk/dokumenty/Final-Program-SME-RODINA-volebny-program.pdf>

[7] Ibid., p. 66.

[8] Ibid., p. 67.

[9] <https://www.flipgorilla.com/p/26183111565907491/show>

[10] Ibid, p. 245.

[11] Ibid., p. 243.

[12] <https://za-ludi.sk/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/program-strany-za-ludi.pdf>

[13] <https://euractiv.sk/section/energetika/interview/podpredseda-sas-mochovce-su-najvacsou-naslapnou-minou-pre-dalsiu-vladu/>

[14] <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.pnuce.2019.103192>

[15] https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-658-21441-8_8

[16] <https://www.nrsr.sk/web/Default.aspx?sid=zakony/zakon&ZakZborID=13&CisObdobia=8&CPT=68>, p. 53.

[17] Ibid., p. 54.