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The role of regulation as an obstacle or an enabler of the SMR promise? Diverging industry and regulator views

Regulatory reforms are underway, nationally and internationally, to streamline and harmonise nuclear safety regulation, to facilitate the deployment of SMRs. While some –both within and outside of the nuclear community –consider excessive and “fear-driven” safety regulation as the main obstacle to the commercialisation of SMRs, others in turn regard regulatory reform as secondary, blaming the nuclear industry for its inability to harmonize industry standards as the main bottleneck.

This paper analyses the distinct views of industry, regulators, and politicians on the rationale and the role of the regulatory reforms in facilitating SMR development and deployment. It does so by examining the SMR reforms in Canada and Finland, two countries actively preparing for the deployment of SMRs, and representing the somewhat distinct European and North American regulatory regimes. The Canadian nuclear safety Commission (CNSC) continues to collaborate with the US NRC to streamline its safety regulation in preparation of the deployment of SMRs, whereas in Finland, a comprehensive reform of the Nuclear Energy Act is underway, partly to prepare for the possible introduction of SMRs. The paper first outlines the key elements of the regulatory reforms and regulatory contexts in the two countries. It then analyses stakeholder views via qualitative text analysis methods to publicly available government and industry documentation.

Country OR International Organization

Finland

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