

UK and Czech Republic Team Up on Small Nuclear Reactors to Boost Energy Security

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The United Kingdom and the Czech Republic have agreed to collaborate on the development and deployment of small modular nuclear reactors (SMRs), marking a major step in the low-carbon energy strategy and industrial partnership.

Under the initiative, Rolls-Royce's SMR unit could export up to six of its factory-built reactors to the Czech Republic. Each unit is designed to deliver approximately 470 megawatts and, collectively, could supply enough power for around six million homes. The UK has committed £2.5 billion to its SMR programme, aiming for faster, cheaper deployment compared to conventional nuclear power plants.

Czech investment house ČEZ will acquire a 20 per cent stake in Rolls-Royce SMR, supporting plans to install up to 3 gigawatts of capacity domestically, equivalent to six reactor units. Deployment is expected in the 2030s, with formal contracts and site selection due later this year, pending regulatory approvals.

Prime Minister Sir Keir Starmer and his Czech counterpart, Prime Minister Petr Fiala, highlighted the deal at a London business roundtable, emphasising its benefits for energy security, job creation, and advanced manufacturing. It reinforces both nations' ambitions to position themselves as leaders in clean, nuclear-based power across Europe.

Rolls-Royce was bestowed as the UK's preferred bidder to develop small modular reactors earlier this year. Siemens Energy has already been chosen to supply essential turbine and generator components for the factory-built units, boosting UK-German industrial ties.

SMRs offer compelling advantages; they can be manufactured in controlled conditions and delivered en masse, reducing on-site construction delays and cost overruns. Once operational, each unit provides consistent, low-carbon baseload electricity over a lifespan of 60 years.

Critics of nuclear power caution that the technology remains unproven at scale and requires substantial upfront investment. However, supporters argue that SMRs are crucial for meeting net-zero emissions targets without reliance on intermittent renewables or fossil fuels.

This partnership forms part of the UK's broader "golden age of nuclear" strategy, which includes major investment in projects like the Sizewell C plant. It also highlights shifting EU–UK cooperation on energy security as global uncertainty intensifies.

In essence, this deal exemplifies a pragmatic, centre-right approach: bolstering national energy resilience, reviving manufacturing through advanced civil engineering, and forging strategic ties, all while reinforcing fiscal discipline and environmental goals.