# France's nuclear ambitions take shape with turbine deal

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Unlike Germany, France remains staunchly pro-nuclear.

French electricity giant EDF prepared Monday to close a deal for the nuclear turbines business of General Electric, the latest step in President Emmanuel Macron's plans to revive his country's atomic power drive.

Buying the turbines would give EDF a key component for the new EPR reactors it hopes to build in France while also wooing international clients looking to reduce reliance on fossil fuels for energy.

Talks with GE were announced last September, when Finance Minister Bruno Le Maire hailed a deal that "increases EDF's capacity to build our future energy system and fulfil our industrial ambitions for this strategic sector".

It would mark a return for the turbines business to France seven years after GE's purchase of the unit from Alstom—a controversial deal approved by Macron, who was finance minister at the time.

Details have not been released, though financial daily Les Echos said EDF would pay $273 million (236 million euros), of which $73 million is assumed debt, if approved by the board of the state-controlled firm late Monday.

EDF's board of directors met on Monday, several sources told AFP.

However, the company was not expected to formalise a takeover on Monday and would await the signing of a memorandum of understanding before communicating further, added one source who asked not to be named.

If announced in the coming days, a deal would come ahead of a trip by Macron on Thursday to Belfort, in eastern France, an industrial basin that is home to GE's main production site for its steam turbine systems.

He is expected to announce further details of a new nuclear push he insists is crucial for supplying zero-emission electricity as Europe moves to slow global warming and reduce its dependence on imported oil and natural gas.

That could see next-generation EPR2 reactors built in France in the coming years and the development of more affordable Small Modular Reactors (SMR), which could replace existing coal-fired plants.

EDF has said Scandinavian and Eastern European countries are interested in building SMR plants, but EU heavyweight Germany remains strongly opposed to nuclear power over safety and radioactive pollution risks.

France generates 70 percent of its electricity from a network of more than 50 reactors across the country, but many are nearing the end of their lifespan.

EDF is building its first EPR, a technology that heats highly pressurised water to power a steam turbine, at Flamanville in northwestern France, but the project has sustained multiple delays and cost overruns since its launch in 2007.

GE, for its part, has been shedding assets for several years in a bid to focus on its energy production businesses, which include nuclear fuel and reactors, as well as healthcare and aircraft engines.

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