THE EUROPEAN COMMUNITY

PRESS RELEASE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

EURATOM'S ECO REACTOR GOES CRITICAL AT ISPRA, ITALY

WASHINGTON, D. C., December 15 -- The ECO (Orgel Critical Assembly) reactor at Ispra, Italy has gone critical, it was announced yesterday in Brussels by the Commission of the European Atomic Energy Community.

This development means that Euratom's Orgel project of heavy water-moderated, organic liquid-cooled reactors has its first major research equipment at its disposal. Construction on the ECO reactor was begun in 1962 by a group of Community firms with plans drawn up by Euratom's technical departments. Construction and operation costs of the facility are financed from Euratom's research budget.

ECO was conceived as an experimental reactor to study heavy water-moderated and organic-cooled lattices. The reactor's fuel is metallic uranium, uranium oxide or carbide; and fluids other than organic liquids may also be used as coolants. The ECO reactor is designed to operate at a very low power (1 kilowatt), just above the critical threshold at which a nuclear reaction is sustained without any appreciable energy release.

A second Orgel reactor, the ESSOR (Orgel Test) reactor, is presently under construction and is expected to come into operation in 1967. Recent studies have shown that construction of a prototype Orgel reactor is feasible in the near future.

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