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BUSINESS

U.S. Moves Toward Supplying Romania with a New Style of Nuclear Plant.

The proposed deal, for a smaller and cheaper kind of nuclear plant, built by an American firm, could start a race to export small reactors.

By STANLEY REED

The United States said on Monday that it would supply Romania with a training simulator in preparation for building a new type of nuclear power generating plant in the country.

If an agreement on moving ahead with a power station is reached, Romania could become the first country in Europe, and perhaps in the world, to have such a plant, known as a small modular reactor. Designed to be less expensive and easier to build than traditional nuclear reactors, modular reactors have been proposed by several manufacturers.

The one in Romania would be built by NuScale Power, a start-up company based in Portland, Ore. The government announced that the plant would be built in Doicești, at the site of a shuttered coal-fired power plant about 55 miles northwest of Bucharest.

The arrangement was announced at a news conference held by a group of American officials and businesspeople visiting Bucharest, including David Turk, the deputy secretary of energy, with Romanian counterparts including Virgil-Daniel Popescu, the country's energy minister.

The United States, which in recent years has not played a major role in the construction of new nuclear plants overseas, would have an opportunity to take an early lead in what could be a new nuclear race with Europe and China.

France and Britain are also exploring building small nuclear reactors, but their programs appear less advanced.

NuScale's approach to nuclear energy involves constructing relatively small reactors in factories and then as-



NuScale Power, LLC.

A one-third-scale prototype that replicates the entire NuScale Power Module and reactor building cooling pool at the company's NuScale Integral System Test (NIST) Facility in Corvallis, Ore.

sembling groups of them at the actual site for generating power. The aim is to reduce costs as well as the time required for construction. Conventional modern nuclear plants can cost \$10 billion or more.

The plan involves building a power station composed of six of the modular units. The plant would generate 462 megawatts of electricity, making it the size of a medium-size conventional power station. Such a plant might cost around \$1.6 billion, according to figures

published by the U.S. Embassy in Bucharest, but NuScale said the plant's costs are still to be determined. The hope is to have it operating by the end of the decade.

A plan to build groups of smaller, less costly modular reactors.

Romania is phasing out coal, a politically dicey exercise that puts many jobs at risk. Romanian officials and NuScale executives say choosing a former coal site would save money by using some of the existing facilities, like electrical grid connections, and provide work for the coal plant's labor force.

For the coal communities, the nuclear plants could offer "rejuvenation, so to speak," said Cosmin Ghita, chief executive of Nuclearelectrica, a Romanian utility that operates the country's two existing nuclear power reactors at Cernavoda, about two hours east of Bucharest.

The simulator would be located at a university in Bucharest and used to train Romanians and others from the region to operate one of the reactors. The U.S. government would pay for it, in a sign of commitment to the deal.

In 2019, Romania broke off talks with China about supplying additional conventional reactors at Cernavoda and turned to the United States as the country's main nuclear partner. Although the reactors at Cernavoda are of Canadian design, Romanian officials say they are talking to American contractors about a role in building new ones.