

# FROM INFORMATION AND CONSULTATION TO CITIZEN INFLUENCE AND POWER

## 10-YEAR EVOLUTION IN PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT IN RADIOACTIVE WASTE MANAGEMENT

The OECD/NEA Forum on Stakeholder Confidence (FSC) was created in 2000 to promote the sharing of international experience in addressing the societal dimension of radioactive waste management. It explores means of ensuring an effective dialogue amongst all stakeholders and to strengthen confidence in decision-making processes. The working definition given to the term "stakeholder" is: Any actor – institution, group or individual – with an interest or with a role to play in the process. The FSC has documented a wealth of experience through topical sessions and studies and, in particular, through its many national workshops and community visits. Its publications, including those mentioned below, are available on the FSC website. The present flyer highlights the growing stakeholder empowerment in radioactive waste management observed since the inception of the Forum ten years ago.

### Background

National radioactive waste management programmes are in various phases of siting final management facilities and rely on different technical approaches for different categories of waste. In all cases, it is necessary for institutional actors and the potential or actual host communities to build a meaningful, workable relationship. Four FSC studies, based on the analysis of actual experience by practitioners and social scientists, furnish a detailed picture across the decade of how these relationships have been envisioned and built up.

- A 2003 report "*Public Information, Consultation and Involvement in radioactive waste management*" (based on a 1999-2002 survey) documents how waste management organisations developed their credibility and more effective means of communicating with technical and non-technical audiences.
- A 2004 report "*Learning and Adapting to Societal Requirements*" synthesises countries' experience of relationship-building.
- A 2007 study "*Fostering a Durable Relationship between a Waste Management Facility and its Host Community*" summarises the expectations for sustained improvements to the quality of life of the affected communities and host regions, beyond the endowment of immediate economic benefits.
- Finally, a 2010 study "*Partnering for Long-Term Management of Radioactive Waste*" (based on a

2008-09 survey), documents the approach taken in each country and the evolution of partnership arrangements.

**Openness, transparency, technical competence and procedural equity** are identified in the 2003 "*Public Information...*" report as necessary conditions for public acceptance of waste management programmes. The importance of those elements has been confirmed in the subsequent years.

In "*Learning and Adapting...*" (2004), the **partnership approach** is cited further as a practical method for effective collaboration with local communities and informed consent.

"*Fostering a Durable Relationship...*" (2007) highlights **innovations** in siting processes and in facility design that add value to the facility both in the short- and in the long-term. An FSC flyer, available online, summarises these findings.

"*Partnering for Long-term Management...*" (2010) defines further the basic components of the partnership approach: **volunteerism**, a form of **veto**, various administrative formats of **collaboration with communities**, and **community benefits**. An FSC flyer, available online, summarises how these components may contribute to positive outcomes of the dialogue.



## Comparative Findings across the Decade

**Collaboration.** In the early study many countries reported the establishment of local citizen committees, e.g. local liaison and information and monitoring groups. Their main tasks included conveying information to the inhabitants, airing community concerns and providing input to the decision-making process. In general, such committees had little effective influence on the decisions regarding site, waste management concept or facility design. The 2010 report observes that a variety of partnership organisations (e.g. NGOs, local government associations, units within or around local/regional governments) have been or are being set up in an increasing number of countries. Most often such organisations build their own expertise and influence the implementer's work. They also collect, process and disseminate information on the facility and its impacts, monitor other players' performance and advise local governments. The result of collaboration is mutual learning on the part of the community and the decision makers.

**Community benefits.** Community benefits include empowering measures, such as financial resources to pay the expenses of collaboration and to hire the communities' own experts, and socio-economic benefits aimed at compensating for potential losses and making host communities better off. The 2003 report did not explicitly address the issue of community benefits,

although in some cases it did give information about community empowerment measures (e.g. the funding of collaborative research in the USA). The 2010 publication reports a wide range of community benefits and it stresses that these benefits have to be integrated and adjusted to the needs of the host community. It also emphasises that community benefits have to contribute to the sustainable development of the affected region.

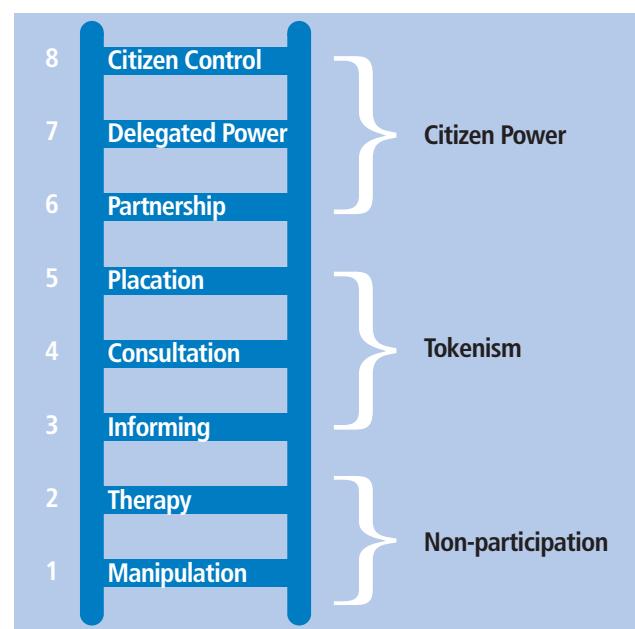
**Volunteerism.** At the time of the 2003 report, site selection processes based on volunteerism had already been launched in several countries. The site selection processes were only in their initial phases, however, and it was not clear if this approach would lead eventually to the identification of suitable sites. The 2010 publication observes that volunteerism has been applied in the majority of the investigated countries and that in most cases it appears successful in bringing the siting process to a satisfactory close.

**Veto arrangements.** The 2003 report investigated the impacts of formal veto rights granted to local or regional governments. It observed that such rights are likely to increase public confidence. The 2010 publication also analysed cases where veto power was assured to volunteer communities on only an informal basis. The study concludes, that whether formal or informal, when a veto right can be accorded it is an important factor in achieving local support.

## 10 Years On: A Leap from Tokenism to Real Participation

The "ladder of citizen participation" proposed and elaborated by Arnstein in 1969 provides a relevant framework to compare approaches or study evolution in public involvement (see figure). It can be observed that the focus on partnership in the survey responses published in 2010 is two rungs higher on the participation ladder than the focus on information and consultation reported in 2003, and it indicates an important leap from a form of "tokenism" towards a form of "citizen power".

At the higher rungs of the ladder power is reapportioned through negotiation between citizens and decision makers. They agree to share planning and decision-making responsibilities through such structures as joint policy boards, planning committees and mechanisms for resolving impasses.



IMPORTANT CHANGES HAVE TAKEN PLACE IN CITIZEN PARTICIPATION FOR RADIOACTIVE WASTE MANAGEMENT IN THE PAST DECADE: A SHIFT FROM INFORMATION AND CONSULTATION TOWARDS CITIZEN INFLUENCE AND POWER, AND A SHIFT FROM OVERT CONFLICT OR RESIGNED ACCEPTANCE TO VOLUNTEERING AND COLLABORATION BY LOCAL COMMUNITIES. OVERALL, THERE IS RECOGNITION OF THE LEGITIMACY OF COMMUNITY EMPOWERMENT MEASURES AND SOCIO-ECONOMIC BENEFITS, AND THERE EXIST NOW A GREAT VARIETY OF ADMINISTRATIVE FORMATS FOR COLLABORATION. NEW IDEALS AND BASES FOR COLLABORATION HAVE ALSO EMERGED. THESE ARE: MUTUAL LEARNING, ADDING VALUE TO THE HOST COMMUNITY/REGION, AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT.