

Nuclear Energy and Civil Society

RADIOACTIVE WASTE MANAGEMENT

FSC workshop in Hungary

The integration of waste management programmes into wider socio-political considerations is a major challenge for all waste management programmes. Through its Forum on Stakeholder Confidence (FSC), the RWMC provides member countries with opportunities to exchange information in this area as well as to exchange views with relevant stakeholders. The FSC continues to organise workshops in national context to provide a basis for helping the national stakeholder dialogue programmes and to gain insight into both country-specific and general aspects of the political, cultural and socio-economic framework. Six FSC workshops in national context have been organised thus far: in Finland (2001), Canada (2002), Belgium (2003), Germany (2004), Spain (2005) and Hungary (2006).

The sixth FSC workshop was held near Bataapáti, Hungary, the site where an underground repository for short-lived, low- and intermediate-level waste (LILW) will be built. Workshop participants observed an outstanding demonstration of trustful co-operation among stakeholders as well as the great trust the communities have in the implementing waste managing organisation, which has

been built up over 16 years of active engagement. The workshop proceedings will be published in due course.

FSC "value added" project

Traditionally, local benefits to be drawn from a radioactive waste management (RWM) facility are discussed in terms of hosting fees and socio-economic development packages (employment and infrastructure, for example). However, communities do not gain added value and sustainability through financial compensation and development opportunities only. Whilst those economic means are important, RWM projects also offer opportunities to improve well-being, consolidate knowledge, fulfil value ideals, elaborate community identity and image, and develop social relationships.

Based on the analysis of numerous stakeholders' input and FSC experience, an FSC report on "Added Value and Sustainability from a Radioactive Waste Management Facility" identified a number of basic elements for designing a facility that would favour building a sustainable relationship with a local community. The design elements include functional, cultural and physical features. The very process of working out the desired features of an RWM facility and site can also bring added value to the community. Social capital – networks, norms and trust – is built up, equipping the community to face other decisions and issues. Local stakeholders may also focus their work on community identity, image and profile. Even when not favourable to hosting an RWM facility, communities can use the opportunity to develop quality-of-life indicators and reflect on the direction they wish to take in coming years.

FSC project on organisational changes

Institutions with responsibilities for radioactive waste management must be able to accommodate organisational changes in order to carry out the long-term projects for which they are responsible. Institutions capable of achieving and maintaining stakeholder confidence will need focused efforts in the three main areas of organisational aspects, mission and behaviour. For the purpose of better understanding recent cultural and structural changes taking place within RWM organisations, the FSC launched a survey.

The survey indicates that important changes have recently taken place in the vast majority of the queried organisations. Changes in mission and main goals were observed in a few organisations, and changes in values and culture in most of them. Similar changes have been reported by implementers, regulators and policy makers. There are, however, remarkable variations among countries. These differences reflect not only idiosyncratic cultural and political traditions, but also variations regarding the stage of RWM programmes. Further investigations are necessary to determine the extent to which various factors, such as cultural context, political and social environment, legal



PURAM, Hungary

Above: Participants at the sixth FSC workshop, held near Bataapáti, Hungary.
Below: The site of the Bataapáti waste repository.



Attila Nagy, Index.hu, Hungary

and policy changes, and local aspects influence changes in RWM organisations.

Internet and e-communication

RWM organisations themselves seek to create trust and stable relations with various parts of society and therefore need to be proactive in their information and communication strategies towards stakeholders. In this respect, internet technologies appear to be a prime tool, and interactivity a major asset of web technology.

As part of the FSC meeting held in June 2006, member organisations' experience in the use of Internet-based communication has been addressed. This experience highlights the diversity of stakeholders and their perceptions and needs – media, institutions or local associations, young people, other individuals or groups of different generations and different locations – but also the diversity of communication objectives RWM organisations seek to achieve: publicising their corporate identity and area of expertise, informing the public at large as well as the media, and seeking to establish a dialogue with identified stakeholders on a specific issue.

Stakeholder confidence can be strengthened by making all relevant information available on the website in a transparent, open and clear manner. This requires trade-offs between exhaustive and complex information and oversimplification, but in any case socially contentious issues must be addressed. Electronic communication technologies can be a tool, among a range of others, to sustain strategies and to achieve broad-ranging objectives. However, building stakeholder confidence depends upon many communication practices among which the web and electronic platforms can play a very useful role, but cannot entirely replace people-to-people exchanges.

STAKEHOLDERS AND RADILOGICAL PROTECTION

The recognition of the need for and usefulness of stakeholder involvement in decision making has enlarged the focus of radiological protection in recent years. The CRPPH has for some time devoted a significant part of its programme of work to stakeholder involvement, primarily through the series of workshops held in 1998, 2001 and 2003 in Villigen, Switzerland. A key result of these workshops suggests that when stakeholders are involved in radiological risk assessment and management, and science is brought to the service of "inclusive" decision-making processes, the resulting decisions can be of higher quality and greater sustainability than had stakeholders, radiological protection scientists and other professionals not worked together with decision makers towards a solution.

A key area of application of the stakeholder involvement knowledge developed through the above-mentioned work is that of rehabilitation of contaminated lands and facilities, which often involves significant stakeholder concerns. Work to rebuild the lives of those living in the areas affected by the Chernobyl accident is a prime example of this, and with 2006 marking 20 years since the accident, the CRPPH revisited this case publishing a new

report entitled *Stakeholders and Radiological Protection: Lessons from Chernobyl 20 Years After*. While clearly not all of this experience is applicable to other circumstances in other countries, much can be gained by studying its stakeholder involvement aspects.

This report describes how radiological protection has been adapted to meet the needs of people still affected by the accident or, in some cases, the lessons learnt from this. The report strives to demonstrate how a technical discipline, such as radiological protection, can adjust to be more effective in meeting the needs of ordinary people forced to live in extraordinary circumstances. As such, the report goes beyond supporting the work of the CRPPH, and is stimulating reading for anyone with an interest in planning for emergencies involving widespread contamination and their aftermath.



The CRPPH also remains involved in other key discussions. Following the International Radiological Protection Association (IRPA) session on stakeholder involvement in May 2004, the Spanish Society for Radiological Protection (SERP) consulted the French and the UK Societies to explore opportunities for organising a follow-up international workshop aiming at promoting stakeholder engagement among radiological protection professionals. The three societies agreed to hold three workshops on this important issue in 2005 (in Spain), 2006 (in France) and 2007 (in the United Kingdom). The CRPPH and the NEA Secretariat have actively participated in the first two of these meetings, and plan to attend the third. One of the general conclusions from these two meetings is that the radiological protection community, under the auspices of the IRPA, should develop a "Code of Ethics" for stakeholder involvement, or a "declaration of commitment" from radiological protection experts entering into stakeholder discussions describing the processes and rules to which they are willing to commit. The CRPPH is strongly placed to contribute to this work.

As noted earlier, the CRPPH is also carrying out a study to see how various national radiological protection organisations are managing to incorporate stakeholder involvement most effectively in their processes, and what, if any, structural implications this may have. This study will provide useful elements for debating the way forward at the 50th anniversary meeting of the CRPPH in May 2007.

NUCLEAR REGULATORS AND THE PUBLIC

Information officers from regulatory bodies meet once a year under the auspices of the Working Group on Public Communication of Nuclear Regulatory Organisations (WGPC) to exchange information and experience related to communication with the public and to carry out related studies. The two main topics discussed in 2006 were the challenges associated with public communication during abnormal situations and the publicity given to regulatory decisions, together with the preparation of a workshop on the transparency of regulatory activities to be held in Japan in May 2007. For further information regarding the activities of the WGPC, see page 15.