The appropriate management of radioactive waste and public perceptions: the role of Parliamentary Committees of Inquiry

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In Italy, the Parliament establishes Commissions to examine in depth the draft Laws and to investigate on matters of public interest.

In particular, the Inquiry Commissions act with the same power and limits of the judiciary authority.
The analysis and prevention of illicit behaviour plays a relevant role in the risk control.
In fact, inadequate behaviours, aimed to pursue individual interests or characterized by lack of expertise or superficiality, may have relevant implications on the safety and on the protection of public health.
The Inquiry Commissions operate with the purpose to adequately follow up relevant legal actions, by dealing in depth with the specific issues, so to provide the Parliament with their findings, for legislative purposes or for possibly advising the Government, to support Judiciary, to openly interact with public and stakeholders.
Many kinds of subjects are requested for interrogation or ask to be listened (operators, environmental associations, authorities ...)

The interest of the waste Commission is addressed to the general waste cycle, including radwastes
Events that had a large impact on the public opinion in Italy:

- Nuclear accidents (Chernobyl-Fukushima)
- The attempt to force a decision on the site for the final radwaste disposal following 2001 terroristic attaches

Consequences were:
- Referendums
- Closing NPPs
- Protests leading to changing approach to Final Repository siting procedure
The dismantling process is taking long time for several reasons, and there are several aspects we believe public should be **timely** informed on:

- The **relevant costs** incurred by citizens for maintaining adequate safety and radiation protection on several sites
- The real need for a RW repository, for radwaste which is not only coming from the nuclear sites,
- All the relevant aspects to develop own decisions.
Delays in decommissioning have several drawbacks but can offer opportunities, for instance thanks to:

- radioactive **decays**, 
- development of more **effective technologies**, 
- striving to better **approaching the public**, 
- new awareness for **environment** (reuse, recycle...) and **future generation safety**
A new challenge: the map of suitable areas for National Radwaste repository is going to be published and the selection procedure to be started.
The Commission makes several efforts to inform and investigate in order to:

- Stimulate operators, institutions and authorities to function properly,

- Openly and transparently inform public on the real occurrences,
- Make everybody understand that problems are **tackled** to find the proper solution,
- Contribute to the perception of **Institutions’ credibility**,,
- Avoid deleterous political **prejudices**
But the Commission is conscious that:
• the subject of radwaste is **complex**,  
• decisions are rarely perceived to take public and **stakeholders views** into account,  
• **new generation experts** have to be trained,  
• **media** should be highly involved in the process.
Many positive results came out from the action of the Commission in the conventional wastes management and some experiences are useful also for radwaste. An example in the conventional waste area:

An amendment in a budget Law for incentives to the companies available to make use of mixed plastics, given the positive experiences the Commission had the opportunity to note during its surveys.
Radwastes – some items to the attention of the Commission

• Possible bugs in the overall institutional frame,

• Delays in the issuance of implementation norms required by Law,

• Delays in the realisation of works relevant to the radwaste management (irregular procurements, corruptions...),

• Obstacles to the coherent and homogeneous implementation and control of safety rules in the national territory,

• Possible anomalies in the management of large quantities of radwastes,
• Appropriate management of sites clean up where large contaminations occurred (es. melting furnaces),
• Careless behaviours in the medical applications of radioactive sources,
• Anomalous management in the use of radioactive sources and in the non energetic radwaste management
An example of the Commission action in the radwaste management

A temporary storage facility for medical, industrial and research radwaste, in a very run-down condition after prosecution of the owner.
The Commission realized that the insufficient actions were taken for bringing it in a safe condition, performed an inspection and strongly recommended the Government and all the responsible parties to urgently perform appropriate actions. The settlement works are now in an advanced phase.
From the past experience of the Commission, we believe that a significant contribution can be given for the future challenges, in particular in improving the effectiveness of the Institutional subjects and in catching the transparency motions from the public.
THANK YOU FOR THE ATTENTION!