

## Current strategy for NRO communication- Europe

The regulator's day to day  
Communication as the facilitator for  
a credible Crisis Communication

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## How to become a reliable information source for public & media?

- > by managing a clear, coherent communication strategy, reflected in our daily attitude & communication
- > by showing every day we deserve to be seen as trustworthy, objective, reliable

## Content

- WGPC – Federal Agency for Nuclear Control (FANC)
- **The way we choose to go:** Strategy & most used instruments up to today by the WGPC members (WGPC survey 2010)
- **The way we continue:** How we cope with public expectations?
- Societal context: needs & opportunities
- How do we respond to public expectations?
- Our opportunities & challenges for the future

## FANC

- Federal Agency for Nuclear Control
- Mission: **protection of population, workers and environment against negative effects of ionising radiation**
- Role: independent & objective advice to Belgian government on safety & security matters in the nuclear- control of nuclear sector-follow up of radiological situation
- ISO 9001/2000 certified
- +/- 150 employees

# The way we chose to go

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## The WGPC's sub Working Group on Transparency (2008-2010)

- Results of the NEA WGPC survey -> 18 countries participated
- Objective : To establish **good practice guidance for NRO's** on implementation of transparency in order **to promote public confidence and consistency of practice** across Regulators, where appropriate

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## Information disclosure, transparency & the legal position: where do we stand?

- All responding countries (18) had a legal basis for disclosure of information
- Practices on proactive disclosure of information vary
- Most NROs interact with or oblige industry (licensees) to be more transparent
- The FOI Act/ Aarhus provides guidance on how information should be disclosed -> not always clear view on how to do this
- Most responding countries have a 4 week (30 day) timeframe for disclosure of documents
- For sensitive (security )information most countries redact/withhold parts of rather than a whole document

## Routine Access to Information

- All NRO's use the internet and the media as it is recognised as the most timely and direct way to communicate with the public. The majority use the web to publish information on specific events/incidents ->becoming point of reference
- There is a growing trend to release information about regulatory decisions -> looking for a coherent approach national/international level
- The majority of responders do not proactively publish information about security matters -> balance security/transparency
- Half of those responding disclose peer reviews such as IRRS mission reports, some do for the inspection reports
- Many NRO's produce annual reports aimed at the public on their activities
- The majority of responding countries publish information about INES and how it works -> after incident/accident in the shortest of time (2H)
- Good practices of use of social media still are a challenge, the use is promoted but still imited

# Public Engagement

- Most NROs have stakeholder engagement processes but the form and level of public involvement varies from country to country -> **looking for resources!**
- There are a number of innovative methods of engagement being deployed or piloted by NROs (**media campaign about protection measures in case of emergency, agreements about communication priorities, expositions, ...**)
- Consultation is a common activity but is usually the responsibility of Government or the operator, not the NRO - Most NROs are not required to consult on regulatory process -> **international legal frame !**
- Some formal engagement meetings take place but this varies - Informal meetings are used by most



## Using the media as a communications channel to access the wider public

- All NROs consider that a **permanent, proactive, transparent communication** is important way to gain public confidence
- All countries try to be proactive with the media: **in the meantime most NROs have one or more well appointed spokespeople**
- Most media activity is **reactive** as it is generally considered more difficult to attract media interest in good practice in 'no accident' time
- Some countries have guidelines for communicating with the press
- Most NROs organize media training but how this is done varies



# The way to continue

**... or how the daily regulator's communication approach is the key element for an efficient crisis communication**

## Societal Context: some facts

- 'radioactivity' goes hand in hand with an **extreme risk perception\***
- Sector known as **'secretive'** and thus not trusted
- General **knowledge** about radioactivity stays **below mediocre\***
- Context stays polarised and is often (strongly) **ideologised and influenced by** discussion about nuclear energy\*
- Most **trusted sources** by public are scientists (46%) and **nuclear safety authorities** (30%)\*
- **Media are main information source** for the general public in case of an incident, (TV 72%, newspapers 40%, internet 27%, radio 23%, magazines 18, schools & universities 7%)\*
- To much use of **'specialist language'** gives opportunities for many different interpretations (confusion)
- Generally little interest when no incident/accident
- **Gap between technical and common language:** mSv and Bq were only mentioned in +/- 10% of the newspaper articles

## How do we respond: The Regulator's opportunities & challenges

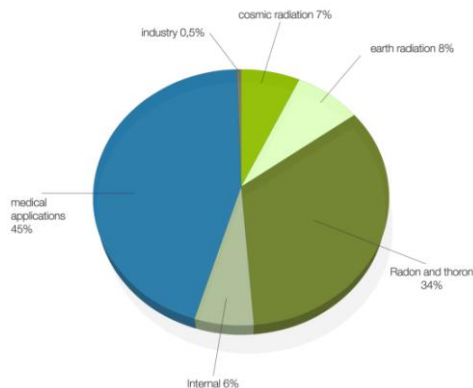
- Our mission: protection of population, workers and environment
- Our status of neutrality and objectivity
- Competences contain more than safety in nuclear power plants (medical, natural, cosmic, ...) -> many opportunities, many subjects

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## Our strength: many subjects concerning daily life



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## Already a long way behind us, still many challenges to take... (1)

- Transparency and openness
  - > how open and transparent are we? Still looking for a good balance: communicating everything, every report is not necessarily = transparency; what about balance security/safety, when are we over-communicating?...
  - > how understandable is the language we use?
  - > do we communicate what people want to know or what we want to tell: which is the right balance?
- Communication plans
  - > where do we stand, what about internal communication, organisational culture (every representative = ambassador)

## Already a long way behind us, still many challenges to take...(2)

- Stakeholdersmanagement: set up an optimal communication between all levels : all concerned authorities, operators, media, in our own team, with NGO's, with scientists..., define competences and responsibilities
- Know how to use social media and social networks
  - Help population to understand, knows how to evaluate diffused information, knows the most important actors, knows how to act in case of incidents and accidents, prepare messages, comparisons,...and use them!



## Already a long way behind us, still many challenges to take...

### (3)

- Media relations: how much do we invest in media relations, do they know whom they can contact, are we available at any time, is there a clearly, appointed spokes person, do we communicate in an effective, easy-to-use way, language? How fast do we respond to their questions? Do we seize all opportunities we have?

## Conclusion

- Crisis communication demands reliability, trustworthiness, prompt reactions, well trained spokesperson(s)
- -> our day to day approach is the best, daily exercise to prove on a continual basis we deserve this trust!

## Sources

- *Special Eurobarometer 324: Europeans and nuclear safety, 2010*
- *Sck.cen Press barometer about Fukushima reporting in Italy, Belgium and Slovenia),2012*
- *Commendable Practices on transparency in Nuclear Regulatory Communication with the Public. NEA/CNRA/R(2011)3, january 2011*

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