

RISCOM Process

Case Study Application of the RISCOM Model in the Czech Republic

Country Czech Republic

Date of Latest Update: August 2013

Background Information

At the end of 2005, areas at six sites were selected in the Czech Republic for geological and borehole surveys and for further characterization as part of the site selection program for a deep geological repository for spent nuclear fuel. Many communities protested against these developments, resulting in a de facto moratorium. When this was about to expire, it was realised that a neutral platform for discussion across a broad spectrum of stakeholders was needed, that was acceptable to all participants. In order to provide such a platform, the RISCOM Model was applied, involving the active involvement of a range of stakeholders, including local and national communities.

Phase of decision making process

Site screening for a deep geological repository

Formal framework of decision making process

The fundamental decision-making framework for radioactive waste management in the Czech Republic is structured according to the Atomic Act and regulations of the State Office for Nuclear Safety. According to the Act the state is responsible for the safe disposal of all radioactive waste. To ensure that related activities take place, the Radioactive Waste Repository Authority (RAWRA) was established in 1997. The long-term policy of the state is formalized in a basic strategic document entitled “Concept of Radioactive Waste and Spent Nuclear Fuel Management in the Czech Republic”. According to this concept, construction of a deep geological repository for the direct disposal of spent fuel and other high-level waste is considered the only realistic option for a final solution based on the current state of knowledge. Two suitable sites should be selected before 2015 and included in area development plans. After a confirmatory underground laboratory, construction of the repository should be started after 2050, with operation targeted for 2065. [This concept was revised in 2012, with altered dates].

Objectives of process

According to the RISCOM Reference Group Agreement, the principal aim was to increase the common awareness on all aspects of the problems of the choice of a suitable locality for the radioactive waste and spent nuclear fuel repository, in order to increase the conditions for transparency and active involvement of the general public in the decision-making process. Attention would also be paid to providing the general public with the possibility of inspecting the project activities and the results obtained.

Which tool was used?

The hearing format with stretching was implemented to a limited degree by a stakeholder panel, supported by a professional moderator.

Status

Complete

Objectives and outcomes of stakeholder engagement

Objectives were achieved, but this was only the very first step in the long term dialogue required. It will be important to increase the activities of relevant state institutions in communicating with the public and to strengthen the political responsibility. Creating a long-term concept with clearly defined rules and requirements

concerning the process of siting the deep geological repository is important. The long-term concept should be prepared on the basis of discussion and consensus of all stakeholders and it should have support in legislation.

After the ARGONA project, a national working group on dialogue was formed that had as one of its tasks to propose supporting legislation.

The RISCUM model proved to be a very suitable tool for initiation of dialogue among all stakeholders in the area of nuclear waste management.

Involved Stakeholders

Reference Group members were invited to the hearings, as were attendees at other meetings.

Implementer of the participation process details

The process was part of the ARGONA Project, the Reference Group was chaired by Nuclear Research Institute (NRI), and the working group had representatives of NRI (CR), RAWRA (CR), Karita Research (Sweden) and Wenergy AB (Sweden). The Reference Group had 12 members. Meetings and hearings had independent moderators.

Financing

Details not available

Points to consider

It is critical to secure the legitimacy of the RISCUM Reference and Working Groups outside the project. Election of members should be transparent. The hearing format with stretching was implemented to a limited degree by a stakeholder panel, supported by a professional moderator. In future the stretching can be further developed. The structured dialogue format was presented to the Reference Group at the very beginning of the project. However, time constraints limited the amount to which this feature of the model could be implemented. This can be done in a more systematic and comprehensive way in future applications, which could bring more organization and order into the debate about site selection issues. During the project some form of institutionalization of the RISCUM process was discussed as a possibility.

Further tools used in this case study

In parallel with the RISCUM Process, three different meetings were held, referred to as a Focused Science Shop, a Consensus Panel and an Interaction Panel. They differed in terms of the objectives and character of the meetings and selection of participants more than in the conduct of the meetings. For example, the Focused Science Shop was held to increase awareness amongst the public of actual and potential effects of radioactive and toxic wastes and to clarify questions and uncertainties that people might have in this field. The Interaction Panel discussed if and how stakeholders should be involved in the process of formulating the safety case. Even though these meetings were not formally part of the RISCUM Process, they were seen to support activities that took place within the same context of dialogue in the Czech Republic.