

## Citizen Advisory Group Asse “Begleitgruppe Asse-II (a2b)”

**Case Study: Closure of Repository Asse-II**

**Country: Germany**

**Due date: March, 12<sup>th</sup> , 2013**

### Background Information:

From 1965 till 1978 radioactive waste was disposed in the Asse-II repository operated that time as a research mine. But it faces several problems e.g. the danger of flooding in case of an increasing brine inflow and the danger of a collapse due to the instabilities caused by disaggregation and conversion. In 1997, it was decided to close the mine. Since 2009 three options for closure were discussed namely the backfilling, the internal relocation of the waste packages and the retrieval of the waste packages.

As part of the procedure developed for the closure of the former Asse LLW repository, which addresses a number of problems caused by brine inflow and instability, a “Citizens Advisory Group” was established, consisting of regional level stakeholders from the fields of politics and administration, together with environmental groups and citizens’ initiatives, as well as representatives of the relevant ministries and the operator. The Advisory Group is in turn supported by an Expert Group.

### Phase of decision making process

In the beginning of 2010 the operator (since 2009 Federal Office for Radiation Protection-BfS) has chosen the retrieval as the favoured option for closure involving the stakeholder in the decision. Presently the feasibility of the chosen option is checked for which the operator needs further investigations on-site. The approval for these investigations was given in summer 2012. Within the investigation a first borehole was drilled into the salt above the chamber 7. The final decision for the closure option will be done with regards to the outcomes of the investigations.

### Formal framework of decision making process

Since 2009 Closure under German Atomic Energy Act which requires a license based on the “plan approval procedure” including formal public involvement. The public involvement process in form of a Citizens Advisory Group and an Expert Group at present stage is informal, initiated End of 2007 from responsible authorities (Federal Ministry for the Environment-BMU, and Ministry for the Environment of Lower-Saxony – NMU, Federal Ministry of Education and research -BMBF)

### Objectives of the process

safe closure of the repository Asse-II with involvement of local stakeholder

### Which tool was used?

A Citizens’ Advisory Group” was established, consisting of regional level stakeholders from the fields of politics and administration, together with environmental groups and citizens’ initiatives, as well as representatives of the relevant ministries and the operator. The

Advisory Group is in turn supported by an Expert Group. The Citizen Advisory Group here consists of ± 30 stakeholders who meet regularly with representatives of the implementer and the authorities, with the latter having only observer status. The aim of the Group is to inform the public and communicate their concerns to the implementer and the authorities, in order to enable them to consider them in their decisions.

Status: Ongoing

## Objectives and outcomes of stakeholder engagement

Objectives:

- To bring the discussion on a more objective level;
- To accompany the decisions of the responsible ministries;
- To gain trust and acceptance between stakeholder, operator and in the general public;
- To ensure transparency through well documented professional judgements;
- To make sure that the requirements of the Atomic Energy Law are considered;
- Public relations including to inform the general public;
- High level of recognition in general public, relevant stakeholders included;
- To bundle the regional interests.
- Since January 2012 the Citizens Advisory Group tried to bring a new Asse Act on the way with the aim to fix the retrieval as the favored option for closing the Asse disposal and with the aim to accelerate the process of retrieval.

Outcomes:

- The Asse Act was adopted by the German Federal Parliament in February, 2013.
- Since 2009 the closure of the Asse is being conducted under the Atomic Energy Act.
- Since 2009 the Federal Office for Radiation Protection-BfS is responsible for closing the Asse mine. The BfS publishes documents and news on its website ([www.endlager-asse.de](http://www.endlager-asse.de))
- The Citizens Advisory Group succeeded in bundling the regional interests
- The working atmosphere within the Citizens Advisory Group is good, the trust between the stakeholders is at least partly improved.
- The general public is informed through the Website of the Citizens Advisory Group ([www.asse-2-begleitgruppe.de](http://www.asse-2-begleitgruppe.de)), Press Release and articles and interviews in newspaper, radio or tv.
- 

## Involved Stakeholders

Representatives of the operator (1 BfS, 2 Asse GmbH) and the responsible authorities (1 BMU, 1 BMBF, 1NMU) have an observatory status without voting power. 4 experts selected by the Citizen Advisory Group, 1 (KIT) selected by BMU. Elected representatives of the affected region (e.g. 2 representatives of district administration, 4 representatives of different political parties, 4 mayors of nearby villages and one NGO)

## Implementer of the participation process details

Initiated by responsible authorities (BMU, NMU, BMBF), sponsored by BMU, The Citizen Advisory Group organised by administrative district Wolfenbuettel

### **Financing**

The participants of the Citizens Advisory Group work on a honorary basis. The management of the Citizens Advisory Group is financed by the administrative district Wolfenbüttel ( one 50% part-time job). The Federal Ministry for the Environment finances the Expert Group.

### **Points to consider**

In the beginning, growing separation of voting members of the Citizen Advisory Group a2b and the ones without voting power. Later the interaction between all members became trustworthy and good. However, the members with voting power meet in additional closed meeting of the so called "Small Citizens Advisory Group", mostly before the meetings of the regular Advisory Group. These meeting are used to internally discuss issues.

It has to be noticed that the interaction between recommendations of Advisory Group and formal decision making process is not regulated and the rules of participation were not sufficiently agreed.

### **Further tools used in this case study**

Website, different printed media, information center, Mobil Display Center, Public meetings, interviews (all mainly initiated by operator) , Expert Group "Arbeitsgruppe-Optionen Rückholung" earlier "Arbeitsgruppe Optionenvergleich (AGO)" with the aim to support the Citizen Advisory Group BGA-II