Expert Group AGO

Case Study: Closure of Repository Asse-II

Country: Germany

Due date: March, 12th, 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 the Expert Group AGO ("Arbeitsgruppe Optionen Rückholung" earlier "Arbeitsgruppe Optionenvergleich ").

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-_MU, 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?

The Expert Group consists of several experts. In this case some of them were nominated by interested regional authorities.

Status: ongoing

Objectives and outcomes of stakeholder engagement

Objectives are:

- To support the Citizen Advisory Group "a2b";
- To accompany critically the closure of the repository/the work of the operator;

Outcomes are:

- Trust between participants themselves and between operator and experts improved.
- More transparency: documents of operator mostly available for Expert Group,
- documented professional judgement;
- High level of trust in results of Expert group because Stakeholder could influence the composition of Expert group;
- Comments of Expert Group considered by operator.

Involved Stakeholders

Representatives of the operator (BfS, Asse GmbH) and the responsible authorities (BMU, BMBF, NMU) have observer status without voting power. 5 experts selected by Citizen Advisory Group , 3 from KIT

Implementer of the participation process details

Initiated by responsible authorities (BMU, NMU, BMBF), sponsored by BMU, project leader Karlsruhe Technology Institute (KIT) commissioned by BMU

Financing

The participants of the Citizens Advisory Group work on a honorary basis. The managment 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.

Further tools used in this case study

Website, different printed media, information centre, Info Mobil, Public meetings, interviews (all mainly initiated by operator) , Citizen Advisory Group a2b