

## Focus Groups

**Case Study** Licencing of a LILW Repository at Saligny

**Country** Romania

**Date of Latest Update:** August 2013

### Background Information

The existing subsurface repository Baitha Bihor in the Apuseni Mountains has been in use since 1985 as a national institutional waste repository for LILW and will be remediated and restored. Therefore a new subsurface repository is to be constructed especially due to nuclear power plant wastes. A potential site has been identified within the municipality of Saligny, near to the Cernavoda NPP.

### Phase of decision making process

A communication programme with the local community was performed by the national implementer (2008 – 2010) mainly based on presentations, leaflets, and meetings with common people. The final decision was expected by a large consultation of citizens, probably by referendum. A second communication programme, started in 2012, is intended to increase the public participation and public knowledge on the issues. In the first phase the public involvement consists of a series of Focus Groups, which began in October 2012, with subsequent meetings in 2013. The purpose is to discuss the issues associated with the authorisation to construct the facility.

### Formal framework of decision making process

The license for construction is to be issued by the Nuclear Regulatory Body. According to the legislation, a precondition for the siting license is to obtain an environmental permit. For a near surface repository the environmental permit is granted by the national environmental authority. The environmental permit procedure includes the EIA process. In accordance with EU directives and the Aarhus Convention, as ratified in Romanian legislation, the general public is to be consulted as part of the EIA process and environmental authorities' approval procedure. Consultations include public debates, responding at public inquiries, etc. The EIA process approval also includes a transboundary consultation in accordance with the Espoo Convention, also ratified in Romania.

According to current Romanian law, the siting of the repository should be approved by a Parliamentary law and the construction should be approved by a Governmental decision. Both approvals are based on the licenses and permits issued by the authorities. According to the law, the national waste disposal organization must develop a communication programme linked to the development of the repository.

From the local perspective the approval of the authorization for the construction is the responsibility of the local Council. Due to the long term consequences, the local Council is determined to involve the whole community as much as possible, probably through a local referendum. A prerequisite of this decision is to develop a relevant information dissemination process.

### Objectives of process

The objective is to discuss the impact of the repository and to prepare for a final license decision. Also the focus-group investigations produced recommendations for the implementer (AN&DR) as to how to adapt the communication programme to the real needs of the citizens.

### **Which tool was used?**

At least three Focus Group meetings were proposed. The first one took place in October 2012. The second and the third were run in June 2013. A discussion of the results of the 3 focus groups was planned for July 2013 in the meeting of Romanian Stakeholders Group.

### **Status**

Ongoing

### **Objectives and outcomes of stakeholder engagement**

The objectives of the Focus Groups were: Understanding of local concerns, learning, enhanced transparency, improved public trust, and public understanding.

### **Involved Stakeholders**

The first focus group includes the mayor, the deputy and 9 members of the local council. The composition of the second focus group consisted of 10 citizens with relevant influence on the common citizens (priests, teachers, medical doctors, clerks). The third focus had 11 common citizens randomly selected by using some demographics criteria (gender, occupation, level of education).

### **Implementer of the participation process**

INR

### **Financing**

INR effort (to set up the methodology and run the focus groups) was covered by IPPA project. Future public meetings will be covered by National Nuclear and for Radioactive Wastes Agency (implementer of the repository) funds.

### **Points to consider**

There is a lack of continuity in the AN&DR local community communication programme. Also due to political changes both at national and local level some difficulties were present. At the start of the tool implementation process, initial contact was made with the mayor of Saligny, but after local elections a new mayor was appointed and the process had to start again.

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

Public meeting with presentations

The final decision will be based on a referendum or a final debate (panel, consensus conference etc.) to be decided by Local Council.

### **Contact details (if required)**

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