

RISCOM Reference Group

Case Study: Expansion of LILW repository in Mochovce **Country: Slovakia**

Date of Latest Update: August 2013

Background Information:

Slovakia operates 2 NPP with 4 units, another 2 are under decommissioning and 2 more units are under construction. Since 2001, a LLW repository in Mochovce has been in operation, and construction of deep geological repository in Slovakia is planned according to the 'Strategy for the back-end of the nuclear cycle'.

When previous siting activities for nuclear facilities in Slovakia were conducted, public participation was not legally required in the decision making process. Therefore there is no experience with communication of nuclear safety issues with the communities outside the so-called "microregions" around nuclear sites. This lack of experience can have significant influence on near future deep geological repository siting procedures.

Obligatory public hearings have been organized during Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) procedures and Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) procedures associated with the development of new nuclear facilities for waste storage or processing on the existing nuclear sites. Limited public discussion was held with very limited impact on the projects themselves. The effectiveness of this kind of public participation is limited and takes place late in the licensing process, therefore a need for a new model of participation has arisen.

Within the IPPA project it was planned to establish a RISCOM Reference Group which would be involved in the future engagement processes associated with RAW management in the Mochovce region. The region surrounding the surface repository site in Mochovce was selected to be an IPPA focus territory as result of stakeholder activities that emerged there during the EIA processes concerning the proposed storage facility for institutional wastes and additional enlargement projects at the surface disposal facility.

Stakeholders have been interested in improving communication with the operator of the repository and in improving their participation in future decision making processes. Despite this, the current EIA processes are already in their final stages. Relevant past experience demonstrates a real need for improvement in the communication processes in the future, as well as a need for better understanding of the possibilities to influence decision making and even the process itself.

Phase of decision making process

The EIA processes related to the enlargement of the national LILW repository and the construction of a VLLW repository at the Mochovce site was in its final stage as of the time of writing of this case study in autumn 2013.

Formal framework of decision making process

Enlargement of the LILW repository at Mochovce is regarded as a significant change to the original project, therefore a new EIA process was required. An obligation for public involvement in EIA processes was established by Act No. 127/1994 Coll. on environmental impact assessment, which has been in force since 1994. National as well as international consultations were required by the Ministry of Environment. After the agreement of the Ministry was obtained, permission was granted for construction of the facility.

The IPPA Reference Group only started work at the end of this EIA process, but before the final

decision, taking into account the need for discussion and consultation in future actions.

Objectives of the process

One objective of the IPPA Project is to create favorable conditions for wide and effective public participation in future decision-making processes related to the Slovak geological repository development program. Planned objectives include an enhanced quality of future decision-making, increased transparency, building improved trust and understanding between the RWM implementer and stakeholders, enhanced capacity building/learning and detailed discussion of the issue in order to create new ideas.

Which tool was used?

The RISCOM Reference Group. A kick-off meeting with stakeholders took place in May 2012, and two more meetings had been held by June 2013.

Status: Ongoing

Objectives and outcomes of stakeholder engagement

The main objective of the RISCOM Reference Group was to create a space for open and safe discussion between stakeholders and implementer and increase the capabilities of both for future dialogue.

Outcomes:

Continuity and good will from real stakeholder engagement have to be guaranteed and supported by the operator/developer of the facility, otherwise interest in cooperation and participation in group work by stakeholders and NGOs will decrease.

A focus on the Reference Group objectives and its purpose are clearly needed.

Involved Stakeholders

Representatives of the Regional environmental authority are invited, as well as regional municipalities' association representatives. Local municipalities and citizens, if interested, are also members of the Reference Group.

The national Greenpeace office has also been invited to join the process, as this is the only NGO currently dealing with nuclear issues in Slovakia. The waste management organization (JAVYS) has also been a partner for discussion, and representatives of the National Nuclear Fund have participated in some meetings.

Implementer of the participation process

The IPPA Partners, namely DECOM (a Slovak nuclear engineering and consultancy company) and the Matej Bel University in Banská Bystrica (MBU), guaranteed the work of the RISCOM Reference Group as part of the IPPA project, and organised and facilitated the work.

Financing

To date the meetings have been financed from IPPA project budget (and this will continue until the end of 2013). The costs are expected to be 100 Euros per meeting.

Points to consider

Potential pitfalls are:

- A lack of interest from the stakeholders and repository operator
- Conflict of interests of some representatives of relevant stakeholders;
- Political nomination of some stakeholders can lead to frequent variation of representatives present at meetings, which can negatively influence the continuation of the RG activities;
- A lack of experience on both sides (implementer as well as participants) with informal “safe space” processes.

To be considered:

- Flexibility is needed to organize the events outside typical working hours; as local stakeholders can only be involved after work (i.e. stakeholders are not professional NGOs, but rather informal activists).
- Since the program for deep geological disposal of high level waste has not been started yet the RISCUM Reference Group established within the IPPA project focusses on low-and intermediate level waste, in particular the enlargement of the Mochovce facility. But this public involvement started very late in the process, when the EIA processes are in their final stage. That might be a reason why the interest of stakeholders in participating is rather low.

Further tools used in this case study

- Bilateral consultation, opinion survey, roundtable discussion
- Interviews with Key persons
- Focus groups
- Seminar on Aarhus convention