

Workshops

Case Study: Construction of a LILW repository at Krško Vrbina

Country: Slovenia

Date of Last Update: September 2013

Background Information:

In 2009, the Vrbina site in Krško municipality was selected as the location for a LILW repository by adoption of a Governmental Decree. Only a few months later, at the beginning of March 2010, ARAO decided to cease the activities of the local partnerships in the Krško and in Brežice municipalities which were formed to ensure citizen involvement and participation in decision-making during site selection. At the same time as this decision, Krško municipality agreed, claiming that the Krško partnership needed to be modified and reshaped. Brežice municipality did not support the termination officially (as indicated by a special decision of Brežice council that the local partnership should continue to function) but did not adopt any other formal solution with regard its continuation.

The cessation of activities was in line with the Agreements signed at the beginning of the local partnerships, but many stakeholders did not agree with this decision and demanded further involvement. Within the IPPA project further possibilities for stakeholder involvement have been explored and several workshops held. At the time of writing (September 2013) activities are directed at consultation and exchange of opinions with former partnership members and have recently been organized by the University of Ljubljana. The responsible authorities show little interest in restarting a stakeholder involvement process.

Phase of decision making process

The Vrbina site was selected in December 2009 and was confirmed by a Governmental Decree. Since then, detailed site investigations have taken place, although progress since 2010 has been very slow due to problems with ARAO financing to a lack of interest in coordinating public involvement and participation in the decision-making.

Formal framework of decision-making process

The site selection is completed and the site is approved. Now a construction license is needed. A plan has been adopted by ARAO in which the repository would receive this by 2016 and the repository would be constructed by 2018. Due to serious delays in all necessary activities over the past 3 years, ARAO is now preparing a revision of schedule for repository licensing.

The Atomic Act in 2002 had foreseen the start of operation of the LILW repository in 2013. Several amendments to this Act have been adopted by the parliament in 2004, 2008 and 2011, but no corrections were proposed by the ministries or other responsible administrations to correct the proposed dates.

In line with the Environmental Protection Act, an environmental impact assessment (EIA) for the LILW repository must to be prepared in which public participation is envisaged. The EIA report will be presented and there will be 30 days available for comment and amendment of the repository concept and supporting documentation (for example the safety report, reference documentation, EIA report). ARAO has so far begun the scoping activities for the EIA in association with the Agency for Environment of Republic Slovenia (the competent administration within the Ministry of Agriculture and Environment), but without involving the stakeholders. Nor has there been any involvement of neighbouring countries, especially Croatia, as mandated on the Espoo Convention.

Objectives of the process

The aim was to support public involvement in decision-making concerning the construction and operation of the LILW repository and location of the possible new nuclear power plant.

Which tool was used?

Within the IPPA project further possibilities for stakeholder involvement have been explored and three workshops have been held, one in November 2011, one in June 2012 and one in April 2013. At least one other is planned for 2013. The groups for the workshops were developed based on contacts with existing stakeholders (members of the local partnerships in the Krško and Brežice communities, relevant authorities, ministries, research institutions, industry and non-governmental organisations).

Status: On-going and Planned

Objectives and outcomes of stakeholder engagement

The main objectives of the workshops are:

- to enhance capacity building,
- to understand the development of the public participation process and their consequences,
- to suggest possible improvements to the process, and
- in particular to improve trust and understanding between different stakeholders.

Different aspects of public participation in radioactive waste issues have been discussed, including the status of local partnerships, implementation of the Aarhus Convention in Slovenia, and possibilities for future participation of interested members of the public in the control of construction and operation of the LILW repository (especially in light of the formal cessation of the local partnerships).

Involved Stakeholders

Stakeholders from all groups were selected either on the basis of their former activity in the LILW repository siting process (public, NGOs, as well as the implementer and local communities) or on the basis of their responsibility for the issue in question (Decision Makers from the State and local levels, experts) or both. Participation is open to all those interested.

Implementer of the participation process details

University of Ljubljana within the IPPA-Project

Financing

Costs for the workshops include rent of the meeting location, refreshments and some travel costs for participants. These amount to between 500 to 1000 Euros per meeting.

Points to consider

Potential pitfalls:

- There is no matching level of interest within the different stakeholders groups for participation, i.e. there is a high level of public interest but a low level of interest amongst the authorities.

Other points to consider are

- the need to implement the requirements of the Aarhus Convention,
- the consequences of the current siting process on further participative processes,
- improving awareness of the need for public participation amongst the State and local community authorities.

Further tools used in this case study

Public meetings, Newspaper articles

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