



How the Forum on Stakeholder Confidence serves as a platform to build and share knowledge about stakeholder confidence in radioactive waste management

The Forum on Stakeholder Confidence (FSC) was established by the NEA Radioactive Waste Management Committee (RWMC) in 2000, and is first and foremost a learning organisation. The FSC is cataloguing and discussing various new and customary approaches to radioactive waste management, including storage, transport and disposal, through the enhancement of meaningful stakeholder engagement. “Stakeholder” is defined as anyone with an interest in radioactive waste management decision making. Through the FSC, members seek to improve their role as responsive actors in the regulation and management of radioactive waste, and ultimately, help promote advancements in their home organisations. The FSC fosters learning about stakeholder dialogue and practices ways to develop shared confidence, consent and approval of management solutions. The FSC provides a setting for dialogue exchanges among its interdisciplinary members in an atmosphere of mutual respect and learning. The FSC collaborates with local and national stakeholders to explore issues of common interest, identify best practices, make recommendations and publish reports. The FSC assesses the information it has gained in discussions, develops conclusions, and in co-operation with those concerned, validates the conclusions with the help of academic researchers in order to then publish this learning to have on record. Together, FSC members explore means of ensuring an effective stakeholder dialogue and consider ways to strengthen confidence in decision-making processes.

FSC members

Government policy and regulatory officials, research and development specialists, implementers and industry representatives from 18 countries: Belgium, Canada, the Czech Republic, Denmark, Finland, France,

Germany, Hungary, Italy, Japan, Korea, Norway, Russia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, the United Kingdom and the United States.

FSC activities

National workshops

FSC national (country-specific) workshops and community visits provide feedback about the factors that influence stakeholder confidence in the area of radioactive waste management. Participants in the workshops can include the national waste management agency and safety authorities, as well as

representatives of non-governmental organisations, local community and the general public. Stakeholders in the countries hosting these workshops appreciate the opportunity to engage with the international community as a means for improving dialogue and competence building.

The workshop host country defines the principal themes for discussion in radioactive waste management. FSC members learn from national presenters about the history and context of each case study and hear from a broad range of stakeholders, who describe their positions, actions and concerns. While in small group breakout sessions, FSC members can ask questions to the host stakeholders, better

understand their points of view, and share experiences from their own organisations and countries. Following a national workshop, the main observations are published in a record of the proceedings, along with the presentations. The FSC then further explores the topics discussed and the lessons to be learnt.

The FSC has held workshops in ten countries to date:

- **Finland (2001):** Stepwise Decision Making with Stakeholder Involvement
- **Canada (2002):** Social Considerations and Development Opportunities
- **Belgium (2003):** Interests, Values and Knowledge in Managing Risk
- **Germany (2004):** Reorientation of the Radioactive Waste Management Site Selection Strategy
- **Spain (2005):** Stakeholder Interactions between the Local and National Levels
- **Hungary (2006):** Regional Development and Community Support
- **France (2009):** Repositories and Host Regions: Envisaging the Future Together
- **Sweden (2010):** Actual Implementation of a Spent Nuclear Fuel Repository in Sweden: Seizing Opportunities
- **Czech Republic (2012):** Deliberating Together on Geological Repository Siting: Expectations and Challenges in the Czech Republic
- **Switzerland (2016):** Developing Sustainable Intergenerational Decision Making in Radioactive Waste Management

SFOE, Switzerland.



Presentation on the outcomes of discussion sessions facilitated by FSC members during the 10th National Workshop, Bern, Switzerland.



Youth participation at the 10th National Workshop, Bern, Switzerland.

Annual meetings

The FSC annual meetings in Paris include topical sessions and discussions to reflect on the ideas gained from the national workshops and to deepen investigation. In addition to FSC members, participants typically include social scientists and academics. The FSC distils lessons learnt from these activities, and

from studies and questionnaires distributed to FSC members. It provides a pool of information to those with an interest in radioactive waste management or societal dialogue in the general area of technological decision making.



FSC 17th Annual Meeting participants.

Factors of confidence

The FSC has learnt that a number of factors contribute to stakeholder confidence in the safe and secure management of radioactive waste, in accordance with societal values and expectations. These confidence factors, drawn from workshop dialogue and reflection, can be arranged under the following themes.

Decision-making process

A stepwise approach to decision making is preferred, combining a technical and societal focus. It should take into account and empower the full range of stakeholders (government, industry, public), fostering mutual learning. It should embrace ethical considerations concerning future generations and the

potential socio-economic impacts on communities, as well as health, safety and environmental concerns. A bottom-up, community-based methodology should allow early participation of the public alongside the experts. The site selection process should empower potential host communities to negotiate a win-win solution. Under the appropriate conditions, voluntary processes that incorporate the right to veto may be effective in communities affected by nuclear facilities. Development plans should be undertaken with private and public support at the local, regional and federal levels. Where conflict exists, there should be co-operative efforts to rebuild trust between actors, for example through third-party facilitation when communication has broken down.

Framework for oversight

A clear framework should be in place that defines the roles and responsibilities of actors. The financial responsibility for long-term waste management should be clear and primarily incumbent upon those who generate the waste. An active role should be played by local communities in developing, shaping and overseeing solutions with assistance from regulatory and decommissioning authorities, as well as industry proponents. Local communities should be included in planning and implementation when a siting agreement is reached, with local liaison groups near potential sites facilitating public information, education and consultation.

Stakeholder obligations

It is important that all stakeholders assume their responsibilities, and that local and national actors work together towards mutually agreed solutions. Trust in the national regulatory bodies and the implementer is crucial. Dialogue across communities through dedicated associations, and dialogue between local decision makers and national agency managers, are essential to develop radioactive waste management programmes. Solutions can only be reached when local actors are engaged to co-operate and improve their community well-being. Confidence is gained when a higher standard of living is observed in the host community through, for example, increased tourism, improved infrastructures, creation of employment and better connections with other regions and the capital.

Local communities appreciate technical training to participate in environmental monitoring. Community familiarity with the nuclear industry and knowledge of community members working in existing facilities and construction sites contribute to local confidence.

Transparency

A core value that has been acknowledged in all areas of governance, both at the national and international levels, is transparency. Transparency is seen as an important goal and should be practiced systematically in the field of radioactive waste management. It can only be achieved within an ongoing process if stakeholders are given access to information about the process and the opportunity to provide their input. Transparency as a practice is fostered by implementing clear and observable institutional frameworks and by ensuring openness and authenticity in behaviour.



Further reading

- *Stakeholder Involvement in Decision Making: A Short Guide to Issues, Approaches and Resources* (2015)
- *Fostering a Durable Relationship between a Waste Management Facility and Its Host Community* (2015)
- “Stakeholder Involvement in Decision Making: Annotated Bibliography” (2015)
- *Radioactive Waste Management and Constructing Memory for Future Generations: Proceedings of the International Conference and Debate* (2015)
- “Stakeholder Confidence and Transparency in Radioactive Waste Management” (flyer, 2014)
- “Local Communities’ Expectations and Demands on Monitoring and the Preservation of Records, Knowledge and Memory of a Deep Geological Repository” (2013)
- “Stakeholder Confidence in Radioactive Waste Management: An Annotated Glossary of Key Terms” (2013)

All FSC workshop proceedings and summaries, studies, reports and flyers can be downloaded freely from the NEA website at www.oecd-nea.org/rwm/fsc.