

Conference »Nuclear Energy and Public Participation« in Ljubljana

Focus-Association for Sustainable Development organised in Ljubljana, the capital of Slovenia, on December 2 2013 a conference on »Nuclear Energy and Public Participation« with participation of experts from URSJV- Slovenian Nuclear Safety Administration, IRSN- Institute for Radiological Protection and Nuclear Safety from France, ANCCLI - French National Association of Local Information Committees and Commissions , Nuclear Transparency Watch (NTW), FDV - Faculty of Social Sciences of the University of Ljubljana & IPPA Research activities regarding the implementation of the Aarhus Convention in the nuclear sector, ARAO-Slovenian Agency for Radioactive Waste Management and Greenpeace. The conference was initiated by Slovene civil initiatives and NGOs that addressed IRSN and ANCCLI with request to support civil society engagement on nuclear issues in Slovenia, supported also by Nuclear Transparency Watch.

The aim of the conference was to stress the importance of access to information, knowledge and expertise for transparent decision making processes on nuclear energy. The participants in particular discussed the results and open questions regarding the study of Libna fault nearby Slovene town Krško for siting of new NPP in the country as well as for safety operation and life extension of the operating NPP Krško. The results indicated that Libna fault should be considered capable according to IAEA Safety Guide SSG-10 (2010). IRSN requested updating the previous study to assess the potential seismic and surface deformation hazards.

Representatives of NGOs and civil initiatives also pointed out a need for reliable and trustful solution for disposal of low and intermediate radioactive wastes from NPP Krško as a precondition for planned life-extension of the 696 MW Westinghouse PWR in Krško. After more than 3 decades of operation of NPP Krško Slovenia is still missing an adequate national repository for low and intermediate level waste.

[Public participation in processes related to nuclear energy in Slovenia and position about the IRSN report \(video\)](#)

In his videotaped contribution the director of Slovene regulatory body (Slovenian Nuclear Safety Administration) **Andrej Stritar** presented activities of the Administration to inform the public and his view on expertise regarding seismological assessments of the site carried out in order to assess its adequacy to build new NPP. IRSN as one of the partners in consortium of 4 expert institutions involved in the assessment requested additional site investigations of the nearby geological fault Libna that in IRSN opinion might present a potential threat for safe operation of a nuclear power plant. In spite of consensus of the involved experts that the nature of the treat does not represent immediate risks to operation of NPP Krško the administration decided to publish all relevant documents regarding site assessment for the new NPP in order to avoid any accusations of having biased position on the issue.

[Presentation of IRSN report on possible NPP Krsko II site. What are the implications of this report?](#)

Oona Scotti and **François Besnus** presented some details on IRSN conclusions and findings on geological faults nearby Krško. They pointed out that there is no scientific dispute between the institutions engaged on the fact that the faults exists, however there is no consensus on implications of the findings for the planned new NPP . On that basis IRSN suggested to the client (GEN Energija) to consider other locations for siting of the new NPP. Field investigations of Libna and neighbouring faults is also necessary for safe operation of actual NPP, especially in the perspective of its planned life extension. They also suggested a model for the process of assessment that is based on best practices of engagement of unbiased expertise on the issue of seismic risks for safe operation of NPPs.

[ANCCLI – A national network to discuss about transparency and nuclear safety @ Nuclear Transparency Watch \(NTW\)](#)

Yves Lheureux (ANCCLI) emphasised the importance of an adequate self-organisation of civil society to take role as efficient and effective watchdog in processes on nuclear energy. In his opinion France can be considered as a country where a lot of time and efforts have been undertaken by civil society before this objective has been reached, yet now this role is recognised and respected both by regional and local authorities as well as by nuclear industry. At present there are 38 independent local commissions, co-financed by national government, that are carrying out information activities on different aspects of nuclear safety and decision making on construction, maintenance&operation and decommissioning of nuclear facilities. Both NGOs and experts are involved in the activities of the commissions. **Gilles Hériard Dubreuil** underlined the importance of civil society

engagement in the context of technical safety where not only scientific facts are to be taken into account but also uncertainties and value driven trade-off between safety and costs where the civil society is legitimate to have its say to be listen to and taken into account as clearly stated by the Aarhus Convention.

[Siting and construction of repository for low and intermediate level waste in Slovenia: Opportunity for involving the public](#)

Metka Kralj presented the view of ARAO on »local partnerships« established in support of transparent and inclusive decision making on siting of the LILW depository in Slovenia during the years 2005-2009. She stressed that the concept of local partnership gave a positive general experience and provided an opened forum for unbiased, well prepared and mediated dialogue, participation of all relevant stakeholders and access to relevant information. She also pointed out some negative aspects of local partnerships in Slovenia, such as complex structure, time and finances consuming process, lack of representativeness and mandate, and domination of private interests, that undermined the positive experience.

[Public participation in siting LILW depository in Slovenia](#)

Drago Kos (FDV) reminded on the three decades of history of siting of LILW depository in Slovenia where one can next to NIMBY syndrome identify two phenomena that are characteristic from the very beginning and remains constant: lack of trust in experts and claims for financial compensation as the major concern not only of municipalities but in most cases also of civil initiatives. In his opinion the complex structure of local partnership was a deliberate strategy of official municipality representative to minimise both the interest and the impact of the civil society on the issue in order to legitimise decisions made far from any influence of civil society and legal processes.

[Public participation in nuclear procedures](#)

In his presentation **Jan Haverkamp (Greenpeace)** first pointed out importance of respect of normative dimensions of Aarhus convention that requests public participation at the point where all options are still opened and not subjected to elimination based on expert based “most suitable” solutions. He recalled and warned from dominant attitudes of investors and public authorities that are neglecting competencies of lay people for taking part in qualified decision making on complex technological, social and procedural issues. This attitude leads towards failure to comply with requests of civil society stakeholders for their participation or (to)late inclusion of the later, therefore decision making processes lack transparency and inclusiveness or both. Unbiased experts that are not involved in investments and/or are not dependent on state authorities or investors are also part of the public and can help –when properly engaged and by having access to information and expert studies – the public to understand issues, options and related risks. Therefore is not only necessary to include affected and interested lay people in procedures in an early stage but also to assure support of unbiased experts and provide clear procedures for fair access to information and expert studies. If this is not assured by national legislation then one should stick to Aarhus convention that is above the national legislation and gives provisions that can be used regardless to national provisions in all countries that has signed it. In his opinion in spite of improvements that are still needed France can serve as model country regarding public participation on nuclear issues. In spite of many weaknesses access to information and discussion on nuclear issues in Slovenia is also on higher level than in many EU countries, including many nuclear “old member states”. However there are many things to be improved and this can be done also by an adequate self-organisation of civil society and its attitude toward public authorities in the field of nuclear safety. An adequate communication of nuclear safety issues can result in larger autonomy and independence of regulatory public bodies.

Some conclusions

The conference confirmed the necessity of well tailored international support for fruitful and balanced discussion of hot nuclear safety issues in countries without long tradition of opened dialogue on modern risk technologies. It also provide some valuable insights how civil society should self-organise and in what way it needs to be supported by the state to establish levelled playing field that enables fruitful solution finding processes on opened issues of safety operation and decommissioning of nuclear facilities. Further on it has exposed need for further cooperation in transfer of know-how and good practices for well designed and long lasting frames and support mechanisms for balanced engagement of civil society, industry and public authorities in finding solutions to build trust and solve both technological as well as social challenges related to

nuclear power. Last but not least it has exposed need for further investigations of geological faults at Krško in order to determine the scope and the scale of risks to actual and envisaged exploitation of the nuclear energy on site and to enforce independent position of national regulatory authority in this respect.