

Planning geological underground storages: Communicating with society

Brief description:

The project “Planning geological underground storages: Communicating with society”, financed by the Swiss Federal Office for Energy aims at identifying basic principles for an appropriate information and communication strategy in the process of finding an underground site to store radioactive waste. The topic concerns an issue increasingly discussed in modern societies that is to say: how to improve the dialogue between science, infrastructure operators, public authorities, groups in civil society and the population to answer complex problems. Against this background, the following questions have to be resolved in the context of the project:

- Which differences are there in evaluating risks and resolutions within the participating groups of stakeholders and among the participants themselves? How relevant is scientific knowledge and expertise for the justification of different points of view? To what extent do scientific arguments influence the stakeholders’ dialogue?
- How can the dialogue between science, politics, economy, organised and non-organised public be arranged appropriately? Which principles are to be considered in organising this process? How can distrust within the population be reduced and confidence in authorities and scientific expertise be increased?
- How should concepts of information, communication and participation be organised to optimise the implementation of problem-solving strategies?
- How can society be integrated adequately in the process of decision making so that this process is comprehensible, acceptable and legitimate?

To answer these questions, an analysis method based on scientific theory will be developed which compares international participation and communication processes in finding underground storage sites. The intention of the project is to analyse case studies in countries such as Germany, Finland, France, Great Britain and Sweden. By using specific criteria to evaluate these processes, the strong points as well as the drawbacks of the countryspecific concepts of information, communication and participation will be analysed in a comparing dimension. By taking into account the outcomes, prototypical scenarios can be deduced that can serve as a basis for compiling a reference catalogue of measures.

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Duration:

June 2007 to December 2008