

Experiences from an NGO on stakeholder participation for effective decision-making in radioactive waste management

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The risks of inferior stakeholder participation

- Stakeholder participation/public participation is unfortunately still often seen as a way of mainly trying to achieve acceptance of nuclear projects. This is not a serious approach by implementors.
- This means that we still see efforts that mainly involve informing the stakeholders/public in consultation processes after taking a decision and announcing it. The taken decision is defended rather than being open to input that may improve it.
- Such an approach considerably increases the possibility of failure of projects, as it easily leads to loss of stakeholder/public trust.
- To gain the needed trust to implement a successful project takes time and is difficult. To lose trust is easy, and can lead to project failure.
- There is a reason why the acronym for Decide, Announce, Defend is DEAD.

The goal is to get better and safer projects

- Stakeholders that are interested in constructively participating in decision-making want to make projects environmentally and socially better, and/or want to achieve higher safety and security for projects.
- Effective decision-making involves genuine interest from the implementor in receiving input from stakeholders, taking due account of it and utilizing it in project development.
- In order to be able do so effectively and allow influencing a project, an open-minded stakeholder engagement must be started as early as possible – and very likely earlier than in the judicially mandated formal public participation process.

Use the Aarhus Convention and BEPPER!

- Aarhus Convention on Access to Information, Public Participation in Decision-making and Access to Justice in Environmental Matters – 1998
 - Access to information
 - Access to public participation
 - Access to justice

(<https://unece.org/environment-policy/public-participation>, <https://ec.europa.eu/environment/Aarhus>)

- BEPPER report “Transparency in Radioactive waste management” from Nuclear Transparency Watch (NTW)
 - Effective implementation of the Aarhus Convention
 - + Effective access to resources
 - Improving transparency (access to information, public participation and justice) to give better safety and security


(<http://www.nuclear-transparency-watch.eu/a-la-une/new-publication-bepper-report.html>)



Personal experience from Sweden

- The Swedish repository concept for spent nuclear fuel (KBS-method) was developed in the late 1970s. The Swedish government decided to approve construction in January 2022 after a very long decision-making process.
- The quality of the decision-making process was improved by the legal implementation of a formal consultation process, and an access to justice system within an environmental court system.
- The quality of the decision-making process was certainly improved by resourcing local communities, environmental NGOs and an independent government scientific advisory board, to enable them to participate fully in the process.
- The quality of the decision-making process could have been further improved by having the private company implementor abide by the Swedish access to information system. This would have meant that Swedish research on RWM would have been more open, allowing a better handling of scientific controversies in the decision-making process.

More information on the MKG web site



The screenshot shows the homepage of the Swedish Environmental Protection Agency's Nuclear Waste Review (MKG). The browser address bar displays 'www.mkg.se'. In the top right corner, a red circle highlights the navigation links: 'Läs alla Nyhetsbrev', 'Kontakta oss', and 'English'. Below the header, there is a search bar with the text 'SÖK' and a search button. The main content area features a welcome message in Swedish, followed by a section titled 'Aktuellt från MKG' with a sub-heading 'MKG till SSM: Fortsatt motstridiga resultat från SKB om kopparkorrosion'. On the right side, there are two promotional boxes: one for 'Läs om aktuella händelser, följ myndighetens och domstolens arbete, ladda ner handlingar m.m.' and another for 'Miljörelsen gör slutförvaringen säkrare'. A 'Nyheter' section at the bottom right lists recent news items with dates and brief descriptions.



**Thank you for your
attention**

