

Recommendation Group n°8

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Local democracy

The practice of local democracy requires a decision-making process which the actors are aware of. This approach is all the more requested in the nuclear field where the decision to carry out a civil nuclear program was made 40 years ago without any prior consultation for a majority of countries.

In respect of pluralism, the elected authorities, the representative bodies and the citizens must always be consulted during decision-making processes especially when it comes to nuclear waste management. The local actors must assume their role of information and organization of local debates and report to the national level.

The local level must be involved sufficiently early in the process in order to reach a decision that builds on a basis as broad as possible. Moreover, if local involvement is introduced too late, the citizens will not feel concerned by a decision that they will be likely to consider arbitrary since they were unable to contribute.

The national level must take on several responsibilities to make the local debate possible, i.e. :

- widening the scope of debate to national energy policy which conditions the types and quantities of waste;
- developing an accurate inventory of waste (nature, quantity, origin, destination, conditioning...)
- designing the overall nuclear waste management policy and the technical options considered, under the various aspects concerned;
- delegating responsibilities to the local level with matching resources;
- creating a local body

The local authorities in charge of the local debate and local body must get guarantees that:

- local questions and comments will be given due consideration at national level and will not remain without effect;
- at any rate, a clear and explicit answer will be given.

The national level must provide financial support to allow municipalities and groups of municipalities concerned with a potential site to face their responsibilities as regards information, expertise and follow-up. The management and use of these resources shouldn't be dependent on the operator.

The local body should include a membership that reflects the local realities. It will carry out :

- during site characterization : technical, financial and social analysis of the project;
- after siting : follow-up and information

Its composition depends on the local environment. Prior to its setting up, a sociological survey would help to prepare the most representative body possible. This local organisation must comprise elected officials, representatives of associations, consular Chambers, experts, citizens... Its statute should enable members to file a law suit.

The operator should never be a leader in this local control and information body : however he is expected to bring information and answer questions. Following local debate, it is likely that he needs to modify his project.

Members of the local body dispose of their own expertise. As an additional support, external scientific experts will be consulted on specific issues that request attention. The local body provides local elected representatives with its reports in order for them to carry out a dialogue with the national authorities.

Expertise

Expertise in the decision-making process must:

- help the local body to raise questions, to ask for further information, and prepare comments;
- help with the examination of the technical files, and their possible modification
- allow a better appraisal of the limits of the file as regards technical as well as social, environmental and economic issues

Consequently, the local body must be able to call upon experts from different backgrounds. These experts should not be linked with the proponent and must be able to express themselves with complete freedom.

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