

THE BENEFITS OF WORKING TOGETHER

The benefits of an ERDO to partner countries will be felt at local, national and international level:

Internationally

- increased national visibility and influence in addressing a widely acknowledged issue of global environmental protection and nuclear security
- contributing to Europe-wide investment savings of several billions of EUR
- increased influence in European and international agencies dealing with nuclear energy and nuclear safety
- increased influence on suppliers of nuclear technologies and fuels

Nationally

- clear demonstration of a credible approach to responsible management of national radioactive wastes
- reduced R&D burden
- increased, pooled resources to develop a realistic and timely solution
- large economic incentives and infrastructure improvements to the host country
- access to wider skills and technology

Locally

- involvement in modern, stakeholder-led approaches to solving environmental problems
- increased influence of local host communities in national environmental decision-making
- large economic and infrastructure benefits to the host communities, both today and for many decades to come

ERDO
working group

Working on a
shared
European solution
for radioactive
waste

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Every country in Europe has to manage its own radioactive wastes responsibly. Only a few countries have developed a final solution for the most hazardous and long-lived of these wastes. This involves building deep underground geological repositories. This is currently recognized to be the only safe and secure way to dispose of these waste without burdening future generations. For some countries, building a national repository is a major challenge.

Working on a shared solution for radioactive waste

The European Parliament and the EC recommend that all Member States have a clear programme for how they will manage their wastes; this programme will have to ensure that all States have access to a geological disposal facility. With increased demand for nuclear power to tackle both climate change and the security of electricity supply, the pressure to initiate credible radioactive waste disposal programmes will grow within the European Union.

Even those countries that do not intend to use nuclear power engage in nuclear technological activities that produce small quantities of long-lived radioactive wastes. For European countries with only small amounts of waste to manage, constructing their own repository is a major challenge, practically and economically. The obvious solution is for countries to share in the development of one or more regional repositories. As well as the technical advantages, partner countries would also save hundreds of millions of EUR by sharing development and operation costs.

THE WORKING GROUP

A multinational working group (WG), whose members are nominated by the appropriate Government level organisations, has been established to study the feasibility of setting up a not-for-profit European Repository Development Organisation (ERDO) that

would implement one or more shared geological repositories in Europe. The mission statement agreed for the ERDO-WG at its first meeting on 28th January 2009 is:

“Our aim is to work together to address the common challenges of safely managing the long-lived radioactive wastes in our countries. Specifically, we will investigate the feasibility of establishing a formal, joint European waste management organisation. The Working Group will carry out all the necessary groundwork to enable the establishment of a European Repository Development Organisation (ERDO) as a working entity and present a consensus proposal to our governments. Providing that a sufficiently broad consensus is achieved by our governments or their representatives, the ERDO will be established at the end of this process.”

Further important goals of the ERDO-WG are to exchange information, to build up competence and to promote

the concept of shared repository development as a complement to the national facilities being developed. The ERDO-WG is a project managed by the national waste agency of the Netherlands, COVRA (www.covra.nl) and the Arius Association (www.arius-world.org) on behalf of its Members.

SAFETY

As for national repository programmes, ensuring operational and long-term safety will be the top priority for a future ERDO. Shared regional waste management facilities will have to meet the highest standards of environmental safety. This will be assured by the national regulatory agencies in the partner countries working closely together. The high profile and level of interest worldwide in the project implies that the ERDO-WG will also involve the IAEA and advice of the European Nuclear Safety Regulator Group (ENSREG), in a wide overview and regulatory capacity.



FINDING A SITE

Since the early 1980s, siting radioactive waste repositories has proved immensely difficult in every country, but real lessons have been learned in the last decade from successful national programmes and a modern, inclusive process has emerged as a model for dealing with difficult environmental issues. The technical approach advocated for a European repository will ensure that any chosen site is demonstrably environmentally safe and secure. It will also work with local communities that are interested in the project and wish to become actively involved in its development. A community-level and national-level discussion and evaluation process will be employed to find sites that are both technically suitable and societally acceptable. No national declaration of willingness to be a repository host is necessary to join the exploratory ERDO-WG. Potential host countries will be volunteers that emerge only after extensive interactions

have taken place with potentially interested communities within the country. Potential host countries can withdraw from the siting process at any time up to the point where a final commitment is needed.

WHAT NEXT?

The ERDO-WG will generate over the next 1-2 years the decision input needed for Governments to decide whether to proceed with the formal establishment of an ERDO. If there is sufficient agreement to do so, a domicile, staffing structure and initial programme will be agreed as a basis for the work of the ERDO over the next 10 or more years. The ERDO will operate as a sister organisation to the advanced European national disposal programmes that are charting the way forward towards safe, secure and societally accepted geological repositories.

WHICH COUNTRIES?

The following countries currently participate in the ERDO-WG:

| | |
|-------------|-----------|
| Austria | Bulgaria |
| Ireland | Italy |
| Netherlands | Lithuania |
| Poland | Romania |
| Slovakia | Slovenia |

In addition, the IAEA and EC have delegated observers to the ERDO-WG. Discussions continue with further European countries.

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