

The NEA Forum on Stakeholder Confidence – Phase I Lessons and Phase II Activities

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Abstract

The Forum on Stakeholder Confidence (FSC) was created under a mandate from the OECD Nuclear Energy Agency (NEA) Radioactive Waste Management Committee (RWMC) to facilitate the sharing of international experience in addressing the societal dimension of radioactive waste management. It explores means of ensuring an effective dialogue with the public, and considers ways to strengthen confidence in decision-making processes.

The Forum was launched in August 2000 and completed its first phase in 2004. Major findings and principles for action were published under the title of “Learning and Adapting to Societal Requirements” (NEA, 2004a). Activities of the FSC were also reported at Valdor 2003 (Le Bars & Pescatore, 2003). In the second mandate of the FSC, there is continued use of a variety of tools and formats to allow dialogue among stakeholders in an atmosphere of mutual trust: national workshops and community visits, topical sessions, and desk and interview studies. In Phase II, the FSC is exploring: the link between research, development & demonstration and stakeholder confidence; cultural and organisational changes in RWM institutions; the role of media relations and outreach opportunities; tools and processes to help society prepare and manage decisions through stakeholder involvement; and increasing the value of waste management facilities to local communities. Workshops have been held in Germany and Spain. A large set of publications makes both Phase I and Phase II findings widely available.

1. Why the FSC?

Lessons learnt from the past difficulties in progressing national radioactive waste disposal programmes indicate that any significant decisions regarding the long-term management of radioactive waste will be accompanied by a comprehensive public review with involvement by a diverse range of stakeholders. These stakeholders include not just the waste generators, waste management agencies and regulatory authorities, all of whom have a primarily technical focus, but also interested or concerned parties with a non-technical focus such as local communities, elected officials, non-governmental organisations and the general public. The Forum on Stakeholder Confidence (FSC) was created under a mandate from the NEA Radioactive Waste Management Committee (RWMC) to facilitate the sharing of international experience in addressing the societal dimension of radioactive waste management. It explores means of ensuring an effective dialogue with the public, and considers ways to strengthen confidence in decision-making processes.

2. Working Methods and Programme

The FSC convenes a series of alternating regular meetings and workshops. The latter are held in a national context.

The Forum was launched in August 2000 (NEA, 2000) and completed its first phase mid-2004. Much of the **Phase I work** was reported at Valdor 2003 (Le Bars & Pescatore, 2003). Four **annual meetings** were held in Phase I. They included topical sessions for which **proceedings** are, or are being made, available:

- The link between RD&D and stakeholder confidence (in 2005)
- Media Relations 1 & 2 (in 2004 & 2005)
- Decision Making Processes at the Strategic Choice Stage: How different stakeholders are involved, and which values are taken into account? (in 2004)
- Addressing Issues Raised by Stakeholders: Impacts on Process, Content, and Behaviour in Waste Organisations (NEA, 2004b)
- Stakeholder involvement tools: Criteria for choice and evaluation (NEA, 2003a)

- The EIA as a tool for public and stakeholder participation (in 2002).

The **workshops** - also held annually - focus on stakeholder involvement in waste-management issues in a host country. After a **community visit**, a wide spectrum of country stakeholders is invited to express their views on the nature of their involvement and the process by which they are involved. A highly interactive format allows FSC delegates and country stakeholders to compare experience and deepen the discussion. Thematic rapporteurs, invited by the NEA Secretariat, give feedback to the workshop participants from their own disciplinary perspective. Three workshops were held in Phase I, in Finland, Canada, and Belgium. Workshop **proceedings** (NEA 2002; 2003b; 2004c) may be consulted on-line (www.nea.fr/html/rwm/fsc.html) or ordered from the OECD. Summaries of these workshops including an international perspective by the NEA Secretariat can also be consulted on-line or downloaded.

Besides those proceedings, five published FSC **documents** reported Phase I learning; they too can be ordered or consulted on-line or, in most cases, downloaded:

- A compilation of outreach activities performed in NEA member countries in the past few years (NEA, 2003c)
- An analysis of the lessons learnt by the regulators (NEA, 2003d)
- A theoretical and practical review of stepwise decision making (NEA, 2004d; Pescatore & Vári, 2006)
- A short guide to stakeholder involvement techniques including an annotated bibliography (NEA, 2004e; 2005a)
- A document outlining the overall lessons learnt through the FSC activities (NEA, 2004a).

The **Strategic document** of the FSC (NEA, 2005b) outlines priorities and expectations for this initiative, as well as modus operandi. It is reviewed and updated periodically.

The **upcoming programme** is worked out in twice-yearly meetings of the FSC Core Group. This group, assisted by the NEA Secretariat, has 6 representatives of the FSC institutional “constituencies”, that is, implementers, regulators, policy makers and scientists in research and development.

A **self-evaluation** was performed in 2004 (NEA, 2004f). FSC participants assessed the ways in which the initiative enabled them to better address their mission and the effects observed in their home context (15 nations are represented among the active membership). As well, directions for Phase II were identified.

Phase II started mid-2004. The **programme of work** to date includes 5 main areas:

- The link between research, development & demonstration (RD&D) and stakeholder confidence
- Evolving cultural and organisational changes in RWM institutions vis-à-vis stakeholder confidence
- Link between RWM organisations, the media, and stakeholder confidence
- Tools and processes to help society prepare and manage decisions (e.g., about technology, sites) through stakeholder involvement
- Increasing the value of waste management facilities to local communities.

Two Phase II **national workshops and community visits** have been held to date in Germany (NEA, 2005c) and Spain (in 2005). They are reported below. The next national workshop is planned to take place in Hungary in November 2006. The workshop will examine the theme of local and regional benefits from waste management projects. In addition, a one-day workshop will be held to finalise and endorse findings from the study on increasing facility value to communities. Several stakeholder representatives of communities that participated in that study should be present.

Finally, the FSC interacts with other working parties of the NEA RWMC. Input was made to the Working Party on Decommissioning and Dismantling's topical session on "Decommissioning and Stakeholders Involvement" in November 2005 (NEA, 2005d). A proposal has been made to co-operate with the Integration Group on the Safety Case on means for communicating safety. The FSC is participating in a discussion of the meaning of "safety" and the formulation of practical and ethics-based principles for long-term management of radioactive waste in a major initiative of the RWMC's Long-Term Safety Criteria group. Another NEA body, the Committee on Radiation Protection and Public

Health, has received a briefing on findings from the FSC study on cultural and organizational changes. Additionally, the Secretariat of the FSC provides briefings to the International Atomic Energy Agency and teaches courses based on the FSC experience. Similarly, the Chairperson of the FSC typically is invited to participate in national and international events.

3. Lessons Learnt in Phase I: Learning and Adapting

FSC Phase-1 work culminated in a publication of major results under the title “Learning and Adapting to Societal Requirements” (NEA, 2004a). Key findings were organised under the headings of: favourable conditions for issuing radioactive waste management policy; design of the decision-making process; the social and ethical dimensions; trust in the actors; stakeholder involvement; the local dimension of radioactive waste management. Three overarching principles were identified as essential elements of any policy seeking strong societal support. These are: an iterative decision making process allowing time and opportunities for organising fair and competent deliberation; facilitation of social learning, for example through dialogue between stakeholders of different categories; facilitation of public involvement in decision making, e.g. by promoting constructive and high-quality communication between individuals with different knowledge, beliefs, interests, values, and worldviews. A set of eight action items specific to radioactive waste management is also suggested to put in practice those principles. Alongside analysing all these principles and findings in depth, the document recalls how the NEA sharpened its focus on stakeholder issues throughout the 1990’s and how a cultural shift in RWM was the context for the 2000 creation of the FSC.

4. Phase II Activities to Date

A topical session was held in June 2005 on the topic of **RD&D and stakeholder confidence**. It examined the role of science, scientific institutions, and experts in today’s society. An implementer, a regulator and a policy maker each gave a view of how research and research capability are approached in order to gain stakeholder confidence in their role and performance. Perspectives were also gathered from academics (France, Spain) and representatives of local communities (Oskarshamn, Sweden, and Hospitalet, Spain).

In 2004 a topical session, “Addressing Issues Raised by Stakeholders: Impacts on Process, Content and Behaviour in Waste Organisations” focused on the responses given by regulators and implementers to

stakeholders' concerns and needs in eleven contexts. A questionnaire survey then was carried out to better understand recent **cultural and structural changes taking place within RWM organisations**. A 2006 discussion paper presented questionnaire findings in the context of fundamental concepts of organisation theory and design. Changes in mission and main goals were observed in a few organisations, and changes in values and culture in most of them. Differences in stakeholder interaction patterns were found to reflect not only idiosyncratic cultural and political traditions, but also the varying stages of RWM programmes. At the June 2006 annual meeting a topical session will consider how various factors – e.g., cultural context, political and social environment, legal and policy changes, local aspects, etc. – influence changes in RWM organisations. Similarities and differences with other contexts (environmental issues, controversial societal debates in general) will be reviewed.

Consideration of **media relations and outreach** to both institutional and societal stakeholders is a regular feature of FSC Phase II annual meetings. A group was formed to help organise the topical sessions and to devise an “FSC communication/outreach concept”. Three major initiatives are under study: a brochure on the FSC, a compilation of members' annual reports to the Forum regarding stakeholder confidence, and a topical session on the use in NEA countries of electronic platforms to inform and spread the knowledge of radioactive waste management. The Secretariat updates the FSC public homepage (www.nea.fr/html/rwm/fsc.html) and maintains a database of persons who have expressed interest (claudio.pescatore@oecd.org) or participated in FSC activities. Those contacts are kept informed of FSC developments and are invited to participate in reviews.

The topic of **tools and processes to help society prepare and manage decisions** is currently under development. Proposals focus on political tools (e.g., direct democracy; when are referenda appropriate?), and educational processes (community knowledge- and competence-building).

Finally, the FSC has undertaken a study of **value added by waste storage or repository projects**, to consider how they can be better integrated with their community and made attractive for the long term. Beyond economic development opportunities, the **cultural value and amenity** brought to a community by a RWM facility may be powerful elements in a sustainable, long term relationship. A desk study and interviews were undertaken in 2005, and a topical session is planned for June 2006. Contacts have been made with communities on two continents who have shown willingness to discuss these issues on an international

level. A workshop involving communities is planned (in association with the November 2006 country-based workshop) in order to finalize the study report and have it broadly co-sponsored.

5. Phase II Workshops in Germany and Spain

The FSC methodology for running country workshops has proven to be constructive in fostering national dialogue and helping frame the issues that stakeholders wish to be considered. This was shown to be the case again at the fourth national workshop, held in Germany in June 2005 (NEA, 2005c). The Federal Office for Radiation Protection (BfS) and the Federal Ministry for the Environment, Nature Conservation and Nuclear Safety (BMU) hosted the workshop, which included a site visit and discussion with local stakeholders from Gorleben as well as from the Konrad area. Similarly to the FSC Canada workshop, the Hitzacker-Hamburg meeting took place at a time when the country's radioactive waste management policy has come to a critical point. Germany's RWM situation was analysed as being at a stalemate, with incompatible contending positions. German government authorities invited the delegates of the international community to participate in the discussions of a new, proposed approach, the AkEnd method. Stakeholders were willing to share their views and concerns with the international community, and this resulted in important lessons for all sides.

A new national workshop was held in Spain in November 2005; proceedings are under preparation. It was organized with the sponsorship of ENRESA – the national waste management and decommissioning agency - and AMAC - the association of Spanish municipalities affected by nuclear facilities. The CSN – the national safety authority – also supported the workshop. The focus of discussion was the methodology that their joint project, “Cowam Spain”, has identified in order to arrive at facility-siting proposals that may be broadly accepted by society and to offer the results of their reflection to the national politicians and administration before a method is decided for identifying the national site for interim storage of spent fuel. The 2.5-day workshop was held in Hospitalet, Catalonia, with the excellent support of the local mayor. Delegates visited the site of the partially-dismantled Vandellós-I NPP. Both newcomers and regular FSC participants found that the “Cowam Spain” reflection has come to similar principles and conclusions as the FSC had before. This was a mutually reinforcing experience for the FSC and the Spanish counterparts. There was a strong request to make the stakeholders' programme of the Vandellós decommissioning better known beyond the region.

6. Conclusions

The Forum on Stakeholder Confidence (FSC) acts, on behalf of the OECD Nuclear Energy Agency Radioactive Waste Management Committee, as the centre for informed exchanges of opinion and experiences across institutional and non-institutional boundaries, documents these exchanges and distils the lessons that can be learnt. The FSC seeks to achieve this by promoting open discussion across the entire spectrum of stakeholders in an atmosphere of trust and mutual respect. As the FSC enters its second mandate, these goals are being met. A long list of publications reflects the interesting and lively dialogue in which participate institutional and community stakeholders, social scientists and other experts. The continuing enthusiasm of these participants and the new collaborations that open up confirm that the FSC is a unique and valuable forum on the international scene. It also has a solid work programme. The Strategic document (NEA, 2005b) highlights questions in the areas of process/structure of RWM, organisational issues/trust, and stakeholder involvement. With the combination of national workshops and community visits, desk and interview studies, and topical sessions as well as regular meetings, the FSC will continue to offer opportunities for the whole spectrum of RWM stakeholders to grow and learn together.

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