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Is Croatia Going to Build a Radioactive Waste Repository?

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Site selection process for low and intermediate level radioactive waste repository in Croatia was ended in 1999, nominating Trgovska gora as the potential macrolocation for the facility. Feasibility of the Trgovska gora disposal project was analyzed in a number of studies prepared by APO Ltd. from the mid-nineties up to 2003. An affirmative, though preliminary and largely generic safety assessment was completed. Specific microlocations were selected and analyzed based on literature data (garnished with low-resolution digital satellite pictures), and the best microlocation was tentatively narrowed down to Pavlovo brdo.

After 2003, no further activities related to the repository project were undertaken for nearly ten years, until in its public procurement plan

for 2013 the Croatian Fund for financing the NPP Krško decommissioning and waste disposal dedicated over half a million euro to continuation of the project.

In general, safe radioactive waste disposal pre-requires establishment of a complex national framework with appropriate functionality and competence; with such a framework established, decisive first steps towards building a repository are to identify potentially suitable locations and to ensure local community consent and cooperation. The rest should mainly be routine. But in Croatia, both lack of proper framework and the project history of indecisiveness may adversely affect further developments.

Trgovska gora was designated as the potential location in the national land use plan only after three other potential locations had been dismissed by political decisions based on the largely assumed adverse attitudes of local communities. Repository project now appears to depend on cooperation of a single local community hosting the only potential site. The site has never been visited by any repository project participants, nor has the local community ever been officially contacted in an open and straightforward way, despite the 20-year old history of the project activities.

Of course, the local community is not entirely unaware of the wavering interest of the state in building the repository there.

Under such circumstances, considerable effort, skill and knowledge will be needed to establish confidence of that community in the authorities and their intentions and competence – and yet all that may not be sufficient.

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