

Report from the InSOTEC Stakeholder Seminar, Barcelona, 21-22 March 2012

The seminar was held at the Universitat Pompeu Fabra in central Barcelona. About 80 people attended, including the InSOTEC partners, municipal staff and interest groups, research institutes, NGOs, and government regulatory and waste management agencies.

In her opening remarks for the seminar, Anne Bergmans, PhD, InSOTEC coordinator and Senior Researcher at the Faculty of Political and Social Sciences, University of Antwerp, informed the participants that the InSOTEC project is funded under the 7th framework program of EURATOM, and will be communicating with the Implementing Geological Disposal – Technology Platform (IGD-TP). According to the European Commission website CORDIS, Community Research and Development Information Service, the InSOTEC project intends to “Advise the IGD-TP on how to strengthen its position” by “Exploring with the IGD-TP how to fulfil its ambition to link a broader range of stakeholders; and making concrete suggestions to the IGD-TP on how to set priorities for a social sciences and multidisciplinary research agenda.”

Well aware of the controversy surrounding the IGD-TP, she stated, “The role of InSOTEC is not to move the IGD-TP forward, but rather to look at challenges for implementing geological disposal within the broader context of how radioactive waste strategies are defined. Geological disposal is not seen as a goal in itself.” Throughout the seminar, the IGD-TP was the target of criticism for being unscientific and politically and socially inappropriate.

After the seminar, Anne Bergmans was asked how it was possible to “not move the IGD-TP forward” at the same time as “advising how to strengthen its position”? She answered, “Moving forward to us means dealing with nuclear waste in the best way possible and that



Left to right: Morgan Meyer, Göran Sundqvist and Anne Bergmans.

doesn't necessarily mean according to the IGD-TP vision. We especially want to provide insights on social aspects.”

A view repeated over and over again during the seminar by all stakeholders, was that social and technical aspects cannot be separated. The statement by Anne Bergmans in her opening presentation that “anything technical is inherently social” was supported numerous times in the presentations, question periods and group discussions. This common sense notion has been examined in minute detail by the branch of social studies called Science and Technology Studies



International Socio-Technical Challenges
for Implementing Geological Disposal -
InSOTEC, www.insotec.eu

InSOTEC is a three year project that started 1 March 2011 with 13 partners from 12 countries including universities and research institutes, one consulting company, and the Group of European Municipalities with Nuclear Facilities (www.gmfurope.org).

Total budget: 2,730,063 Euros

EC contribution via EURATOM: 1,999,886 Euros

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Objective: InSOTEC aims at identifying the main socio-political challenges for implementing geological disposal and their interplay with technical challenges. It will furthermore provide the IGD-TP with concrete suggestions on how to address these entangled socio-technical challenges.

Sources: European Commission website CORDIS, <http://cordis.europa.eu/> and “Project Presentation – May 2011”. File 2011-05-23PP_InSOTEC_forWEB.pdf retrieved 2012-03-20 from www.insotec.eu/publications/deliverables

(STS), which is a main theoretical basis of the InSOTEC project, as was explained in one of the presentations.

Zsuzsanna Koritar, Energiaklub, Hungary, and member of the nine-person InSOTEC Stakeholder Reflection Group, talked generally in her presentation about how dissident voices need to be considered as they could have valuable points of view the majority don't think of. She stressed that all concerns need to be addressed and that the people who submit them should be asked if they are satisfied with the answers. She pointed out that the IGD-TP did not take that approach. She also explained that NGOs do more than simply "oppose." NGOs also ask questions, raise concerns, watch, communicate and facilitate.



Zsuzsanna Koritar, from the NGO Energiaklub, Hungary.

Draft Country Reports

Draft country reports, expected to be completed by the end of April 2012, have been made for 14 countries: Belgium, Canada, Czech Republic, Finland, France, Germany, Hungary, The Netherlands, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, UK and USA. All of the reports together make up a total of 400 pages (in English only). The reports vary greatly in aspects covered, especially with regard to the role of civil society. Some of the reports omit documenting the position of the national anti-nuclear movement in the country concerned, regardless of the fact that Science and Technology Studies excels in identifying political links to technical choices.

In his presentation about the situation in Germany, Tobias Riedl, from Greenpeace Germany, explained

that all the problems in the past have led to the environmental movement in Germany asking for a "new start for nuclear waste management." The conditions he gave for this new start are a phase-out of nuclear power, abandoning the Gorleben site, investigations into the flaws of the past so they can be avoided in the future, and excluding people responsible for the wrong decisions and who continue to maintain unacceptable positions.

Discussions during the seminar revealed that to many of the seminar participants from all the stakeholders represented, it was perfectly obvious that the production of nuclear waste cannot be separated from the issue of dealing with existing waste. In contrast, a few seminar participants working for local and national government

Implementing Geological Disposal - Technology Platform (IGD-TP) = A bulldozer out of control? (www.igdt.eu)

Since the founding of IGD-TP in November 2009, The Swedish Nuclear Fuel and Waste Management Company (SKB) and Posiva, a similar company in Finland, have been among those taking the most initiative. SKB continues to have main responsibility for the secretariat.

"Technology platforms" are an attempt by the European Commission to get countries to work together towards a common goal. For the IGD-TP, the goal is expressed in their vision: "Our vision is that by 2025, the first geological disposal facilities for spent fuel, high-level waste, and other long-lived radioactive waste will be operating safely in Europe". At the InSOTEC seminar it was not only the choice of method of waste management and setting of a date that was criticized. Of greatest concern was the problem of openly declaring that research is done to confirm pre-determined conclusions rather than realizing that results may not necessarily be what is expected or hoped for. For example, it is stated in the IGD-TP "Vision Report" that, "The future RD&D issues to be pursued, including their associated uncertainties, are not judged to bring the feasibility of disposal into question."* Thus, when in his presentation on the IGD-TP, Maarten Van Geet from Ondraf/Niras,

Belgium stated, "If any obstacle is observed, it will be removed," everyone knew he was not referring to people. Rather, he was referring to the confidence that all technical problems could be overcome.

Another concern expressed at the InSOTEC seminar was that the IGD-TP gives the impression of being open to participation from all stakeholders when in fact they are not. An example brought up on a few occasions was "the Greenpeace problem." The Greenpeace European Unit is the only NGO that took the bull by the horns and accepted the offer of "participation." After two years of trying, Greenpeace withdrew 22 February 2012. They wrote, "Our experience leads us to conclude that IGD-TP is not a platform for open and scientifically sound discourse on the issue of radioactive waste management" (see www.nonuclear.se/greenpeace_igdt).

A difficulty that has arisen is that the IGD-TP has maneuvered themselves into the position of being an advisor to the European Commission. With no other advisors, geological disposal could become the consensus by default.

* Source: file VisionDoc_Final_Oct24.pdf, p. 12, downloaded 2012-03-20 from www.igdt.eu.

agencies expressed the view that nuclear waste has nothing to do with nuclear power. One participant said in private that a well known problem is that civil servants in pro-nuclear governments have a hard time keeping their jobs if they point out that in fact nuclear power isn't necessary, and that maintaining job security for people working on the nuclear waste problem is one of the most difficult socio-technical challenges to address.

A management approach and method of analysis that continues to be predicated on the decoupling of the production of waste from its responsible management cannot, in the opinion of the Roundtable, be considered "socially acceptable."

Quoted in the InSOTEC draft national report for Canada, 1 March 2012, pp. 12-13. From: Sierra Club of Canada, 2005 (p. 6), see www.nonuclear.se/sierraclubofcanada_nwmo20050915-16



Tobias Riedl, Greenpeace Germany.

The Municipality of Östhammar

There is only one place in the world where an application to build a repository for irradiated reactor fuel is currently under judicial review. This application was submitted 16 March 2011 by the Swedish nuclear industry consortium The Swedish Nuclear Fuel and Waste Management Company (SKB, *Svensk Kärnbränslehantering AB*), and is for a geological repository about 500 meters under the surface in the bedrock at Forsmark, in the Municipality of Östhammar, located about 140 km north of Stockholm. Provided the application isn't rejected in the first phase where it is examined for completeness, both the Environmental Court and Swedish Radiation Safety Authority (SSM) plan to submit their statements to the government in the spring of 2015. The government will then be in the predicament of having to make a decision, regardless of positive or negative views by SSM and the Environmental Court. If the government accepts the application, they must ask the Municipality of Östhammar if they are willing to accept the facility. If the answer is no, the government has the right under law to say yes "if the activity is of the utmost importance with regard to the national interest" (Environmental Code, Ch. 17, section 6). What is more, SKB has repeatedly stated that they will withdraw their application if the people of Östhammar don't want it. SKB has however

not specified what exactly they mean by "if the people don't want it."

Stakeholder Reflection Group, was invited to give a presentation at the seminar. She was accompanied to the seminar by Vice Mayor Anna-Lena Söderblom, and Analyst Johanna Yngve Törnqvist. Marie began her presentation by stressing that a decision has not yet been made in Sweden and particularly by the Municipality of Östhammar, which has decided to wait for the outcome of the review process. By presenting the main issues in general of concern to the municipality as "main political considerations" she showed that the mix of social and technical aspects is taken for granted. Her list of main political considerations included longterm safety, environmental impact, health effects, and socio-economic aspects; with all of these related to the bedrock, the overall environment and society. The active participation in the seminar by the three representatives of Östhammar Municipality made it clear that the Municipality is not only highly informed but insists that both SSM and the Environmental Court carry out a rigorous analysis. None-the-less, there is a danger that the Municipality will be blinded by local pro-nuclear sentiment and influenced by the financial contributions it receives from SKB during the review process.



Marie Berggren, Head of Unit, Radioactive Waste Management, The Municipality of Östhammar.

It was with recognition of the key importance of Östhammar that Marie Berggren, Head of Unit, Radioactive Waste Management, The Municipality of Östhammar, and member of the nine-person InSOTEC



Left to right, from the Municipality of Östhammar: Johanna Yngve Törnqvist, Analyst and Anna-Lena Söderblom, Vice Mayor.

InSOTEC Research Topics – Or, how can the nuclear waste problem be studied without promoting the production of more waste?

The InSOTEC partners requested comments on their choice of four research topics regarding geological disposal: safety, siting, reversibility, and technology transfer. Additional topics that came up were taking a close look at the role of regulators, transparency and access to information, as well as definition of terms (e.g. "disposal" versus "management" considering the long period of time nuclear waste is dangerous).

With the fitting title "Politics Beneath the Surface - Concluding Reflections," Professor Pieter Leroy, Radboud University Nijmegen, the Netherlands, stated in the final presentation of the seminar, "None of the so-called 'technical' solutions is value free, they are intrinsically political". In his view, the country reports should address the political, scientific and participatory constraints and opportunities. He added, "Our present political institutions and rules have great difficulty with present environmental issues, such as nuclear power in general and geological disposal in particular. There are temporality issues, scale issues, persisting uncertainties and ongoing controversies."



Professor Pieter Leroy, Radboud University Nijmegen, the Netherlands.

After the conference ended, Barcelona resident Professor Josep Puig reflected on the nuclear waste issue and the responsibility of scientists.

"The first step is to stop production of nuclear waste, then we can discuss how to deal with the waste problem. While EURATOM is offering lots of money to university researchers, it is much more difficult to get money for research on issues against nuclear. In Spain we must remember that the nuclear reactors were built by private companies under the Franco dictatorship and with the active involvement of the oligarchy that made it possible. The nuclear waste is a problem inherited from the dictatorship. So, a democratic society has the responsibility to deal with this inherited problem, but first of all, it has to make the decision of stopping the production of nuclear waste. I also ask myself if it is ethical to use public money to solve an ecological problem

created by private electricity companies, at the same time as these reactor companies are making a lot of net profits? From the point of view of university research and the social responsibility of science, the role of this kind of project, like InSOTEC, has to be questioned. The socio-ethical responsibility of scientists should be considered."



Josep Puig, PhD, Engineer, Professor of Energy at the Autonomous University of Barcelona, and founder of the Barcelona based Group of Scientists and Engineers for a Non-Nuclear Future. The group is the organizer of the Catalan Conference for a Sustainable Energy Future Without Nuclear Power. The 26th conference will be held in Barcelona on 26 April 2012, with the theme "Creating our own electricity company: citizen generated electricity." For more information see: www.energiasostenible.org.

Participants in the seminar from Sweden

There were 12 participants from Sweden: Adel Daoud, InSOTEC researcher, University of Gothenburg; Mark Elam, InSOTEC researcher, University of Gothenburg; Kjell Andersson, Karita Research, Coordinator IPPA; from The Municipality of Östhammar: Marie Berggren, Head of Unit, Radioactive Waste Management, Johanna Yngve Törnqvist, Analyst and Anna-Lena Söderblom, Vice Mayor; Holmfridur Bjarnedottir, Administrative Director, Swedish National Council for Nuclear Waste; from the Municipality of Oskarshamn: Rigmor Eklind, Second Vice-Chairperson, Charlotte Liliemark, consultant, Ted Lindqvist, Director of Information, and Philip Möding, Mayor retired and GMF member; and Miles Goldstick, Information Secretary, Milkas.

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