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End User Conference

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ARGONA

End User Conference

Conference Report

17-18 March 2009 - Uppsala, Sweden

Sponsoring organizations:



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Introduction

The ARGONA project, standing for “Arenas for Risk Governance”, investigates how approaches of transparency and deliberation relate to each other and to the political system in which decisions are taken. The field of investigation is final disposal for nuclear waste and the project includes a number of European countries who are at different stages in their nuclear waste management (NWM) programmes. ARGONA sees transparency and participation as key elements in effective risk governance and both theoretical and practical aspects of transparency and participation in NWM are being studied in the project. The project describes the policy making structures on national and international levels, and how participation and transparency link to the political and legal systems. It defines and analyses *the arenas of transparency, deliberation and representative democracy* and how they relate to each other. The project also study *mediators of issue*, i.e. actors who facilitate public engagement in nuclear waste management, and the conduct of public consultations, which is facilitated by *mediators of process*. Furthermore, the project investigates the concept of risk and how good risk communication can be arranged, taken cultural aspects into account.

Another part of the project tests methods and apply approaches to transparency and participation within the participating countries, especially in the Czech Republic. This includes the methods focused science shop, consensus panel, interaction panel and application of the RISCUM model. The public participation in Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) and Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) in some of the participating countries is also reviewed and there are investigations made on the role of compensation in nuclear waste facility siting and the role of local referenda. Finally, on the base of this work, ARGONA will suggest guidelines for transparency and participation in issues of final disposal for nuclear waste.

ARGONA End Users Conference

The ARGONA End Users Conference took place on 17 – 18 March 2009 in Uppsala, Sweden. The conference was initiated and arranged to provide ARGONA with feedback from end users in the field of NWM, as well as to provide stakeholders and end users with research results. The intention was also to gather researchers from different European NWM projects to provide a wider

view of the state of knowledge about participation and transparency in radioactive waste management in Europe. The conference provided a forum for end users and researchers to discuss the outcome of research in the field, and to reach their own respective positions about their needs for participation and transparency in the future. Practical implications of research were in focus and the main question was: How can recent research improve the governance of NWM in Europe?

Four research projects participated in the conference, two of them on-going and two recently ended. Except ARGONA, the participating projects were:

CARL (Citizen stakeholders, Agencies responsible for radioactive waste management, social science Research organizations and Licensing and regulatory authorities), an independent, self-supporting consortium of organizations from countries that have experience with stakeholder involvement in radioactive waste management

OBRA (European **O**bservatory for long-term governance on **r**adioactive waste management), a coordination action under the 6th Framework Programme of the European Commission that includes a feasibility study for a European Observatory for long-term governance on radioactive waste management.

CiP (Community Waste Management in Practice), a research action part-funded under the 6th Framework Programme of the European Commission with the aim to make actual progress in NWM and includes participation from stakeholders in five European counties.

Apart from researchers from the four projects, the conference attracted a number of different stakeholders. About 110 people participated, representing local municipalities, regional and national councils, the European Commission, authorities, the industry and environmental organizations. They came from Belgium, Czech Republic, Finland, France, Luxembourg, Norway, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden and the UK.

The conference activities

The one and a half day conference involved several different activities. There were speeches from Uppsala Regional Council, Östhammar Municipality, the European Commission, the Swedish National Council for Nuclear Waste and SKB, which are summarized below. One main activity of the conference was the “stretching” of the research projects. Stretching, here, means that the research approaches and results are challenged by independent researchers and end users. This activity started with presentations from each one of the research projects,

after which the stretching followed, where the panel questioned and “stretched” the researchers. A more detailed description of the stretching and the feedback from the audience is given below.

Another important part of the conference was the working group discussions. The participants were divided into six different stakeholder groups to discuss a few topics. The division into stakeholder groups was made as it was found valuable to get a picture of the different stakeholder group perspectives. Three groups consisted mainly of local and regional representatives, and these groups had interpretation. One group consisted mainly of researchers, one with different NGO:s and one with industry representatives.

The questions given for discussion in the groups were:

- Having heard from the presentations and discussions today - what do you think is most important for the type of stakeholder you represent? Does cooperation like ARGONA/CARL/CIP/ OBRA make a difference? How?
- The four research projects presented today will all be ended within 2009. How would you like to proceed?
- What would you like to see take place in your country? In EU? How would you/your organization like to be involved?
- To what extent are we prepared to bring in ideas, methods and approaches over the borders from other countries? Are we too locked into existing structures?
- What can be done with the safety analyses? Should it be communicated or is it just too complex to understand?

The results from the discussions were thereafter presented in plenum. These results proved to be very valuable input to ARGONA and the NWM community as a whole and the results are described later in this report under different thematic topics. The conference also included several other possibilities for the participants to discuss and give input and feedback to ARGONA. These included plenary discussions and a questionnaire sent to the participants after the conference.

The quantitative results of the questionnaire is found in appendix 1.

Presentations

At several occasions during the conference, there were plenary speeches by representatives from different organizations, summarized below:

Arne Sandemo, Chairman of the Uppsala Regional Council Board welcomed the participants to the conference. He described the current situation in Sweden as being partly dependent on nuclear power as well as in need of finding a solution for the final disposal of the nuclear waste. He highlighted one group of people that he found underrepresented in the discussion on nuclear waste today: the younger generation. He expressed his hope that it will be possible to find solutions for the waste that enables us to hand over a planet with good conditions to the future generations.

Jacob Spangenberg, Mayor in Östhammar Municipality, at the time of the conference one of the two site selection municipalities in Sweden, presented a municipality perspective on the final disposal project. He described the process that has been taken place in Östhammar and how they have organized their work. The main considerations for Östhammar are radioactive safety, environmental impacts, health aspects and socioeconomic aspects and it is important that the residents have confidence in the process. Because of the veto right of Swedish municipalities, the local politicians have the ability to take a final decision about the repository.

Katerina Ptackova from DG Research, European Commission, presented the EU funded research, including nuclear research under the Euratom programme, as well as the outlook for future needs. The benefits of the governance projects under Euratom is that practices are identified and challenges are mapped; that the projects involve experts and use mediation and facilitation techniques; that they emphasize and improve dialogue between all stakeholders and that the outcome includes better understanding of issues by all stakeholders and improved connections in the radioactive waste management community. The objective for the future Euratom FP7 on RWM were identified as implementer-oriented R&D on aspects including investigation on governance and societal issues related to public acceptance. More governance research is also possible if there are identified needs for this.

Lucie Riad from Uppsala Regional Council presented an initiative from the Council called Internet Forum for Public Discussion on Nuclear Waste Management. It is a forum to inform the citizens on societal issues and to stimulate debate. At the forum, people can start discussion topics and discuss with others about different subjects related to the final disposal of nuclear waste.

Monica Hammarström from the Swedish implementer SKB spoke about the Technology Platform, an industry led activity to bring together R&D-relevant stakeholders to develop a long-term R&D strategy for Europe. The platform will be launched in the end of 2009 and its objective is to have the first geological disposal for hazardous radioactive waste in operation by 2025.

Eva Simic, Director of the Swedish National Council for Nuclear Waste described the council's work and the currently on-going transparency programme. The Council consists of independent experts, and the purpose is to advice the government in nuclear waste management. The transparency programme, running from 2007, gathers a number of different stakeholders in hearings on different topics relevant for the NWM process in Sweden.

Ute Blohm-Hieber, Head of Unit, Nuclear energy, transport, decommissioning & waste management at DG TREN, European Commission, presented the Commission's perspective on the way towards implementation of transparency, access to information and public participation in nuclear matters. She talked about representative and participative democracy and presented the background for transparency and participation in different conventions and international policy documents. She also described the Transparency Working Group of the European Nuclear Energy Forum (ENEF) and its achievements.

Stretching of the research projects

All four research projects presented their projects and their findings, and the three projects ARGONA, CARL and OBRA were then "stretched". After each project presentation, representatives from the projects were stretched by a panel of independent researchers and stakeholders. The stretching panel questioned the researchers for about 20 minutes, and then the audience had about 10 minutes for questions in the end of the session. The panel consisted of Tuija Hilding-Rydevik, member of the Swedish National Council for Nuclear Waste, Juhani Vira from Posiva Oy, Finland, Hana Gabrielova from the NGO Calla in the Czech Republic and Catherine Draper from NuLeAF, UK. Moderator for the session was Björn Hedberg from the Swedish Radiation Safety Authority.

An example of stretching

To get an idea of how stretching can appear in practice, an extract from part of the stretching dialogue with ARGONA is given here:

Catherine Draper, NuLeAF: I am representing local stakeholders and in your work, you have obviously amassed a great knowledge base. Can you tell me what steps you are going to take to make sure that all that information that you have amassed is available to us as local stakeholders, because the papers that I was sent to read in advance of this meeting I found very complicated and not very accessible to me, and I know that the people further down that I would actually have to pass the information on to, could not go straight for that information and understand what was there. So I'm hoping that you are going to say that there will be, not an idiots guide, but something that is very easy for us to understand. We talked about transparency and participation, and surely the end reports have to take that into consideration as well.

Kjell Andersson, ARGONA: Yes, obviously that is something which we need to work on to improve. Compared to other projects which we will hear about today, ARGONA has a more academic character because we are studying theory as well as doing practical implementation. We think this is necessary to build a firm ground, otherwise if you don't have a theoretical basis, you may be doing interesting and useful things, but it will be a little bit ad hoc and the next time you wouldn't know what you have done, and that is why I think it is necessary to have a theoretical basis. But then of course you need to communicate the theoretical basis better than we have been doing. There are many things that can be done, you can have a one day seminar about the RISCUM model, you can have a one day seminar about different processes of participation and so on, we could develop a lot of information material on paper, maybe on video. One thing could perhaps be to video hearings which would show how things can be done in practice, because I think, in a way, even if there is a theoretical basis, everyone doesn't have to know all the details. I think you are learning by doing, I think that is the key issue, you learn by doing. I think that is a way, start on a small scale, you can try to implement one the processes as presented by Hana here from the Czech Republic. That's a way how to understand how things work.

Tuija Hilding-Rydevik, Swedish National Council for Nuclear Waste: Well I was interested in the case study from the Czech Republic because you said in your presentation that the RISCUM model proved to be very suitable. And I was just curious to know what you mean by useful and what element of the RISCUM model made it useful in your context?

Hana Vojtechova, ARGONA: For us, a very important part of this model is to organize a reference group. It was the very first time that all stakeholders met around one table to discuss. It is very important for the Czech Republic, for the initiation of dialogue, and RISCUM model is very interesting in structuring dialogue, several levels of dialogue

among scientists, and among public and dialogue between scientists and responsible state organizations. It is very interesting for us and useful.

Lucie Steinerova, ARGONA: The most important thing is that the stakeholders are regularly meeting each other and talking and planning different tools of communication of the RISCUM model. They are talking about what they want to hear at the public meeting, what they expect from this meeting. It is really the first time when all stakeholders sit at one table and discuss this issue and its future.

Tuija Hilding-Rydevik, Swedish National Council for Nuclear Waste: So, it is not so much actually about the model, it is about meeting? Or? Do we need to have a model to say that you need to sit around a table?

Kjell Andersson, ARGONA: I think I can explain a little bit the role of the reference group. Because, of course when we started this process in the Czech Republic, we had meetings about the RISCUM model, the philosophy, the content, because it says that transparency is much more than openness. Well, we didn't show the RISCUM triangle here and so on but there is a model, a theory and a philosophy which is behind this that was communicated to all the different stakeholders. And then we said, now we should implement this, we should do something in order to create this transparency, and this will be done with the hearing that will be organized in May. But how to organize a hearing? That is where the reference group comes in, because the reference group consists of the implementer, the research institute, government agencies, Calla NGO and so on. So the reference group together now discusses, not only discusses, but designs how the hearings will be performed in order to accomplish something of what is in the RISCUM model. And that is fair, you have to be fair in using this model, you cannot set up a stretching exercise as we have here if you haven't really communicated that before and if not the ones who are expected to defend their arguments have been in the process together designing the hearings because they will be the subject of hard questioning. So it is a model, and you have a process for utilizing the model, which is the reference group.

Tuija Hilding-Rydevik, Swedish National Council for Nuclear Waste: So, the model contributes with improving the will to meet, and also providing an arena with a special format for people to communicate, if that is correct?

Kjell Andersson, ARGONA: Yes, precisely. And an arena for creating clarity, not an arena for creating some sort of consensus during the hearing. Then, after the hearing we don't know what will happen, if there is some sort of continuation, or if it's not at least the participants have become more knowledgeable about their different views and the issues. But this is a small step, one hearing is a small step.

Stakeholder perspectives

This section is based on contributions from the conference participants. Mainly, the input comes from the presentations from working group discussions.

Stakeholder views about the research projects and their impact

The municipality representatives found the research presentations valuable and interesting:

“One of the most interesting things for municipalities is that discussion arenas are provided by different kinds of EC projects. One can however pick the best from the different projects and use it in a way that is adapted to the own country.”

They meant it is impossible to compare or generalize amongst the projects since they are different and deal with different issues. They found that the EC projects seem to be of greater interest for those countries whose NWM governance processes are still in an early phase compared with those who have a longer history in these matters.

Another experience was that they had learned from the projects and it had helped to change the situation in some countries, to put pressure on the system and to insist on the democratic procedures in the process. One explained it like this:

“The European programmes have added enormous value to the country, they have helped us change the situation in Spain, we have implemented and carried out the debate. (...) We have been able to use these European programmes to put pressure on the debate and open somehow the local participation but we still have a long way to go, the idea of opening up to seeing different situations in different countries have been very valuable. But we have to maintain the European network to make sure that countries learn from each other.”

The research projects have provided a valuable arena for the municipalities to meet and learn from other countries in a similar situation. To maintain networks and arenas for communication and discussion among stakeholders is considered very important by the municipality representatives:

“The important thing for the municipalities is to have a possibility to meet each other and discuss different kinds of subjects. This was also what the CARL project have given the municipalities: insight into other countries problems and how they deal with them. CARL project can also be regarded as complementary to ARGONA, the CIP project and OBRA, that were initiated from the Commission. So it is also important that it is initiatives from different parts.”

The researchers themselves found that the projects are all struggling with the link between science and society and how to get the issues of scientific information across to the public, to people in the communities. The benefit of several different projects in this field is acknowledged as it is possible to look at the same issue from a number of perspectives. But on the other hand, it is impossible to produce a common answer applicable in all countries due to cultural and historical situations.

The researchers experienced problems with explaining project details in short time. It can also be difficult to give strong recommendations: it can be too political. They found it important that they manage to contextualize results and explain theoretical assumptions. Research has shown that meaningful discussions can be arranged between those who have different views, but the conditions vary in the EU countries.

The NGO group consisted of seven persons, all from different Swedish environmental NGO:s. The group highlighted the fact that they were all from Swedish NGOs¹ and that no member in the group was participating in any of the research projects. They explained the existence of the group as a result of the strong environmental movement in Sweden, and the possibility for NGO:s to get funding for taking an active part in the consultation process for nuclear waste repositories in Sweden. Their recommendations were therefore to support and increase NGO participation in EU- funded projects.

¹ There were a couple of other representatives from NGOs from other countries attending the conference, but due to interpretation matters, they participated in other groups

The industry representatives believed that the exchange of good examples and international practices and approaches is the most important. They recognized the international dimension of the projects with the international approaches and solutions but also that the processes can help empower actors, which otherwise are weak in the national arena.

Future needs

Cooperation and communication on all levels, from governments to local communities and NGO:s was stressed as very important to create a good process. One problem is that this is a long-term process, while political leadership changes much faster. This is a common problem in several countries for finding more long term decisions.

The main questions raised by the groups of local representatives were: Will the research show results of practical use? Will there be discussion forum provided by the European Commission in the future? And are comparisons between countries useful? In a municipality perspective, these questions seem to be very important for future projects to keep in mind.

For the future, the researchers would like to distribute the research results widely and also try to draw recent project outcomes together. There have been many projects and it might be the time to draw the results together and see what they mean and how they hang together. It is important to recognize that different countries are at different stages, so some of the results from one country may be directly applicable to another, and some of them might need to have the historical context explained. But at the same time it is important to continue the process so as to allow people to continue meeting. Among the areas that the group found important to explore were for example if we can develop criteria to judge “success”. And what is the role of community benefits?

The NGO group wanted to highlight that if participation of environmental NGOs in projects is considered important, an extra effort has to be made. Financial support is needed to get NGO participation. The group stressed the long-term safety in this issue. The group recommended the European Commission to stress environmental NGO participation in calls for projects and in negotiations. The group also discussed a database, an open and interactive database that could be used to gather information and where everyone can comment and make changes. They recommended establishing such a database instead of building new closed databases for knowledge distribution.

From the side of the industry, they want to exchange information and good practices; what was good, what was wrong, why it was wrong, and also to provide the possibilities for networking to the different actors in the processes. They have experienced that people sometimes believe in information from other sources much better than the information coming from the national implementers and this is a question of trust. Industry representatives would like to share information about the technical approaches with the technological platforms as an important tool and they want to have support from the different projects and programmes.

The need for guidelines

The ARGONA project is anticipated to propose guidelines for governance of nuclear waste management and the conference showed a strong demand for such guidelines by the end users. The guidelines should preferably be of practical use for local situations. Especially the Spanish delegation feels they are in a hurry and can't wait for research results:

“We are in a hurry and cannot wait for research results. We must find a site and a solution for the waste.”

However, research results are not useless, rather much needed as guides and providers of pathways:

“Guidelines are needed as well as a forum for discussions. Relations have to be established where all are involved.”

Another municipality group also expressed the need for guidelines:

“We hope that in the future there will be guidelines from ARGONA because we think it is needed to have a common view on how the communities and the public can be involved in the decision process and it would be easier if you have guidelines, it is easier for all different countries to push that forward. Of course you have to adopt that to the local use.”

and also, as one respondent put it:

“I certainly did notice the strong demand by end users for guidelines – whatever they may be. I saw that the end users have pretty strong trust in the researchers to formulate them.”

In the survey sent to participants after the conference, the respondents were asked what they found most important to bring forward in guidelines and the answers can be divided into two different forms:

1. General guidelines or principles of NWM governance, relevant for all EU countries. For example concerning transparency, openness and participation. Responsibilities were also clearly mentioned as important to state in guidelines.
2. More specific and pragmatic guidance, using for example best practice and examples. Several respondents mentioned the value of presenting good examples and experiences from reality, or to learn from “bad experiences”.

Other comments around guidelines regarded the importance of: full involvement of the host community; communication; public access to official records and to provide arenas where information and experiences can be exchanged; guidelines for how to go from R&D to action; support to enable participation from different groups, both the public in general and NGOs; defining the roles of stakeholders clearly.

Exchange of ideas

The common meaning from all participants were that we are sharing ideas between countries in Europe today, but that efforts need to be taken for this networking and sharing of ideas to go on and develop. People are interested in taking part in other countries work:

“It is something that is always important, the possibility to obtain information because the local communities want to know what’s going on in other countries in similar circles. So that would add value and thus this type of conferences should go on from that perspective.”

The ARGONA End Users Conference was taken as an example of that this exchange of information and ideas is already taking place:

“In some countries, to actually meet and actually talk about an issue is absolutely unheard of. Through these projects, we have been able to develop this famous space, this arena, for people to come together and it is important that we admit that we have done that. (...). We need to find mechanisms to keep them moving forward.”

The industry has its own network for sharing ideas across Europe:

“Implementers are quite well organized on the EU level, we are having clubs of agencies, meetings of the EU level within the Commission. So we think we are quite well organized already.”

Examples were given on issues that might be controversial but that we should be able to discuss in the open, such as regional or international repositories or what it means that the industry owns the process of finding a solution to the waste issue.

Communication networks and arenas

Enhanced from above, several groups discussed communication. The local municipalities want the research results to be communicated and the researchers are struggling with getting their information to the local communities. There is obviously a need to bridge over that gap.

One of the working groups with representatives mainly from municipalities in the Czech Republic, Sweden and the UK constantly returned to the concept of communication in their discussions. They stressed the importance of transparent, participative and inclusive communication between stakeholders at all levels:

“Information and communication up and down and between parties, across stakeholders talking to other stakeholders involved, and across political boundaries and how important it was for us all to feel involved in the process; those who are for and those who are against.”

For this to work, communication needs to be supported by structures that encourage people to be involved to participate. The group also stressed the importance of communication of research results.

“We wanted to stress how important the knowledge pool that has been generated by all the projects we heard of yesterday, how important that is, and how important it is that isn’t lost. (...) The communication and the networks must go on, and it got to be accessible.”

The black box of safety analysis

One issue for discussion was the safety analysis: should it be communicated or is it too complex? The discussion circled around the concept of the black box; does it exist, could it be opened, and what is in it? The common answer to the question of the safety analysis was that it definitely should be communicated. The municipality groups considered it should be communicated, both on expert level and layman level. They felt that there is nothing in the black box that cannot be communicated. Rather, it is the ability to communicate that is the problem and that the experts don’t know how to communicate those issues. And perhaps it is not always the content that is interesting, it could be the context, and the history and the meaning of the research, not necessarily the results and the methods. Everything can be communicated, but it requires adaptation to different target groups and different languages:

“However, we have to avoid transmitting things in a more complex way, we have to make information understandable. The reports and the safety evaluations put into perspective different scenarios which point to the safest solution. It is therefore important to have them at hand. Citizens understand more than we tend to think. Citizens are interested in knowing what is going on and we don’t have to make the lay persons language close to something like children language, we are not that ignorant.”

The group of researchers found it important to communicate the relevance of the safety analysis as well as its historical context. The safety assessment can for many people be perceived as a black box. Therefore, it is important to communicate that the safety assessment is a tool, its purpose and how it is used by implementers and regulators. All the details in it are not possible to communicate, but the key is to find a way to communicate the bones of the

safety assessment without throwing away the substance of it. It is possible to communicate the safety assessment, but the communities need to help the research community in doing it, how to do it; it is a two way process.

The NGO group stressed that it is not only the implementer's results that should be communicated, but also other actors results. Controversies with regulators and environmental NGOs can be used to put light on uncertainties that exist in the safety analysis. It may also broaden the safety analysis' way of approaching the issue. NGO:s are often bringing up other aspects of relevance for the safety assessment than the strictly technical ones.

The representatives from the industry believed they have to communicate the safety analysis with the public, but that it has to be adjusted to the different target groups. The language has to be general and the issue has to be made more simple and understandable. We have to open the black box, but the level of details which is presented depends on the public itself:

“We can explain more, we can explain less, it depends on the requirements. We are not afraid to open it (the black box).”

They all stressed that there is a history of bad communication of the nuclear industry, and even still, several examples with incidents which have not been properly communicated to the public. So there is definitely a need for transparent and good communication.

Summary of working group discussions

Presented by Britt-Marie Drottz-Sjöberg

We have said that it is possible to work together on a very broad basis of competences. It is also necessary to do this because the challenge is very large in these types of projects. There is a challenge with the several aims we have, and in this respect we have a range of scientific tasks and social implementations which seem both paradoxical and maybe a dimension that we could work out to be a working dimension.

One very interesting thing during these two days is the issue of purity, which is related to the dimension of science and society. It includes that we are supposed to work independently; we are supposed to have clear roles as researchers, as representatives for specific stakeholder groups. And we are still to have a “me and you” communication.

How can people who are supposed to be independent researchers work in the “me and you” communication mode for example? How can people who take decisions take information and use it from research projects without compromising themselves? I would suggest for the discussion that we have the notion of keeping the transparency, the necessity to have information available for everybody, to exchange information. But also the necessity of up-keeping very critical eyes on what we do ourselves, and what others do. Because there is the phenomenon of group thinking; that everybody in the same group is thinking the same, everybody is agreeing and in that respect they are making the huge mistake of not including the critical aspects that actually push the future forwards. And we need that push very much and that is the independence of specific groups, specific research projects. So we need both of those types, we need all these forces, all these competences, to work together in a specific arena.

Evaluation of the conference

This section is mainly based on responses to a questionnaire sent to participants after the conference. The comments from the respondents to the questionnaire revealed that the End Users Conference was a needed gathering. The meeting provided mainly two things: the gathering of the four governance projects in the same arena and the possibility for different stakeholders from different countries to meet, network and learn from each other. The initiative was found intriguing:

“Overall it was a very good initiative; similar events should be organized for all Community research projects in order to overcome the risk of ‘l’art pour l’art’.”

Not as successful was the lack of concrete outcome from the conference and that the time schedule was too tight, both for presenting the different projects and for discussion. It can also be difficult to combine several aims and needs in one conference. One participant puts it like this:

“We know all too well this isn’t easy. The problem is that different end-user groups have very different expectations as regards output. E.g. scientists want output to be ‘academic’, local stakeholders want it to be practical ... Not easy to match that.”

Overall, the participants were pleased with the mix of stakeholders, but some mentioned groups that they found missing: national government representatives, national authorities, international organizations, natural scientists, the media and more radical environmental NGOs.

The End Users Conference format

The respondents gave many valuable suggestions to how the conference format could be improved and there were three main concerns: that there should be a more clear focus on the end users; that there is a need for concrete results that are useful for the end users and finally, that there should be more time dedicated

to group discussions in various groups with a mix of participants. For example, researchers and end-users could meet in smaller groups:

“The idea of having working group discussions among researchers, stakeholders and implementers in separate groups was useful. However, next to that, it would be good to include also working group discussions that mix researchers and stakeholders and that focus on specific topics.”

The presentations and stretching of the research projects

The researchers considered it difficult to give the results of the projects in such a short time as was available:

“In the context of this meeting, we hope you understand it is very difficult to take two-three years results from the projects that is still being worked on, and to sit here in 15-20 minutes to give the bones of the argument and then to be stretched, (...) It is not meant a criticism of this process, I think this is a very good forum, but I think stretching needs time, and maybe it was not so much stretching as inquiring and you need to stretch us as we go forward over and over again. But I always use the Swedish stretching as a good example of how interaction can take place and I think we need to be prepared to open ourselves to it. It is no use just saying it should be the implementers or the regulators that should be stretched, everyone should be stretched, even the community of experts should be stretched.”

The comments from the other conference participants revealed that some found the stretching of the research projects very useful, others wished it had been more provocative and exhaustive, with focus on fewer, deeper questions. The researchers should also have time to prepare themselves for the answers beforehand.

The research presentations should also have been more structured and distinct, with focus on the useful parts and presented in a form accessible to all stakeholders. Clearly, many found concrete results and recommendations from the research projects as most valuable. Some were requesting more time for the project presentations, to enable a more detailed exploration of them but others rather asked for summaries of the most useful results of direct use and of good evaluated examples. People also requested not only “how” something have been done, but also “why” it has been done.

Future research needs

Another question in the questionnaire was what needs future initiatives (in research or otherwise) should especially address? The answers were spread and only a few gave actual suggestions on research areas. Instead, the same issues as earlier were standing out as in need of improvements:

1. Bridging the gap between the scientists and the lay people - Communication of already existing project results should be improved, as making documents more accessible to all stakeholders. The practical aspects needs to be better addressed or better communicated.
2. Sharing information and experiences - Absolutely necessary to continue support the pluralistic and transnational sharing of experience, creating arenas where viewpoints can be presented safely.
3. Evaluation of current practices – A need to review the national NWM programmes in terms of participation and transparency, their societal and political contexts, as well as the current existing public participation process on both national, EU and international level.

The more concrete suggestions addressed public concerns about waste issues; decomposition of HLW; the link between HLW and nuclear weapons; comparative political science research over EU countries; legal research on instruments for good governance; morality, ethics, insurance, safety and responsibility for future generations; public acceptance; impacts for NWM of revival of nuclear power programmes, and retrievability.

Final reflections

What we can see from the discussion results and the questionnaire responses is that the meeting provided a valuable and anticipated arena for different stakeholders to meet and discuss. In detail, things could have been done differently, and many elements of the conference can be developed further, but overall, just the fact that all these stakeholders from different countries and with different perspectives, facing the same problems to solve, met and discussed, were proved to be of great value. The message was also that it is important that the possibility to meet in these kinds of arenas is maintained.

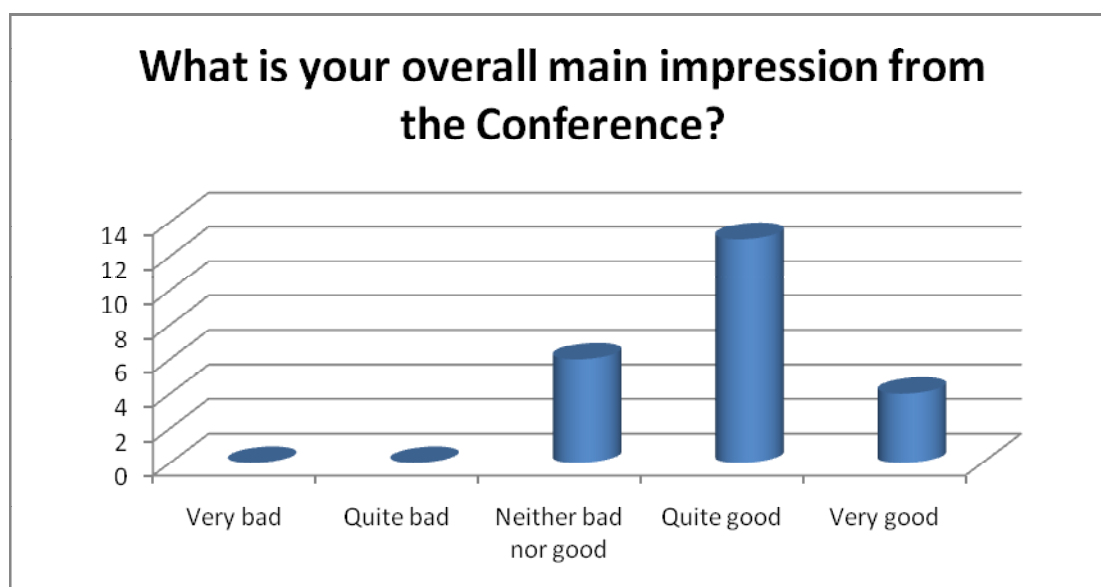
All stakeholders have different needs and expectations when attending a conference like this, and the organizers have their aim and needs. Maybe, the organizers tried to do too much in one conference. The arena for research projects and the end users arena are both proved wished-for, but are maybe not suitable to combine, or at least, the different aims could be divided more. At the end users conference, focus should be on the end users needs, which seem to be to hear results of direct relevance and use for them and to exchange experiences with others. To judge what is important or not could, however, be hard for the researchers to know so it is important to open up discussions among researchers for a broader public. It is also important not to separate the different parts too much, so that the valuable arena for exchange of ideas and practices is not lost.

Appendix 1: Questionnaire responses

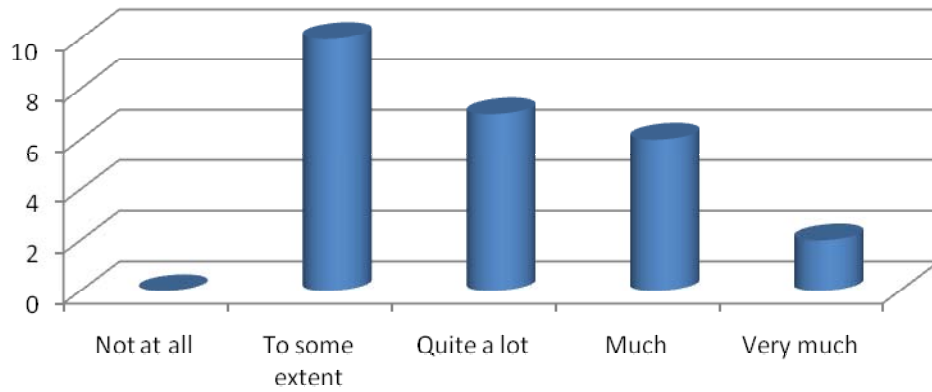
A few weeks after the conference, a questionnaire was sent to all participants. The questionnaire was only provided in English, so for the countries whose participants were not comfortable with English, the contact person for each country was asked to help with the translation. The questionnaire was anonymous. 25 responses of the questionnaires were received. The respondents could be divided into the following stakeholder groups:

3 Municipal council or similar work	1 National authority
3 Regional authority	1 European Commission
8 Research group	3 NGO
4 Implementers / industry	2 Not specified

These are the quantitative results of the questionnaire. The comments and suggestions are included in the main report.



To what extent do you find the concept of the End Users Conference useful for bridging the gap between research and implementation?



To which extent were the following activities of value to you?

