

**COWAM : OLOF SÖDERBERG/IRIS HAWKINS**

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## **SUMMARY OF GENERAL IDEAS FOR FOLLOW-UP WORK THAT HAVE BEEN INSPIRED BY DISCUSSIONS WITHIN COWAM REDOMMENDATION GROUP 3**

### **1. Local democracy**

It might be possible to identify *principles and/or best practices* for the involvement of the concerned local population when deciding on nuclear waste management issues. But the *implementation* has to be adapted to the traditions and the constitutional structure of a particular country.

The concept of ‘local government’ has different meanings in different countries. The same concept also has different meanings for different actors on the local scene.

The following observations reflect some of the many aspects that should be taken into account.

- The policy adopted on nuclear waste management should in theory reflect the attitudes of a majority of the population of the country. If there is a clear majority behind the policy on nuclear waste management, the policy is legitimate, even if there is strong criticism. However, this may be difficult to take for granted, as nuclear waste management does not seem likely to be a major issue at general elections at the national level. If a policy is clearly supported by a majority on the *national* level, but meets strong opposition by a majority on the *local* level (in communities that will be affected by that policy), there is a democratic dilemma to be solved.
- Principles for the decision-making process on the national level should also contain clear principles for local participation in this decision-making process.
- Principles for local participation in this decision-making process should contain some minimum requirements, for instance stating that the ‘normal’ locally elected representative body (a municipal or a corresponding body) should always have a decisive role.
- If possible, a local community should be able to work out its own decision-making process, e.g. about the use of local referenda .
- Much more than lip service has to be paid to concepts such as transparency, openness and dialogue.
- A situation has to be avoided where the local actors experience a lack of principles or are given the impression that they are in the hands of the main actors on the national level, such as the Government, its regulating agencies or the implementer.
- Efforts are expected by the local authorities to involve the silent majority in decision-making processes in order to overcome democratic gaps.

### **4. Influence of the local actors on the national nuclear waste management framework**

#### *General*

A desirable basis for local involvement is the existence of a clear national policy. Such a national policy should contain answers to at least four basic questions:

- Where does the power rest to decide on the policy and the principles for carrying out the policy (National government, Parliament)?
- Who is responsible for regulating this policy in detail and what exactly does this responsibility mean?
- Who is responsible for implementing this policy and what exactly does the responsibility of the implementer cover?
- How is the implementation of the policy going to be financed?

*Respective roles of the different local actors*

The existence of different local actors working in different ways when influencing national nuclear waste management framework must be acknowledged and regarded as an asset. Major features should be the following:

- Local involvement in nuclear waste management issues should be based on usual democratic rules that are used for decisions on other issues of major importance for a local community.
- However, given the often deep concerns and involvement of local NGOs and many individuals among the population on matters concerning nuclear waste management, 'ordinarily' elected officials and bodies should consider the significant potential contribution by concerned individuals when democratically elected representatives of the municipality have to make a decision which they believe is in the interest of the municipality and its inhabitants. Thus, local opposition and local NGOs should be regarded as an asset.
- To take part in a dialogue also means taking on a responsibility. At some point, decisions have to be made by institutions that have been given such powers through a democratic process.

*Local competence and resources*

The participation of local communities in the decision-making process requires that they develop some competence and that they have access to resources that enables them to do so.

- The key issue is that concerned municipalities have access to funding mechanisms that allow them both to inform their inhabitants and to develop a competence of their own that provides them with the tools for meaningful participation.
- Funding mechanisms should be constructed in a way that guarantees an independence from the implementer concerning the use of money for different purposes.