



PRESS RELEASE

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International waste conference indicates that the Danish final repository project for low and intermediate level radioactive waste is problematic

Tuesday, March 24th, six green NGOs held an international conference in The Common Hall (Fællessalen) in the Danish parliament building, Christiansborg, in Copenhagen. The subject of the conference was the environmental and safety impacts of the planned Danish final repository project for low and intermediate level radioactive waste from Risø National Laboratory. Lately, the final repository project has been criticised by international experts and authorities in other countries and during the conference, some of the most prominent of these critics from Öko-Institut in Germany and The Swedish NGO Office for Nuclear Waste Review presented their opinions.

Among the spectators were representatives of research institutions, municipality administrations, citizens groups, NGOs, the press and electronic media, mayors and Members of Parliament.

The conference documented that the Danish final repository concept is fundamentally flawed, does not live up to international safety standards and that the localization process, resulting in five municipalities being designated to potentially host the repository, should start all over again.

The Director of MKG, *Johan Swahn*, compared the Swedish nuclear waste process to the Danish and established that the international criticism of the Danish final repository concept should indeed be taken very seriously. Considering that Sweden has solved many of the same problems that Denmark currently is troubled with, the Danish authorities could benefit from cooperation with the Swedish authorities.

Beate Kallenbach-Herbert, Head of Öko-Institut's Nuclear Engineering & Facility Safety Division, compared the German nuclear waste program to the Danish and mentioned some issues also relevant to the Danish situation. Senior Researcher at Öko-Institut, *Gerhard Schmidt*, who lately has been criticised by Danish Decommissioning and The Danish Ministry of Health, presented his analyses of the Danish nuclear waste inventory and the Danish final repository concept. According to these, almost none of the Danish waste types decay within the administratively controllable period of less than 300 years to below clearance levels, so almost none of it is suitable for the planned near-surface disposal. In the ensuing panel debate between the international experts, the criticism from the Danish authorities was refuted and Gerhard Schmidt pointed out that they never took a position on his most important assessments.

In the subsequent panel debate between *Flemming Møller Mortensen*, MP from The Social Democratic Party, and *Sophie Løhde*, MP from The Liberal Party, *Hans Luunbjerg*, Mayor of Kerteminde Municipality, and *Søren Vester* from the citizens group against nuclear waste in Skive, the pros and cons of an interim storage facility and a final repository were weighed against each other. Everybody agreed that irrespective of what political choice would be made in a year from now, the safest option should be preferred.

The conference Chair, Former Chairman of The Swedish National Council for Nuclear Waste, *Torsten Carlsson*, closed the conference by pleading for a closer and more trustful cooperation in nuclear waste management between the responsible authorities and representatives of civil society.

“Anybody who have had their doubts, whether the Danish final repository concept for nuclear waste is flawed and does not live up to international safety standards, must now be convinced that it is”, says Palle Bendsen from NOAH FoE Denmark’s Uranium Group. “The criticism from the international experts is unequivocal and leaves no room for interpretation. Considering that it is supported by a long series of position papers from among others nuclear authorities in our neighbouring countries during the strategic environmental assessment of the final repository, it is high time that the Danish authorities wake up. Not only must the current final repository concept be scrapped, but the ongoing process to locate the final repository in one of the five designated municipalities - Lolland, Bornholm, Skive, Kerteminde and Struer – should stop immediately”.

“It is in everybody’s interest that the responsible Danish authorities respond to the recommendations from the international experts”, says Hans Pedersen from SustainableEnergy. “All parts of civil society – municipalities, NGOs and citizens groups – should be involved much more in the nuclear waste process than until now. In addition, not only the Former Chairman of The Swedish National Council for Nuclear Waste has recommended cooperation between the Danish and Swedish nuclear authorities, but The Swedish National Council for Nuclear Waste itself recommends Danish cooperation with The Swedish Radiation Safety Authority and The Finnish Radiation and Nuclear Safety Authority. Both have more experience with nuclear waste management than we have here in Denmark. This should happen as quickly as possible”.

Presentations from the conference: <http://noah.dk/radioactive-waste-management-conference/>

Statement from Öko-Institut on Danish Decommissioning’s and The Danish Health Ministry’s comments on Öko-Institut’s working paper on the Danish final repository concept:

http://noah.dk/wp-content/uploads/2015/02/Gerhard_Schmidt_statement_final_2015-03-19.pdf

The organisers of the conference were NOAH Friends of the Earth Denmark, SustainableEnergy, Society for Green Technology / Danish Society of Engineers, Nordic Folkecenter for Renewable Energy, Greenpeace Denmark and The Danish Ecological Council. The conference was made possible through funding by Miljø- og energifonden af 2005, Plums Fond for Fred, Økologi og Bæredygtighed and 1. Maj Fonden.

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