



OPINIONSGRUPPEN  
FÖR SÄKER  
SLUTFÖRVARING

## OECD/NEA Forum for Stakeholder Confidence in Gimo, Sweden, 6 May 2011.

By Kenneth Gunnarsson, chairman of Oss.

OSS was formed in 1996 as a reaction to the arrival of SKB with its project for high-level waste in our community.

The reason we formed our organization was that we wanted it to be 'critical eye' and to offer a platform for people engaged in the issue who were skeptical in one way or another.

Our work is financed via the municipality out of funds provided from the Nuclear Waste Fund as support to the municipality's participation in the process.

### Personal engagement

My personal engagement in the nuclear waste issue started after I had spent some time with Sámi. It is the native people in the north of Sweden. I was working with a photographic project and it was in 1990, four years after the Chernobyl disaster.

The area where this community of Sámi lives was one of the most polluted in Sweden.

Here you can see how they are measuring the rate of Cesium in a reindeer. This specific animal had 11 000 Bq per kilo.

Immediately after the accident over 4000 reindeer had to be slaughtered when they exceeded the permitted maximum rate of 1500 Bq per kilo. As a consequence of the Chernobyl accident the market for reindeer meat collapsed from one day to next because of people's anxiety and their attitudes to nuclear technology and to how the authorities handled the problem.



This Sámi boy is Neila. His father also have 11 000 Bq per kilo in his body.

Today this Sámi community still has to face the consequences of the Chernobyl disaster in the same way as 25 years ago.

## People's confidence

With this short story I would like to point at the impact of people's attitudes. It is a key factor also in the nuclear waste issue, especially in the localization process.

People's attitudes can also be shown in their confidence in different stakeholders and actors.

To give you an idea of our standing in relation to other actors in the repository process, I'd like to show you the results of a survey taken annually since 1986.

The question they ask is: "How much confidence do you have in these groups when it comes to information about energy and nuclear power?"

	1986	1990	1995	2000	2005	2007	2010	
<b>Scientists</b>	81	87	81	87	82	81	82	(83)
<b>Environmental organizations</b>	57	61	71	59	60	64	60	(62)
<b>Federal authorities</b>	40	36	41	56	56	56	56	(49)
<b>Nuclear power industry</b>	36	52	45	52	47	39	40	(44)
<b>Government</b>	52	36	39	42	38	42	51	(43)
<b>Journalists</b>	16	20	28	29	31	27	27	(25)
<b>Energy industry</b>				29	24	23	22	(25)

SOM-Institute (Society, Opinion and Media. University of Göteborg)

## Financial support

People's attitudes to the project, and the trust they have in the planning process and the environmental impact assessment, the EIA, are very important. That is why in 2005 the government changed the law so that money could be paid out from the Nuclear Waste Fund to make it possible for environmental organizations to take active part in the process.

So, the NGO participation in this process is indirectly subsidized by the Swedish nuclear power industry - a unique arrangement from an international point of view. This arrangement is also unique in Sweden. There are no corresponding provisions relating to other environmental issues.

The motive behind it is not some sudden stroke of generosity on the part of the government.

It was a strictly pragmatic strategy to resolve the conflict that the nuclear waste issue had triggered in the eighties and nineties.

The legal provision for environmental groups' participation, provisions for greater formal influence in the Aarhus Convention on access to information and public participation, and financial support from the Nuclear Waste Fund have all strengthened our position.

But we still lack tools for exerting real influence. I am thinking about our status, or lack of status, vis-à-vis the Environmental Court and our lack of the right to appeal the Court's findings.

In drastic terms, I might go so far as to say that they are all happy to have us on board, to heighten public confidence in the process - so long as we don't have too much influence.

## **EIA consultations**

Once Östhammar and Oskarshamn agreed to participate in the more detailed phase of the siting process in 2001, formal consultations under the leadership and control of the nuclear waste management company got under way.

My organization Oss looked forward to the opportunity to participate in the process. Our first move, however, was to approach the County Administration, who represent the central government in the consultations in Östhammar, and ask them to recommend that the proceedings be led by a neutral party, some institution that was not directly associated with the waste management company. We also suggested that the meetings be minuted and recorded by a neutral party, and that they be taped for future reference.

The Administration said No, referring to the waste management company's sovereignty and their responsibility for the process. The company of course wasn't interested.

The total control the waste company has had over the formal aspects of this process has its roots in a distinct division of responsibility set out in Swedish law. As a consequence, the final waste storage issue has been totally de-politicized and removed from politics. Which has given the industry a free hand these past 30 years to run the process entirely to serve its own needs and interests, without fear of political intervention.

I think this is a key factor behind the singular efficiency and "success" of the process in Sweden.

But a success for the industry is not necessarily the same as a success for the society.

Solving the industry's waste problems is not the same thing as finding a solution to a serious environmental problem that faces the whole of society and generations to come.

But after the politicians abdicated their responsibility, the issue was reduced to a problem facing the industry.

## **Actors' objectives**

I would like to say a few words about some of the actors or players in the process.

Each actor has of course its own objectives – pursues its own agenda. Those that most distinguish themselves in this regard are the waste management company and the two municipalities. Both are clearly committed to the realization of the project.

The waste management company SKB is totally focused on gaining approval of its project and a permit to build, which is also a condition for the permits to operate the power companies' reactors.

It is also indirectly a condition for the waste management project in Finland. And I would say it also is of highly importance for the European Union's waste management directives.

The municipalities they need this project, and they both have expressed hopes that their community will be chosen.

As a consequence, none of these actors is particularly eager to discuss or otherwise call attention to problematic aspects of the project, aspects that might endanger its realization.

As the EIA consultation has been so tightly controlled by SKB, and political supervision has been delegated down to the municipal level, these actors' self-interest has affected the conduct of the consultations. We have seen numerous examples of this kind of bias these, since the consultations got under way.

We environmental organizations, too, distinguish ourselves in that we have absolutely no self-interest in the project. That is, we have no stake in the choice of method or the siting. Our only objective is to try to ensure that the process allows the selection and execution of the best solution in terms of its performance and environmental impacts in the longer term. That is one of the main reasons why the public has such confidence in the environmental NGOs.

## Two arenas

The industry's total control over the consultation process and their will to protect their interests at every turn has meant that the project has been discussed and examined in two different arenas.

In one local arena, controlled by the waste company, we have met some local politicians, NGO's and sometimes even some locals.

This was the arena for the formal EIA consultations, where we were talking about dust, noise and frogs' habitats etc. We have also been talking about the labor market, opportunities for local industries, infrastructure etc.

The second arena is where you could find most of the actors. The leading actor here has been the National Council for Nuclear Waste. Others are the national authorities, different scientists and experts, other municipalities and NGOs.

Here we have been talking about hard stuff like long term safety, ethical and moral aspects, BAT, alternative methods etc. Interested individuals and groups have been invited to this arena to participate in a number of conferences and seminars.

But an ocean has separated these two arenas. Little or nothing of the views and insights put forward in this second arena has had any effect on either the company or the project. Possibly, it may have slowed the process a little.



## Co-decision-making

I had the opportunity to participate in an IAEA Workshop on Stakeholder Engagement in Las Vegas this past December. The workshop tried to identify some key factors behind successful processes relating to storage facilities for nuclear waste. One of the factors that emerged from the discussion was that the process should lead toward shared – that is, mutually agreed – decisions.

The concept of 'mutuality', or anything like 'co-decision-making', is totally foreign to the Swedish process. Here, the nuclear waste management company has dictated everything. From start to finish.

Therefore, by way of conclusion, I finally would like to encourage you all to ask yourselves... Why arrange for public participation, for 'transparency' and public access to information, if all this is not allowed to influence the project itself?

Ultimately, I think, it's about trust and the authenticity of the process and the project. Trust is crucial to loyalty and thus, to the long-term safety of the project, to the society's capacity and willingness to deal with the kinds of problems that arise if and when plans go awry. As they will from time to time – most recently in Japan.



**NGO for the Safe Final Storage of Radioactive Waste**

[www.oss.avfallskedjan.se](http://www.oss.avfallskedjan.se) – [oss@avfallskedjan.se](mailto:oss@avfallskedjan.se)

Member of the national network MKG – [www.mkg.se](http://www.mkg.se)