

Report on the Seventh Meeting on 10 and 11 May 2023

The Austrian Board for Radioactive Waste Management (“**Advisory Board**” for short) - met for its seventh session on 10 and 11 May 2023. The aim of this meeting was to develop and record the recommendations for the legal framework and safety criteria, to present the results of the study for public participation "Austria and its radioactive waste: What you always wanted to know and we always wanted to ask you" and to receive an update on the status of the study "Comparison of Repository Options", the participation concept as well as the timetable and roadmap and the key performance indicators.

Background

Based on “The National Programme for the Management of Radioactive Waste” (2018), the Advisory Board **develops a basis for decisions and recommendations for the Federal Government regarding the safe disposal of low- and intermediate-level radioactive waste** accumulated in Austria. Radioactive waste is generated in Austria through applications in medicine, research, industry and through the dismantling of facilities that are no longer required (decommissioning).

The mandate of the Austrian Board for Radioactive Waste Management defines its tasks. It is valid for three years and ends in June 2024. The four tasks according to the mandate are:

1. Radioactive Waste in Austria: Survey of the Status Quo

The aim is to survey and collect information and data on radioactive waste management, to discuss the inventory of radioactive waste in Austria as well as to evaluate the studies on the Federal Government’s previous activities with respect to final disposal. As part of this, plans are to provide a tangible overview of the existing situation. The data collected in this survey describes the starting point in detail and provides the basis for the work of the Austrian Board for Radioactive Waste Management.

2. Analysis of the Options for Final Disposal

The aim is to provide an overview of all possible options for the final disposal of radioactive waste in the form of a single document. It should include the option of cooperation with other countries and outline the requirements, strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and risks, as well as an initial cost estimate for each option.

3. Framework for Public Participation

The aim is to develop a framework for the public to participate (including cross-border measures) during the process of establishing a final repository for radioactive waste in Austria. The concept should consider technical, economic, and social aspects. Moreover, it should contain recommendations on how and when the public should be informed, involved, and included in the decision-making process.

4. Development of a Timetable for the Disposal of Radioactive Waste

The aim is to define a timetable and roadmap for the disposal of radioactive waste accumulated in Austria. This draft should include, where possible, relevant intermediate stages ("milestones"), key performance indicators and precise timelines for reaching these stages.

The recommendations worked out by the Advisory Board on the individual mandate items are forwarded to the Federal Government and serve as a basis for decisions on future steps.

The Austrian Board for Radioactive Waste Management includes representatives of the Federal States and Governments, scientists, NGOs, and from the public. The Advisory Board is chaired by Silvia Benda-Kahri from the Environment Agency Austria. The members of the Advisory Board may change in the context of future mandates depending on the tasks at hand when the current mandate ends in June 2024.

Review

A report on the "Legal Framework" was prepared for the Advisory Board. The results were presented and discussed at the sixth meeting. The final report was compiled based on the discussions. Based on the discussion, the Committee on the "Pathway to the Evaluation of Options for Final Disposal" worked on open points and recommendations.

The report on safety criteria was presented. The Committee on the "Pathway to the Evaluation of Options for Final Disposal" discussed the report and formulated first recommendations and presented them to the Advisory Board. The report was amended based on the discussions during the sixth meeting.

The report on the "Long-term Behaviour of a Final Repository" was presented. Moreover, the questions that the study on "Site Criteria" should contain, were introduced.

The Committee on the "Framework for Public Participation" gave an update on the status of the development of the participation concept. The further development and wording of the participation concept was undertaken in close coordination with the other committees.

During the sixth meeting, an update of the timetable and roadmap as well as first recommendations were presented.

Results of the Seventh Meeting

The results of the seventh meeting of the Advisory Board are presented on the basis of the mandate items.

Mandate Item 1: Radioactive Waste in Austria: Survey of the Status Quo

The previous work on mandate item 1 serves as the basis for the other mandate items and recommendations.

Mandate Item 2: Analysis of the Options for Final Disposal

The Committee on the "Pathway to the Evaluation of Options for Final Disposal" presented its recommendations from the study on the "Legal Framework". The concept of the study on the "Comparison of Repository Options" by Öko-Institut e.V., Institute for Applied Ecology, Darmstadt was presented. In addition, the amended report on the "Proposal on Safety Criteria regarding a Facility for the long-term Disposal of Radioactive Waste" was presented.

Results

The Advisory Board has agreed on the following course of action:

The recommendations on the legal framework will be adapted according to the discussion.

The report on the "Comparison of Repository Options" is to be prepared and submitted to the Advisory Board. The report will be presented at the eighth meeting.

There will be a kick-off meeting for the study on site criteria and the interim results will be presented and discussed at the eighth meeting. The final report will be available in December and presented at the ninth meeting.

The report on the safety criteria has been submitted. The committee formulates further recommendations, for example on chemical aspects.

Mandate Item 3: Framework for Public Participation

The study on "Austria and its Radioactive Waste" is presented by the Environment Agency Austria and the results are discussed by the Advisory Board.

The Committee on the "Framework for Public Participation" gives an update on the status of the development of the participation concept.

Results

The report on the exploratory study "Austria and its Radioactive Waste: What you always wanted to know and we always wanted to ask you" will be completed and sent to the Advisory Board.

The findings from the exploratory study and from the NGO meeting as well as the timetable and roadmap will be considered during the preparation of the participation concept.

The recommendations for the participation concept will be presented by the Committee on the "Framework for Public Participation" in the eighth meeting.

Mandate Item 4: Development of a Timetable for the Disposal of Radioactive Waste

The current version of the timetable and roadmap was developed further in coordination with the Committee on the "Framework for Public Participation". In addition, a first draft of the key performance indicators was presented and further steps were discussed.

Results

The key performance indicators will be sent to the Advisory Board members for comments. At the eighth meeting, the revised key performance indicators will be presented and discussed with the Advisory Board and recommendations will be documented.

The next meeting of the Austrian Board for Radioactive Waste Management will take place on 27 and 28 September 2023.

Participants

Advisory Board

Roman Beyerknecht (Nuclear Engineering Seibersdorf)

Eva Festl (Federal Ministry of Finance)

Bernhard Haubenberger (Association of Austrian Municipalities)

Patricia Lorenz (Global 2000)

Frank Melcher (Montanuniversität Leoben, Chair of Geology and Economic Geology, Applied Geosciences and Geophysics)

Gabriele Mraz (Austrian Institute for Ecology)

Nikolaus Müllner (University of Natural Resources and Life Sciences, Institute of Safety and Risk Sciences)

Christina Raith (Federal Ministry of Social Affairs, Health, Care and Consumer Protection)

David Reinberger (Ombuds Office for Environmental Protection Austria)

Ursula Rosenbichler (Federal Ministry of Arts, Culture, Civil Service and Sport)

Sabine Schneeberger (Federal Chancellery)

Gerhard Seifritz (Lower Austria, Representative of the Federal States)

Sigrid Sperker (Upper Austria, Representation of the Federal States)

Angelika Spieth-Achtnich (Ökologie-Institut e. V., Institute for Applied Ecology)

Johannes Sterba (Technical University of Vienna, Atomic and Subatomic Physics)

Erik Tajalli (Federal Chancellery)

Charlotte Vogl (Federal Ministry for Agriculture, Forestry, Regions and Water Management)

Hannelore Weck-Hannemann (University of Innsbruck, Department of Public Finance, Faculty of Economics and Statistics)

Other Participants

Silvia Benda-Kahri (Environment Agency Austria) Chair

Sabine Kranzl (Environment Agency Austria) Co-Chair

Claudia Ackerl (Federal Ministry of Climate Action, Environment, Energy, Mobility, Innovation and Technology)

Roman Zöchling (Federal Ministry of Climate Action, Environment, Energy, Mobility, Innovation and Technology)

Rudolf Engelbrecht (Austrian Agency for Health and Food Safety GmbH)

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