

Report on the ninth Meeting on 31 January and 1 February 2024

The Austrian Board for Radioactive Waste Management (“Advisory Board” for short) met for its ninth meeting on 31 January and 01 February 2024. The aim of this meeting was to decide on recommendations for mandate items 1, 2, 3 and 4 and to discuss the paramount recommendations. In addition, the further procedure and the status of the final report were also discussed.

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

At the eighth meeting of the Austrian Board for Radioactive Waste Management, the report "Comparison of Options for Final Repositories" by the Institute for Applied Ecology in Germany was presented and discussed by the Advisory Board. In addition, the authors of the report "Proposal for siting criteria" presented its interim status.

The committee on the "Framework for Public Participation" presented a paper with recommendations for a participation concept at the eighth meeting.

Moreover, the committee on the "Timetable and Roadmap" presented its recommendations.

The Advisory Board decided to hold an extraordinary meeting between the eighth and ninth meeting to coordinate the recommendations for the final report.

The amended recommendations on the four mandate points were presented and discussed at the extraordinary meeting.

Results of the ninth meeting:

The results of the ninth 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 committee on the "Radioactive Waste in Austria - Focus on Quantities" presented the recommendations on Mandate Item 1.

Results

The Advisory Board has finalised and decided on the recommendations on prevention of waste and the clearance of radioactive materials for Mandate Item 1.

Mandate Item 2: Analysis of the Options for Final Disposal

The report "Proposal for Site Selection Criteria" was presented by the authors and discussed with the Advisory Board.

In addition, the committee on the "Pathway to the Evaluation of Options for the Final Disposal" presented its recommendations on Mandate Item 2.

Results

The Advisory Board has finalised and decided on the recommendations for Mandate Item 2 on the topics of safety criteria, protection objectives and options. Further recommendations will be finalised and decided on at the second extraordinary meeting on 4 April 2024.

Mandate Item 3: Framework for Public Participation

The committee on the "Framework for Public Participation" presented its recommendations, including the participation concept.

Results

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

The recommendations on Mandate Item 3 and the participation concept will be harmonized and revised. The revised recommendations and the participation concept will be finalised and decided on at the second extraordinary meeting on 4 April 2024.

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

The committee on the "Timetable and Roadmap" presented its recommendations.

Results

The Advisory Board finalised and decided on the recommendations on the timetable and roadmap.

The Advisory Board decided on having a second extraordinary meeting on 4 April 2024. The tenth meeting of the Advisory Board will be held on 15 and 16 May 2024.

The Advisory Board has agreed that the final report will be revised in accordance with the results of the discussions. The final report will then be adopted at the tenth meeting.

Participants

Advisory Board

Roman Beyerknecht (Nuclear Engineering Seibersdorf)

Ulrike Felt (University of Vienna, Department of Science and Technology Studies)

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)

Monika Mörth (Federal Ministry for Agriculture, Forestry, Regions and Water Management)

Gabriele Mraz (Austrian Institute for Ecology)

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

Horst Reicher (Federal Ministry of Climate Action, Environment, Energy, Mobility, Innovation and Technology)

David Reinberger (Ombuds Office for Environmental Protection Austria)

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

Volker Schaffler (Federal Ministry of Climate Action, Environment, Energy, Mobility, Innovation and Technology)

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 (Institute for Applied Ecology)

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

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)

Christina Raith (Federal Ministry of Climate Action, Environment, Energy, Mobility, Innovation and Technology)

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

Henriette Herzog (Austrian Agency for Health and Food Safety GmbH)

Secretariat

Christian Katzlberger (Austrian Agency for Health and Food Safety GmbH)

Konrad Lotter (Austrian Agency for Health and Food Safety GmbH)

Sonja Rosenitsch (Austrian Agency for Health and Food Safety GmbH)

Katharina Schmidt (Austrian Agency for Health and Food Safety GmbH)

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Untere Donaustraße 11, 1020 Vienna

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Austrian Board for Radioactive Waste Management

Secretariat

Henriette Herzog

E-Mail: kontakt@entsorgungsbeirat.gv.at

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