

WM2014 Conference Panel Report

PANEL SESSION 003: Finland/Sweden Featured Nations: National Program and Local Views

Co-Chairs: **George Dials** (*USA*)
Irena Mele (*Austria*)

Panel Reporter: **Keith Miller**, *National Nuclear Laboratory, UK*

Panelists:

- 1 **Herko Plit**, *Deputy Director General, Ministry of Employment and the Economy, Energy Department, Nuclear Energy and Fossil Fuels (Finland)*
- 2 **Vesa Jalonen**, *Chairman of the Municipal Council, Eurajoki Municipality (Finland)*
- 3 **Ingvar Persson**, *Swedish National Council for Nuclear Waste (Sweden)*
- 4 **Jacob Spangenburg**, *Mayor, Municipality of Osthrammar (Sweden)*

This panel session focused on the Waste Management programs and policies in Finland and Sweden. George Dials gave an overview of what attendees could expect to hear during the various presentations, informing delegates that they would have plenty of time to both consider and ask their questions as the Q&A session would be kept to the end.

Summary of Presentations

Herko Plit started by out-lining the main drivers of the Finnish energy policy, siting security of supply, self-reliance and the importance of meeting the EU targets for 2020. Finland has ambitious targets for nuclear and renewable energy, projected as 60:40 split if all 7 nuclear plants become operational. Herko then went on to describe the Licensing Procedure as stated in the Finnish Nuclear Energy Act 1994 and how this related to the Waste Management Policy. Posiva published their first site screening in 1985, which included 6 separate site investigations. In 2001, Posiva final disposal decision was ratified by the Parliament (159 - 3). Work continues on the ONKALO underground repository, at a depth of approximately 400m. An operation date of around 2020 is expected, making this facility a first of a kind in the world. Herko noted that the program's success is based on a long term stable policy, strict safety requirements and the credibility and independence of the Safety Authority (STUK)

Vesa Jalonen explained the background to involving the Local Community in the Finnish context. The Eurajoki Municipality has of the order of 6,000 inhabitants, of which 53% work in the industry, paying local taxes and providing a major income stream for the Local Council. The Municipality has had nuclear power since 1978. Okiluoto also has an interim storage facility for spent nuclear fuel and repository for low and medium-level waste. In the late 70's and early 80's the requirement for a deep repository in Finland was driven by fuel-cycle economics, later (1994) the import and export of nuclear waste was prohibited by law. As in all nuclear matters, safety is the primary consideration, together with a sense of national duty to manage nuclear waste. There is a long-term political commitment to the repository and so there is no reason to delay its implementation. Vesa Jalonen then went on to outline the procedure for the political decision on Final Disposal and the reasons why Eurajoki had been chosen (wide-spread local acceptance, and seen as a success story for the area), noting that local attitudes had steadily

WM2014 Conference Panel Report

increased over the last 20 years. A program of active communication continues focusing on local welfare issues and investments in the local community.

Ingvar Persson summarized the allocation of responsibilities between the State and power companies in relation to spent fuel and nuclear waste in Sweden. He first dealt with the historical perspective, then gave an overview of nuclear facilities and outlined the 4 basic principles which have been endorsed by the Swedish Parliament (Cost of disposal to be met from revenues generated by the sales of energy; Reactor owners are responsible for the disposal of their spent fuel and nuclear waste; Overall responsibility rests with the Government; and Each country onto should take responsibility for their own spent fuel and nuclear waste). Persson described in more detail how these responsibilities were allocated and discharged respectively by Government and the power companies. These include the establishment of R&D programs, a Nuclear Waste Fund and a long-term commitment to the disposal of spent nuclear fuel and nuclear waste. Ingvar concluded that this clear division of responsibilities had led to a successful order based on law.

Jacob Spangenburg commented that the basis of success is to have a strong independent local authority, maintaining continuity by regularly interacting with utilities and always providing the local perspective. This has been the basis for Osthrammar participation over the years, always ensuring that the community benefitted by Added Value Programs.

Questions and Answer

In response to a question on whether a local referendum would be required before a final decision could be taken, **Jacob Spangenburg** replied that this might be possible if there was sufficient support, but it was generally accepted that it was up to the Local Council to decide. **Herkko Plit** added that the opinion of the local community would be sought. **Vesa Jalonen** noted that his Local Council had voted 20 - 7 in favor when they had considered this issue.

Herkko Plit was asked would it be possible to retrieve the inventory, and noted that this was part of the final approach in Finland. **Ingvar Persson** noted there was no provision in Swedish law, but that it should be possible during the operational phase. However once the repository is sealed then it is not an option.

Jacob Spangenburg was asked to give his views in relation to who could be trusted more, companies or politicians. He replied that it was essential to have an open and transparent partnership between both and that it wasn't a question of trusting one over the other.

Charles McCombie asked the panel for their views on the concept of the local community having a veto, and as the final decision approaches, an increasing level of commitment is required on both sides. **Jacob Spangenburg** responded by stating that the final decision would be approved by the Local Council. **Ingvar Persson** noted that this situation is clearly described in the Environmental Code and that the National Government couldn't say YES if the Local Government said NO.