

International Conference on the Safety of Radioactive Waste Management, Decommissioning, Environmental Protection and Remediation: Ensuring Safety and Enabling Sustainability



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The management of the legacy of radium-production in Belgium: a roadmap to long-term management solutions

Belgium was from 1922 till 1977 a major radium-producer by extraction from natural ores. This production was situated on the site of the former Union Minière, now UMICORE, in Olen.

Since 1977, decommissioning of production facilities and remediation activities were conducted: radium-contaminated materials and soils were brought on landfills and in storage facilities, but these are only temporary solutions. The challenge remains to come to final disposal solutions for all radioactive and non-radioactive wastes.

The last years the tools have been developed and put in place to meet the challenge:

- A methodology to define long-term management solutions for the various categories of radium-contaminated waste on the basis of contamination levels;
- A roadmap to develop and decide on all remediation and disposal projects; focus in the first phase (2021 –2024) is on the completion of the legal and regulatory framework for the remediation and disposal projects, including a national policy for a dedicated shallow-depth disposal facility for radium-contaminated radioactive waste;
- A structure of collaboration and communication with the main actors involved and with the federal and regional governments and local stakeholders.

With this roadmap we are at the beginning of a long path to final disposal solutions (decades), but by focusing now on the legal and regulatory elements and collaboration structures we establish solid foundations.

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