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ERDO Programme for enhancing international cooperation the back-end of the fuel cycle

For nuclear power to be accepted as a sustainable technology, some key requirements must be fulfilled. These include developing waste disposal solutions that are technically and societally accepted. A safe and responsible solution for radioactive waste is also a requirement for other nuclear applications. The ERDO Association is the only entity devoted entirely to enhancing international and regional cooperation aimed satisfying these requirements. ERDO and its predecessor organisations, Arius and the ERDO Working Group, have focused for the last two decades on organising constructive initiatives to encourage multinational efforts to ensure that all countries that generate radioactive wastes that need to be disposed of in a deep geological repository will have access to such a facility. The ultimate objective of ERDO is to establish one or more concrete projects for the implementation of the multinational repository (MNR), but, as this paper will illustrate, ERDO has expanded its activities to include also projects aimed at enhancing cooperation in pre-disposal treatments of radioactive wastes. In its overarching roadmap leading to eventual establishment of an MNR, ERDO follows two paths: a top-down approach encouraging countries to cooperate at the policy level and a bottom-up approach involving technical R&D projects. The present paper will summarise the technical cooperation between member countries in ERDO, and also between ERDO and other international organisations such as the IAEA, the NEA, the EC and IFNEC.

Currently, around half of the 27 Member States of the EU have expressed interest in the potential option of a shared MNR. Given the growing interest in expanding or introducing nuclear power globally, emergence of a credible MNR project might significantly counter potential public or political opposition based on assertions that “the waste disposal problem” remains unsolved.

Primary author: Dr VUORIO, Marja (COVRA and ERDO Association)

Co-authors: Dr MCCOMBIE, Charles (McCombie Consulting and ERDO Sec.); Dr VERHOEF, Ewoud (COVRA and ERDO Association); Prof. CHAPMAN, Neil (Chapman Consulting and ERDO)

Presenter: Dr VUORIO, Marja (COVRA and ERDO Association)

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