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French Low-Level Long-Lived repository project : ensuring sustainability from the early stages

In France, Andra, the national radioactive waste management agency, is in charge of developing long-term solutions for all types of radioactive waste. Application of graded approach principles for the disposal of Low Level-Long Lived waste category (i.e. for graphite and radium-bearing waste) have specific environmental and safety concerns. Intermediate depth repository options have been engineered by Andra for several years and a community in Aube district (East France) volunteered to host the project. At the current “feasibility” stage of the project, Andra decided to carry out an environmental diagnosis of the community site to:

- Identify compartments and areas where environmental specific values should lead to their early exclusion of the siting process.
- Collect and structure initial information on the sensitivity of potential sectors to give robustness to the “avoid/reduce/compensate” strategy,
- Pre-assess and analyse the impacts on all environmental sensitive components (land use, water, air, biodiversity, landscape, economic activities including agriculture and forestry...) at construction, operation and post closure phase of a disposal facility

Coupling safety analysis with environmental studies at the earliest stage of the project gives a strength and robustness to the systematic identification, sorting and specification of project requirements. It also steers the project development by identifying when project iterations would be needed to ensure a step-by-step refinement of the disposal solution for this category of waste.

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