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Evaluation of the regional participation procedure used during the search for sites for deep geological repositories for radioactive waste: Comparison of the on-going evaluation and the ex-post evaluation

Final report from the research project on
“Participatory waste disposal policy”

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Summary

In the final report on the research project *Participatory waste disposal policy* an on-going evaluation is made of the regional participatory procedure within the framework of the sectoral plan procedure for deep geological repositories. The findings of the on-going evaluation are also compared with the results obtained in the ex-post evaluation carried out in 2016. Because only three of the proposed siting regions, Jura Ost, Nördlich Lägern and Zürich Nordost, were still under consideration in stage 3 of the site selection procedure in the period in which the on-going evaluation was made and no further added value was anticipated by studying certain evaluation criteria again (as they have remained stable), the on-going evaluation is reduced in scope – both in respect of the cases evaluated (only three instead of six) as well as with respect to the evaluation criteria employed (only 40 instead of 55). The procedure corresponds in the main to that of the ex-post evaluation: Once again use was made of available documents and data, and additional data was gathered in interviews and in an online survey. On the basis of the available data the three regions were analysed with respect to specific criteria and for each sub-criteria it was established whether it was *fulfilled*, *largely fulfilled*, *partially fulfilled*, *barely fulfilled*, *not fulfilled* or *not measurable*. Finally, the assessments for individual sub-criteria were summarised to give an overall assessment for each main criterion.

The findings of the on-going evaluation do not differ much from the findings of the ex-post evaluation. Only a few sub-criteria were assessed differently in some regions; the differences seen in each case are minimal. In the main criterion *Fairness* (1) a lower assessment of the sub-criterion *Adequate moderation* in Jura Ost and a better assessment of the sub-criterion *Adequate reaction on the part of the organisers to requests and suggestions* in Zürich Nordost leads to a lower and a better assessment of the main criterion in the region concerned. No change occurs in the overall assessment of *Fairness* – it remains the same as in the ex-post evaluation, that is *largely fulfilled*. With respect to *Transparency* (2) the sub-criterion *Transparent and clear communication of competencies and tasks of the various players* was assessed higher in both Nördlich Lägern and Zürich Nordost, but this did not lead to a higher assessment of *Transparency* overall. In all it remains *largely fulfilled*. In Jura Ost a better assessment of the criterion *Maximisation of the number of interested people reached* led to a better assessment of the evaluation criterion *Motivation of participants* (10) in this region. However, once again this did not change the overall assessment; motivation of participants remains *partially fulfilled*. Under the evaluation criterion *Direct and comprehensible information* (12) both the *Comprehensibility of information* and the *Quality of information on the issue* were assessed as better in all of the regions. Overall, however, these evaluation criteria remain *largely fulfilled* – as in the ex-post evaluation. Further, final re-assessment of individual sub-criteria – under the criterion *Transformation of zero-sum conflicts into positive-sum conflicts* (13) – did not lead to another overall assessment. *Openly striving to resolve conflict* was assessed less well in Jura Ost and higher in Zürich Nordost, but these evaluations had no influence on the overall assessment of the criterion in either region.

The sub-criteria of the main criteria *Early and iterative participation* (3), *Joint determination of decision-making and procedural rules* (4), *Institutional integration* (5), *Balance between different social classes* (6) (this criterion was not re-evaluated), *Balance between organised and non-organised interests* (7), *Balance between short-term and long-term interests* (8), *Learning opportunities* (9), *Professional competence of the participants* (11), and *Stability of expectations* (14) were all assessed as being exactly the same as in the ex-post evaluation. Therefore, assessments for individual sub-criteria and main criteria have not significantly changed since the ex-post evaluation was made. The conclusion can be drawn that the overall quality of regional participation in the sectoral plan procedure has been neither greatly improved nor greatly impaired.

In view of these results from both evaluations and the recommendations made in the ex-post evaluation, in the conclusion of the report a brief look was taken at regional participation in stage 3 of the site selection procedure. It was determined that most of the recommendations made in the *Concept for regional participation in stage 3* should be applied in the next stage. The *Suitability of the procedure for laypeople* should be improved with more appropriate scheduling of meetings for part-time participants, comprehensibly formulated mandates from the SFOE and sufficient time should be made available for response. The *Exchange of information among the regions* should be improved by coordinating activities and mutual exchange of experience among the regions. Further, the *Representative composition of the regional conference* should be improved and/or the deficit in the form of lack of representation should be countered by implementing various channels of communication and different participatory formats adapted to the needs of the population groups to be addressed (e.g., participatory forums). To *Make public relations activities better and more appealing*, public events should be made more attractive in stage 3; this could be done by inviting well-known people or by offering entertainment in addition to an address by an expert (e.g., presentation of a film). In addition, different channels of communication should be employed and activities in the field of communication should be specifically designed for specific target groups (e.g., only young people).