

Participatory Disposal Policy

An Evaluation of Regional Participation Procedures in the Search for Suitable Sites for Deep Geological Repositories for Radioactive Waste in Switzerland

2nd Conference on
Key Topics in Deep Geological Disposal

Challenges of a Site Selection Process:
Society – Procedures – Safety

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The Regional Participation Procedures

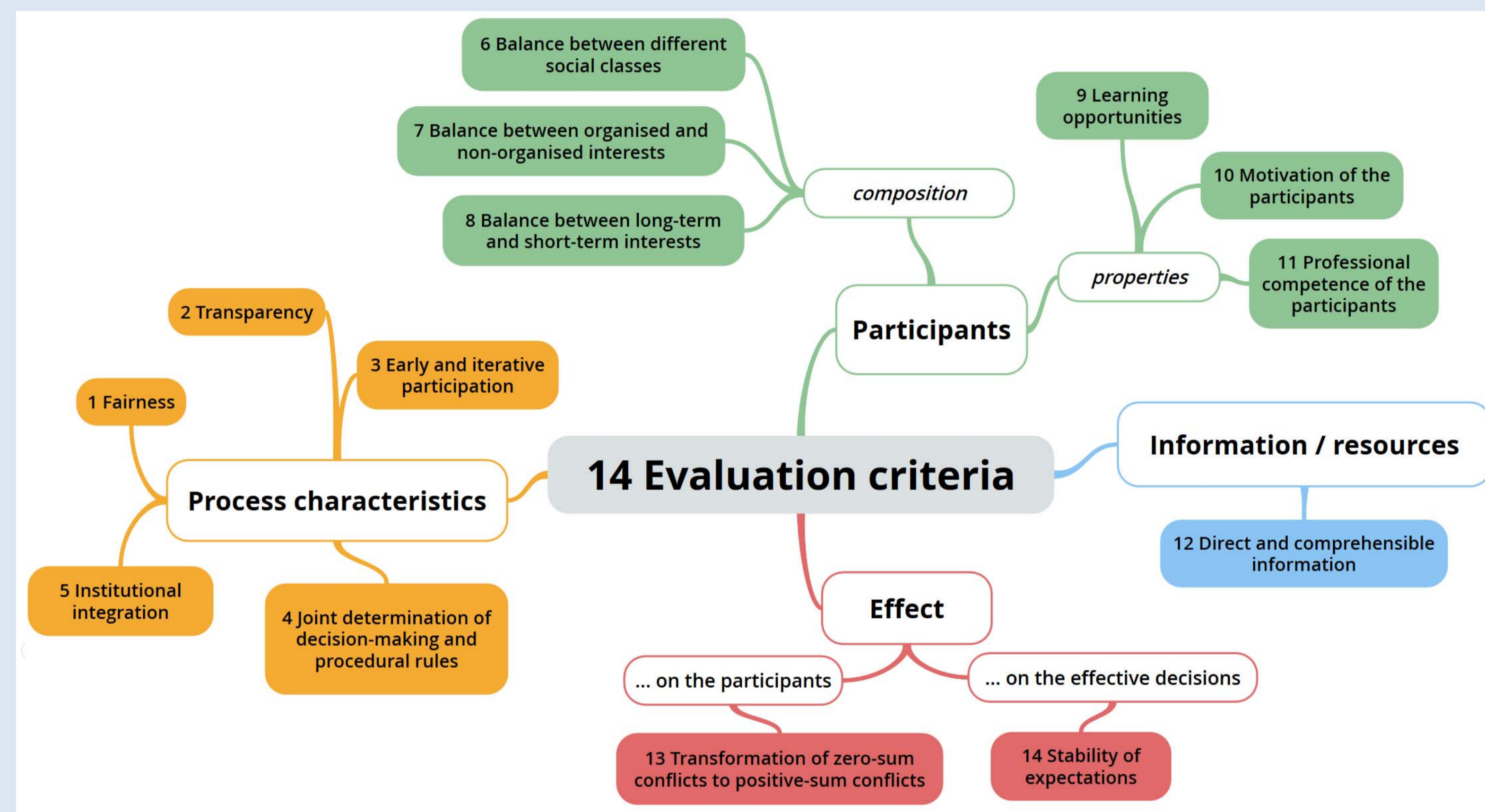
As part of the *Sectoral Plan for Deep Geological Repositories* (see box on the right), the *Swiss Federal Office for Energy* (SFOE) in cooperation with affected communities and cantons established regional conferences in each of the six siting regions which come into question for deep geological repositories for radioactive waste. These participatory structures aim at including the wishes and concerns – e.g. in terms of written statements on the issues at hand – of regional politicians, the local interest groups, and the concerned citizens of the regions into the overall process. A regional conference range in size between 70 and 120 members. Every conference consists of a management group (five to twelve members), an administrative office and three working groups (on surface facilities, on the socioeconomic and ecological impact study, and on the safety) with around ten members each. These working have about eight meetings a year and the whole regional conference meets three to four times a year in a so called “*Vollversammlung*” (plenary session). In this project the regional participation structures of each siting region are evaluated.



Plenary assembly in the region *Südanden*
(Source: Peter Hunziker, Regionalkonferenz Südanden)

The Evaluation Criteria

The implemented criteria draw on the well-established “criteria to evaluate participation processes” by Linder and Vatter (1996) as well as their revised version by Vatter (1998) which were established to analyse the construction of nuclear power plants and special waste incinerator plants in Switzerland by means of qualitative case studies. The revised version (Vatter 1998), including 14 criteria, were updated on the basis of insights from the new participatory literature. In this vein, more specialized sub-criteria, 55 in total, were added. Furthermore, these criteria were divided into four groups: process characteristics (1), participants (2), information/resources (3), and effect (4).



On the one hand, the 14 criteria include widely accepted principles for the evaluation of the quality of political decision-making procedures such as fairness, transparency, and stability of expectations. On the other hand, they contain criteria that take into account the empirically proven deficits of conventional participation procedures such as the (low) motivation of the non-organised population, the dominance of zero-sum conflicts, and the missing balance between different social classes.

Sectoral Plan for Deep Geological Repositories

“The conceptual part of the sectoral plan for deep geological repositories determines the goals of the federal government in this area and the procedures and criteria to be applied in selecting sites for deep geological repositories for all categories of waste in Switzerland. The focus of the site selection process is on safety-based criteria, with land use and socio-economic aspects playing a secondary role. The conceptual part of the plan also specifies a three-stage site selection process and regulates the collaboration between the federal government and the cantons and neighbouring countries, among the responsible federal offices and concerned organisations and persons under public and private law [...]. It also outlines [...] how development can be supported in siting regions that are influenced by the repository projects” (SFOE 2008: 5).

In 2008 the *National Cooperative for the Disposal of Radioactive Waste* (Nagra) proposed six possible siting regions in Switzerland where a deep geological repository could be built due to safety-based and geological criteria. These six regions are Jura Ost, Jura Südfuss, Nördlich Lägern, Südanden, Wellenberg, and Zürich Nordost.

The Evaluation Process

In order to test whether the 14 evaluation criteria (and the 55 sub-criteria) are met, existing documents (protocols, annual reports, etc.) of the *Swiss Federal Office of Energy* (SFOE) and the participatory board have been analysed. In addition, interviews with important stakeholders and leading persons have been carried out, and, furthermore, an online survey with the participants of the regional participation has been conducted.

Following the collection and organisation of the data, all documents were analysed and searched for indicators of the degree of fulfilment of the 55 sub-criteria for each region. Afterwards, each sub-criteria was rated for each region (or sometimes for all regions together) on the basis of the table below. Thereafter, the total degree of fulfilment (for each region and each criteria) has been calculated based on the arithmetic mean.

not at all fulfilled	○○○○
hardly fulfilled	●○○○
hardly / partially fulfilled	●●○○
partially fulfilled	●●●○
partially / mostly fulfilled	●●●●
mostly fulfilled	●●●●
mostly / completely fulfilled	●●●●
completely fulfilled	●●●●

Main Results of the Evaluation

Fulfilment of the Criteria

In sum, most of the criteria are partially or mostly fulfilled (two or three points). There are almost no differences between the six analysed regions. The weaknesses of the procedures particularly lie in the criteria 6 to 8 – all of them deal with the representativity of the regional conferences. Lower social classes (regarding education and income) as well as non-organised interests (women, youth, and people with a migration background) as well as long-term interests are underrepresented. Further, the motivation of the participants is given only partially as the rather low attendance figures of the meetings of the regional conference show. The region *Wellenberg* sticks out on some criteria due to the fact that this regional conference has only about 30 members – with every member being in at least one working group. This explains why the region has divergent ratings sometimes.

Recommendations

Based on the results of the evaluation, recommendations for the SFOE have been formulated. Notably, one of the most striking deficiency of the process is the missing suitability for the chosen system in which non-professionals as well as laymen, participate and work on a voluntary basis. This has to be improved for instance by an appropriate frequency of meetings, simple and understandable information, an adequate amount of information (not too much), and early submission of the meeting documents. Besides this, there are also other aspects to improve, in particular the supra-regional exchange or the representative composition of the regional conferences (particularly women and young persons should be attracted). In order to improve professional competence, a structure with only working group and/or management group members is conceivable. Finally, the SFOE as well as the regions should try to include the public more, e.g. with enhanced and more attractive public relations.

Evaluation criteria		Jura Ost	Jura-Südfuss	Nördl. Lägern	Südanden	Wellenberg	Zürich Nordost	total
process characteristics	1. fairness	●●○○	●●○○	●●○○	●●○○	●●○○	●●○○	●●○○
	2. transparency	●●○○	●●○○	●●○○	●●○○	●●○○	●●○○	●●○○
	3. early and iterative participation	●●○○	●●○○	●●○○	●●○○	●●○○	●●○○	●●○○
	4. joint determination of decision-making and procedural rules	●●○○	●●○○	●●○○	●●○○	●●○○	●●○○	●●○○
	5. institutional integration	●●○○	●●○○	●●○○	●●○○	●●○○	●●○○	●●○○
participants	6. balance between different social classes	●●○○	●●○○	●●○○	●●○○	●●○○	●●○○	●●○○
	7. balance between organised and non-organised interests	●●○○	●●○○	●●○○	●●○○	●●○○	●●○○	●●○○
	8. balance between long-term and short-term interests	●●○○	●●○○	●●○○	●●○○	●●○○	●●○○	●●○○
	9. learning opportunities	●●○○	●●○○	●●○○	●●○○	●●○○	●●○○	●●○○
	10. motivation of the participants	●●○○	●●○○	●●○○	●●○○	●●○○	●●○○	●●○○
	11. professional competence of the participants	●●○○	●●○○	●●○○	●●○○	●●○○	●●○○	●●○○
effect	12. direct and comprehensible information	●●○○	●●○○	●●○○	●●○○	●●○○	●●○○	●●○○
	13. transformation of zero-sum conflicts to positive-sum conflicts	●●○○	●●○○	●●○○	●●○○	●●○○	●●○○	●●○○
	14. stability of expectations	●●○○	●●○○	●●○○	●●○○	●●○○	●●○○	●●○○

References

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