

PRESS RELEASE

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## **Öko-Institut criticises the Danish final repository project for low and intermediate level radioactive waste from Risø National Laboratory**

Four months ago, NOAH FoE Denmark and SustainableEnergy called on the German Öko-Institut to provide an expert opinion on the proposed concept for a Danish final repository for low and intermediate level nuclear waste. The Institute is known as one of the world's leading expert organisations in the field of nuclear waste management. Among those who have commissioned opinions from Öko-Institut's Division on Nuclear Engineering and Facility Safety are The European Commission, The European Parliament, EURATOM, OECD, NEA, ENVIROS and in Germany a long series of federal and state ministries, agencies, municipalities and energy companies.

A working paper has now been produced by one of the Institute's experts, Gerhard Schmidt. In almost all respects, the paper rejects the Danish final repository concept. Among its findings are:

- None of the Danish waste types decay within the administratively controllable period of less than 300 years to below clearance levels, so none of it is suitable for the planned near-surface disposal.
- Only two of the Danish waste types decay enough within the time period to the next predicted ice-age ( $\approx 10,000$  years) to below clearance levels. One is slightly above that criterion, whereas all the other 18 waste types require isolation/confinement times of 100,000 years or beyond.
- The Danish method and criteria chosen to evaluate the feasibility of disposal are unsound from a safety standpoint because they ignore the basic principles of safe geological disposal.
- The fundamental principle of isolating the wastes and to guarantee that the radioactive content decays in safe distance to any future people has not governed the site selection and site evaluation process.
- Instead of opting for a near-surface geologic situation for the repository, the criteria should have been to identify geologic layers of low or no hydraulic conductivity with a sufficient vertical extension of more than 80 m thickness, in a suitable depth (e.g. 300 to 800 m) and with a geologically predictable long-term integrity.
- The results of the performed site-selection process are useless, because they are based on inappropriate criteria.

Taken at face value, the conclusions of the expert opinion indicate that the ongoing process to locate the final repository for nuclear waste in one of the five designated municipalities - Lolland, Bornholm, Skive, Kerteminde and Struer – should stop immediately.

*“We finally have the independent international evaluation that everybody has been asking for”, says Niels Henrik Hooge from NOAH’s Uranium Group. “Fortunately, it is published before the Parliament decides on whether to build a final repository, an interim storage facility or to export the nuclear waste. However, irrespective of what the political decision-makers choose to do, the last decade’s decision-making process for the disposal of the nuclear waste has now been rendered meaningless. There can be no doubt that the basis for decision that has been put forward by the Ministry of Health, does not live up to the necessary requirements”.*

*“The Danish Parliament should immediately react to the documentation that is now presented” says Hans Pedersen from SustainableEnergy. “It is time to form a broad commission to revise the planned disposal of the nuclear waste and analyse the security, environmental, health and financial aspects of the various scenarios. Apart from representatives of the relevant authorities, the commission should include representatives of the municipalities, citizens groups, green NGOs and in particular independent international expert organisations”.*

**Öko-Institut’s expert opinion can be downloaded here:** <http://www.oeko.de/oekodoc/2161/2014-711-en.pdf>

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