

# Nuclear waste deposit in Saligny, Constanta

## The case

The project for the Nuclear Power Plant in Cernavoda started in 1980, when five reactors were scheduled. In 1996, Unit I was turned on and in 2007, Unit II. Reactors 3 and 4 have been scheduled to be turned on in 2014-2015, while Reactor 5 hasn't even been planned.



At this moment all radioactive waste, whether of weak, medium or high level, is deposited at the Nuclear Power Plant. For ten years, until 2006, this waste has been accumulated and has begun to turn into a real problem. Thus, experts started looking for a place to deposit the weak and medium level radioactive waste, considering Saligny to be a favourable location.

Saligny is a village in south-eastern Romania, Constanta county. Geographically, it is a calcareous area, which hinders agriculture. This village is 10 km away from the Nuclear Power Plant from Cernavoda. It has unasphalted roads and it is not very well equipped with utilities.

The weak and medium radioactive waste deposit is an underground one, of low depths and with a lifespan of 300 years. The waste will be put in capsules and concrete will be poured over, forming modules. The modules will be arranged on three levels and will form cells. From the 64 cells of the deposit, only eight will be put into use in 2019. The deposit will be filled by 2110, when it will be closed.

## The change process

Since 2006 and until now, the authorities are trying to obtain all the necessary approvals for building this deposit.

Informative meetings were held in October and November 2006, July and September 2007, September 2008 and July 2009 in Saligny and Cernavoda, in order to raise the awareness of the population of the two communities on how waste will be stored and on workers who drill and take data from the area.

Also, the younger generation has been informed through class-presentations, informative materials distributed in schools, games, auditions and mock-ups of the waste.

Approvals were obtained from the mayor and the land-owners where the deposit will be build, meeting with NGO's where held and the press was monitored so that the population perception of this weak and medium radioactive waste deposit will be understood.

Although the Romanian Nuclear Agency for Radioactive Waste supports these data and from their studies it is shown that the population from Saligny and

Cernavoda is well to very well informed, Terra Mileniul III Organization's research say otherwise.

In may 2008, Terra Mileniul III published a research report regarding the construction of the radioactive waste deposit. From this report, we can observe that only 3% of Saligny population was consulted regarding this problem and only 15% feels well to very well informed regarding the risks and advantages represented by the deposit (a majority being women).

Also, the population would rather have asphalt roads and the water and sewage infrastructure improved.

The Saligny Mayor, Gabriel Tatulescu, says that through intense debates, the village can obtain many benefits: "We will have a lot of advantages, water, sewage, cheap heating energy, asphalt roads and we will not give in easily. We have to get a lot of facilities for the community and we will also do a local referendum."

Although the population considers this deposit as being very dangerous for their and the next generation's health, only about 10% do not having anything against the building of the deposit, as shown in the report of both the Romanian Nuclear Agency for Radioactive Waste and Terra Mileniul III, Saligny residents say that eventually, they would have nothing against the deposit as long as the functioning security will be proved and especially if the community would have a lot of benefits from it.

### The outcome

On 2 August 2011, Saligny City Hall has issued the Urbanism Certificate for the elaboration of the Urbanistic Plan for the Deposit Construction. Ion Nastasescu, the president of the Romanian Nuclear Agency for Radioactive Waste, mentions that the European legislation requires a method of radioactive waste management, this deposit thus being necessary.



PER (Romanian Ecologist Party) feels the need to take action and organise a protest against the Saligny Deposit.

Environmental NGOs fight against nuclear power plants, trying to raise awareness about the dangers posed with the opening of the Reactors 3 and 4 and also to educate the population about the risks of a low and medium radioactive waste deposit, but also of a high radioactive waste deposit.



After building the warehouse, Saligny village will acquire 32 permanent jobs and 200 temporary ones, new roads will be build and old ones will be rehabilitated, water supply and sanitation will be provided. Also, the health of local people will be constantly monitored by performing a series of free medical exams.

## **Lessons learned**

The environment and human health are equally affected by radioactive waste and nuclear energy will always represent a risk factor. However, as long as we continue to use nuclear energy, radioactive waste deposits are necessary.

As long as people are well informed about the risks brought by this kind of deposits near their homes and as long as this waste is kept in containers that provide maximum security, radioactive waste deposits will be build where experts believe they will have the least impact and local people will be rewarded with various community condition improvements.