

## EUROPEAN COMMISSION INVOLVEMENT IN MULTINATIONAL REPOSITORY INITIATIVES

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The potential benefits of national programmes for disposal of spent fuel and high-level radioactive wastes sharing a common disposal facility (a **M**ulti**N**ational Repository – MNR) were recognized early. The IAEA produced a series of reports on such cooperation scenarios in the early 2000s. The EC took a major step forward in the same period when DG-RTD supported the comprehensive SAPIERR projects (**S**trategic **A**ction **P**lan for **I**mplementation of **E**uropean **R**egional **R**epositories), which examined key technical, organisational, social and financial aspects of MNRs. This project stimulated a group of EU Member States to form the ERDO (**E**uropean **R**epository **D**evelopment **O**rganization) Working Group which, in 2021, became the ERDO Association, whose focus is on strategic rather than technical issues. Because the major challenges in MNRs are not technical, but strategy/policy related, ERDO assumed that support for encouraging cooperation would come more appropriately from DG-ENER than from the research-oriented DG-RTD. Positive strategic input did emerge from the 2011 EC Waste Directive, which explicitly acknowledged that transfers of wastes for disposal in another EU Member State were allowed. ERDO interacted with DG-ENER in the following years, but there was no direct DG-ENER support for study of MNR issues. Given that around half of the initial reports submitted by Member States in response to the 2011 Waste Directive indicated an interest in the MNR option, the lack of strategic support for shared solutions was surprising; DG-ENER argued that specific policy initiatives should come from Member States. The established focus of the EC on cooperation in R&D then led to the establishment through DG-RTD of the EURAD. In establishing the Strategic Research Agenda for EURAD, little attention was paid to MNR issues, although the vision statement aimed at promoting cooperation “*throughout all programme phases (from “cradle to grave”) across Europe now and in the future*”. Some Work Packages did, however, directly address aspects of the MNR concept. In response to a specific request from the European Parliament, DG-ENER in 2024 issued a restricted call for a “*Proposal for a Joint European Approach towards Radioactive Waste*”. This work is underway to establish a wide consultation on a joint European approach towards radioactive waste management, including disposal. A complementary project, aimed at producing a compendium of data on the RWM systems of EU MS has also been initiated. Our paper will expand on the above points and also include a brief review of other current work on MNR initiatives.

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