Nordic Nuclear Safety Research (NKS) programme: Nordic cooperation on nuclear safety issues

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Nordic Nuclear Safety Research (NKS) programme: Nordic cooperation on nuclear safety issues

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Nordic cooperation on the prospects of the peaceful exploitation of nuclear energy, and on nuclear safety, first saw light at the beginning of the 'atomic age' following the Second World War. Over the years that followed, an initial unsystematic collaborative effort between countries sharing an ancient cultural heritage has developed into a Nordic platform for cooperation and building/maintaining competence in nuclear safety. The current Nordic Nuclear Safety Research (NKS) programme has two main branches: The NKS-R programme on reactor safety, including decommissioning and safety culture, and the NKS-B programme on emergency preparedness, including radioecology and radioactive waste.

NKS activities may take place in the form of research and development projects, exercises and seminars to address relevant issues of common Nordic interest. Dissemination of activity outputs through NKS reports and the establishment and maintenance of networks allows for the sharing of expertise and experience across the Nordic countries. By keeping vital networks in tune between the Nordic authorities, scientists and other stakeholders, the region's potential for fast, coordinated and targeted response to urgent issues is strengthened. Provision of common grounds for understanding in cross-border issues is an important task of the NKS network to maintain trust in Nordic authorities and to facilitate harmonization in responses and recommendations.

Through a flexible organisation the network can rapidly adapt to emerging issues, new challenges and sudden events. This was reflected for instance in the initiation under the NKS framework of activities dealing with radiological terror threats nearly a decade ago, while in 2012, NKS will organise a seminar devoted to the lessons learned from the Fukushima accident. Ensuring knowledge and expertise for the future is a priority task, which NKS addresses by promoting the involvement of students and young scientists in all its activities. Experience has shown that new problems will emerge in relation to nuclear and radiological safety and it is already clear that technological improvements are needed for existing management tools. Through the NKS programmes, the opportunity exists for the next generation of Nordic nuclear safety workers to develop their careers and to meet the challenges that lie ahead.