

Name of Exercise: Construction of a New Landfill for Municipal Waste in 1992-94

Location: The City of Tychy

Participation Exercise under which Article? *Article 6 and Capacity Building*

Purpose of Participation Exercise:

To collect public opinion on the siting of a new ecological landfill installation for municipal waste in the Urbanowice district of Tychy city.

Background:

The proposal included a new landfill of 4.8 ha in size with the closure of the existing landfill site of 2.9 ha. Around 4 ha of land had to be purchased from private owners for the new site. The proposal included a 300 m buffer zone around the new land fill to prevent farmers and city allotment users cultivating crops within the buffer zone.

Participation Techniques Used:

A public awareness-raising campaign was started to stimulate the local community's interest in the scheme. The campaign involved identifying people as either "senders" of information or "receivers" of information. The residents of Urbanowice were receivers of information on the importance of municipal waste management.

The City Council Chairman, councillors from the district, the City Executive Board and Heads of Departments of Environmental Protection and Farming, and of Public Utilities and City Investments were the group of officials responsible for contacts with the residents of the district. These were the "senders" of the information. At two monthly intervals, sometimes more frequently, the group of officials went to the Urbanowice district and met with the residents in the common room of the local Rural Women's Club. Between 100-150 residents came to each meeting – almost the whole village.

At the first meeting, the City Executive Board presented the concept of the new ecological landfill. During the meeting, it was clear that the local community was divided into two groups. The farmers and residents living close to the proposed landfill (which was proposed to be sited beside the existing landfill) opposed the location, while the other group, living at the other end of the village, did not express any view.

In order to gain approval of the location by residents, various educational activities were undertaken, e.g. a "driving wave" campaign, topic campaigns and school youth awareness campaigns. In the course of the "driving wave" campaign, environmental problems were presented to all of the local community. That campaign still continues (from time to time we publish information on the environmental problems of our city in the local press).

At the subsequent meeting, the local community accepted the location of the landfill installation as proposed by the "sender group". The residents of the district expressed their will to approve of the proposal subject to certain conditions. These were:

- that local farmers could bring their household waste by their own means of transport to the land fill
- the improvement of about 0.5 km of a field road in the district
- to have a gas pipeline built
- to protect the old land fill in such a way that would prevent rodents from visiting the farms in the district
- to maintain the new land fill in such a way that the number of birds there is minimised to limit the noise from the birds.

The consultation team considered these conditions. As a result of consultation the City Board undertook measures to meet some of the demands:

- a consent was given to individual transporting of household waste by the residents in the first year of the landfill operation
- an immediate action was taken to exterminate rats in the old landfill
- the technique of waste collection used at the new land fill minimised the number of birds at the landfill.

Who participated?

The residents of the district, representatives of the City Board of Farmers, Farmers' Clubs and Organisations, members of the local Rural Women's Club, school youth as observers, representatives of the Green Party, councillors of the City Council and members of an environmental club.

Stage(s) at which public participated in the process:

- Consultation at the conception phase – about one year
- Consultation continued until the construction permit was given – about half a year
- Consultation at the stage of defining the buffer zone around the land fill and the method of the old land fill reclamation

What information was made available?

During the consultation the following information was presented:

- the technological process of the new land fill construction
- degasification project for the old land fill
- the ways the leachates from the new and old land fills will be monitored
- the methods the waste brought to the land fill will be controlled

In addition, information was presented on the cost of the new landfill construction and its financing. Some of the funds were guaranteed from the municipal budget and some came from the Provincial Fund of Environmental Protection and Water Management.

What was the outcome of the public participation exercise?

At the end of the consultation:

- the municipality got the public consent for the construction of the landfill and setting up the buffer zone;
- private owners sold the necessary land for the landfill construction;

After the construction permit was issued, nobody appealed against the decision.

During the construction phase, the residents watched each process very closely and called the Department of Environmental Protection and Agriculture or the Department of Public Utilities and City Investments to give their comments. As a result, we had a very good public supervision over the land fill construction process.

Comments of participants in the process:

- High involvement of the district residents in the consultation
- Good preparedness of the negotiating team (headed by the President of the City)
- High involvement of the councillors of the City Council in the consultation
- During the consultation, efforts were made to provide factual responses to the questions posed. The answers provided were backed up by the research data
- An important role in the consultation was played by the extensive information plan (developed by the consultation team) in the form of brochures, articles in the local press, and a telephone number which the residents could call and get answers to their questions
- The consultation ended up with a full success thanks to concessions made by both sides: residents and the consultation team. Part of the demands were met. The landfill accepts 100-250 tonnes of municipal and municipal-like waste daily. The plan is binding until 31st Dec. 1999.

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REC view on participation exercise:

This case appears to provide a positive example of detailed consultations with affected members of the public on the local level. The appropriate methods of public participation are slightly different where local issues are involved. For example, the notification of the public concerned can often be more easily achieved. The high level of involvement of the residents in the discussion appears to indicate that notification and information requirements were met. Useful tools employed in the exercise include the use of a telephone contact, and the holding of meetings at the most convenient point – i.e., in the village. It also appears that the authorities had organised themselves to deal effectively with public comments, and took the public comments into account. The authorities also made sufficient attempts to respond to public comments about the operation of the site.

Significant omissions from requirements of Article 6:

Based on the information given, the exercise seems to have met the requirements of Article 6, although it is implied that alternatives for the siting of the facility may not have been presented to the public.