

ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR EUROPE

Group of Experts on Monitoring of Radioactively Contaminated Scrap Metal
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Agenda Item 4

Presentation by: Ms. Alicia Garcia Franco - Federación Española de la Recuperación (FER)

Title: The Spanish Protocol in practice

The Spanish protocol was born in 1999, just after the agreement was signed by the main agents involved in the radiological surveillance of metallic materials:

- The Federation of Spanish Recycling, as representative of the recyclers
- UNESID, representative of the iron and steel industries
- Industry Ministry, representative of the civil service
- Infrastructures Ministry, representative of the commercial port
- Nuclear Security Council, superior institution with competence (authority) in nuclear matter
- The National Company of radioactive management waste (ENRESA), institution responsible to handle radioactive waste
- Representatives of other industrial sectors have joined the agreement, such as FEAF (small smelting), UNIPLOM (lead refiners), ASERAL (aluminium refiners)

Up to now, there are 79 recycling companies, 26 iron and steel industries, 2 smelting companies and 2 aluminium refining companies signatories to the protocol; and the number is increasing.

The Federation of Spanish Recovery (FER) sector was born in 1982 in order to represent the recycling (recovery) sector in the economic, technical and social fields. The Federation represents the sector before the civil service (environmental Ministry, industry Ministry, etc) and other private organizations and institutions. Nowadays, more than 170 companies and many regional associations are members of FER.

FER is Member of the Bureau of International Recycling (BIR), of the European Ferrous Recovery and Recycling Federation (EFR) and of the European Metal Trade and Recycling Federation (EUROMETREC).

FER advises its members, arranges all the papers requested for adherence to the Spanish Protocol, provides the procedure and protocols to be followed and offers courses. Through free courses, recycling companies are made aware of the problem of radioactivity. They are thus able to assess the magnitude of the problem and to get involved in radiological surveillance.

FER also provides agreements with companies that supply equipment for radiological surveillance and offer radiological protection services. In this way, radiological materials are increasingly being successfully removed from the metal stream. In 1999, there were 54 alarms, in 2000 there were 50, in 2001 were 47, in 2002 were 72, in 2003 there were 141 and

in 2004 there were 129. It is important to emphasize that those alarms are not always source; “NORM” are also included here.

The amount of sources removed, which entail a potential danger for persons and institutions, is approximately 10%.

Success of the Spanish Protocol

The Spanish Protocol is put in practice in a flexible way and with good judgment by everybody. The performance of the teamwork groups (with representatives of every single sector) is essential. The parties to the Protocol have a clear idea who to address, what to do and how to do it effectively. It allows them to act quickly not only in case of detection of radioactivity at the entry of a company but also in case of incorporation of a source in the process and its contamination, thus minimizing the consequences.

The existence of established procedures makes it possible to take immediate actions, improve coordination and reduce the waste and the eventual closing down of a plant. The companies take charge of expenses of the detectors, and the industry sector has requested subsidies for these acquisitions but to date there is no additional help.

If the companies attached to the protocol detect a source or NORM, the civil service covers the expenses of the correct treatment of the source, a treatment developed by Enresa. If an incident takes place, the expenses of the treatment are at the cost of the company; these expenses are much higher if the company is not a member of the Protocol.

The civil service and the associations take charge of the courses' expenses, publication and distribution of posters and informative material. They also cover the expenses of the Projects and Technical Research regarding the radiological surveillance of metallic materials (which are done in collaboration between ENRESA , the Polytechnic University of Pais Vasco and the Polytechnic University of Madrid).

International issues

One of the biggest problems of the application of the Protocol is the importation of sources from foreign countries. A great deal of the sources detected come from foreign countries. It is often difficult to identify the origin of sources coming from big ports with a large scrap traffic. Companies generally require a certificate of non-radioactivity and in these cases, the sources can be returned to the suppliers and the expenses passed on to them.

Spain is a net importer of scrap metal, so there have been few incidents with exports.

Overall the experience is very positive thanks to the involvement of every single sector affected. They take an active part participating and collaborating, and this is the reason for the positive result. Step by step, other sectors (aluminium, lead, refining companies...) are joining the Protocol, extending its application.

The voluntary character of the Protocol is a great advantage. However, there are always exceptions and there are companies which have not yet joined the Protocol and others that apply the Protocol incorrectly, even if these numbers are low.