



EUROPEAN RADIOECOLOGY ALLIANCE

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European Alliance in Radioecology An initiative to integrate radioecological research in Europe

At the International Conference on Radioecology and Environmental Radioactivity that opens today in Hamilton (Canada), eight European research organizations present an initiative to integrate radioecological research in Europe.

Radioecology is the study of radionuclide transport and transfer into the environment and its resultant potential impact on both human health and ecosystems. Recent events in Japan have underlined the necessity of being able to realistically assess and predict whether consequences on man and the environment can be expected in relation to accidental and post-accidental exposure. Radioecology is also needed to understand, assess and manage nuclear releases under normal operations. Research in this field is needed to reduce uncertainties in the assessment of the radiological risk to man and the environment.

Major European organizations involved in radioecology research – BfS of Germany, NERC of the United Kingdom, CIEMAT of Spain, IRSN of France, NRPA of Norway, SCK/CEN of Belgium, SSM of Sweden and STUK of Finland – have recently signed a memorandum of understanding to establish an organization called the European Radioecology Alliance (“the Alliance”).

In the coming months, these eight organizations will develop a Strategic Research Agenda that will ultimately integrate their respective programs. The agenda calls for definition and prioritization of joint research areas for the next 15 years. The next stage will be to specify actions to be taken at the European level to optimize the use of research facilities, training in radioecology, and knowledge management. The European Commission (EURATOM FP7) is supporting this initiative by providing funding for a Network of Excellence in Radioecology, known as STAR (Strategy for Allied Radioecology), which gathers the Alliance members plus two universities (University of Life Sciences in Norway and University of Stockholm). The STAR activities will consist partly of activities in training, management and the dissemination of knowledge, and partly of research activities. The research will focus on three themes: 1) integration of methods for assessing radiological risks to human and non-human species, 2) research on the effects of low doses on ecosystems, and 3) the study of mixed pollution, combining radioactive and chemical components.

Links will also be established with other international research teams, especially in Japan, in the US and in India so that new knowledge may be acquired more rapidly. In addition, close ties will be maintained with the stakeholders – the ultimate users of the research – by holding workshops and conferences and using advanced tools for sharing knowledge.