



In April 2009, the EU project 'NearCO₂' started. This project studies public reaction to CO₂ capture, transport and storage. How will people perceive storage projects in their neighbourhood, and the risks and benefits? Is European regulation for public consultation applied during emerging projects? What lessons can we learn from participation and communication practices in ongoing projects for future developments? How can stakeholders and the public be involved in local decision making on CCS projects? The research in the NearCO₂ project will make a substantial contribution to answering these questions.

CO₂ capture and storage is increasingly being considered as a serious option to mitigate climate change. Public engagement in the development of CCS operations will increase over time. To enable the public to form a well considered opinion on a technology as complex as CCS, access to factual, comprehensive, and reliable information is required.

However, currently little is known about what would constitute effective communication and participation methods in CCS projects and how these may differ for various audiences. Therefore, aim of the NearCO₂ project is to identify public needs and the mechanisms that may affect the formation of public opinions, using insights to develop effective participation and communication methods and materials.



Regulatory context and current practices in CCS Projects

To investigate the context for minimum legal requirements for public participation, we have made an inventory of formal processes leading to policy and project approval at the general level in the EU and specifically in six Member States: Belgium, Germany, the



Netherlands, Poland, Spain, and the United Kingdom. Legal requirements for the role of public participation in the development of CCS projects are examined. Requirements include mandatory dialogues and public hearings with NGOs, local authorities, other stakeholders and the public at large, as well as information campaigns and other interactions possibly required by existing national and international regulations. Results set the context for 'minimum' requirements that may dictate much of what happens in practice. A report about this research has been published on the NearCO₂ website, www.communicationnearco2.eu.



Current practices in CCS projects: From Ketzin to Barendrecht

Current practices are the focus of a second report, which centers on the lessons to be learned from CCS and analogous developments in recent years about effective and ineffective communication and participation strategies in CCS projects. To this end, we have conducted eight case studies on CCS and other industrial or infrastructural projects in the participating member states. This has helped us determine the nature and effects of the communications and consultation strategies used by project developers and government.

Results show that most stakeholders and the local public are not involved in the process of decision making. Not surprisingly, the presence of communication efforts does not automatically lead to satisfaction with the project, this relationship is much more complex and is dependent on many other factors. The upcoming report will provide recommendations for consultation exercises in future CCS projects.

Case Study: Public Protest of CO₂ Storage Project in Barendrecht, the Netherlands

In 2006, Shell Storage B.V. started preparations for a CO₂ storage demonstration project in two depleted gas fields under the city Barendrecht. If approved, the project will be eligible for a €30 million grant from the Dutch government.

Shell Storage B.V. started informing the local public about the project early in 2008. It soon became apparent that local politicians were strongly opposed and that residents had many questions about the procedure, safety, and risks for public health. The Environmental Impact Assessment was approved in early 2009, but increasing resistance against the project called for additional communication, information, and research activities. Although additional research again concluded safety risks to be at acceptable levels, local governments have officially de-

clared themselves against the project. The national government has stated that the project is safe and should continue. The relations between the most important stakeholders - the national government, local authorities, the project owner, and the public - are now polarized and disabling effective dialogue. The estimated project delay is at least two years.

Our study of stakeholder relations, stakeholder communication activities, and public protest activities in Barendrecht demonstrates the size and origins of public opposition. However, our study does not allow for conclusions about the numbers, background, and attitudes of those who may be in favor of, unaware of, or indifferent to the project. Although at present the public protest in Barendrecht appears significant, it is known that those who are opposed to a project receive the most extensive media attention. Further insight in public perceptions of CCS in Barendrecht would therefore require studying a representative sample of the local public.





DVD on CCS for the general public

From April onwards, we have been working on the development of a multi-lingual audiovisual presentation on CCS in DVD format. The primary aim is to present CCS in a factual, neutral way to explore public reactions to installations in the entire CCS chain. In addition, the DVD may be employed in public participation projects. The DVD is divided into four sections which are each followed by questions for discussion, about (1) climate change, (2) available options for cli-

mate change mitigation such as biomass, solar power, and wind energy, (3) CCS as a new mitigation option, and (4) the advantages and disadvantages of CCS. The DVD has been finished recently and focus groups are now being planned to study first reactions. Upon completion of this research, both the research report and the DVD will both become available on the project website.

Project partners



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