

Public Outreach activities on CCS in Norway

Carbon Capture and Storage (CCS) is high on the political agenda in Norway, both as a possible option to reduce national emissions and mitigate global climate change, and for enhanced oil recovery. There is an increasing focus on CCS among the public, especially in relation to the construction of gas-fired power plants to secure energy supply in the western part of Norway.

The discussion paper on Public Communication and Outreach by the Public Awareness and Outreach Task Force under the lead of Canada, showed that public outreach is essential to make CCS public acceptable, and that in general the public is not well informed on CCS technologies and the issues surrounding its implementation and potential impact. The Canadian study on public attitudes found that respondents were most concerned with unknown future impacts, such as safety risks of a CO₂ leak and harm to plants and animals near the disposal site and underground, and that CCS is perceived as the wrong solution to the climate change problem. The study also found that respondents who were opposed to the technology were likely to become less opposed if they received more information, if independent experts and NGOs were involved, if CCS is in addition to and not reducing spending on renewables and energy efficiency, and there is strong regulation and monitoring.

The new Norwegian Government, which took office in October 2005, has ambitious plans for realising capture, use and storage of CO₂, especially in connection with construction of new gas-fired power plants in the western part of Norway. The aim is to use the captured CO₂ for enhanced oil recovery. The Government's ambition on realising CCS in general receives favourable response seen as a possibility of increased energy production without an increase in emissions of CO₂. Arguments against the Government's goals for realising capture, use and storage of CO₂, are based on the overall costs of CCS, while concerns about future impacts and safety risks of a CO₂ leak seems to be less.

CCS has broad support among the majority of national NGOs. Industry and the Government have a strong focus on development of technologies to realise CCS. Activities connected to development of new technologies for CO₂ capture and storage has been ongoing and increasing for several years in Norwegian companies and research institutions, in cooperation with the authorities.

The Norwegian authorities emphasise an open and inclusive process regarding CCS. Involving the public, NGOs and industry in developing the regulations and in the decision-making process is of great importance for public acceptance of CCS, and should be secured in the legal and regulatory systems of CCS.

Norway participates in several initiatives for CCS, amongst others is the Legal Issues Subcommittee under the IEA Working Party on Fossil Fuels. In relation to the Legal Issues Subcommittee Norway will provide a discussion paper on Public Awareness. The key issues for the discussion paper are increasing Public Awareness and gaining Public Acceptance of CCS by developing a legal and regulatory system that secures public involvement in the process of developing legislation and assessing each CCS project.

The British Energy Minister and the Norwegian Minister of Petroleum and Energy in November 2005 signed a joint declaration on geological storage of CO₂, and agreed to set up a North Sea Basin Task Force with the aim to develop comprehensive, common principles as

a basis for regulating CO₂ storage in the North Sea. The Task Force will consist of both public and private bodies.

There have been little public discussions regarding the ongoing storage of CO₂ at the Sleipner field in the North Sea and the coming storage of CO₂ from the Snohvit field from 2007. Both storage projects have broad support from the main environmental organisations, which may have had a positive effect on the general public's acceptance of these projects.

The Norwegian authorities emphasise public outreach on CCS, and have arranged and taken part in several conferences and workshops about CCS with broad public participation. In 2005 Gassnova was established. Gassnova is the state centre for sustainable gas technologies, with emphasis on carbon capture and storage. The purpose of the centre is to promote innovative, sustainable and cost effective gas technologies. Gassnova is a public agency reporting to the Norwegian Ministry of Petroleum and Energy. Gassnova shall work proactively and market oriented providing stimuli for enhanced co-operation and joint development ventures among government agencies and industry.

Storage of CO₂ in geological formations and use of CO₂ for enhanced oil recovery have been described earlier years in the Ministry of Petroleum and Energy's annual publications about the Norwegian petroleum sector. The Government's ambitious goals and efforts for realising capture, use and storage of CO₂ will be discussed in this year's publication, to be distributed in May-June.

Useful links:

www.oed.no

www.gassnova.no