

Enhancing regional cooperation on security matters in Europe. The way forward for the European Nuclear Security Regulator Association (ENSRA)

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1) Abstract

Security of nuclear materials and facilities has been a matter of concern since the very beginning of the clear industry for peaceful uses. Nevertheless, in the aftermath of the September 11th attacks nuclear security became a source of major concern, considering the new threats that had appeared in the international scene. In October 2.004, European Nuclear Security Regulators Association was founded based (with members from 8 different European countries) on ToR suited to foster cooperation and information exchange among the members

2) The way forward for ENSRA

Security of nuclear materials and facilities has been a matter of concern since the very beginning of the clear industry for peaceful uses. Nevertheless, in the aftermath of the September 11th attacks nuclear security became a source of major concern, considering the new threats that had appeared in the international scene

Since the threat, obviously, had a clear global pattern, efforts to secure nuclear materials and facilities had to be shaped for an increased global cooperation to succeed in front such threats. In this context, and considering Europe a zone particularly desirable and fit for cooperation, in the very first years of the last decade, they took place the first contact among different European nuclear security regulators to foster cooperation and experience exchange. This was certainly unusual in the nuclear security, differently to other state activities to tackle with other threats coming from malevolent acts related to other fields of human activities.

In October 2004, European Nuclear Security Regulators Association was founded based (with members from 8 different European countries) on ToR suited to foster cooperation and information exchange among the members. Consideration given to the difficulties of sharing security related information and, sometimes, the different roles, as regulators, of the founding members, the initial ToR highlighted the importance of informal exchange of views and information of different security topics to build a climate of mutual confidence and understanding among members, adequate to consolidate the initial aims of the association. Also it was clearly stated that the opinions and statements made in the ENSRA context were made as individual experts, not representing the opinion of the regulatory authorities as such.

Despite this initially limited scope of ENSRA activities, the activities of the association were able to create an adequate atmosphere to share experience and points of view on important security related topics. Some joint activities were undertaken, like launch of surveys and assessment of the data gathered to define possible useful improvements for members, creation of working groups (namely, working group on training activities and working group on background checks criteria and possible improvements). The fostering of the ENSRA management continuity (since the chairmanship was individually held just for one year) was another important aim. A "troika"-like management (bringing together the current chairman, plus the exiting and the upcoming) was adopted, which resulted in better sustainability of the association working plans. The association membership increased (nowadays, 15 European countries have the membership to ENSRA), as well, reinforcing the exchange and the richness of the views in the ENSRA activities.

Nowadays ENSRA is revisiting its project and reformulating a new one, to tackle some important limitations that are real constraints for an ambitious cooperation program in the ENSRA context:

- To look for projects based not only in exchange of technical views or discussion of relevant information, but to endeavor, in the extent feasible, a real harmonization and setting of common goals in the security field for all the members, commensurate to the strong links and cooperation inherent to European regional space. Such a harmonization should be based in the internationally accepted guidelines and criteria (set and developed mainly by the IAEA) and
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also in common views and practices, fit to the European context, that might be developed by ENSRA in the future.

- To make progress in the above mentioned way, it's clearly needed to take a step beyond in the ENSRA representativeness, i.e., the participation of the high management of the European security regulators and the setting of clear procedures to have endorsed by this management ENSRA activities and productions.
- Considering that in the security field an overriding priority, to share information, is the assurance of the preservation of information confidentiality, an adequate system to preserve sensitive information shared in ENSRA of any threat of unauthorized disclosure or loss of control. For this purpose, to build an adequate, robust and flexible enough for information sharing is crucial.

Nowadays ENSRA is in the process of drafting new ToR, suitable for the above mentioned purposes, and have them approved at the adequate level, for this ENSRA ambitious reform taking place. The vision, for the years to come after the new Tor entry into force, is to have ENSRA able to play, in the European nuclear security arena, a role similar (allowing room for the unavoidable differences) as the one that WENRA plays in the European nuclear safety field. Considering this goal, the new ENSRA should:

- Seek for cooperation with the IAEA, with the main aim of harmonizing, as possible, the implementation of the IAEA guidance in nuclear security. Provide cooperation to IAEA in areas like training and IPPAS missions, providing experts in suitable number to cope with the important needs in Europe regarding these points. ENSRA should aim to become an outstanding partner of the IAEA in most of the projects related to nuclear security in Europe.
 - Promote nuclear security before the adequate European institution, acting both as nuclear security enhancement common programs promoter and as cooperator with that institutions to develop action plans and , in general, common improvements and, as suitable and feasible, harmonization of the security framework and features among European countries.
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