RAPORTTI

Kaupunginjohtajan osallistuminen

NEA Global Forum on Nuclear Education, Science, Technology and Policy Symposium

30.5.-2.10.2025, Ann Arbor, Michigan, USA

Perspectives from community members -session panelistit (vasemmalta oikealle): Sola Talabi (Pittsburg Technical), Makoto Takahashi (Tohoku University), Aditi Verma (University of Michigan), Kara Colton (Energy Communities Alliance ECA), Tomas Björkroth (City of Loviisa), Emma Wong (Electric Power Research Institute EPRI)

Tavoitteet

Kutsu ja osallistumispyyntö symposiumiin tuli Group of European Municipalities with Nuclear Facilities (GMF) -järjestöltä, jossa Loviisan kaupunki on jäsenenä.

Osallistumisen tavoitteena oli 1) viedä Euroopan ja GMF:n viestiä ydinvoimaenergiaan suhtautumisen muutoksista Euroopassa ja 2) tuoda esille kokemuksia Loviisan ja Suomen kontekstista paneelikeskustelussa otsikolla ”Perspectives from community members”.

Lisäksi tavoitteena oli verkostoitua muiden vastaavien toimijoiden kanssa, saada vaikutteita ja oppia tästä erilaisesta kontekstista.

Ohjelma ja sisällöt

Maanantai 29.9.

Matkustuspäivä, Helsinki-Ann Arbor

Tiistai 30.9.-torstai 2.10

Osallistuminen symposiumiin ohjelman mukaisesti:

https://ners.engin.umich.edu/globalforum/

https://www.oecd-nea.org/jcms/pl_101954/nea-global-forum-symposium

Perjantai 3.10.-lauantai 4.10

Matkustuspäivä, Ann Arbor-Helsinki

RAPPORT

Stadsdirektörens deltagande i

NEA Global Forum on Nuclear Education, Science, Technology and Policy Symposium

30.5.-2.10.2025, Ann Arbor, Michigan, USA

Panelisterna I Perspectives from community members -sessionen (från vänster): Sola Talabi (Pittsburg Technical), Makoto Takahashi (Tohoku University), Aditi Verma (University of Michigan), Kara Colton (Energy Communities Alliance ECA), Tomas Björkroth (City of Loviisa), Emma Wong (Electric Power Research Institute EPRI)

Mål

Inbjudan och begäran om deltagande i symposiet kom från organisationen *Group of European Municipalities with Nuclear Facilities (GMF)*, där Lovisa stad är medlem. Syftet med deltagandet var:

1. att föra fram GMF:s och Europas budskap om förändringar i attityderna till kärnenergi i Europa, och
2. att lyfta fram erfarenheter från Lovisa och den finländska kontexten i en paneldiskussion med rubriken **"Perspectives from community members"**.

Dessutom var målet att nätverka med andra aktörer, få nya influenser och lära sig av denna annorlunda kontext.

Program och innehåll

Måndag 29.9
Resdag, Helsingfors–Ann Arbor

Tisdag 30.9 – torsdag 2.10
Deltagande i symposiet enligt programmet:
https://ners.engin.umich.edu/globalforum/
https://www.oecd-nea.org/jcms/pl_101954/nea-global-forum-symposium

Fredag 3.10 – lördag 4.10
Resdag, Ann Arbor–Helsingfors

Programme BIO

Tomas Björkroth, Member of Group of European Municipalities with Nuclear Facilities (GMF) and Mayor of Loviisa, Finland.

Mr Björkroth is the Mayor of Loviisa, a coastal city in southern Finland that has hosted two nuclear reactors for nearly 50 years.

He holds a Master's of Science in Marine Biology and Environmental Science, which has shaped his perspective on energy and sustainability and his role in local governance.

Development perspective in Loviisa, Finland:

Loviisa recently sold 300 hectares of land adjacent to the nuclear energy plant to Fortum, the company that operates it. This indicates a strong signal of Fortum's commitment to investing in, maintaining, and developing emission-free energy production in the region. Over the decades, the attitudes of Loviisa's citizens toward nuclear power have evolved. The plant has brought jobs, innovation, and international connections to the community. Today, the cooperation with Fortum is not just about energy—it's a strategic partnership that is helping shape the future of Loviisa.

GMF briefly

Municipalities from 16 European countries to promote the involvement of the local level in nuclear governance.

GMF goals

1. Clearly define "the concerned people" as regards information and participation
2. Establish legal and/or institutional frameworks for information and public participation
3. Ensure provisions and dissemination of transparent, plural and reliable information by independent experts in layman's terms
4. Create tools for public participation around nuclear facilities (Local Information
5. Commissions, partnerships etc)
6. Ensure effective communication channels between different political spheres – national decision makers and local authorities

POINTS in the discussion

Community Member's Perspectives panel - Reflection to Kara Coltons introduction

I'm here on behalf of GMF, the Group of European Municipalities with Nuclear Facilities BUT **I'm also here as the Mayor of the City of Loviisa in Finland,** a city that has hosted two nuclear reactors for nearly 50 years.

Brief history about nuclear energy production in the City of Loviisa.

Our city hosts two of Finland's five nuclear reactors, the two reactors in Loviisa standing for around 10% of the total electricity production in Finland. These reactors were built in the 1970s as a collaborative project between East and West in a context that reflected the global, polarized politics of the time. The plant's reactors and much of its technology came from the Soviet Union.

Back then, nuclear power sparked debate both locally and nationally, in line with growing environmental awareness. But over time, attitudes in Loviisa, as in Finland in general, have shifted. The construction and operation of the reactors brought jobs, new influences, and a sense of opportunity.

Today, the reactors have been granted an extension until the year 2050. All of the Soviet-era technology is gone, and also the fuel now comes from the West.

The operator, Fortum, has stated they will invest a billion euros to keep the two reactors up and running for another 25 years. That investment will reflect on our local community, as have earlier investments done during the past decades.

In addition to keeping up the production we also have new and exciting projects going on in Loviisa regarding the development of nuclear energy: the city just sold 300 hectares (about 750 acres) to Fortum, the operator of the reactors in Loviisa with an expressed intention to expand the nuclear energy production in Loviisa.

Just as late as yesterday the Finnish government expressed their wish to see at least one new full scale nuclear reactor starting the licensing process during the next 18 months.

Saying all this, I want to stress that as a Mayor my role is NOT to promote nuclear energy itself, but to represent and advocate for my municipality. From that perspective, a new nuclear investment would be a gamechanger for our city – boosting our community's attractiveness for investment and making Loviisa an even better place to live.

Panel Q&A outline

Public and community perspectives are not fixed; they change over time.
1) How and why have community perspectives on nuclear changed over time in the communities you have engaged with?
2) How have you gone about understanding these changing perspectives?

When we talk about nuclear energy, **today, the narrative in Finland** – and across the Nordic region in general – is remarkably positive. Nuclear power is widely accepted as a safe and reliable way to produce electricity and more considered forming the backbone of economic development. It's also seen as a key tool in our efforts to combat climate change.

However, as a representative of GMF I must note that perspectives vary across Europe. The further south you go, the more critical voices you encounter regarding nuclear power.

Going back to the construction era in Loviisa in the 1970s the job opportunities, economic development and new influences all contributed to a changing attitude to nuclear energy.

Here I also want to add, reflecting on Francesca Giovanninis interesting presentation earlier on the link between nuclear competitiveness and geopolitical influence that in Finland I see an expansion of nuclear energy production without a substantial drive for innovation (other than operators r/d) and the expansion is certainly without any geopolitical aspiration!

From a city officials view it's important to draw a clear line between what is the role of the city and what is the role and responsibility of the operator.

The goals are kind of the same – the aim to have a nuclear power plant built – but the roles differ:

The investment and all operational decisions are to be made strictly by the operator. Land planning and licensing are the responsibilities of the city to the extent they are not up to national authorities to decide upon.

The roles can easily get mixed up in discussions with citizens or media when trying to picture the future.

In addition to planning and licensing, what the city can, and wants to do, is to see to that the infrastructure serves the potential investment as well as possible. This comprehends for example housing possibilities, school network, public transportation, etcetera, good community service in general, that is.

Often, nuclear engineers and developers are creating technologies for communities in faraway places. What can we do to better understand the priorities of these communities and incorporate their perspectives into our technology development efforts?

Loviisa remote?

No, seriously speaking I've been more surprised over how well a nuclear facility puts the city on the map, globally. **In the nuclear context**, so to say, it was a real eye-opener for me to see, that people from Canada, Australia and so on know two places in Finland: Loviisa and Eurajoki and then there's an airport – Helsinki – between those two sites.

That's an asset many don't understand in Loviisa, for example.

Q: For those of you who work with communities in many different places (across the US, Europe, the West and the Global South), have you perhaps been surprised to discover shared perspectives (positive or negative) on nuclear in completely different places? (all)

All of you in your roles interface with both communities and technology developers. Many of us in the room fall in the latter category. What do you think community members would want technology developers to know about a community before entering into a conversation with them?

<The general attitude to nuclear energy>

Is there a fear among the tech personnel that there is fear among the community members?

The dialogue is important. In conjunction with the land sale – before and after – the city arranged meetings where community members got to meet the operators representatives. This was very valuable, even though there is a common history going back 50 years in time.

Q: Nuclear projects are a hundred-year (or more) commitment – how can technology developers engage respectfully with communities over each stage of a nuclear facility's lifetime?

By communicating the different stages of that hundred-year era, helping to see it as a process where every step is planned on beforehand (and explained to

Q: What advice do you have for young people in the room who want to engage in community outreach? Where can they be most useful?

Make us 50+ people understand it's YOUR future you are building.

Be part of the dialogue. Participate.

There are not so many actively involved in the dialogue, therefore your voice will be heard!

And of course, make yourself a career in the business! There are not so many there yet so you will have a great career!

Q: Let's imagine we are building a community engagement playbook. What are two or three key pieces of advice, lessons, or approaches you would each add to such a playbook?

- The **dialogue** I mentioned earlier. Communication is everything and there the municipality has a role and a responsibility,
- **Interact**. Arrange meetings where community members can meet the "tech guys": the company gets a face, knowledge diminishes the risk of misunderstandings and so on.
- **Involve other stakeholders** like universities and vocational schools, transportation companies, politicians and officials from different branches like kindergarten, school, housing and also other municipalities – the building of a nuclear power plant concerns and influences the whole area.