

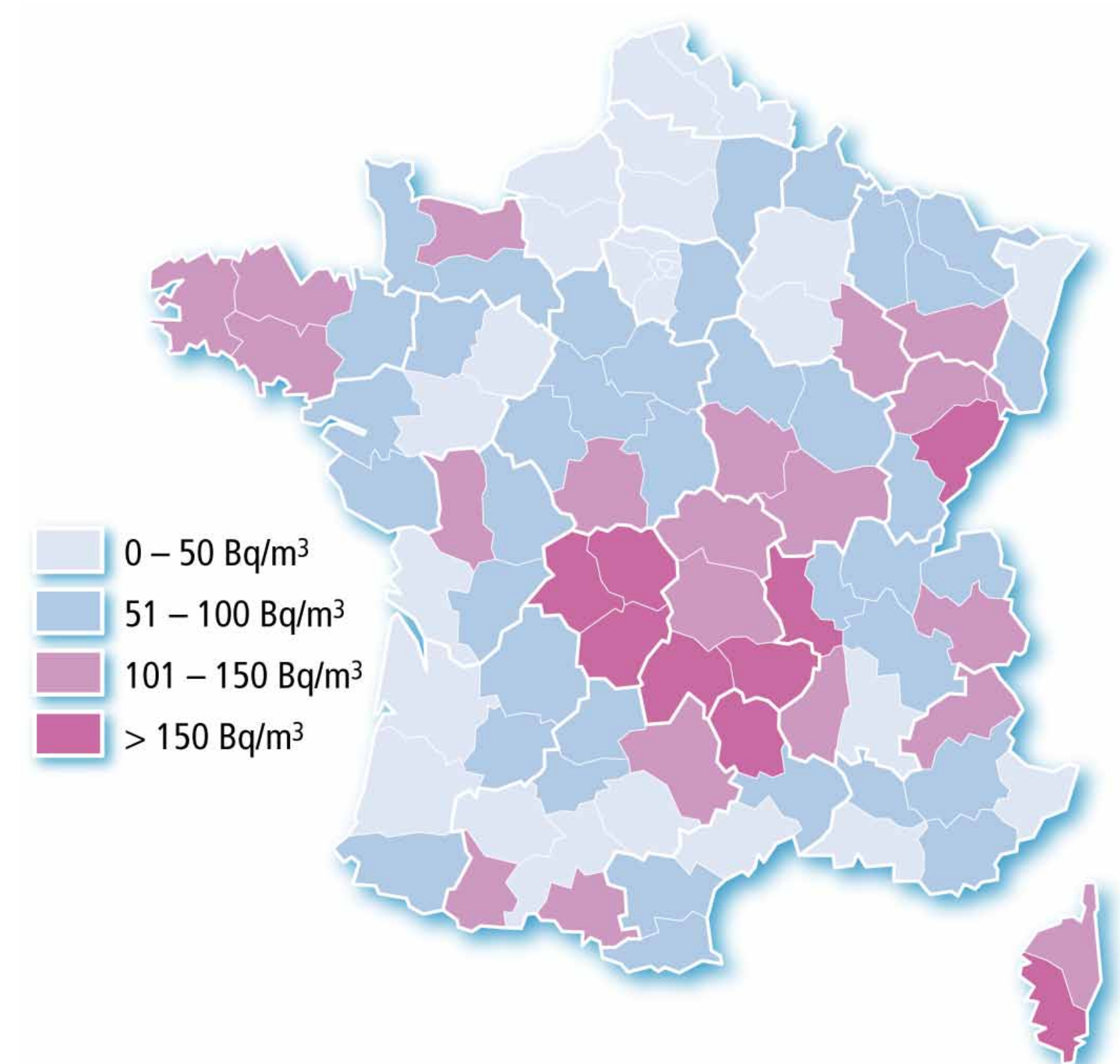
IMPLEMENTATION OF A “CITIZENS’ WORKSHOP” ON DOMESTIC RADON

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Background and objective of the citizens’ workshop on radon

For several years, the IRSN has been developing a strategy of openness about its work to society. Up until now, this project has essentially been expressed by the development of joint actions with local information committees and environmental associations.

To be able to engage in a dialogue directly with members of the public, IRSN sought to experiment with a new methodological approach by setting up citizen-workshops. To be useful, it was important for this pilot study to cover an issue that is part of the Institute’s strategy of openness to society. The topic of radon was therefore selected, because of the usefulness of its results to the internal IRSN working group currently defining strategic priorities in terms of radon-related prevention actions.



Objectives



To identify with citizens :

- how they perceived the risks of radon
- as well as the actions and stakeholders they deemed essential to an effective risk prevention at home

Citizens-workshop process

The citizen-workshop process is inspired by the citizen conferences introduced for the first time in France in 1998.

A citizen-workshop allows a group of around 15 citizens to spend two weekends receiving balanced information about the topic under discussion, hearing from experts and different stakeholders in the issue. Following this information and training, the group spends a third weekend drafting their joint recommendations. The principal advantage of this type of process is that it creates a true dialogue between experts and citizens and thus allows the latter to develop their own opinion.

Results

In their joint recommendations, the 15 citizens involved in the workshop proposed a strategy of action combining information and local support. Although the citizens considered that governmental guidelines are necessary, they did not think immediate mandatory regulation is required, given that the impact of radon can generally be reduced by simple actions. They underlined the importance of intermediaries at the local level and stressed the role of specific actors, such as physicians and building professionals.

Insights

The insights of this citizen-workshop led IRSN to further carry out a pluralistic approach about radon in a French specific area (Franche-Comté Region), intended to contribute to the general public’s information and awareness and to provide local support to those concerned by this issue.

