

A Swiss-German Approach to Introducing Pupils, Students, and Young Professionals to Radiation Protection

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Abstract

Due to a variety of reasons, not least in consequence of the lasting public debate on nuclear power and the risks of radiation, the readiness of pupils (and teachers) for being engaged in radiation affairs is rather poor. With or without nuclear power use, however, we shall certainly need young professionals in the well established radiation protection domains now and in the future, too. Thus, the Swiss-German Association (Fachverband für Strahlenschutz, FS) looks upon the encouragement of young people and young professionals as one of its prominent jobs. The experiences, difficulties, shortcomings, and expectations of the approach are to be discussed.

Key Words

pupils, students, young scientists, young professionals, teaching, lines of funding

1. Introduction

The actual debate on nuclear power, particularly in Germany and Switzerland, is part and culmination of a long lasting quarrel in politics and society. Instead of regarding radiation protection as a useful and necessary tool to protect human and environment against the harm of radiation, many people believe that with the abandonment of nuclear power the radiation in total vanishes as well and, thus, radiation protection becomes dispensable. This is, somewhat simply speaking, one of a variety of reasons for that the readiness of pupils and teachers for being engaged in radiation affairs is rather poor. With or without nuclear power use, however, we shall certainly need young professionals in the well established radiation protection domains now and in the future, too. Thus, the Swiss-German Association (Fachverband für Strahlenschutz, FS) looks upon the encouragement of young people and young professionals as one of its prominent jobs.

2. The Funding System

As a non-profit society ("Verein") all the FS's activities and initiatives are honorary and unsalaried. Thus, the (financial) means that could be applied for encouragement and recruiting are rather limited. Society members being involved are engaged beyond their actual day jobs.

Nevertheless, in order to introducing pupils, students, and young professionals to radiation protection topics, the FS has established three different lines of funding :

- The first line aims at pupils (age between 16 and 18) and teachers in schools. Radiation protection projects are to be performed in groups of 1 to 5 pupils with one teacher. Support is given by FS-members who have appropriate laboratories or other facilities available. Each project is funded by € 500. The results are presented annually at a particular little symposium with prizes and awards. In total, 25 projects with about 80 pupils involved have been performed since 2007.
- The second line is for students in radiation related study courses. The FS supports studies abroad by funding one semester outside of Switzerland or Germany with € 1,000 per student. Up to 2011 9 students have been funded.

- The third line is a young scientists award, called "Rupprecht-Maushart-Preis", initiated in 2008. The prize is awarded every two years to an outstanding thesis related to radiation protection performed at a Swiss or German university or comparable academic institution. In essence, the conditions of the "Rupprecht-Maushart-Preis" are in line with the Young Professionals Award of the IRPA.

3. Conclusions

A considerable lack of interest in radiation topics to young people must be stated. Thus, the FS looks upon the encouragement of pupils, students, and young scientists as one of its prominent jobs. While most of those young people, who eventually run one of the funding lines, are delighted and eager to keep up, prior to that it is often hard to draw attention to radiation topics, in general, and to the supports and funds given by the FS, in particular. It seems to need a permanent effort by our community to keep or even to enlarge the readiness of pupils and teachers for being engaged in radiation affairs.

Organisation:

THM, University of Applied Sciences
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Society:

Swiss-German Association for Radiation Protection
Fachverband für Strahlenschutz (FS)