

Radioactive lightning rods removed

From the sixties to the eighties, thousands of radioactive lightning rods (lightning conductors) were installed in the former Yugoslavia. This was under the mistaken assumption that the higher energy of gamma emitters would make the rods work better.

RADIOACTIVE RODS ON SCHOOLS

The lightning rods were installed on the roofs of public buildings including schools, kindergartens and factories.

Due to the lack of maintenance, some radioactive lightning rods started collapsing, hence potentially threatening public health. Some radioactive material from such rods was even found in scrap metal, including on the border between Kosovo* and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia.

As part of the IPA programme on nuclear safety, EU support was provided to improve the nuclear waste management of the Western Balkans.

The first stage in tackling the regional problem of radioactive rods was in Montenegro when a contract was given to the Centre for Ecotoxicological Research, licensed by the Environmental Protection Agency of Montenegro.

This was part of a regional project to manage radioactive materials covering Montenegro, Kosovo* and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia.



**This designation is without prejudice to positions on status, and is in line with UNSCR 1244/1999 and the ICJ Opinion on the Kosovo declaration of independence.*

DIFFICULT ACCESS

A full inventory of sites with radioactive rods was taken and site visits made. Many of the locations were difficult and dangerous to get to and could only be accessed with a crane and extreme caution. The materials were safely removed, processed and placed in an approved storage area.

Ervin Spahic, director of the Environmental Protection Agency, said:

The project has had a psychological effect as well because better management of sealed sources of

radiation will reduce the population's unrealistic fear of possible radiation.

As well as reducing potential radiological risks in Montenegro, the project provided valuable training for personnel in the country's nuclear regulatory bodies, and an operating procedure reference for similar future work in other countries of the former Yugoslavia.

PROJECT DETAILS –

Management of sealed radioactive source, including radioactive lightning rods

Partner:
Centre for Ecotoxicological Research, Montenegro (CETI)

Total cost in €:
EUR 454,000

EU Contribution:
100%

Start date:
March 2013

End date:
March 2014

Results:
Reduced threat of radioactivity to public health

Techniques:
Removal, transport, processing and storage of sealed radioactive sources

