

Jørn Holm-Hansen

Public Awareness and Nuclear Safety in Russia - An Evaluation of Bellona's Contribution



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Jørn Holm-Hansen

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NIBR Report 2015:14

Title: **Public Awareness and Nuclear Safety in Russia
– An Evaluation of Bellona’s Contribution**

Author: Jørn Holm-Hansen

NIBR Report: 2015:14

ISSN: 1502-9794
ISBN: 978-82-8309-068-0

Project number: 3413
Project name: Evaluation of Bellona Foundation's Project on Nuclear Safety in Russia

Financial supporter: Bellona Foundation

Head of project: Jørn Holm-Hansen

Abstract: Bellona’s niche within the Norwegian government’s Nuclear Action Plan is to work with civil society. In the field of securing access to information for the public at large, facilitating public participation and pushing for more security Bellona has made a distinct difference through its readiness to cooperate with the authorities.

Summary: English

Date: June 2015

Pages: 35

Price: 250,-

Publisher:: Norwegian Institute for Urban and Regional Research
Gaustadalléen 21
0349 OSLO
Telephone (+47) 22 95 88 00
Telefax (+47) 22 60 77 74
E-mail: nibr@nibr.no
<http://www.nibr.no>

Printed: X-idé
Org. no. NO 970205284 MVA
© NIBR 2015

Preface

This evaluation has been carried out for the Bellona Foundation. It is based on interviews in Norway and Russia, and on documents and news articles.

The Norwegian Institute for Urban and Regional Research (NIBR) would like to thank all those who have shared their time, information and insights with the evaluator. Everyone has been very helpful.

Oslo, June 2015

Geir Heierstad
Research Director

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Summary

Jørn Holm-Hansen

Public Awareness and Nuclear Safety in Russia – An Evaluation of Bellona`s Contribution

NIBR Report 2015:14

The Bellona Foundation's project on nuclear and radioactive security in Russia aims to promote nuclear safety and safe handling of spent nuclear fuel and radioactive waste. The project is carried out within the framework of the Norwegian government's Nuclear Action Plan. Bellona's niche within the Plan is to work with civil society.

Bellona's project is financed through the subsidy funds under the Nuclear Action Plan. These funds are administered by the Norwegian Radiation Protection Authority, which serves as a specialist directorate for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Bellona has received approximately NOK 3.5 million annually for this project.

The project is coordinated by Bellona Norway, so technical and professional support and follow-up, writing of notes, planning of projects and arranging seminars and workshops is the responsibility of the Oslo office. Bellona Murmansk and Bellona St Petersburg have long experience in working on nuclear issues in Northwest Russia. From an initial focus concentrated mainly on Russia's Northwest, and the Kola Peninsula in particular, Bellona now includes also the federal level in its activities.

Bellona's core project activities relate to ongoing developments with relevance to nuclear safety in Russia. The project's aim is to ensure access to information for the public at large, as well as to assist in the public participation that is established in Russian law.

The organisation's tri-lingual websites are useful tools in this regard, and a key source of updated, popularised information. Bellona arranges workshops together with Rosatom's Public Council, which has been established to facilitate Rosatom's communication with the general public and affected local residents. Bellona is an active participant in Rosatom's Public Council and also takes part in hearings on potentially dangerous nuclear projects, at times also as co-arranger of such hearings.

Bellona's main approach involves working with the relevant authorities and with civil society on the areas where these actors meet. Bellona stresses the importance of local civil society engagement, e.g. where repositories are located or planned. Bellona's main asset as an NGO is probably its emphasis on scientific accuracy. Bellona has characteristics that enables it to fit in with how policies are implemented in Russia. The organisation focuses more on results than on processes. Furthermore, it operates with a pragmatic willingness to network with the relevant authorities and polluters to find practical solutions.

Bellona's approach and methodology have yielded results in line with the objectives set out in the project plans. In ensuring access to information for the general public, facilitating public participation and pushing for heightened security Bellona has made a distinct difference. Its participation in Rosatom's Public Council has proven conducive to these aims.

Bellona is closely integrated with other environmental groups and with Rosatom's day-to-day work on nuclear safety. This makes the project well-rooted. Regarding funding, however, the project is less sustainable, being financially dependent on the Nuclear Action Plan as its sole funder. Moreover, the Bellona offices in Russia are heavily dependent upon Bellona Norway.

The present evaluation of Bellona's nuclear safety project in Russia concludes that the project should be continued. Bellona is also recommended to continue cultivating its civil society niche within the Nuclear Action Plan.

List of acronyms and abbreviations

EBRD	European Bank for Reconstruction and Development	
MFA	Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA)	Det kgl norske utenriksdepartement
NRPA	Norwegian Radiation Protection Authority	Statens Strålevern
Rosatom	State Atomic Energy Corporation	Государственная корпорация по атомной энергии «Росатом»
Rostekhnadzor	Service for Ecological, Technological and Nuclear Supervision	Федеральная служба по экологическому, технологическому и атомному надзору

1 Introduction

1.1 Bellona in Russia

The Bellona Foundation was established in 1986. Today, Bellona has around 65 employees in its headquarters in Oslo and offices in Brussels, Murmansk, and St. Petersburg, as well as a presence in Kiev and New Orleans. In 2013, annual turnover was approximately €5 million, of which 12 per cent came from sales of advertisements, 25 per cent from programmes with business, 15 per cent from funds and organisations, and 45 per cent from the Norwegian government (the Research Council of Norway, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Climate and Environment, Ministry of Petroleum and Energy). Bellona enjoys a high standing among Norwegian politicians and can count on broad support in case of conflict with the bureaucracy or international actors.

Bellona's project on nuclear and radioactive security in Russia is financed by the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) through the Nuclear Action Plan, whose subsidy funds are administered by the Norwegian Radiation Protection Authority (NRPA).

Russia has been one of Bellona's core interests for almost 25 years, and the organisation has built up considerable experience in working with nuclear safety, human and environmental rights in Russia. Bellona has two main partners in Russia – Bellona Murmansk and Bellona St Petersburg, which together have around 30 full or part-time staff members. Bellona is one of the most well-established environmental organisations in the country. From initial work mainly in Northwest Russia, Bellona's activities – also on nuclear and radioactive safety – now cover the entire Russian Federation.

Financially, Bellona Murmansk is entirely dependent upon Norwegian support. Bellona St Petersburg receives around half of its funding from Norway. In addition it receives funds from Dutch and US American sources, the EU Commission, the Dutch and Norwegian consulates. In 2013, Bellona St Petersburg also received presidential grants, funding through the grant scheme established in 2008 to support Russian NGOs.

The Russia Group in Bellona's Oslo office used to have seven employees. Today there are only three: one working solely with nuclear issues, one working partly on nuclear issues and one working on industrial pollution and renewable energy.

Keeping the public informed and facilitating public participation are among Bellona's core activities in Russia. For this purpose Bellona produces a large volume of reports, notes and news articles. However, the main channel of external communication is the tri-lingual website. The most comprehensive of the three is the Russian-language site, which currently has about 90,000 readers every month and serves as a major source of information on Russian environmental problems, policies and activism.

Bellona's project on nuclear and radioactive safety in Russia, 'Nuclear Challenges in Russia 2013–2015', forms part of the Norwegian government's Action Plan for Nuclear Activities and the Environment in Northern Areas ('the Nuclear Action Plan').

1.2 Purpose of the evaluation

This evaluation deals solely with Bellona's work in Russia on nuclear safety. Bellona aims to promote nuclear safety and safe handling of spent nuclear fuel and radioactive wastes.

The evaluation analyses the role played by Bellona in the Russian context. Does it provide input that other organisations could not provide equally efficiently? What distinguishes Bellona's methodologies? What are the results of its work?

1.3 Methodology

The main purpose of this evaluation is to assess if and how Bellona's working methods contribute towards achieving the desired changes. Through its project activities, Bellona seeks to set in motion certain mechanisms that can promote improved nuclear safety in Russia. This could be termed Bellona's *theory of change*. In order to identify how (and whether) the mechanisms actually work, the report examines the organisation's activities as closely and in-depth as possible within the scope of a relatively short evaluation.

The data needed to undertake the evaluation have been drawn from two main types of sources: documents and interviews. Interviews have been conducted with Bellona staff in Oslo and Murmansk, with the authorities in Norway and Russia, as well as with Russian environmentalists involved with Bellona. In addition observation has been applied as a method. The evaluator took part in the IV Information Seminar arranged by Rosatom, Rosatom's Public Council and Bellona in Murmansk, 16 April 2015.

2 The nuclear safety issue in Russia

There has been a serious lag in Russia's nuclear waste treatment, but Russia now aims to remedy this situation. The national policy on nuclear power safety is defined in the document 'State policy principles on nuclear and radiation safety in the Russian Federation until 2025', approved by presidential decree in 2012.

Bellona contributed to putting the issue on the agenda in Russia and internationally in the 1990s. Considerable efforts have been made by the Russian authorities, with substantial financial support from abroad, to get the country's nuclear and radioactive waste under control. Today the nuclear sector in Russia – civilian as well as military - is amalgamated into one single agency, the state corporation Rosatom.

In Russia, most existing reactors are set to continue for another 15 to 25 years. Several new reactors are being built and planned: some have been under construction for a long time, like Beloyarsk-4 (since 1989), and others have been under planning for several decades. As of 2015 eight reactors are under construction, including one floating power plant with two reactors on board. The construction of most of these reactors began in 2008–2010, with planned start-up of operations by 2018 (Böhmer 2015).

In addition, Russia is involved in the construction of several nuclear power plants abroad. Together with French Areva, Rosatom is a key actor on this market (Sliviak 2015). Rosatom is an important international actor in a situation where the construction of new nuclear reactors has slowed down in many parts of the world, including Japan, Europe and Northern America.

Nuclear power is controversial. The general public in Russia and other countries where Rosatom is involved is concerned about the risks of accidents and problems related to storage of radioactive waste and spent nuclear fuel. Bellona cooperates with Rosatom's Public Council, which has been established for communicating and working together with civil society. Some Rosatom projects require public hearings as part of Environmental Impact Assessments.

2.1 Nuclear safety problems in Northwest Russia

Northwest Russia has a large concentration of Russia's nuclear waste problems. This waste has three main sources: the Northern Fleet (unit of the Russian Navy responsible for the defence of northwestern Russia), the civilian fleet of nuclear ice-breakers, and the Kola Nuclear Power Plant. Bellona's mapping of the situation in the early 1990 (Nilsen & Böhmer 1994) brought the problems to the fore for the general public and the authorities in Russia and internationally. Of particular concern were the spent fuel and radioactive waste from the Northern Fleet.

The hotspots of nuclear safety in Northwest Russia include:

- the nuclear storage bases in Andreeva Bay and Gremikha Bay
- the transport service vessel *Lepse*
- radioisotope thermoelectric generators (RTGs)
- the Kola and Sosnovy Bor nuclear plants
- after-effects of nuclear testing on the Novaya Zemlya Islands, 1955–1990
- sunk submarines with spent fuel on board
- nuclear ice-breakers

All these issues have received considerable international funding and professional assistance since the 1990s. The general international public has become aware of the dangers related to nuclear power and storage of spent fuel in Northwest Russia very much because of Bellona's investigations. At the time Russia was administratively and politically disorganised, and economically incapable of dealing with the problems on its own, so a

comprehensive international support scheme was established (see Nikitin & Shchukin 2014, and Shchukin 2015). One result of joint Russian and international effort has been the construction of the top-modern Saida Bay facility for treatment and long-term storage of radioactive waste.

Andreeva Bay

In the early 1960s, the Northern Fleet established a technical base in Andreeva Bay, some 45 kilometres from the Norwegian border. The base was to serve as a facility for extraction and deposition of spent nuclear from the Northern Fleet's nuclear submarines, before sending the waste to the Mayak Chemical Combine in the Urals for final reprocessing. After active operation of the Andreeva facility was halted in the 1980s, due largely to accidents and leaks, maintenance has been minimal. The area is extremely contaminated, and has long been considered the most dangerous site for nuclear and radioactive waste in Northwest Russia.

At Andreeva there are around 22,000 spent fuel assemblies – equivalent to 100 reactor cores – from nuclear submarines and ice-breakers stored in three concrete containers that are in poor condition. Moreover, some 4,500 m³ of solid radioactive waste and about 1,600 m³ of liquid waste are stored on the site. The spent fuel and nuclear waste are to be removed, but this hinges on funding from abroad.

Since 2000 construction works have been underway, including sanitary control points, access control points, roads, guardrooms, electricity, and sewage. The removal of the spent nuclear fuel from the storage in Andreeva Bay is planned to start in 2017.

Gremikha Bay

Like the base in Andreeva Bay, the Gremikha Bay base is a site for temporary storage of spent nuclear fuel and radioactive waste.

Soviet nuclear submarines were deployed in Gremikha in the 1960s. With support from international sources, spent fuels is now being removed from the area.

Transport service vessel *Lepse*

The *Lepse* was originally a support vessel for the nuclear icebreaker fleet, unloading spent nuclear fuel from Soviet nuclear icebreakers

– the *Lenin*, *Arktika* and *Sibir*. In 1981 the vessel was converted into a storage depot for spent nuclear fuel and radioactive waste. The *Lepse* holds 639 spent nuclear fuel assemblies stored in casks and caissons in its irradiated holds, and is considered Russia's most dangerous nuclear vessel. In 2014, thanks to Russian and international efforts, the vessel was finally shifted to a floating dry dock at the wharf in Nerpa on the Kola Peninsula.

Radioisotope thermoelectric generators (RTGs)

Radioisotope thermoelectric generators (RTGs) are used as a source of electricity in remote lighthouses and safety projects at nuclear power plants. The strontium batteries used in the lighthouses were very dangerous, and are now being removed and replaced by solar cells.

2.2 Rosatom

Rosatom is organised as a state corporation – a non-profit organisation created by special federal law and entirely owned by the Russian government. The corporation is authorised on behalf of the Russian Federation to fulfil Russia's international obligations in the field of peaceful uses of atomic energy and the nuclear weapons observation under a non-proliferation regime. Rosatom brings together nuclear companies and R&D institutions in the civilian and defence sectors. It is the biggest developer of nuclear plants worldwide, currently involved in the construction of some 30 nuclear power plants in a range of countries. Among Rosatom's tasks are the fabrication of nuclear fuel through the decommissioning of nuclear facilities, and the management of spent nuclear fuel and radioactive waste (Rosatom 2014).

For communicating with concerned citizens, residents of affected areas, local groups and organised environmentalists Rosatom has a Public Council with numerous working groups.

2.3 International cooperation with Russia on nuclear and radioactive safety

The Norwegian Nuclear Action Plan has contributed with more than NOK 2 billion to solving the nuclear and radioactive safety problems in Russia since the mid-1990s.

There is a high degree of readiness on part of international actors. As a neighbour that could be directly affected by, for instance, accidents on the Kola Peninsula, Norway has been particularly involved. When the Russian Ministry of Defence informed of radioactive leakages from the storage containers in the Andreeva Bay, the Norwegian government contributed USD 817 million to solve the problem. In the 1999 the project was finalised, and leakages into the sea were halted.

The G-7 have provided safety assistance to Russia's nuclear power plants since 1993. In 2002, the G-8 introduced the programme 'Global Partnerships against the Spread of Weapons and Materials of Mass Destruction'. This programme envisaged the transfer of USD 20 billion over a ten-year period (10 billion from the US government and 10 billion from the remaining member states of the G-8). The three biggest sites in focus were Andreeva, Gremikha and Saida, all on the Kola Peninsula. This programme was completed in 2012.

The Northern Dimension Environmental Partnership (NDEP) fund is managed by the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD). EBRD runs several very large projects on nuclear safety in Northwest Russia.

3 Bellona and nuclear safety in Russia

3.1 Project organisation

Bellona Oslo

The project on nuclear challenges in Russia is coordinated by Bellona Oslo. Technical and professional support and follow-up are the responsibility of the Oslo office, which also manages the websites on Bellona.org (ru) (no) concerning nuclear issues in Russia. The Oslo office also has responsibility for the writing notes, planning projects and arranging seminars and workshops.

Bellona in Russia

Bellona Murmansk was established as a branch of the Bellona Foundation in 1994. Four years later, Bellona Murmansk was registered as an independent regional Russian organisation. The office has considerable expertise on nuclear safety.

The office in St Petersburg – the Environmental Rights Centre Bellona – was established in April 1998 following the court trials of Bellona employee Aleksandr Nikitin. This gave the office its profile: the legal and human right aspects of environmental protection.

Bellona in Murmansk and St Petersburg have extensive or broad experience in working on nuclear issues in Northwest Russia, not least through their participation in Bellona projects. Their journalists provide important insights on nuclear issues.

Within the nuclear safety project, Bellona Murmansk and Bellona St. Petersburg conduct individual projects, gather information and analyse it for further dissemination, produce news, arrange workshops and prepare professional briefing notes.

Funding procedures

Bellona's project is financed under the Norwegian government's Nuclear Action Plan. In 2012 the Ministry of Foreign Affairs delegated the task of administering funding for projects – and ensuring the quality of individual projects – to the Norwegian Radiation Protection Authority. The NRPA established an advisory board that meets five or six times a year. All correspondence regarding applications for funding and progress reports is dealt with at the NRPA.

Applications and reports are also discussed in the NMFA advisory committee before the NRPA makes final decisions on funding. Applicants often have to re-submit their proposals due to flaws or vagueness. For instance, the advisory board received project proposal from nine organisations in 2014, but had to assess no less than 22 versions. Of these, Bellona submitted proposals for two projects that were assessed in eight versions. The NRPA arranges an annual meeting with all funding recipients to discuss procedures for project applications and reporting, in addition to holding several meetings with recipients individually.

3.2 Bellona's nuclear safety activities in Russia

Bellona's activities regarding nuclear safety in Russia started up with demonstrations against the nuclear testing on the islands of Novaya Zemlya in 1990. This was followed up by mapping of sources of radioactive contamination in Russia. This mapping resulted in the report 'Sources of Radioactive Contamination in Murmansk and Arkhangel'sk Counties' (written by Thomas Nilsen and Nils Bøhmer). The report was published in Russian, English and Norwegian in 1994, and aroused great interest internationally. The Environmental Commissioner of the EU attended Bellona's seminar in Murmansk in 1994. The report was received with respect by Russian nuclear authorities, who found it to be matter-of-fact. They had not had this information compiled and arranged in one document.

However, the report did not address radioactive contamination from military installations and vessels in detail. Bellona opened an office in Murmansk in 1994 and hired the former nuclear submarine officer and nuclear safety inspector Aleksandr K.

Nikitin. Bellona soon published the report ‘The Northern Fleet – Potential Risk of Radioactive Pollution of the Region’ based on Nikitin’s research based on open-source literature. In 1995 he was charged with high treason by the Russian Federal Security Service (FSB) for treason and was held in custody for almost 11 months. A second trial ended with a full acquittal that entered in legal force in 2000.

Despite the confrontation with the FSB in the mid-1990s Bellona continued its work on nuclear safety in Russia. Gradually, the organisation developed good working relations with Rosatom State Atomic Energy Corporation.

In the 1990s Bellona pressed for the issue of Russia’s nuclear safety to be put on the international agenda. Drawing on its reputation from the reports and the Nikitin case, Bellona took the initiative to an inter-parliamentarian group with members from Russia, the EU, the USA and Norway. Also international hearings were arranged.

Bellona’s international networking and advocacy was conducive to the financial mechanisms that were later put in place to contribute to Russia’s work on nuclear safety (see chapter 2).

Bellona enjoys Rosatom’s trust as a participant in public hearings. Bellona, Rosatom and Rosatom’s Public Council (for interaction with civil society) have organised four annual information seminars, most recently in Murmansk in mid-April 2015. As an indication of the good working relations between Bellona and Rosatom, it should be mentioned that Aleksandr Nikitin is a member of Rosatom’s Public Council and heads one of its subcommissions.

3.3 Bellona’s role in the Nuclear Action Plan

As noted, Bellona’s nuclear safety project is carried out within the framework of the Norwegian government’s Nuclear Action Plan. The Plan aims to reduce the risk of nuclear accidents and radioactive contamination in Russia. The cooperation within this Plan is based on a collaboration agreement between the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Rosatom. Bellona’s niche within the Plan is to work with civil society.

Bellona's activities on nuclear safety in Russia have been financed under the Norwegian Nuclear Action Plan since the mid-1990s. The Norwegian Nuclear Action Plan has spent 1.9 billion (1995–2014). Under the Plan Bellona has received around NOK 3-4 million annually. The Plan refers to Norwegian policies that emphasise the importance of civil society access to information and voice on issues pertaining to nuclear safety and security. Together with the two NGOs Naturvernforbundet (Friends of the Earth Norway) and Nature and Youth (NU) Bellona has been assigned to function not only as a link between authorities and the public but also as a disseminator of reliable information about nuclear safety.

The current Bellona project 'Nuclear Challenges in Russia 2013–2015' operates within a total framework of NOK 10 550 000, i.e. around 3-4 million per year. Bellona can charge the standard seven per cent for overhead that apply for NGO projects supported by the Norwegian government.

The Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs (NMFA) has the overall responsibility for formulating strategies and priorities concerning the Nuclear Action Plan. The Norwegian Radiation Protection Authority (NRPA) is the directorate assigned by the MFA to implement the Nuclear Action Plan. The NRPA and Rosatom entered into a bilateral agreement in 1997; the NRPA also cooperates with Rosgidromet, the Russian hydro-meteorological services. The County Governor of Finnmark and the Institute for Energy Technology (IFE) are the Norwegian project managers for work in Andreeva Bay, the removal of radioisotope thermoelectric generators (RTGs) used to produce electricity in remote lighthouses and safety projects at nuclear power plants. Bellona takes part in the Expert Group on Nuclear and Radiation Safety under the Council of the Baltic Sea States. As a part of this cooperation a Russian–Nordic preparedness plan is being developed.

As part of the Nuclear Action Plan, Bellona operates within a framework of quite dense Russian–Norwegian institutional cooperation.

3.4 Bellona's project activities

Bellona seeks to engage with Russian and international projects on nuclear safety in Russia, with the aim of ensuring access to information for the public at large and also assisting in the public participation as required by Russian law. The organisation's trilingual websites are useful tools in this regard. In addition, Bellona produces reports, web articles and arranges workshops together with Rosatom and Russian non-commercial organisations (as NGOs are called in Russia), to maintain the focus on Andreeva Bay, the *Lepse*, nuclear ice-breakers, the nuclear power plant on the Kola Peninsula and other issues relevant for nuclear and radioactive safety. Information meetings with Rosatom have also been held in Oslo.

Bellona is an active participant in Rosatom's Public Council and takes part in hearings on potentially dangerous nuclear projects, at times also as co-arranger of the hearing. Currently, special focus is on the development of the Russian RBMK (High Power Channel-Type Reactor) reactors and planned nuclear waste storage at the Leningrad nuclear power station. Bellona is also following up the development of the planned new power plant in the Leningrad region and the planned new floating nuclear power plant.

Bellona keeps a look-out for potentially dangerous incidents related to nuclear power. The aim is to provide correct and balanced information to local residents in case of accidents. The organisation has a special focus on the planned clean-up of the Kara Sea, where large quantities of nuclear wastes have been dumped. Bellona is calling for a thorough international assessment of the Russian authorities' clean-up plans.

From an initial concentration of focus on Russia's Northwest, and the Kola Peninsula in particular, Bellona now includes also the federal level in its activities.

3.5 Bellona Murmansk as 'foreign agent'

In March 2015, Bellona-Murmansk was classified as 'foreign agent' under the Russian law on non-commercial organisations (the "NGO Law"). This made Bellona the 49th Russian NGO to receive this classification by the Ministry of Justice. The concrete

reason cited was Bellona's critical assessment of Russia's anti-pollution policies whereby, according to Bellona, it may be more economically rational to pay the environmental fines rather than investing in cleaner production. Bellona Murmansk's nuclear safety activities were not, however, mentioned in the indictment. Bellona Murmansk is one of three Murmansk-based NGOs classified as 'foreign agents', the other two being focused on gender issues and human rights.

3.5.1 The 'NGO Law'

The 2012 law on non-commercial organisations (NGOs) included a passage that requires non-profit organisations to register as 'foreign agents' if they receive foreign donations to carry out political activities. This applies not only to funding from foreign governments but also international organisations and foreign organisations. The law opens up for a large degree of discretion in interpreting the meaning of 'political activity'. The reporting obligations for 'foreign agent' NGOs are more elaborate than those for other NGOs in Russia.

For the first few months the law was not actively enforced. Then, in a speech to members of the Federal Security Service in February 2013, President Vladimir Putin urged law-enforcement officials to do so. The official justification of the law is to curb foreign interference in Russia's internal affairs to avoid a repetition of the 'colour revolutions' experienced by several neighbouring states. However, little seems to be done by the authorities to distinguish between NGO activities 'commissioned' by foreign governments through grants on the one hand, and activities generated by Russian NGOs that set their own agenda but need funding from foreign sources.

The way the law has been enforced bears witness to a judicial system with little confidence in the capacity of the Russian NGO sector to setting their own agenda. Moreover, the definition of 'political activities' is very wide, and encompasses all activities aimed at influencing decisions to be made by state bodies or pressing for changes in decisions already made. In other words, foreign-funded NGO activities must be in line with current Russian policies. In several cases, the Ministry of Justice has interpreted this as a ban on advocacy work involving criticism of

existing laws or proposals for new laws or amendments to laws. NGOs often refer to the experiences of other countries, with the aim of proposing changes and improvements in specific policies. In some cases this has been used as justification for classifying certain NGOs as ‘foreign agents’.

The law makes a distinction between ‘political activities’ on the one hand, and activities in the field of science, culture, art, health care, social support and protection, protection of motherhood and childhood, support to disabled citizens, sport, protection of flora and fauna, and charity on the other. A Resolution of the Constitutional Court (No. 10-P, of 8 April 2014,) states that this applies also when the activities are aimed at influencing decisions to be taken by state bodies, or policies carried out by them – if these decisions are within the policy field of the given NGO.

In the wake of the Ukraine crisis in May 2015, a new set of measures was introduced against ‘difficult’ NGOs, according to which the General Prosecutor may define individual NGOs as ‘undesirable’ without going to court. Such NGOs may be banned and their employees risk up to six years in prison or being barred entry to Russia. Among the reasons cited for this step was the need to stop ‘destructive organisations’ that threaten the ‘value of the Russian state’ and stir up ‘colour revolutions’.

The clampdown on externally funded NGOs is clearly an attempt to reduce foreign influence on organised civil society in Russia. Whether it is also an attempt at curbing NGO influence as such is less clear. In general, the authorities divide NGOs into ‘allies’ or ‘adversaries’ of the state (Lyytikäinen 2014). The allies are ‘the state’s helpers’, combining a strong commitment to their ideal with support to the state in carrying out services that the state cannot provide. Bellona’s approach would place it in this category.

When the Putin administration in 2005 first placed its constraints on NGOs, primarily aimed at foreign-funded organisations, it also soon introduced a new financing mechanism of funds and grants. Civil society organisations are to serve the overall interests of Russia, *inter alia* by pressing for modernisation but not necessarily for democratisation, in close cooperation with the authorities. Russian NGOs make use of these opportunities, and Bellona St. Petersburg received such grants in 2014.

3.5.2 The NGO Law and Bellona Murmansk

Bellona was subjected to regular inspections in 2013 (by the city district prosecutor) and 2014 (by the Ministry of Justice, Murmansk branch). No irregularities were found in Bellona Murmansk's organisation or activities. Bellona presents annual reports to the Ministry of Justice, Murmansk branch, and reports on its activities to the Murmansk region (oblast') Ministry of Natural Resources and Environmental Protection. A third inspection (by the Ministry of Justice, Murmansk branch) in 2015 focused on checking Bellona Murmansk's activities in the period 1 to 23 January 2015.

After Bellona Murmansk was classified 'a foreign agent' in March 2015, the organisation chose to change its status and become a branch of Bellona Norway. This is in line with the model applied by Greenpeace Russia as a branch of Greenpeace International. Recently, most NGOs in Russia with funding from abroad have made legal changes to their status, often assisted by an NGO set up for the purpose.

The fine levied against Bellona by the Murmansk court in April 2015 for not having registered as a foreign agent was set far below the typical penalty. Bellona Murmansk was fined 50,000 roubles (€900), whereas the minimum fine in such cases is otherwise 300,000 roubles (€5500).

3.5.3 Assessment – Bellona and network governance in the field of nuclear safety

Bellona Murmansk's being required to register as 'foreign agent' does not reflect its standing as a partner with the Russian authorities with which it cooperates directly. Rosatom appreciates the work done by Bellona in Rosatom's Public Council and with the public at open hearings (more on this below).

Many international scholarly studies have noted the tendency for the authorities, civil society and business to operate within a framework where the authorities within the network do not rely on direct command alone. This is conventionally referred to as 'network governance'. Similar processes have been identified in Russia as well, although not to a degree that would threaten the so-

called *power vertical*, the streamlined “single chain of command” that emanates from the executive branch of the government.

Ongoing research by the Norwegian Institute for Urban and Regional Research (NIBR) under the Research Council of Norway’s NORRUSS programme has identified network governance-like practices in various policy arenas. This research opens the possibility of viewing the consultative structures as a Russian variety of ‘network governance’. Russia has developed an elaborate system of consultation through Public Chambers on the federal and regional levels, as well as sector-specific Councils, with Rosatom’s Public Council a clear example of the latter. The characteristics of network governance as analysed in several studies from many countries are present here as well.

‘Network governance’ is based on the theoretical assumption that the complexity of contemporary policy issues requires new ways of policy-making. Direct top–down formal government is partly replaced by processes and practices where state, semi-state and private resources and actors come together in the pursuit of common goals. Bellona is clearly a NGO that endeavours to enter into ‘governance networks’ of this type with the authorities. Civil society organisations contribute to the solution of problems on both the input and the output side. NGOs make available information and viewpoints not necessarily provided or immediately recognised by the authorities. This may be a nuisance for the authorities – but such information may be useful in cases where they are dependent upon a certain degree of trust and legitimacy for their actions.

The authorities gain in credibility among the general public if authorities can show that they communicate and cooperate with critical NGOs – especially in cases where segments of the population mistrust the authorities, as with nuclear safety issues. In addition, NGOs may be helpful in attracting additional funds. The fact that Bellona had put nuclear and radioactive safety on the Kola Peninsula on the agenda in the early 1990s contributed to the international funding of the clean-up. In some cases NGOs contribute with man-hours. Also here Bellona is a good example, with its active participation in the Public Council and public hearings.

Bellona's pragmatic approach based on the 'ecological modernisation' paradigm was originally developed for its activities in Norway, and then applied internationally. The concept of ecological modernisation dates back to Maarten A. Hajer's *The Politics of Environmental Discourse – Ecological Modernization and the Policy Process* (1995), where he traced the emergence of a new way of relating to environmental policy among environmentalists as well as policy-makers. The former group used to be fundamentally opposed to what they saw as the inner logic of the existing economic and social system ('capitalist'), the latter tended to deny the existence of deep-seated dilemmas under the prevailing conditions.

Ecological modernisation overcame this opposition by, *inter alia*, creating agreement among environmentalists and authorities that regulation of the environmental problem appears as a positive-sum game and that pollution is a matter of inefficiency. Briefly put: the idea is that existing political, economic and social institutions can internalise the care for the environment. Bellona clearly operates within this line of thought and has contributed significantly to widening the scope of ecological modernisers by working with polluters willing to improve their environmental performance.

The fact that Rosatom, Rosatom's Public Council and Bellona arranged their fourth information seminar in Murmansk only a few weeks after Bellona Murmansk had been classified as a 'foreign agent' by the Ministry of Justice testifies to the impression that both Bellona and Rosatom find cooperation conducive to their objectives. The only change from previous years was that the latest seminar was formally arranged with Bellona Norway, not Bellona Murmansk.

There are certainly some contradictions in the Russian administrative system that make Bellona Murmansk a 'foreign agent' on the one hand, and on the other hand a trustworthy and useful partner for Rosatom in its practical work.

4 Assessing Bellona's work on nuclear safety in Russia

4.1 Bellona's methodology

Bellona's main approach is to work with the relevant authorities and with civil society in the areas where these actors meet. Bellona emphasises the importance of civil society engagement locally, e.g. where repositories are located or planned to be located. Bellona's main asset as an NGO is probably its emphasis on scientific accuracy. Bellona combines a strong position on environmental issues with a pragmatic approach to cooperation with authorities and polluters.

Openness is seen as a vehicle for giving priority to security, likewise with dialogue involving key actors. Another tool consists in disseminating information about how nuclear safety issues are addressed in the EU and in Norway. Openness, dialogue, and sharing of experiences are the three core methods.

Bellona operates with a very wide range of target groups, which can mainly be grouped into two categories. First there are the Russian authorities at all levels of government and the Norwegian authorities involved in the Nuclear Action Plan. The second category is composed of various NGOs and ordinary citizens affected by nuclear power projects. Bellona reaches its target groups through workshops and meetings and through information on the web and on paper.

Information is the key resource in Bellona's methodology. The initial strategy was to provide accurate information about nuclear safety in the Murmansk region, and then use the information to push for measures to be taken and to attract international funding for clean-up. Bellona is still pushing for international funding and

is considered by Russian partners as an important ally in this. As regards information, Bellona now considers all major non-classified information on nuclear and radioactive safety and contamination to be accessible. Therefore, the current emphasis is on pressing for concrete measures and taking part in processes where civil society and concerned residents are involved.

Given its position as a widely respected NGO in Russia, Bellona's method involves concentrating on creating points of intersection between the authorities, the nuclear enterprises and organisations, and civil society. Within the community of Russian environmental organisations Bellona is listened to and is seen as an organisationally strong partner. In 2014, Bellona took the initiative to a joint statement among environmental organisations on nuclear waste disposal sites.

As outlined in chapter 3.5.3 above, Bellona has been ready to engage in governance networks. It has been working closely with the Murmansk Shipping Company (the only company in the world to use nuclear-powered icebreakers) and its main operating facility Atomflot.

In the 1990s, Bellona worked mainly in Arkhangelsk and Murmansk. Today it also operates in other regions of the Russian Federation and engages with the federal authorities in Moscow. Bellona's main partner – apart from fellow NGOs – is Rosatom.

Bellona sees its contribution to otherwise professionally very strong Rosatom as consisting in reminding of the most secure technologies to replace manpower in dangerous operations. Bellona's legitimacy among environmentalists, combined with its scientific approach and realism, is seen as a further asset that makes it attractive as a partner for Rosatom.

4.2 Project activities and results

4.2.1 Public hearings

Public hearings (*obshchestvennye slushania*) form part of Russia's system of Environmental Impact Assessment (OVOS in Russian). During the last few years some 20 hearings related to nuclear issues have been carried out. Hearings are arranged by the

municipality in which the projects or developments are to be located, but also non-local residents may attend. Bellona's partner NGOs take part in these hearings as part of the project. Access to hearings in the closed cities – the ZATOs – is often limited. The annual report of Rosatom's Public Council 2013 mentioned that so far members of the public as well as local government mainly attend hearings only in a passive role (Nazarov 2014: 49).

Except for Kursk and Smolensk, in all the places where nuclear facilities are currently being developed there are local groups that take a critical stance to nuclear energy. These groups tend to lack expertise, and see Bellona as an important ally. For Bellona the press coverage of these hearings serves as a useful platform for voicing its opinion. The local press is often very interested, and high-profile papers like *Argumenty i Fakty* also offer coverage. Since hearings may be little more than 'noise in the room', with scant resonance among a wider audience, press coverage is important.

Bellona's role in the hearings is to inform the participants about risks, soberly and without exaggeration. When for instance participants fear the effects of digging up radioactive waste to be moved to a safer deposit, Bellona take care to inform about the even greater dangers of not moving the waste. Many nuclear power plants form single-enterprise towns; the residents, being dependent upon their employer, tend not to raise concern about ongoing nuclear activities.

Bellona also arranges roundtables in 'nuclear regions' prior to the regular hearings. Such regions include Leningrad region, Voronezh, Smolensk, Kursk, Nizhny Novgorod, Kostroma, Saratov, Rostov-na-Donu, Ulyanovsk, Tomsk, and Sverdlovsk.

4.2.2 Monitoring and control

Bellona's contribution to monitoring and control consists in informing the general public, in cooperation with Russian NGOs. In the field of nuclear safety Bellona provides accurate and accessible information through its website, as well as publications like *Ekologiya i Pravo* (special issue 1/2015) and reports, like that written by Nikitin and Shchukin (2014). The organisation keeps updated on developments of relevance for nuclear and radioactive safety in Russia. A major point for Bellona has always been to avoid inaccuracies and exaggerations in its information to the

public. Since the Russian authorities have made misinforming about nuclear accidents a criminal offense, this has become doubly important.

4.2.3 Participation in Rosatom's Public Council

The fact that Bellona's Aleksandr Nikitin is a member of the Public Council (since 2013) has given the Bellona a unique opportunity to explain its concerns directly with decision-makers. This has also provided access to sites of interest and the staff there, as at Saida and Mayak. The Council's membership consists of representatives from various scientific disciplines and environmental groups as well as Rosatom leaders.

Rosatom and Bellona have developed a relationship based on trust and open discussion. In 2014, Nikitin was one of five Council members to sign a letter expressing their concerns over the 'foreign agent' law and the danger of being used to intimidate 'inconvenient' NGOs. In addition to being one of the Council's 24 members, Nikitin heads the working group on radioactive waste repositories.

The working group on radioactive waste repositories was established in 2013 in order to study, analyse and involve local populations in the process of planning the sites for final isolation of radioactive waste. Rosatom plans to build about 30 nuclear repositories in the Russian Federation, ten of them in Northwest Russia.

Bellona has received additional funding from the Nuclear Action Plan for its activities in the working group. Nikitin hand-picks the members of his working group. Among the members there are other members of the Council, external experts from other environmental groups, like the well-known environmentalist professor Aleksey Yablokov, who heads the Nuclear Programme of the Socio-Ecological Union, two members of the Bellona Centre in St Petersburg, geologists and one journalist. Also people from areas affected by nuclear-power activities are invited in. The working group meets approximately six times a year and prepares recommendations to the Public Council, often after having visited the sites in question.

A core activity in the cooperation between Rosatom and Bellona are the informational seminars that have been arranged annually for the last four years. The first two workshops were held in Moscow; the venue for the two most recent ones was Murmansk. Participants come mainly from the federal level, reflecting the federal responsibility for nuclear safety.

Bellona's work in the Public Council is closely linked to its work with public hearings. As a member of the Public Council, Bellona has access to information about plans and timeframes that is of use when working with local groups in affected areas.

Bellona considers its participation the Public Council to be a success in the sense that Rosatom now has developed a much more elaborate practice for handling waste.

4.3 Summing up on results

Nuclear and radioactive security and safety in Russia have made several substantial moves forward in the course of the past 20 years (see 3.1). In addition to physical improvements, one major achievement is that the collaboration has taken the step from mere project-based cooperation to institutionalised cooperation between agencies and organisations in the field of nuclear safety.

This is due to several factors. Among them are the willingness of the international community to co-finance clean-up activities, and the Russian government's willingness to accept. Nuclear catastrophes and the fear that terrorists might acquire radioactive materials from nuclear waste storage sites were concerns shared by Russian and foreign governments. Russia's economic and administrative recovery since the turn of the millennium is another crucial factor.

It is impossible to give a precise and accurate evaluation of the impact of Bellona's activities on the overall objectives of the Nuclear Action Plan. However, as regards ensuring access to information for the general public, facilitating public participation and pressing for heightened security, Bellona has made a distinct difference. Its participation in Rosatom's Public Council has proven conducive to these aims.

5 Conclusions

Bellona is widely respected for its contribution to placing Russia's nuclear safety on the agenda, in Russia and internationally in the 1990s. The organisation was indeed a pioneer. Since then, an elaborate system of cooperation and funding has been established, involving many countries and a wide range of scientific and technical institutions. Bellona has found its niche in knowledge-based activities with Russia's civil society and the general public.

Bellona concentrates on the policy field and on results, and less on strengthening its partners organisationally. The focus on results rather than processes fits well with the usual Russian way of working. Bellona's information work in Russia is highly professional: the information provided is accurate, fact-based and in an accessible language. The organisation can draw on a wide network of environmentalists and bloggers in Russia. After initially basing its activities in Northwest Russia, Bellona now works with federal institutions as well, and on nuclear safety issues in many Russian regions. This has strengthened Bellona's efficiency.

Bellona's role within the Nuclear Action Plan, from which funding is provided for its nuclear safety project in Russia, is to work with NGOs and the public. Public Councils of the type established by Rosatom serve as the standard model for encounters and cooperation between civil society and the authorities in Russia today. Whereas some NGOs might find this model too official and binding, Bellona has shown willingness – in line with its general approach applied in Norway and other countries. Priority is given to cooperation and dialogue with authorities and polluters, rather than confrontation. Bellona has proven itself capable of contributing resources that are valuable for Rosatom – as with its capacity to bring in the concerns of critical voices in a professional and knowledge-based way, but also to assist Rosatom in explaining complicated matters to the public. As an environmental NGO,

Bellona is well-positioned to reduce unfounded fears among the public, and make clear what the real threats are.

That being said, it is legitimacy as an environmental organisation that is the most valuable resource Bellona brings into the cooperation. This legitimacy can prove invaluable when communicating with other environmental groups and the public at large at roundtables and hearings.

The fact that, in 2013, Bellona was invited to be a member of Rosatom's Public Council has made it possible for Bellona both to enter into closer dialogue with the authorities and to reach out to more people in Russia. Membership on the Public Council has given Bellona a firm position again, after its initial function as a pioneer in the 1990s had been fulfilled. Today, Bellona holds a unique position in the field of Russian nuclear safety as an actor who can move about freely between countries, levels and the state/society divide.

The close and trustful cooperation between Bellona and Rosatom's Public Council stands in contrast to the current general international political climate. Russia's 'foreign agent' law has led Bellona Murmansk to change its status to become a branch of Bellona Norway. The tense relations between Russia and countries that have been contributing to the funding of Russia's nuclear safety measures threaten to jeopardise further international cooperation and funding. Bellona worries what will happen with the follow-up of the work that has been done in Andreeva Bay if major financial and professional contributors withdraw. One side-effect could be a boost for Bellona's relative importance in keeping Russian nuclear safety on the international agenda. That would make it even more crucial for Bellona to maintain a presence in Russia with local offices.

Bellona's project is sustainable, precisely because it is tightly integrated in the work being done otherwise in Russia in the field of nuclear safety. Too often, international NGO's operate outside the real institutional and administrative life in the countries where they have projects. The fact that Bellona has been able to avoid this pitfall in Russia is an achievement worth noticing. On the other hand, the project is financially dependent upon a sole source of source, the Nuclear Action Plan, and the Bellona offices in Russia are heavily dependent upon Bellona Norway. If Bellona

should withdraw from nuclear safety activities in Russia, the involvement of environmental civil society would be dramatically weakened.

Given the unique position of Bellona as a civil society actor within the Russian policy field of nuclear safety, it is highly recommended that the organisation be given opportunities to apply for funding also in the future. Bellona's strong position as a partner both of Russian NGOs and of Rosatom's Public Council is the result of more than two decades of painstaking work. Discontinuing project activities would be highly regrettable, and re-building the knowledge and trust gained would not be easy.

Bellona's function within the Nuclear Action Plan is to work as an NGO with civil society groups and the general public in close cooperation with Rosatom's Public Council. One of Bellona's main assets in this regard is its ability to process information, which is then presented in a readily understandable journalistic and pedagogical way, reaching out to a broad public. It is recommended that Bellona continue cultivating its civil society niche, even if this may be somewhat more restricted than the role Bellona is able to play in Norway.

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Tilskuddsbrev 'Civil society and Rosatom' – 12 May 2012

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Appendix 1 – List of interviewees

Ingar Amundsen, Norwegian Radiation Protection Authority
– head of department

Nils Böhmer, Bellona –Managing director / nuclear scientist

Inger Margrethe Eikermann, Norwegian Radiation Protection
Authority – head of section

Anatoly Grigoriev, Rosatom – Head of Rosatom’s International
Programme Coordination and Implementation Unit

Anna Kireeva, Bellona Murmansk – journalist / head of
communications

Ole Andreas Lindeman, Consul General, Royal Norwegian
Consulate General in Murmansk

Vladislav Nikiforov, Bellona – director, Russian Programme

Aleksandr Nikitin, Bellona – Adviser and Chairman of the
Environment and Rights Centre

Andrey Ozharovsky, independent adviser / nuclear scientist

Ole Reistad, Institute for Energy technology – in charge of safety
/ head of department

Anna Rudenko, journalist, Balakovo

Andrey Zolotkov, Bellona Murmansk – Chairperson

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CIENS is a strategic research collaboration between independent research institutes and the University of Oslo. CIENS is a national and international centre for multidisciplinary research on the environment and society. The centre is based on joint strategic analysis and research programmes and co-operation regarding consultancy.

Bellona's niche within the Norwegian government's Nuclear Action Plan is to work with civil society. In the field of securing access to information for the public at large, facilitating public participation and pushing for more security Bellona has made a distinct difference through its readiness to cooperate with the authorities.