

# NICOLE: 10 Years of Solid Delivery

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When the ideas for NICOLE as network first emerged in CEFIC over 1995, contaminated land management (CLM) was very much a fractured discipline across Europe. There were substantial differences in approach between countries. There were virtual fault-lines between different interest groups. Beyond the discussion needed on an individual project there was little concerted dialogue occurring between industry, service providers, regulators and researchers. There was not even a "soils department" in the European Commission. National approaches varied between "multi-functional" and strictly end-use related, and there was little consensus on how environmental quality objectives for soil and groundwater should be set. Attitudes between industry and regulators were polarised, and research projects often had little if any end-user input. So in consequence, research results often did not find the applications or the acceptance that they might have done. Service provision was highly variable in how far it took account of the developing state of the art in contaminated land management practice.

A NATO initiative, the Committee for Challenges to Modern Society, was the catalyst that led to the rapid development of contaminated land management networking in Europe and the now much more harmonious relationships between different stakeholders and national interests in Europe. The CCMS

supported a "Pilot Study" that focused on remediation technologies which included among its participants regulators, site holders, technology developers and researchers from the various NATO countries. Among its participants were two individuals who would play an important role in the development of CLM networking across Europe: Johan van Veen and Harald Kasamas.

When CEFIC initiated discussions on sustainable technology across the chemical industry in Europe there was great interest in CLM as many industries foresaw that it would have a major impact on the management of contaminated sites into the future. A number of key research organisations and researchers were invited to these discussions, including Dale Laidler who with Martin Bell (both ICI) quickly came to the conclusion that some form of network for industry to share know-how on a non competitive basis could bring mutual advantage. Other industrial companies, like the Port of Rotterdam and Solvay, also saw this advantage and they were enthusiastic to join. Together with Dale Laidler and Johan van Veen they prepared a successful proposal for the 4<sup>th</sup> EU Framework Program. Thus the NICOLE project was born, leading to the inauguration of the network in 1996, funded as a concerted action by the Framework 4 Programme.

In the meantime Harald Kasamas had also been busy and a technical network was born from the regulatory community across Europe, who had already been meeting on an informal basis since 1993 (again catalysed by the CCMS Pilot Study). This was also a Framework 4 project: CARACAS (Concerted Action on Risk Assessment for Contaminated Sites in the European Union). Paul can recall that the two networks greeted each other with some surprise and mutual incomprehension, and the first meeting between their steering groups in a room at a Consoil conference had some

moments of high drama. Yet this first meeting concluded positively, and began a fruitful collaboration between the two networks that gradually led to an increasingly common approach to the technical basis for contaminated land management: i.e. risk based decision making, and a common interest and involvement in research and development projects to bring to bear and end-user perspective. Over time relationships have matured further.

As projects such as CLARINET (Contaminated Land Rehabilitation Network for Environmental Technologies) have come and gone, NICOLE has evolved into a self-funding network. There is now a consensus for risk based land management, with NICOLE taking a leading role in encouraging best practice among industry and service providers and encouraging relevant and well designed research from the academic community. NICOLE and the regulators' network (the Common Forum) now work together to influence policy and regulation at a European level to try and ensure a balanced approach for CLM across the Member States.

From a technical point of view NICOLE and its projects have been influential in the development of risk based decision making for CLM across Europe, and for the adoption of and guidance for the use of monitored natural attenuation (MNA). Both of these subjects are well represented in NICOLE's publications archive, a selection of which is listed on page 2.



Johan van Veen (left) and Harald Kasamas (right)

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