

**Name of Exercise:** Strategic Environmental Impact Assessment of Major Transport Routes in Slovenia

**Location:** Ljubljana, Slovenia

**Participation Exercise under which Article?** *Articles 6, 7*

**Purpose of Participation Exercise:**

*To invite comments on Strategic Environmental Impact Assessment of Major Transport Routes in Slovenia. This case involves public participation in the development of transport plans, at the legislative, planning and decision-making levels.*

---

**Background:**

Changes to National Physical Plan 1 were introduced at the beginning of 1995. The changes were proposed according to the new transport infrastructure development programme that was passed by Parliament, and related to the location of new roads and railways. The proposal was discussed in Parliament for six months and then adopted.

Public opinion was in favour of better interconnection between Slovenian cities but people rejected the large amount of transboundary highway traffic. They were very concerned about their environment and the NIMBY ('Not In My Back Yard') response was very strong. The quality of the local environment is relatively high: air pollution presents a problem only in the basins where there are industrial and energy producing facilities; there are large areas of important groundwater, areas with high landscape quality and highly valued agricultural land, as well as important natural reserves.

Due to the peculiarities of the plan, and to the fact that the legal framework had not yet been defined and harmonised, the Strategic Environmental Impact Assessment Study (SEA) was started as a research and development project. The main objective was to research the possibilities for the environmental evaluation of location-oriented planning proposals at the national level and, particularly, concrete impact assessment of the changes in the road and railway transport scheme in the Republic of Slovenia. This was a consideration of alternative locations and alternative projects.

The less vulnerable areas were to be defined as the main objective of the process and the assessment of alternatives within these areas was intended as a basis for making decisions about the best transport routes. Within the study, the vulnerability maps of geosphere, hydrosphere, biosphere, atmosphere, natural resources and human environment have been produced with GIS (Geographic Information Systems) support.

Although the Environmental Protection Act has been in force since 1993, the rules and regulations defining the methodology of the strategic environmental impact assessment have not yet been adopted.

In addition, new intervention acts have been adopted concerning accelerated highway construction. These have introduced a simplified planning procedure combining the procedure of plan preparation and adoption with the procedure of the adoption of detailed plans. According to this law, several strategic comparative studies of the alternatives of different alignments have been prepared. In the studies the authors compared the alternatives from four different points of view: economic, technical, urban and environmental. Each study was made available to the public in the offices of the Ministry. The studies formed one of the technical support documents for the location approval.

The study comprised two main parts:

- Environmental impact assessment of the changes in the transport scheme. The procedure of impact assessment of the proposed changes in the physical plan since the roads and railway scheme followed the enforced steps of EIA.
- According to this case study and in considering foreign and domestic experience as found in the literature, the study proposed a possible methodology for other similar (location oriented) cases.

After the draft report on the study programme, activities, timing, relevant issues and chosen methodology was prepared, the first workshop took place with the representatives of the applicant and the different experts. During the discussion the final contents were defined. The next step was impact evaluation through the vulnerability studies. Finally, recommendations and suggestions for decision-making and for the lower stages of planning were prepared as well as recommendations for the change of proposals, new alternatives and planning within more vulnerable areas, etc.

In this stage the final approval rested with the parliament. Subsequently, comparative studies for various alternatives of different highway sections were performed, with active participation of the public (NGOs and individuals). In these cases, information was published in local and national newspapers and in professional publications.

#### **Participation Techniques Used:**

Discussion of the technical environmental studies as input into the plan (only elected officials participated). In the discussion of strategic environmental assessment, there was no organised public involvement. Non-governmental organisations (NGOs) were not invited to the workshops to discuss the studies and only experts were present. The reason given by the authorities was that the NGOs were not willing to participate as they were against the state highway project in general.

In the subsequent comparative studies, public hearings and discussions were organised at different stages of the procedure (scoping, impact evaluation and final reporting) with the conclusions from the public hearings and debates "more or less" incorporated into the final decisions.

#### **Who participated?**

Elected representatives, experts of different authorities and consultants participated in the process. NGOs were not invited to the workshops. During the subsequent comparative studies, NGOs and individual members of the public participated in the various hearings and public discussions.

#### **What information was made available?**

Several strategic comparative studies of the alternatives of different routes have been prepared. In the studies, the authors compared four different alternatives points of view: economic, technical, urban, and environmental. Each study was presented to the public. The studies presented formed one of the sources for the approved location documents.

#### **What was the outcome of the public participation exercise?**

The plan proposal was adopted without any changes. The authors who prepared studies at the lower planning levels took into account the results of the vulnerability study. The comparative studies for the alternatives of the highway sections included the results of the public participation in the final decisions.

#### **Comments of participants in process:**

Non-governmental organisations (NGOs) were dissatisfied because they were not invited to the workshops. There were no official comments on the proposed methodology. In general, there are still different opinions on the implementation of SEA for physical plans and sector programs.

---

**Contact:** Jasna Koblar  
**Address:** Governmental Office for European Affairs  
**Phone:** 38 61 178 25 81  
**E-mail:** [jasna.koblar@gov.si](mailto:jasna.koblar@gov.si), [jasna.koblar@ijs.si](mailto:jasna.koblar@ijs.si)

**REC view on participation exercise:**

In the above case, the important question concerns the involvement of the public in the development of plans, programs and policies by the governmental authorities. This case highlights the different approach that may be taken between Article 6 and Article 7 type procedures. The involvement of NGOs was avoided in the determination of the plans, programs and policies in the area of transport. However, when it came to the discussions on the specific alternatives for highway sections, the public was included to a great extent, and its comments were taken into account. Although the prepared studies seem to have been made available to the public, it does not appear that the public had any opportunity to comment on the studies or to have its views taken into account. In contrast, from the information available it appears that there is a healthy involvement of the public in the discussion of the comparative studies on alternative highway sections, once the overall policies and plans are in place.

**Significant omissions from requirements of Article 6 or 7:**

The public participation exercise appears not to have met the requirements of Art. 7 in the planning and policy stage, but to have met the requirements of Article 6 in the subsequent comparative studies.