











PILOT SEA OF THE NATIONAL WASTE MANAGEMENT STRATEGY AND ACTION PLAN OF GEORGIA

Public scoping consultation meeting in Tbilisi, Georgia

22 September 2015

Meeting report

October 2015

CONTENT

2. Meeting objectives and organization 4 3. Approach 4 4. Summary of the Meeting outcomes 5 5. Conclusions 7 Annex 1: Workshop agenda 9 Annex 2: List of Participants 11	1.	Background	3
4. Summary of the Meeting outcomes 5 5. Conclusions 7 Annex 1: Workshop agenda 9	2.	Meeting objectives and organization	4
5. Conclusions	3.	Approach	4
Annex 1: Workshop agenda	4.	Summary of the Meeting outcomes	5
. •	5.	Conclusions	7
Annex 2: List of Participants		Annex 1: Workshop agenda	9
		Annex 2: List of Participants	11

1. Background

Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) effectively promotes sustainable development by mainstreaming environment into economic development at a national and local level. SEA is a well-established, practical and efficient planning and environmental governance tool/system set out in the UNECE Protocol on SEA to the Convention on Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) in a Transboundary Context. It ensures that development plans in key sectors such as energy, water and waste management with likely significant adverse environmental impacts are efficiently developed taking into account environmental (and health) considerations. SEA, in particular, will allow identification of the most sustainable and cost-effective strategic development alternatives in Moldova for attracting new investments and for improving its environment. SEA also helps strengthen the country's environmental governance through fostering transparency and consultation with relevant stakeholders and the public prior to the approval of plans and programmes. SEA in a transboundary context can also greatly facilitate regional cooperation on environmental matters.

Since June 2013, the UNECE secretariat to the Convention on the Environmental Impact Assessment in the Transboundary Context (the Espoo Convention) assists the Ministry of Environment and Natural Resource Protection of Georgia in developing a national environmental assessment system in line with the Convention and its Protocol on Strategic Environmental Assessment (Protocol on SEA). The activities are implemented in the framework of the EU funded programme 'Greening Economies in the Eastern Neighbourhood' (EaP GREEN) in several phases. Phase I of the programme was carried out from September 2013 to August 2014 and included reviews of legislative and institutional frameworks for the application of EIA and SEA procedures. Phase II extends from November 2014 to September 2015 and aims to develop a new draft law on EIA/SEA (draft law) (grant ECE/GC/2014/05/016). Phase III of the programme overs a pilot application of the SEA procedure (SEA pilot project) to Georgia's National Waste Management Strategy and Action Plan.

The aims of the SEA pilot project are:

- (a) to build national institutional capacities and expertise to conduct SEA at the national level;
- (b) to provide recommendations for environmental optimisation and modifications of the Georgia's Waste Management Strategy, and
- (c) to test the SEA system proposed in the draft law and develop recommendations for its improvement.

The SEA pilot was initiated in July 2015. Based on the discussions with the Ministry of Environment, the National Waste Management Strategy and Action Plan in Georgia was selected as a document to be a subject of SEA. The SEA pilot is being conducted by the national SEA team supported by the international SEA experts in close cooperation with the waste management specialists drafting the Strategy and the Action Plan.

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¹ http://www.unece.org/env/sea/eapgreen.html

The EaP GREEN programme is funded by the European Union and other donors, and is jointly implemented by the four partner organisations: OECD, UNEP, UNECE and UNIDO.

The draft scoping report was issued in early September 2015 (English version with the summary in Georgian) and the public scoping consultation event took place on 22 September 2015 (back-to-back with the training workshop on effect assessment and mitigation measures. This document is prepared by Maia Gachechiladze-Bozhesku, UNECE Consultant, with inputs from Michal Musil, UNECE Consultant, Georgia's Environmental Outlook (GEO), the local logistical partner, to report on the scoping public consultation event.

2. Meeting objectives and organization

A public scoping consultation meeting for the SEA of the National Waste Management Strategy and Action Plan was organised within the EaP GREEN with the support of the UNECE in partnership with the Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources Protection of Georgia. The consultation meeting was organized with the logistical support of non-governmental organization "Georgia's Environmental Outlook (GEO)".

The objectives of the consultation meeting were to:

- Inform stakeholders about the National Waste Management Strategy and Action Plan preparation process, its preliminary results
- Present the preliminary findings of the SEA of the National Waste Management Strategy and Action Plan and obtain a feedback from the stakeholders, including the concerned public
- Raise awareness about the new draft law on SEA, the SEA procedure in general as well as its pilot application in Georgia
- Identify/verify environmental and health issues that are related to the National Waste Management Strategy and Action Plan
- Present opportunities for further stakeholder involvement into the SEA process and the National Waste Management Strategy and Action Plan finalization

The agenda of the event is found in Annex 1.

3. Approach

The Draft SEA Scoping Report (in English) and the summary (in Georgian) of the SEA for the National Waste Management Strategy and Action Plan of Georgia were disseminated to the identified stakeholders. The SEA Team Leader with support of the local implementing partner sent invitations to the identified stakeholders.

The Workshop was organized in a form of open public hearing including debate with participation of the representatives of SEA experts (pilot SEA team members), Waste Management planning authority representatives and experts, representatives of NGOs, environmental and health authorities and representatives of other sectoral ministries – Ministry of Economy and Sustainable Development, Ministry of Agriculture and Ministry of Infrastructure and Regional Development. The event took place in the premises of the hotel in centre of Tbilisi.

In line with the above indicated objectives of the meeting, the following structure was prepared to facilitate the meeting:

The EaP GREEN programme is funded by the European Union and other donors, and is jointly implemented by the four partner organisations: OECD, UNEP, UNECE and UNIDO.

- Introduction to the SEA and purpose of the public Scoping event;
- Presentation of the draft Strategy and Action Plan preparation process and current phase of planning;
- Presentation of preliminary scoping results including the overview of the key environmental and health issues likely related to the National Waste Management Strategy and Action Plan;
- Facilitated discussion; and
- Outline of the following SEA steps.

4. Summary of the Meeting outcomes

38 participants attended the meeting and actively participated in it (for the list of participants refer to Annex 2).

Ms. Maia Bitadze, the Deputy Minister of Environment and Natural Resources Protection, opened the meeting. She emphasized that the main aim of SEA system is to ensure that the strategic documents and related decision-making processes properly reflect environmental and health considerations and likely adverse impacts are avoided or minimized, while environmental and health benefits of strategic actions are maximised.

Dr. Maia Gachechiladze-Bozhesku and Mr. Michal Musil, the UNECE SEA Consultants, gave a welcome response, thanked the participants for attending and explained the key aims of the meeting.



Ms. Irma Melikishvili, SEA Team Leader, presented the EaP GREEN activities in Georgia including the pilot project on SEA, she also elaborated on the meeting purpose and the planned EaP GREEN activities for 2015-2016.

Ms. Khatuna Gogaladze, the coordinator of the EU-funded project on the waste management strategy and action plan preparation, explained the key principles of the waste management strategy and action plan, approach to its preparation and expected timeline.

Mr. Michal Musil delivered a presentation on the main principles of SEA and the process and expected outputs of SEA scoping stage.

Following this, the national SEA experts presented the main findings of the scoping process relevant to their fields of expertise and identified those key issues that should be further studied and analysed during the next stage of SEA. The SEA team experts also provided preliminary overview of issues/recommendations to be considered by the planning team of the waste management strategy and action plan. In addition, experts mentioned the lack of data and information as one of the obstacle that prevented them from conducting more comprehensive baseline analysis.



The discussion session was launched after the presentation.

Ms. Khatuna Gogaladze raised issue on the availability of information and asked the experts if there is any information on the burning of waste and resulted emissions as well as asked about the correlation of health conditions with environmental issues, existing methodologies for making such conclusions in face of some uncertainties that exists in relation to data and information in this field.

Intensive discussion revolved about the cost recovery problems in the waste management sector and data limitation in this regard that both, the SEA developers and waste planning team have encountered.

Ms. Medea Chachkhiani, the representative of the Solid Waste Manage Company (SWMC) mentioned the some of the data used for assessing the situation in waste management sector in the draft scoping report is outdated and more recent data already exist that can be used for the assessment. She also mentioned that the Company also made some steps toward the improvement of situation in terms of landfills management, for example 22 landfills out of 53 were upgraded and adverse effect on the environment is minimized; Kutaisi landfill will be also upgraded in accordance to the EU standards by 2017. The landfills, which are not modernized they will be closed in accordance to standard requirements as well. She also emphasized the role of NGOs in awareness rising related to waste management. She expressed her desire to see updated information in the draft scoping report, mainly in the part devoted to the waste sector. She also expressed her willingness to provide updated information to SEA team in case of need.



The issue of integration of the SEA and planning processes were broadly discussed. The UNECE Consultants explained how the integration could be achieved in this particular case. Mr. Alverd Chankseliani, the head of waste management service of the Ministry of Environment, proposed the SEA team to provide the initial recommendations/issues to be consider by the waste management strategy and action plan planning team at this stage of the pilot project. This will help the planning team to finalize the waste management strategy. In additional to formal letters with recommendations from the SEA team, the waste expert of the SEA team was invited to closely communicate with the waste management planners.

5. Conclusions

The meeting was carried out as planned, it followed the prepared agenda and fulfilled the predefined objectives.

As a result of the meeting, the key tasks were defined in order to progress with the Pilot SEA implementation:

- SEA team will prepare and provide a document with initial recommendations / advice to the waste management strategy and action plan developers in the near future;
- The planning team will expressed their readiness to review and consider the SEA recommendations as far as possible;
- SEA team to finalize and send to all participants the draft Scoping report both in Georgian and English.

Overall, in respect to the Pilot SEA project, the public scoping consultation meeting successfully contributed to the progress of the pilot SEA process, namely in terms of verification of the preliminary findings (baseline analyses, identification of key relevant issues, preliminary recommendations for planners) and establishment of working contacts with the stakeholders for subsequent stages of the SEA.

As a side-result of the meeting, the observation was made by the UNECE experts that some of the participants, despite the delivered presentation, did not fully understand the need for and process of SEA, in particular, of the SEA scoping. The Ministry of the Environment will need to

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PILOT SEA OF THE NATIONAL WASTE MANAGEMENT STRATEGY AND ACTION PLAN OF GEORGIA

Public scoping consultations

22 September 2015

Venue: Hotel "Betsy", 32/34 Makashvili Str. 0108, Tbilisi, Georgia

AGENDA

A public scoping consultation meeting for the strategic environmental assessment (SEA) of the National Waste Management Strategy and Action Plan is organised by the Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources Protection of Georgia with the support of the UNECE in the framework of the EU funded programme Greening Economies in the European neighbourhood (EaP GREEN). The aims of the consultation meeting are to:

- Inform stakeholders about the National Waste Management Strategy and Action Plan preparation process, its preliminary results
- Present the preliminary findings of the SEA of the National Waste Management Strategy and Action Plan and obtain a feedback from the stakeholders, including the concerned public
- Raise awareness about the new draft law on SEA, the SEA procedure in generalas well as its pilot application in Georgia
- Identify/verify environmental and health issues that are related to the National Waste Management Strategy and Action Plan
- Present opportunities for further stakeholder involvement into the SEA process and the National Waste Management Strategy and Action Plan finalization

The consultation meeting will gather together SEA experts (pilot SEA team members), Waste Management planning authority representatives and experts (expert level), representatives of NGOs, environmental and health authorities, sectoral ministries, as well as general public.

The results of the public scoping consultation meeting will be noted and reflected in the further analysis and the final SEA Report.

13.00 – 14.00 **Registration of Participants**

14.00 - 14.10 Opening of the Meeting

Legal framework for SEA in Georgia

Ms. Maia Bitadze, Deputy Minister, Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources Protection of Georgia

14.10 – 14.30 Introduction of the UNECE pilot SEA project: SEA of the National Waste Management Strategy and Action Plan

The purpose of the public consultation meeting

Ms. Irma Melikishvili, National SEA Team Leader

14.30 – 14.40 Presentation of the National Waste Management Strategy and Action Plan preparation process and current phase of planning outputs Ms. KhatunaGogaladze, Team Leader

14.40 - 15.00 Scoping in SEA: Main principles and expected outcomes

Mr. Michal Musil and Dr. Maia Gachechiladze-Bozhesku, Consultants to UNECE

15.00 – 15.30 Preliminary scoping results: Overview of the key environmental and health issues likely related to the National Waste Management Strategy and Action Plan

Questions and answers session

Ms. Irma Melikishvili and SEA Team experts

15.30 - 16.30 Scoping discussion:

- Key environmental and health issues to be addressed by SEA and related specific problems and concerns
- Areas to be likely affected
- Linkages of the identified key environmental and health issues to the National Waste Management Strategy and Action Plan
- Further consultations necessary for the process / additional stakeholders
- Data resources

Discussion facilitated by Ms. Irma Melikishvili

16.30 – 16.40 Initial SEA Recommendations and the feedback of the waste management planning team

Discussion facilitated by Ms. Irma Melikishvili and Ms. Khatuna Gogaladze, Team Leader of the waste management planning team

16.40 – 17.00 Summary of the results of the consultation meeting and next steps Ms. Irma Melikishvili, National SEA Team Leader and Ms. Khatuna Gogaladze, Team Leader of the waste management planning team

17.00 - 17.10 Final remarks and closure of the meeting

Annex 2: List of Participants

PILOT SEA OF THE NATIONAL WASTE MANAGEMENT STRATEGY AND ACTION PLAN OF GEORGIA

Public scoping consultations

22 September 2015

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