

Activity: Espoo Convention Award Scheme

Objective(s)

The primary aim of this activity is to identify and publicly appreciate good or innovative practices in the application of the SEA Protocol and/or possibly of the Espoo Convention as well.

The award scheme would target public authorities that commissioned SEAs or transboundary EIAs that included innovative approaches. Consultants who carried out the specific assignments may be somehow recognised in the award scheme but the main credit should go to public authorities that supported good/innovative practices.

Award schemes offer an effective (i.e. low-cost and influential) process with multiple outcomes and possible uses outlined in the Annex 1 to this proposal. Such award schemes may be organized on periodic basis. This proposal focuses only on a pilot testing of an award scheme in the Espoo Convention context.

Method of work (sub-activities)

Overall approach

The award does not have to be conceived as simple ranking of the submitted cases (e.g. the first, the second and the third prize). It may be rather used for identification of good/innovative practices in those areas where innovations and developments in SEA and transboundary EIA are needed, e.g.:

- ‘grey-area’ issues in SEA or transboundary EIA where experimentation and pilot testing is needed (e.g. addressing health, climate change, biodiversity, etc.); or
- application of SEA or transboundary EIA in regions where uptake of Espoo Convention or of the Protocol may somewhat lag behind (e.g. EECCA) and where practice can be effectively supported by international recognition of good or innovative practice that well operate within the local context.

Thus, there can be only one general award category – a ‘Good/innovative practice in _issue XYZ or region XYZ_’. The awarded authorities who supported these practical applications would receive certificates of appreciation from the Espoo Convention Bureau or from a dedicated evaluation team under the Espoo Convention established for this purpose (see below).

Sub-activities

The award scheme should start by establishment of an advisory team that will develop an evaluation framework, evaluation criteria and applications forms for the award. The advisory team should ideally consist of 6-9 reputed and impartial experts in the field. Such experts can be recruited from the national focal points for the Espoo Convention or for the SEA Protocol and they may possibly also include some invited independent experts.

Applications for the award can be then sent through the Espoo Convention Secretariat to the national focal points for the SEA Protocol who will be kindly asked to forward the

announcement and application to key authorities involved in nationally recognized innovative or good practices.

Five months period can be given for interested authorities to fill out the application forms and return them back to the evaluation team. All received application will be then evaluated with the help of the advisory team. Two-tier system of evaluation is useful. The first round involves review of all applications to identify short-list (i.e. 10) of most promising cases. The second round of evaluations will provide detail review of pre-selected projects and decision on awards.

The project can be concluded by conference and the award ceremony. Both events can be organized in conjunction with the meeting of Parties to the Espoo Convention. The award ceremony itself does not only provide an excellent PR event where innovative approaches can be presented to a wider audience and media. Such ceremony can be effectively combined with a 'conference' where interested practitioners and national focal points for the Espoo Convention discuss the key issues for further developments and possibly come up with recommendations for the Espoo Convention process.

Organizational arrangements

It is suggested that the whole process is run by the UNECE Secretariat to the Espoo Convention with an assistance of a support team (to be identified later) and advisory team (to be identified later).

Time schedule

Such project may take anything from 8 to 12 months to complete (depending on the complexity of the issues covered).

Expected outcomes

Award ceremony & 'conference'

Award ceremony & 'conference' can be organized in conjunction with the meeting of Parties to the Espoo Convention. The first part of the 'conference' can be devoted to presentation of the most interesting cases that were obtained within the award scheme and to general discussion about key elements of successful practice. The second part of the conference would serve as the award ceremony - handing over the specific award by the representatives of sponsor or relevant authority. Agenda items for these two combined events can thus comprise of three equally important elements:

- presentation of the most interesting (not necessarily awarded) cases which were submitted within the award scheme;
- discussion on the presented case to see what lessons can be drawn for the Espoo Convention processes; and
- handing over the specific award by the Chair of the Espoo Convention.

Information on good/innovative practices

The project can finish by publishing of all relevant case studies in printed form and/or on the Espoo Convention website.

Further to this, information on all submitted case studies obtained through such award system can be stored for use in research, development of awareness-raising materials, elaboration of policy papers or wider publishing within the Espoo Convention process.

Budget

15.000 USD for the technical support (consultancy or agency to be identified later)

10.000 USD for the meetings of the advisory team (travel/DSA support as and when needed)

25.000 USD for Award 'conference' and ceremony

UNECE costs ?

Annex 1: Award scheme: A tool with multiple benefits

Experience gained from a capacity building program based on "Award for advancing local democracy" that was already used 5-times in the Czech Republic to identify and publicly credit good/innovative public participation practices suggests that similar award schemes could be used also to promote good SEA practices (or transboundary EIA). Such scheme could provide opportunity for:

- quick surveying of state of SEA practice (or transboundary EIA);
- identification of good/innovative practices and determination of critical success factors and main constrains/bottleneck that should be considered when promoting a good SEA practice (or transboundary EIA) in a given field;
- public recognition of key actors who promote these practices and providing them with moral support for their further work,
- illustration of benefits of good/innovative practices and the use of this information in promotional campaigns and benchmarking in a given field; and
- networking of practitioners (e.g. presentation of the awarded practices through the award ceremony & conference can effectively stimulate contacts and discussion between interested practitioners; key promoters of good/innovative practices can also become involved in relevant training programs, etc.);

Information obtained through such award system (i.e. information about all submitted case studies) can be stored for use in research, development of awareness-raising materials, elaboration of policy papers or publishing.

Lastly, the award ceremony itself does not only provide an excellent PR event where innovative approaches can be presented to a wider audience and media. Such ceremony can be effectively combined with a conference where interested practitioners and decision-makers come together to also discuss key issues for further development in the given field and to possibly come up with recommendations for relevant policy processes.