



**Expert Group meeting - Practical application of the SEA in the alternative and renewable energy sector in Azerbaijan in line with Draft Law on EIA**

**EaP GREEN Programme  
(Greening Economies in the Eastern Neighbourhood)**

**27-29 August 2015, Baku, Azerbaijan**

**Report**

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## 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 Azerbaijan 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.

The Republic of Azerbaijan is not yet a Party to the Protocol on Strategic Environmental Assessment (Protocol on SEA) to the Convention on the Environmental Impact Assessment in the Transboundary Context (the Espoo Convention). Despite the increasing recognition of the SEA as a tool for sustainable development in the region, SEA is rarely used in the country. This is due to a number of reasons, including:

- Weak legislative and institutional framework for its application;
- Low level of awareness of SEA and its benefits among public authorities responsible for preparation of the plans and programmes;
- Lack of understanding of the roles and responsibilities of various authorities in the SEA process.

In responses to these challenges and to better prepare for accession to the Convention and its Protocol the Ministry of Ecology and Natural Resources (MENR) is undertaking a number of steps to develop a national EIA and SEA systems in accordance with the Espoo Convention and its Protocol on SEA, including:

- Improving its legislative and institutional framework to fully comply with the Protocol and relevant EU legislation;
- Defining roles and responsibilities of various authorities in the SEA process;
- Building national and local capacities, developing practical experience and national guidelines in application of the SEA procedures in line with the Protocol and relevant EU legislation;
- Raising awareness and common understanding of the benefits of the SEA at national and local levels and in different sectors, including the benefits of public participation and the consultation of relevant authorities.



Since May 2014, the UNECE Secretariat to the Espoo Convention assists the Ministry of Ecology and Natural Resources of Azerbaijan (hereinafter also the ‘Ministry’) in developing a national environmental assessment system in line with the Convention and its Protocol on SEA within the EU funded programme ‘Greening Economies in the Eastern Neighbourhood’ (EaP GREEN) in several phases.

The first phase of the programme was carried out from May to October 2014 and included review of legislative and institutional frameworks for the application of SEA and EIA and development of the legislative framework on EIA and SEA (draft Law on EIA and SEA) from January 2015 to April 2015.

The second phase (January 2015 to October 2016) aims to build national capacities in practical application of SEA at the national level through the implementation of a SEA pilot project.

Based on the communication with the representatives of the Ministry of Ecology and Natural Resources of Azerbaijan, the ‘Action Plan on Alternative and Renewable Energy Resources Use’ has been selected for pilot application of the SEA procedure. The SEA pilot was initiated in January 2015 and shall last until October 2015. The overall aim of SEA pilot is to further develop legislation on SEA, build capacities in application of SEA procedures at a national level and to raise awareness of SEA benefits among various national stakeholders. The specific objectives include:

- To provide support in the development of the draft law on SEA
- To test and demonstrate opportunities of practical application of the draft law on SEA based on the implementation of a pilot project
- To provide recommendations for environmental optimisation and modifications of the selected plan/programme, and
- To develop recommendations for further improvement of national legislative and institutional frameworks on SEA in a country.

The SEA pilot started in March 2015 with the initial training workshop on scoping and baseline analysis. The draft overview of the key environmental and health issues related to the Strategy was prepared in April 2015 and presented and discussed at the scoping consultation meeting in May 2015, which was organized back-to-back the training workshop on impacts assessment. The scoping report was elaborated during June – July 2015 followed by further works on impacts assessment and mitigation measures in August – September 2015 (including workshop on these aspects in August 27 – 29, 2015). The draft SEA report (the version in Azerbaijani language can be downloaded here) will be prepared in November – December 2015 and the final public consultation workshop on the draft Strategy and the draft SEA report will be organized on December 9, 2015 (to be confirmed).

This Report summarizes the expert meeting organized within the SEA Pilot execution as a follow-up event of workshop on SEA scoping and baseline analysis, organized in Baku, Azerbaijan, 11-12 May 2015.





## 2. SEA Expert meeting design

The SEA expert meeting was organised by the Ministry of Ecology and Natural Resources (hereinafter also ‘MENR’), the State Agency on Alternative and Renewable Energy Resources (hereinafter also the ‘Agency’), and the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE). The logistical support for the event was provided by the Regional Environmental Centre for Caucasus.

The general objective of the event was to support implementation of the pilot project on application of strategic environmental assessment (SEA) during preparation of the National Strategy on Renewable and Alternative Energy Use (hereinafter also the ‘Strategy’). The purpose of this event was to discuss outcomes of the scoping stage and initial assessment results of identified impacts and to formulate mitigation measures and proposals for the SEA and development of the Strategy.

The event organised as internal meeting only for SEA team experts as below:

- i. Internal SEA team meeting (0,5 day) to discuss findings and conclusions of the scoping stage
- ii. SEA group work and follow up discussion (1.5-day) focusing on the impacts evaluation and mitigation measures
- iii. Site visit (1 day) to get acknowledge to the activities to be developed under the Strategy

During the first part SEA team meeting, the national experts presented on relevant issues and the scope of their work. Presentations on impact evaluation and mitigation measures were delivered by the International SEA Expert and a number of case examples and practical tools were introduced in order to facilitate discussions on how shall be the relevant SEA tasks practically implemented in this stage.

Referring to the Strategy content and its next development scheme on the Action Plan and for facilitation the tasks of experts, all presentations were prepared on the practical examples related to the policy analysis, as well as specific measures and activities on impact assessment which could be acceptable for the National Strategy on use of alternative and renewable energy sources in the Republic of Azerbaijan in 2015 – 2020 and its further development.

During the second part of the meeting team experts performed their initial impact assessment results and proposal to the Strategy. It was organised group work for understanding the cases and discussion.

At the same time GIS proposals on biodiversity, soil, water and etc. were performed that is considered as the key tools for evaluation of impacts clearly and makes recommendations to the Agency referring to this data.

During the third day experts visited the Gobustan Hybrid Station of the AREA which included the solar, wind and biogas energy development under the Strategy via expanding the current site. Experts could have an opportunity to get acknowledge the technological process and site location conditions and formulate unclear aspects triggered from the meeting discussion while this visit.



### 3. Summary of main outcomes

There are following major outcomes from the meeting:

- I. Confirmation of Scoping report
- II. Methods and tools to be used for impacts assessment and formulating the mitigation measures
- III. Methods and tools for formulation of final SEA Report
- IV. Workplan for the next activities by team experts
- V. It was discovered that the Strategy doesn't have the internal mechanism of internal evaluation and correction. The comments/recommendations are needed

### 4. Next steps

Following the results of the internal SEA team discussion, next steps and tasks can be defined in order to further proceed with the SEA pilot implementation:

- Issuing the Scoping Report by AREA for official confirmation by MENR and publication of it in accordance with Draft Law on EIA (SEA chapter)
- Preparation of agreed tables on impact assessment and mitigation measures, monitoring for the inputs of the national experts
- Initial drafting the final SEA Report by the international experts by 20<sup>th</sup> of September
- Distributing the 1<sup>st</sup> draft SEA Report among stakeholders for consultations
- Preparation of key proposals for the Strategy to be integrated to the Action Plan

It was also agreed that the meeting with the Energy Agency's top management will be organized in order to introduce the actual SEA outcomes and discuss formal steps in accordance with the draft SEA by law.



## 5. SEA team meeting evaluation

SEA team experts have been provided with evaluation forms to present their feedback to the organizers. The summary of the results is presented below (for the complete overview of results see Appendix 2).





## Annex 1: SEA team meeting agenda

### Practical application of the Draft Law on Environmental Impact Assessment in the Republic of Azerbaijan in the renewable energy sector

#### SEA for the National Strategy on use of alternative and renewable energy sources in the Republic of Azerbaijan in 2015 – 2020

#### Expert group meeting

*August 27-29, 2015*

**Baku, Azerbaijan**

**Draft Agenda**

#### Day 1: Expert Group Meeting

Thursday, 27<sup>th</sup> of August

- |                      |  |
|----------------------|--|
| <b>10:00 – 10:10</b> | <b>Registration of participants</b>  |
| <b>10:10 – 10:30</b> | <b>Opening the Meeting</b><br>Introduction to the meeting's objectives and agenda<br><i>Ms. Aysel Babayeva, SEA Pilot Team Leader,</i>   |
| <b>10:30 – 13:00</b> | <b>Scoping follow-up</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Key findings at the scoping stage (to be presented by the national experts)</li> <li>• Main challenges and difficulties</li> <li>• Scope for further SEA analyses</li> </ul> |

*Presentations of local experts and follow-up discussion*

*Facilitated by Ms. Aysel Babayeva, SEA Pilot Team Leader, and Ms. Marina Khotuleva, UNECE international Consultant on SEA*







**13:00 – 14:30**

**Lunch**

14:30 – 15:15

**Impact assessment in SEA – part. 1**

- Objectives and expected outcomes of this SEA analytical step
- Methods and tools to be used for the impact assessment with focus on policy analysis
- Case examples of approaches to the impact assessment

*Presentation by Ms. Marina Khotuleva, UNECE international Consultant on SEA (30 min)*

- Questions and answers (15 min)

15:15 – 17:30

**Assessing impacts (policy analysis) of the National Strategy on use of alternative and renewable energy sources in the Republic of Azerbaijan in 2015 – 2020**

- Preliminary inputs on impact assessment and mitigation measures (to be presented by the national experts)
- Group work and follow up discussion

*Facilitated by Ms. Aysel Babayeva, SEA Pilot Team Leader, and Ms. Marina Khotuleva, UNECE international Consultant on SEA*

**Day 2: Expert Group Meeting**

**Friday, 28<sup>th</sup> of August**

**10:00 – 10:45**

**Impact assessment in SEA – part. 2**

- Methods and tools to be used for the impact assessment with focus on specific impacts
- Case examples of approaches to the impact assessment

*Presentation by Ms. Marina Khotuleva, UNECE international Consultant on SEA (30 min)*

- Questions and answers (15 min)

**10:45 – 13:00**

**Assessing impacts (impacts related to specific measures and activities) of the National Strategy on use of alternative and renewable energy sources in the Republic of Azerbaijan in 2015 – 2020**



- Group work and follow up discussion

*Facilitated by Ms. Aysel Babayeva, SEA Pilot Team Leader, and Ms. Marina Khotuleva, UNECE international Consultant on SEA*

**13:00 – 14:30**

**Lunch**

**14:30 – 15:00**

**Mitigation measures**

- Objectives and expected outcomes of this SEA step
- Types of possible mitigation measures (including alternatives)
- Case examples

*Presentation by Ms. Marina Khotuleva, UNECE international Consultant on SEA*

**15:00 – 16:30**

**Mitigation measures for the National Strategy on use of alternative and renewable energy sources in the Republic of Azerbaijan in 2015 – 2020**

- Formulating mitigation measures and main proposals to be integrated in the Strategy and/or further planning (Action Plan)
- Group work and follow up discussion

*Facilitated by Ms. Aysel Babayeva, SEA Pilot Team Leader, and Ms. Marina Khotuleva, UNECE international Consultant on SEA*

**16:30 – 17:30**

**Concluding sessions and planning further steps**

- Requirements for the inputs to be obtained from the SEA team and other stakeholders
- Integrating SEA recommendations to the Strategy and/or further planning (how it can be ensured)
- Proposed structure of SEA report
- Overview of the tasks, division of responsibilities and fine-tuning the further SEA pilot process, including timeline
- Formal steps to be implemented in accordance with the draft SEA by law



*Facilitated by Ms. Aysel Babayeva, SEA Pilot Team Leader, and Ms. Marina Khotuleva, UNECE international Consultant on SEA*

**Day 3: Site visit to Gobustan Hybrid Station of AREA  
Saturday, 29<sup>th</sup> of August**

<b>08:00</b>	Departure from Baku
<b>09:30</b>	Arrival to Gobustan Hybrid Station of AREA
<b>09:30 – 11:30</b>	Site visit to the station
<b>11:30 – 12:00</b>	Coffee Break
<b>12:00</b>	Departure to Shamakhi
<b>13:00 – 14:30</b>	Lunch
<b>14:30</b>	Departure to Azerbaijan National Academy of Sciences' Astrophysical Cosmic Station named after N.Tusi in Shamakhi.
<b>15:00 – 16:00</b>	Arrival and visit the station
<b>16:00</b>	Departure to Baku





## Annex 2: List of Participants

1. Marina Khotuleva, international expert
2. Aysel Babayeva, SEA team leader
3. Fikrat Jafarov, SEA Pilot project coordinator
4. Ramiz Kalbiyev, State Agency on Alternative and Renewable Energy Resources
5. Sabina Najafova, advisor, State Agency on Alternative and Renewable Energy Resources
6. Mehman Nabiyeu (expert on biodiversity)
7. Islam Mammadov (expert on atmosphere, climate change)
8. Qasham Yagubov (expert on soil and land issues)
9. Anar Nuriyev, (expert on water resources, GIS)
10. Bariz Mehdiyev, REC Caucasus Baku Office



Start Date: Thirdday, 27 August, 2015  
End Date: Saturday, 29 August, 2015  
Participants: 12  
Female participants: 4

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### Annex 3: Minutes of the meeting

SEA team meeting which was organised on 27-29<sup>th</sup> of August in Aarhus Centre in Baku city, was internal discussion by the team experts which aimed to discuss the results triggered from the scoping stage and to identify concrete steps for the next period of SEA process - impact assessment and formulating the mitigation measures and proposals for the Strategy on Alternative and Renewable Energy use 2015-2020.

Meeting was scheduled for two days and planned to be managed via presentations, discussions and group work according to the identified agenda (see below Annex I).

First day started with the opening speech by Ms. Aysel Babayeva on the purpose of the meeting and introduction to Agenda items. Welcoming the attendance of Mr. Jeroen Williems, Delegation of the European Union to the Republic of Azerbaijan, he was invited to make an opening speech as well. Mr. Jeroen Williems spoke on fruitful cooperation of EU and Azerbaijan on environmental policy and sustainability issues stressing the importance of the role of EU EaP Green, TAIEX program, as well as the current successful projects under these programs in Azerbaijan. He also welcomed the work done by SEA team under SEA pilot project and wished success on further activities. During the meeting he was provided with draft Scoping report prepared by SEA expert team.

According to the Agenda, follow-up discussion was implemented via presentation of SEA team experts on the key findings at the scoping stage, the main challenges and difficulties they faced while analysis which was facilitated by Ms. Aysel Babayeva, team leader and Ms. Marina Khotuleva, UNECE international Consultant on SEA.

It was concluded that the scoping results for further analysis have been already identified, however analysis show that some topics are necessary to be responded during the next SEA stage. Specially, cultural heritage, livelihood and social impact issues also revised to be included to the scope of SEA report and to be analyzed further.

Experts discuss also uncertainties on assessing impacts, for example the policy analysis under the current “Strategy”, whereas, concrete locations of planned activities are not identified yet. The main challenge was the determination of the direct impacts to the specific environment conditions of certain places. In this case, to avoid the “fictional” proposals, the relevant methods discussed to be applied during the next SEA step.

Hereinafter, international expert Ms. Marina Khotuleva also was invited to the meeting to make presentations on objectives and expected outcomes of SEA analytical steps, methods and





tools to be used for the impact assessment with focus on policy analysis, at the same time explanation of various approaches to specific impact analysis by giving the case examples on this regard and in accordance with the “Strategy”.

Ms. Marina Khotuleva, presenting the tools, case examples for understanding the policy analysis, stressed the importance of individual approach to SEA process by each country according to its local characteristics and status.

Next discussions were realised by group work which dedicated to assess the impacts of the “National Strategy on use of alternative and renewable energy sources in the Republic of Azerbaijan in 2015 – 2020”. Thus, prepared impact assessment table was agreed and filled in by each team expert during the meeting by substantiating the significance of environmental impacts (see below the impact table). Impact Assessment table based on the scoping results on indicators that were analysed during the meeting. Experts presented their preliminary assessment results and proposals to the Strategy. Some environmental issues related to technological commissioning process of alternative and renewable energy power stations which remained uncertain to the Team and was considered important for impact evaluation were deemed to be found out during the site visit to intended Gobustan Hybrid Station.

At the event GIS expert also presented the maps which were determined by SEA team on key indicators for the Strategy.

During the meeting the major issues related to the next steps were concluded. First of all, for obtaining the inputs from the SEA team and other stakeholders it was identified that the Scoping has to be concluded as soon as possible taking into account that Draft Scoping report is satisfactory to be officially issued and published.

At the meeting SEA team also concluded its further strategy on how to formulate proposals on relevant indicators and how integrate SEA recommendations to the Strategy. It was agreed to be coordinated with the Agency as well to learn the follow up actions under the Strategy and formulate the proposals on this regard.

At the end of the meeting it was also identified further key directions for structuralizing the SEA Report and formal steps introduced to the participants in accordance with the draft SEA legislation based on Draft EIA law. For the next activities, prior to SEA Report, confirmation the Scoping Report by State Expertise Department considered important to follow up the draft SEA legislation and after confirmation it is required to be published.

Final SEA report identified to be drafted by 21<sup>st</sup> of September and public consultation with other relevant authorities and interested public were agreed to be held on 12<sup>th</sup> of November. At the same time, SEA team meeting concerned on implementation last internal meeting before the public participation, thus, it was determined 11<sup>th</sup> of November 2015.

Third day of the event was aimed to get acknowledge to the current activities of the Alternative and Renewable Energy Agency that included to the Strategy goals. One of those activities is expanding the Gobustan Hybrid Station which exists in Gobustan district. The site visit was considered important to get an experience and to study the case in its specific site location. Agency experts and



engineers guided the SEA team in the site answering their questions. SEA team found it very satisfactory and fruitful for their further analysis.

After the site visit, SEA team got familiar with Azerbaijan National Academy of Sciences' Astrophysical Cosmic Station named after N.Tusi in Shamakhi which located nearby to Gobustan district.

