



## Meeting Minutes

### **Initial meeting of the working group on ‘Guidelines on practical application of SEA in Georgia’**

**2 March 2016**

Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources Protection  
Tbilisi, Georgia

Initial meeting of the working group on “Guidelines on practical application of SEA in Georgia” was held on 2 March 2016 at the Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources Protection of Georgia (MENRP) with the support of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) in the framework of the in the framework of the EU funded Programme ‘Greening the Economies in the Eastern Neighbourhood’ (EaP GREEN).

The aim of the meeting was to initiate the preparation of the ‘Guidelines on practical application of SEA in Georgia’ according to the draft Environmental Assessment Code that was developed by Georgia with the support of the EaP GREEN programme from August 2014 to December 2015.

In the meeting participated: representatives from the Environmental Impacts Permit Department and the Legal Department of the MENRP and the project experts. The full list of participants is attached below. These participants have been identified as project working group members and will be further involved in the WG meetings and discussions.

The meeting was opened by Ms. Tamar Sharashidze, Head of Environmental Impacts Permit Department. Ms. Sharashidze underlined importance of the project for the Ministry and shared her expectations towards SEA Guideline. Namely, in her opinion, it is very important to develop a document that would serve as a guidance methodology for the Ministry to review the SEA reports. In addition, Ms. Sharashidze provided a brief update on the current developments regarding the new draft law – Environmental Impact Assessment Code covering also SEA aspects. Namely, she mentioned that the Code has been uploaded in the Government electronic system and currently, MENRP is holding meetings with the line Ministries on issues related to the draft law, including SEA procedures. It is expected the Code will be submitted to the Government for the final discussion in April 2016.

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After the opening, Mr. Martin Smutny delivered a presentation about SEA Guidelines. The presentation covered: meaning and purpose of SEA, its main targets, main roles and responsibilities of the involved actors, practical tools for SEA application, case examples from other countries etc. In addition, Mr. Smutny presented proposed content of the SEA Guideline for Georgia, and provided examples of guidance documents to be used as background material.

The presentation was followed by a discussion about the Guideline, working process, working group, communication with other Ministries, expectations, timeframes etc. Details of the discussion is provided below.

Ms. Nino Tandilashvili raised an issue regarding concerns of the Ministry of Labour, Health and Social Affairs of Georgia (MLHSA). Namely, MLHSA has been asking questions about their specific role in SEA process, since there does not exist any legally defined framework for assessment of human health related impacts. In addition, there is lack of updated statistical data. According to Ms. Tandilashvili MLHSA needs a detailed guideline with examples, e.g. which aspects of human health needs to be assessed in relation of impacts from different sectors, what are criteria for each sector etc.

In response to that, Mr. Smutny clarified that the Guideline will provide detailed explanation about their roles and expected inputs in relation to human health aspects. Human health aspects need to be addressed in a same way as environmental aspects in SEA. However, while the guideline can address consideration of health aspects at a certain extent, e.g. how health aspects should be addressed and what should be the role of the MLHSA, it cannot provide full guidance about how conducting health assessment (i.e. tools and methods to be used for evaluating likely health effects). Such specific guidelines should be elaborated in another guidance document focusing primarily on health issues. Mr. Smutny also suggested to discuss these issues further with the MLHSA, in order to come to agreement in terms of expectations from the both sides.

Ms. Irma Melikishvili, project expert, asked if there is any planned secondary legislation on SEA.

Ms. Tamar Sharashidze replied that at this moment the Ministry does not expect any secondary legislation on SEA, except for screening criteria, providing that SEA is a new tool in Georgia and until it is tested and well established, it would not be effective to develop strictly binding regulations. Therefore, the Ministry expects that the Guideline will be a recommendatory document, providing clear procedures and steps to be undertaken during the assessment process, including for development of a scoping report as well as a full SEA report. Ms. Nino Tandilashvili added, that the Guideline should be more detailed than the Draft Code, and should include the practical aspects, timeframes, roles and responsibilities. In her opinion, the Guideline needs to be more easily comprehensible compared to legal documents.

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Further discussion concerned screening criteria, namely, whether screening criteria should be presented in the Guideline or a bylaw. Ms. Tandilashvili, as well as Ms. Sharashidze suggested that it would be more reasonable to outline screening criteria in a bylaw to ensure better enforcement. She added that detailed criteria are needed to support decision making. Ms. Sharashidze also suggested that as far as there is not enough practical experience on SEA screening in Georgia, practical experience from other countries would be useful.

Mr. Smutny commented that the Guidelines should describe practical steps in implementing the SEA procedure as outlined in the Draft Code. Regarding the criteria, he added that further discussion is needed whether these should be part of a secondary legislation. Mr. Smutny also emphasised that the Guideline cannot provide clear yes or no answers for screening in 100% cases. Some ad hoc decisions will be needed (mainly regarding the local level plans and programmes), providing that there can be so many and diverse plans and programmes.

Another issue raised was that plans and programmes in Georgia are rather general in many cases, and consequently - difficult to assess. It was commonly agreed that communication with sectoral ministries regarding the planning process and SEA is essential.

In the end of the discussion, it was agreed that it is very important that the Guideline clearly outlined the roles and responsibilities of all involved actors as well as the steps to be implemented.

After the break, Ms. Nana Baramidze, lead expert on the Guideline, outlined the working process, the role of the working group and the timelines. She stated that the 1st stage of the process – elaboration of the first draft will cover March, April and May, 2nd stage – mid-May and June and the 3rd Stage – September and October.

According to the proposed schedule,

- The first draft of the extended content of SEA Recommendations will be submitted to the Ministry by 4 April 2016;
- The first draft of the SEA Recommendations will be submitted by 20 May 2016;
- The Second draft of the SEA Recommendations in both, English and Georgian languages will be submitted by mid-July 2016;
- The final, third draft in both languages will be submitted by beginning of September 2016;
- Updated third draft will be submitted by end of September 2016;
- The finalized draft SEA Recommendations will be submitted by mid-October 2016.

This was followed by a discussion on the working group and involvement of the MLHSA. Ms. Tamar Sharashidze suggested that she will arrange an informal meeting with the working group members from the MLHSA before 18 April workshop, to

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make sure that they are informed about the project and expected outcomes and to discuss possible needs to formally involve them in the SEA working group.

In the end of the meeting, Ms. Sharashidze expressed gratitude towards the project and hope that the SEA Recommendations will be a practical guidance document applicable for the Ministry.

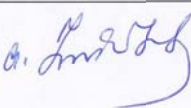



In the meeting participated:

Name, Organization, Position		Contact details
<b>Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources Protection</b>		
1	Ms. Tamar Sharashidze, Environmental Impacts Permits Department, Head	<a href="mailto:t.sharashidze@moe.gov.ge">t.sharashidze@moe.gov.ge</a>
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<b>UNECE/GEO</b>		
7	Mr. Martin Smutny, UNECE	<a href="mailto:martin.smutny@unece.org">martin.smutny@unece.org</a>
8	Ms. Tamar Gugushvili, Project National Coordinator, GEO	<a href="mailto:gugushvili.tamuna@gmail.com">gugushvili.tamuna@gmail.com</a>
9	Ms. Nana Baramidze, SEA Recommendations Lead Author	<a href="mailto:nana.baramidze@gmail.com">nana.baramidze@gmail.com</a>
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Registration  
March 2, 2016

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