

**Training workshop on SEA quality assurance / quality control in Georgia
for the Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources Protection and the
Ministry of Labour, Health and Social Affairs**

November 28, 2016
Venue: Hotel Laerton, 14 Iliko Kurkhuli St, Tbilisi, Georgia

Workshop Report
November 2016



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Background information

Training workshop on SEA quality assurance/quality control for the experts from the Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources Protection and the Ministry of Labour, Health and Social Affairs of Georgia was held on November 28, 2016 in Hotel Laerton, Tbilisi. The workshop was organized by the Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources Protection of Georgia in cooperation with the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) and ‘Georgia’s Environmental Outlook’ (GEO) in the framework of the EU funded Programme ‘Greening the Economies in the Eastern Neighbourhood’ (EaP GREEN).

The training workshop was designed as continuation of the training workshop on SEA Scoping held on 19 April 2016 in Hotel Betsy’s Tbilisi, for the same target audience – i.e. central environmental and health authorities. The aim of the workshop was to introduce and discuss approaches to quality control in SEA with special emphasis on the role of environmental and health authorities to support practical application of the SEA procedure as stipulated by the draft Environmental Assessment Code of Georgia.

The representatives from the Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources Protection and the Ministry of Labour Health and Social Affairs of Georgia, as well as the project national and international experts participated at the event. Full list of participants is attached in Annex II.



Minutes of the meeting

The Meeting was opened by Ms. Tamar Sharashidze, Head of Environmental Impact Permits Department, Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources Protection of Georgia. The opening speech was followed by introduction of the workshop objectives and the agenda and brief introduction of the participants.

In the introductory session on quality assurance/quality control in SEA, Mr. Michal Musil, the international consultant, revisited the definition and main purpose of SEA and major differences between the concepts of SEA and EIA, and further explained the main components of good quality SEA process, main objects of quality control, key agencies and



other parties engaged in quality control, stages in the SEA process subject to quality control and mechanisms ensuring quality control such as quality criteria, forms and licensing systems. In addition, Mr. Musil provided examples on settings/arrangements for quality control from European countries: Croatia, the Czech Republic, and the Netherlands.

The presentation was followed by the questions on different aspects of SEA process in the EU countries, e.g. who is responsible for issuing licenses to the SEA experts, and what are the criteria for awarding a license; what is the average number of plans and programmes prepared annually that are subject to SEA etc. Mr. Musil explained the system of licensing in Croatia and the Czech Republic. Regarding the average number of plans and programmes Mr. Musil clarified that while at the beginning in the most of the EU countries SEA was applied only to the national level documents, after transposition of the SEA Directive the scope of application was expanded to regional and local levels, which resulted in an increased number of SEA cases.

The second presentation in the introductory session, on legal requirements regarding quality stipulated by the draft Environmental Assessment Code of Georgia, was delivered by Ms. Tamar Sharashidze. The presentation addressed following topics: the prerequisites for development of the draft Code, such as international obligations towards EU-Georgia Association Agreement; reforms that will follow implementation of the Code, e.g. legal, institutional and technological; and benefits from implementing SEA in the country. Ms. Sharashidze outlined the key planning agencies, key competent agencies, and main stages and approaches of SEA according to the new draft Code, including the role of the public, decision-making and monitoring, and further explained the role of the decision of the competent authority and the content and the ground of the decision.

The next session was dedicated to discussion of the criteria for reviewing SEA report. Mr. Musil introduced and explained to the participants different sets of criteria to be taken into account when reviewing the SEA report and preparing recommendations, such as e.g. criteria to assess how well the SEA report outlines the content of the plan or programme, its objectives and purpose and whether the SEA report takes into account existing environmental objectives; criteria concerning scope of assessment – to what extent the SEA report corresponds to the scoping report; as well as criteria to assess the scope of the assessment and the baseline analysis. Mr. Musil stressed that the baseline analysis is the most debated subject due to differences in expert opinions, different interpretation of data etc. He reminded the participants that the quality review should not focus too much on correcting or challenging particular technical aspects unless it has some specific importance for the final recommendations. Mr. Musil added that another important aspect for the baseline analysis is acknowledgement of data gaps and uncertainties. Further, Mr. Musil introduced a specific set of criteria for assessing the alternatives, explaining that while SEA, in theory, is a tool for comparing different possible alternatives, in many cases, plans and programmes does not provide alternatives to the suggested optimum scenario. In such cases, he advised to consider at least a zero alternative. Some other criteria he covered concerned mitigation measures – how plan or programme should be adjusted or changed; monitoring – whether SEA report suggests funding arrangements or institutional setting for implementing the recommendations; and finally, he introduced a separate set of criteria applied to SEA report.



After the introduction of the criteria, the participants were given the assignment to select and discuss the criteria most relevant for application in Georgia. The participants discussed selected criteria, and in addition proposed several other criteria that in their opinion would be relevant for reviewing the SEA report. E.g. Ms. Tamar Nasuashvili, from Environmental Impact Permits Department, proposed to assess at what extent the given strategic document links to other strategic documents prepared by other state agencies; Ms. Khatuna Tsiklauri from Protected Areas Agency proposed to look at how the strategic document aligns with the protected area management plans; etc.

The session after lunch was devoted to the group assignment on evaluating quality of pilot SEA application in Georgia i.e. the SEA of the National Waste Management Strategy and Action Plan. The participants split into groups and filled in the matrix, evaluating different aspects of the SEA report using the suggested scoring scale. Different groups evaluated such aspects as: baseline study, description of potential impacts, mitigation measures, and monitoring.



After filling in the matrix, all four groups presented the results of the group discussions. Major critical points concerned lack of data and information, lack of alternatives, and lack of specific mitigation measures. It was further discussed that the Waste Management Strategy itself does not provide alternatives and in addition, it contains rather general measures, which is a challenge in terms of conducting proper SEA.



In the end, the participants were asked for a feedback on the training workshop. Representatives from the both ministries provided positive feedback on the content of presentations as well as the group exercises. After few concluding remarks the workshop was closed.

Annexes

Annex I – Agenda of the workshop

09.30 – 10.00	Registration of participants
10.00 – 10.15	Opening of the workshop and welcome of the participants <i>Ms. Tamar Sharashidze, Head of Environmental Impacts Permits Department, Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources Protection</i>
10.15 – 10.45	Introduction to the workshop objectives and agenda Introduction of the participants and their expectations from the workshop <i>Facilitated by Ms. Tamar Gugushvili, National Project Coordinator, GEO</i>
10.45 – 11.30	Introduction to quality assurance/quality control in SEA <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Possible approaches to QA/QC in SEA (30 min) <i>Mr. Michal Musil, UNECE International Consultant on SEA</i> • Legal requirements regarding quality stipulated by the draft Environmental Assessment Code (15 min) <i>Ms. Tamar Sharashidze, Head of Environmental Impacts Permits Department, Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources Protection</i>
11.30 – 12.00	Coffee break
12.00 – 13.00	Quality criteria <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Overview of quality criteria to be applied in SEA (20 min) <i>Mr. Michal Musil, UNECE International Consultant on SEA</i> • Facilitated discussion to identify the most relevant criteria to be applied in Georgia (40 min) <i>Facilitated by Ms. Tamar Gugushvili, Project National Coordinator, GEO</i>
13.00 – 14.00	Lunch break
14.00 – 15.45	Quality control of SEA pilot <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduction to the assignment (15 min) <i>Mr. Michal Musil, UNECE International Consultants on SEA</i> • Group work: quality control of selected elements of SEA pilot (60 min) <i>Facilitated by the national and international UNECE consultants</i> • Presentation by working groups and discussion (30 min) <i>Facilitated by Ms. Tamar Gugushvili, Project National Coordinator, GEO</i>
15.45 – 16.15	Coffee break



16.15 – 16.45	<p>Procedural aspects of quality control in SEA – facilitated discussion on the most efficient approaches to quality control in Georgia</p> <p><i>Facilitated by Ms. Tamar Gugushvili, Project National Coordinator, GEO</i></p>
16.45 – 17.00	<p>Concluding session</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Summary of main conclusions • Further steps <p><i>Ms. Tamar Gugushvili, Project National Coordinator, GEO, and Mr. Michal Musil, UNECE International Consultant on SEA</i></p>
17.00	<p>End of workshop</p>

Annex II – List of Participants

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