



Introduction to SEA – Principles of efficient application, main stages and key actors

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Baku, 4-5 April 2018

The purposes of SEA

“to provide for a high level of protection of the environment and to contribute to the integration of environmental considerations into the preparation and adoption of plans and programmes with a view to promoting sustainable development.”

EU SEA Directive, 2001

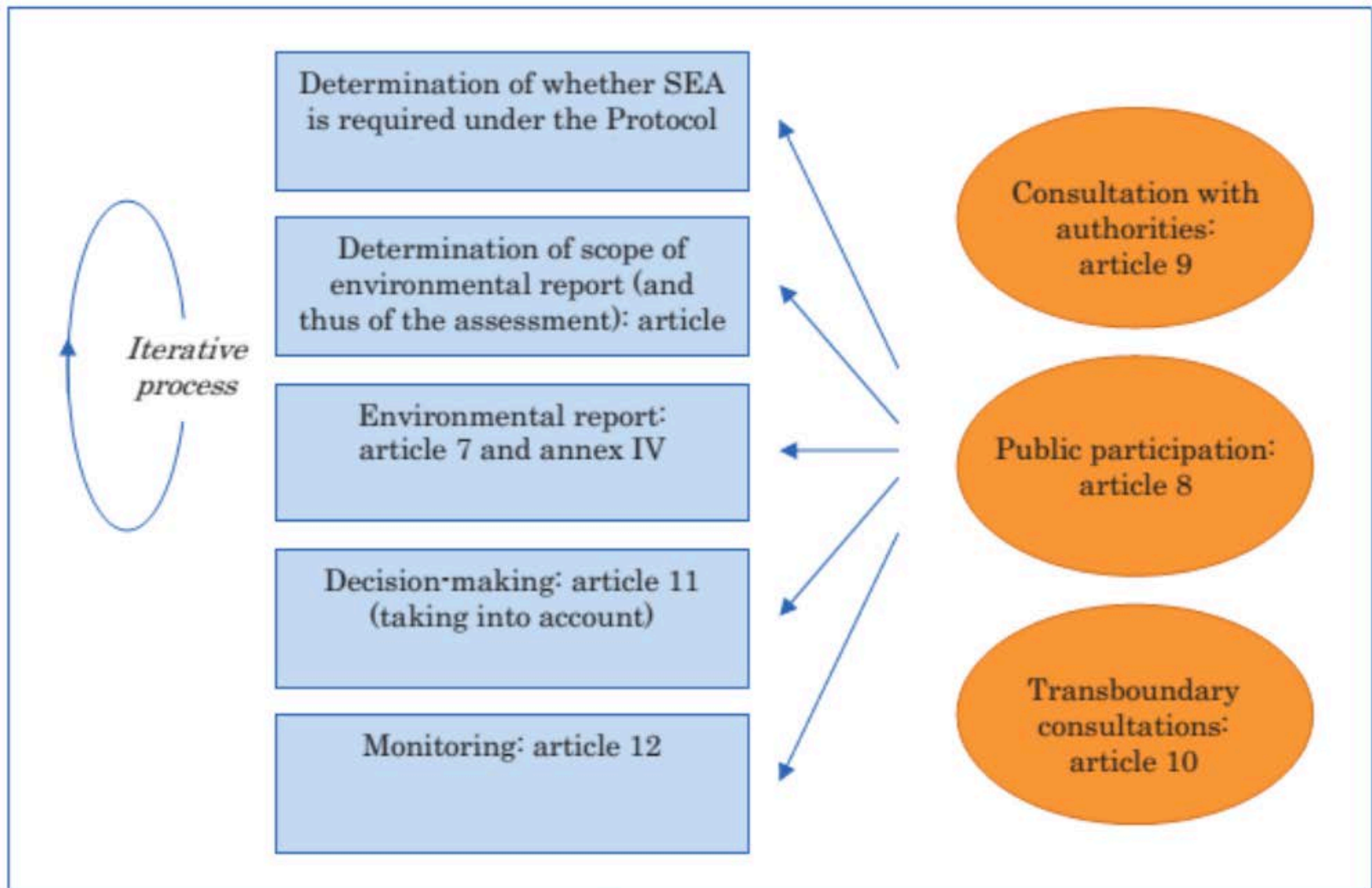
Based upon a broad understanding of environment: ““Environmental, including health, effect” means any effect on the environment, including human health, flora, fauna, biodiversity, soil, climate, air, water, landscape, natural sites, material assets, cultural heritage and the interaction among these factors.” (UNECE SEA Protocol).

The benefits of SEA

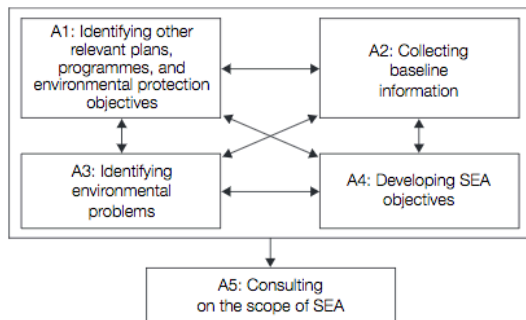
- Ensures the environment is integrated into decision making early on and openly.
- Improves the quality of strategic decision making and plans.
- Facilitates identification of new development opportunities, cumulative impacts, conflicts between different plans, etc.
- Identifies options for avoiding, reducing and remedying adverse impacts, and for positive enhancements.
- Strengthens governance, by opening it up to public debate and scrutiny.

SEA Procedures

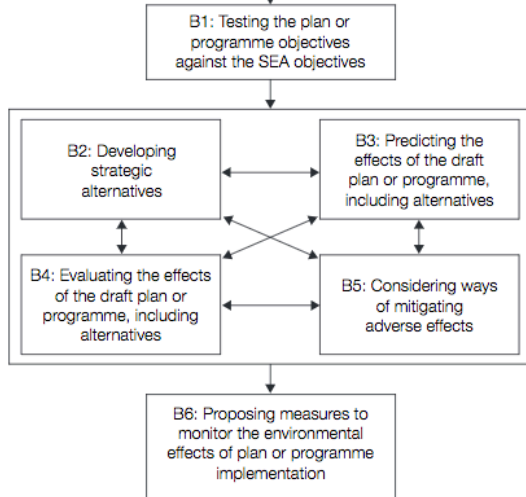
0. Screening
1. **Scoping**
2. **Preparing SEA report**
3. **Public participation**
4. **Assessment of SEA report**
5. **Issuing SEA recommendations**
6. Monitoring (after SEA process)



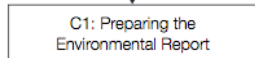
Stage A: Setting the context and objectives, establishing the baseline and deciding on the scope



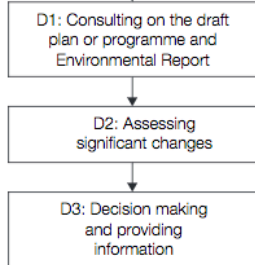
Stage B: Developing and refining alternatives and assessing effects



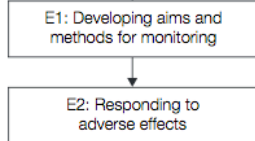
Stage C: Preparing the Environmental Report



Stage D: Consulting on the draft plan or programme and the Environmental Report



Stage E: Monitoring implementation of the plan or programme



Procedures and Process

Source: UK Guidance, 2005

Key Actors

- **Competent or Responsible Authority:** organisations which produces the PPP subject to SEA. e.g. local government, government Ministry, parliament, etc. They are normally responsible for carrying out the SEA.
- **Consultation Authorities:** e.g. EU SEA Directive requires MSs to designate public authorities “which, by reason of their specific environmental responsibilities, are likely to be concerned by the environmental effects of implementing plans and programmes”.
- **Other government bodies** (e.g. neighboring municipalities / local authorities).

Key Actors

- The public: “The public concerned” means the public affected or likely to be affected by, or having an interest in, the environmental decision-making; for the purposes of this definition, non-governmental organizations promoting environmental protection and meeting any requirements under national law shall be deemed to have an interest. (UNECE Aarhus Convention).
- Affected nation states: e.g. a Party or Parties (i.e. signatory nations) to the UNECE SEA Protocol likely to be affected by transboundary impacts.
- Consultants / experts.
- The judiciary: national and supranational (e.g. Court of Justice of the EU).

Key Actors: Case examples

- Scotland: SEA Gateway – responsible for coordinating consultation, maintaining on-line database of SEAs, commissioning guidance, etc.
- Netherlands: NCEA - oversee key aspects of the national implementation: e.g. advises on screening and scoping, organises review of SEA report.

Principles of Efficient Application

Costs versus benefits:

- “experience shows that introducing SEAs into regional and local land-use planning increases the relevant costs by 0.1-1% and approval times by 20 to 25% above the normal duration”
Committee of the Regions, EU, 2010

Principles of Efficient Application

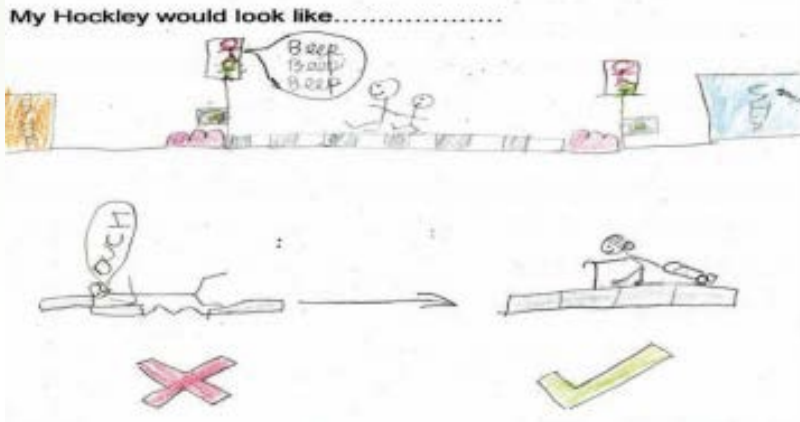
SEA is not EIA!

“When carrying out an SEA, it is important to remain focused on the ‘bigger picture’ and remember that the assessment needs to remain strategic. SEA is not expected to be a large, high level Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA). An SEA should focus on assessing the likely significant environmental effects of implementing a plan and concentrate primarily on the elements that are likely to result in significant environmental effects, either directly or indirectly.”

(Guidance by Historic Environment Scotland, 2009).

Principles of Efficient Application

Proportionality



Title page

Table of contents

Chapter 1. Introduction and methodology (roughly 2 pages)

Explain that this is the draft SA report for your neighbourhood plan, which aims to fulfil the requirements of the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004⁹.

Provide information on:

- The area covered by your neighbourhood plan (include a map)
- The contents and main objectives of your plan, to the extent that you know them
- Who has been involved in writing the plan and carrying out the SA
- The 'story' of your SA so far. This could be in the form of a table such as Table 5.

Table 5. Template for a table summarising the SA process

Date	What we did	Who was involved	Problems that we faced
4 Jan. 11	Initial meeting of SA team to discuss SA methodology	J. Robinson, M. Hughes ...	none
8-10 Jan. 11	Read consultation Core Strategy, summarised how it applies to our neighbourhood	F. Mayes, A. Kahn	Core Strategy is only in consultation form and may still change in the future
...	...		

SEA of Neighbourhood Plans, England and Wales

Principles of Efficient Application

The importance of scoping:

Internationally, there is a widespread perception that SEAs often cover too many issues and that debates occurring after the SEA Report has been published could be better managed at an earlier stage in the assessment.

A number of jurisdictions have taken steps to strengthen scoping practices to address this. The publication of a stand-alone Scoping Report is increasingly common-place.

Principles of Efficient Application

Synchronized with planning

Perceived main effect of EIA on decision-making in Denmark, the Netherlands and the UK.

	Denmark	Netherlands	UK
No effect	6%	7%	4%
The explicit consideration of environmental values, without changing the consent decision	25%	30%	30%
Changing a project to a limited extent	51%	45%	44%
Changing a project more extensively	8%	9%	18%
Choosing the most environmentally friendly alternative	11%	9%	4%

- “the public already has the opportunity to find out about the options envisaged in the course of public hearings while land-use plans are being prepared; an SEA is therefore superfluous as a measure to ensure public involvement.” (Committee of the Regions, EU, 2010)

Principles of Efficient Application

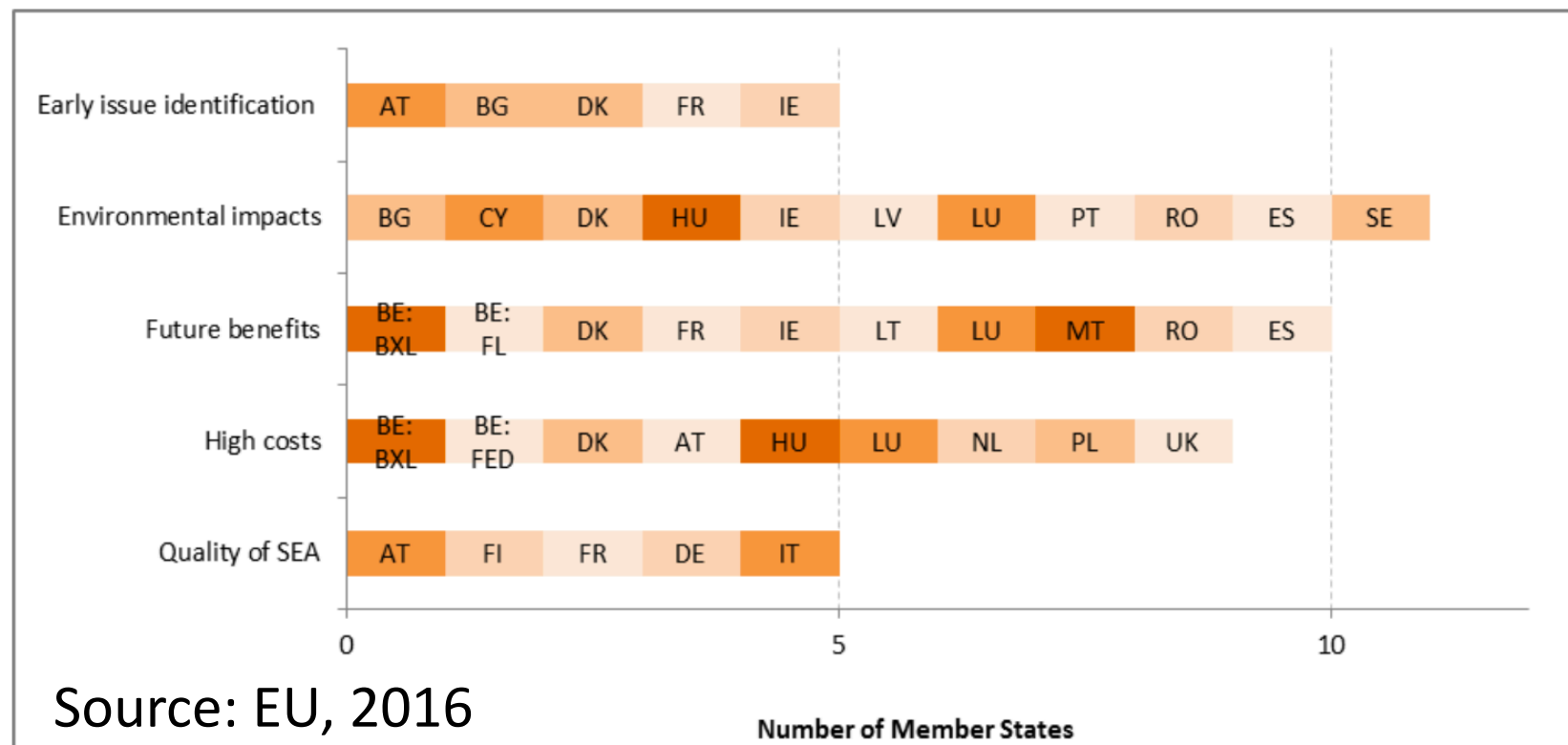
Effective quality control

Robust and enforced quality control standards can promote efficiency:

- Scoping: ensure focus is on potentially significant issues and issues are addressed in a timely manner.
- Report review: ensure reports are e.g. concise, address appropriate alternatives and are trustworthy.
- Central body providing input on screening and scoping.

Principles of Efficient Application

Figure 6 Elements contributing to/hindering SEA cost-effectiveness



Thank you for your attention!