

ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT SYSTEM IN AZERBAIJAN: THE BENEFITS AND WAY FORWARD

Final dissemination event on SEA and EIA component within the EaP GREEN

6 April 2018

Central Pak Hotel, Baku





Event Report

April 2018









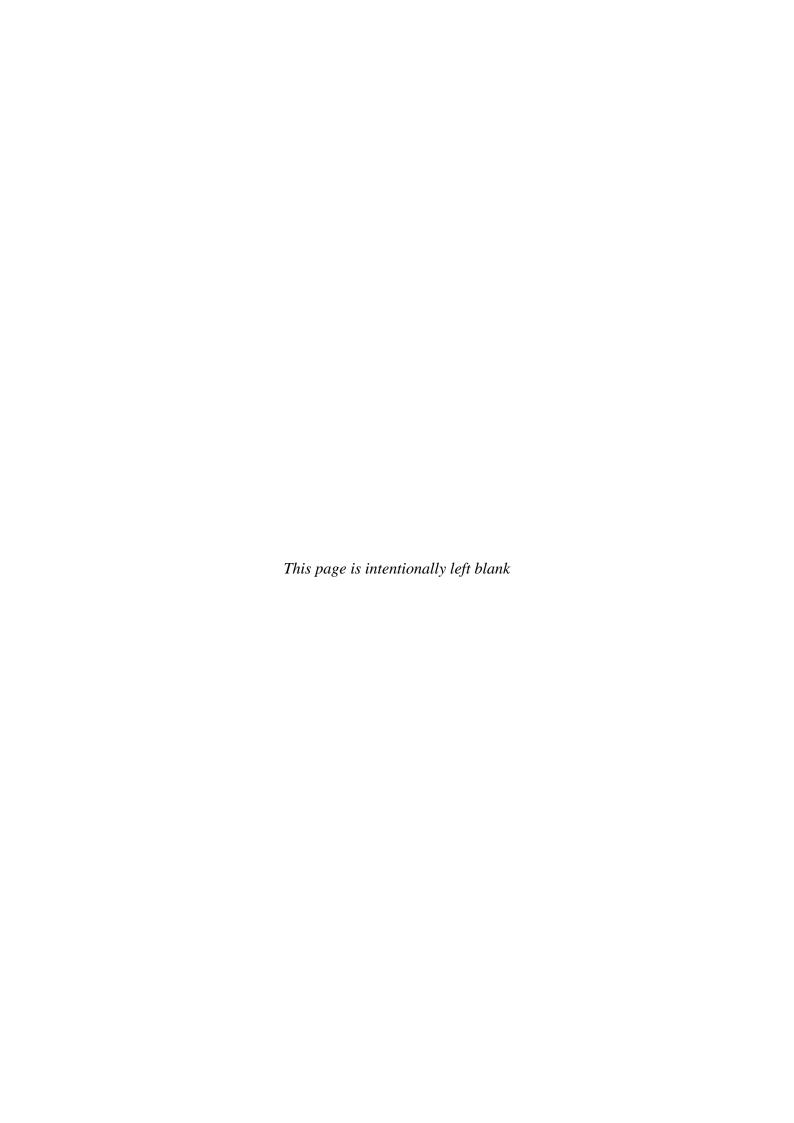




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1. Background information

Strategic environmental assessment (SEA) is seen as an essential planning tool for environmentally sustainable economic development, which can support a country's efforts in greening its economy. It is a step-by-step procedure to integrate green economy targets and other sustainability issues into strategic planning and decision-making to ensure that environmental and health implications of decisions are taken into account before they are made. SEA is applied to governmental plans, programmes, or policy documents in accordance with requirements of the UNECE Protocol on Strategic Environmental Assessment to the Espoo Convention (Protocol on SEA) and the EU SEA Directive.

The "Greening Economies in the Eastern Neighborhood" (EaP GREEN) project was launched in 2013 to support the six European Union's Eastern Partnership (EaP) countries – Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, the Republic of Moldova, and Ukraine – to progress faster towards a green economy through better management of natural capital supporting a higher economic productivity and competitiveness. The above listed EaP GREEN countries made their commitments related to the transition towards a green economy in the 2011 and 2013 Declarations of the EU Eastern Partnership Summits and on other international fora.

EaP GREEN has supported countries in developing methodological, legal, and conceptual material based on international good practice adapted to the country conditions and needs. The EaP GREEN has been jointly implemented by four international organizations: the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE), the United Nations Environment Programme (UN Environment), and the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO). The project has been funded by the European Union, implementing organisations, and supported by several EU and OECD countries.

Since 2014, the UNECE secretariat to the Espoo Convention has been supporting the Ministry of Ecology and Natural Resources of Azerbaijan in developing its national environmental assessment system (both SEA and EIA) in in line with the Espoo Convention, its Protocol on SEA, as well as with the EU SEA and EIA Directives. The assistance was following the Workplan adopted at the VI Meeting of the Parties of Espoo Convention (MOP6, June 2014, Geneva).

The activities were implemented in following three phases:

Phase I

- Review of existing SEA legislation and procedures (carried out from June to October 2014);
- Preparation of the draft Law on EIA, including provisions on SEA (2015).

Phase II

- Pilot application of SEA procedure to the 'National Strategy on the use of Alternative and Renewable Energy Sources in 2015-2020' (September 2014 December 2016);" was selected as the pilot project for the practical application of SEA.
- The pilot SEA also included the training events.











• Participation of the national experts from Azerbaijan in two sub-regional events – the study tour on SEA to the Czech Republic (2014) and the first Training of Trainers workshop (2015).

Phase III

- Preparation of SEA recommendations (October 2016 April 2018);
- Participation of the national experts from Azerbaijan in the final sub-regional event (2017);
- Preparation of awareness raising materials, including a movie and a brochure on SEA Protocol in Azerbaijani language, and leaflet summarizing SEA/EIA activities implemented in Azerbaijan within the EaP GREEN (January – April 2018);
- Organizing training workshop on SEA for the national stakeholders (4 5 April, 2018);
- Organizing a final dissemination event on SEA/EIA component of the EaP GREEN in Azerbaijan (6 April 2018).

The workshop 'Environmental assessment system in Azerbaijan: the benefits and way forward' was the final event on the SEA and EIA component of the EaP GREEN in Azerbaijan.











2. Objectives of the event, participants and approach

The final dissemination event was organized by the Ministry of Ecology and Natural Resources of Azerbaijan in cooperation with the UNECE within the framework of the EaP GREEN. The logistical support was provided by the UNDP office in Azerbaijan. The event took place at the Central Park Hotel, Baku, 6 April 2018.

The objective of the final event were:

- To present the outcomes and results regarding SEA and EIA development activities achieved within the EaP GREEN;
- To summarize the key principles of efficient SEA and EIA practice;
- To raise awareness on the benefits of SEA through presenting good practice examples from EU countries;
- To discuss priorities and needs regarding further development of SEA and EIA system in the country.

The half-day event was attended by 28 participants representing environmental and health authorities, sectoral ministries, academia, and NGOs (the list of the participants is presented in Annex 1 to this report).

The agenda of the event (see Annex 2 to this report) combined presentation on SEA and EIA activities implemented in Azerbaijan within the EaP GREEN and summary of main achievements and result, introduction of two SEA cases examples from United Kingdom, with facilitated discussions on remaining challenges and actions needed to establish a full-fledged SEA and EIA system in the country.

The event was jointly delivered by the experts from the Ministry of Ecology and Natural Resources of Azerbaijan and the national and international consultants to the UNECE.













3. Minutes of the event

Mr. Mutallim Abdulhasanov, Head of Environmental Policy Unit, Ministry of Ecology and Natural Resources of the Republic of Azerbaijan (MENR), opened the meeting. He emphasized the role of environmental assessment procedures for enhancing environmental and health protection in Azerbaijan and acknowledged the benefits of activities implemented under the workplan of UNECE Espoo Convention and highlighted the importance of the contribution made under the umbrella of the EaP GREEN project in the period 2014 – 2018, and – on behalf of the Ministry – expressed his gratitude to the UNECE secretariat to the Espoo Convention and the EU EaP GREEN program for such a large-scale support provided.

Ms. Ulviyya Abdullayeva, Programme Manager, Delegation of the European Union to the Republic of Azerbaijan, in her welcoming note underlined the effort of Azerbaijan in meeting the EU standards and mentioned importance of cooperation between the country and the EU. She informed the participants about the upcoming project EU4Environment, which can be considered as EaP GREEN follow-up initiative. She also indicated importance of transition of Azerbaijan to a green economy as a priority and noted that EU appreciates and stands ready to provided support to this process.

Mr. Shamil Huseynov, Head of Sector on Natural Resources, Energy and Environment Committee of the National Parliament of the Republic of Azerbaijan, shared information on status and the structural schemes of draft Law on EIA. He noted that the draft Law on EIA has only a framework scope regarding SEA and EIA schemes, and therefore after adoption of the Law on EIA, which in current stage is an essential step, sub-regulatory acts will have to be developed in detailed form in order to maintain full and effective implementation mechanisms of SEA and EIA in Azerbaijan in line with national and international requirements. He stressed out that the Government of Azerbaijan tries to establish the national legislative framework on SEA and EIA, and informed the participants that the draft revised Law on EIA successfully passed the first revision on 29 March 2018 at the Natural Resources, Energy and Environment Committee of the Parliament and it was confirmed by the Committee's members as an important legal document. The second reading is planned to be organized in a couple of weeks, and the adoption of the Law should follow soon. Mr. Huseynov also mentioned that altogether eight subsequent legislative acts will required to be developed after adopting the Law to ensure its effective implementation.

Mr. Martin Smutny, EaP GREEN project coordinator and UNECE consultant, also addressed the participants with a welcoming speech. He presented a brief overview of the UNECE activities under the EaP GREEN project across the beneficiary countries with the focus on Azerbaijan.

Ms. Aysel Babayeva, Senior advisor, at the State Ecological Expertize Department of MENR, national focal point of Azerbaijan to the UNECE Espoo Convention, summarized the overview of the activities delivered in Azerbaijan within the framework of the EaP GREEN project. She introduced the lessons learned in the implementation of SEA in the country, including in legislative development, pilot SEA application, the national seminars and trainings, and awareness raising activities. Ms. Aysel Babayeva also presented the main provisions of the draft Law on EIA, which was recently submitted to the Parliament. She explained that the draft Law is prepared in a framework nature that provides the main 'structure' for SEA and EIA procedures. Ms. Babayeva presented the proposed national SEA scheme and noted that the scope of SEA application has been defined in accordance with the UNECE Protocol on SEA and the EU SEA Directive. She mentioned the importance of the results obtained within the activities implemented under EaP GREEN program that were integrated in the draft Law and in the SEA recommendations. She stressed out the contribution of national and













regional events on SEA, and SEA pilot application at the national level, through which ten national SEA/EIA experts obtained enhance the skills and knowledge on SEA.

Mr. Fikret Jafarov, national SEA expert, consultant to UNECE, provided details on the pilot SEA, emphasizing the recommendations formulated by SEA, and the way of communicating the SEA results to the planning agency. He also emphasized the scope of consultations organized within the pilot by MENR and the State Agency on Alternative and Renewable Energy Sources (SAARES). He explained that the 'National Strategy on the use of Alternative and Renewable Energy Sources in 2015-2020' was selected as a subject of pilot SEA. Mr. Jafarov highlighted the outcomes and benefits of SEA pilot project, noting that the pilot was the first project on SEA carried out in renewable energy sector in the country, and it changed an approach to further development of the renewable energy. He also recalled the pilot SEA procedure followed all subsequent SEA stages (i.e. scoping, preparation of the environmental report, consultations with public and relevant authorities etc.).

Mr. Matthew Cashmore, consultant to UNECE, presented good case examples of SEA implementation from the UK. He reviewed in detail the SEA procedure for the coastal wind farm development and local land use planning in England and Wales (where wind energy generation reaches almost 20%). He noted that when conducting the SEA of the potential wind power development initiative, the SEA and planning team focused on the definition of constraints (marine resources, national nature protection zones, etc.) and drew up the maps of such limitations. They gathered the appropriate amount of data and developed various scenarios. The second part of the presentation by Mr. Matthew Cashmore was devoted to the consideration of land use issues. Since 2004, local land use plans had been subject to SEA. This made the entire process transparent and open and served as a mechanism for good communication with all stakeholders.

The participants showed an increased interest in the presentation of Mr. Matthew Cashmore and asked many questions about the cases and the SEA practice in general. The participants were, in particular, interested in who prepared SEA / EIA on wind generators, how the processes were funded, what kind of methods could be used in SEA for various strategic planning documents. They also asked how the Strategy for wind energy was changed / modified due to SEA, how the consequences of implementing the Strategy were being monitored, how the risks of implementing it were assessed, for how many years the baseline research continued, how SEA helped private companies and the government, etc.

The second part of the event was dedicated to the discussion on further priorities for developing SEA and EIA schemes in the country. The participants were invited to hold discussions in groups on the following questions:

- 1. What are the main existing challenges related to EIA (and SEA) in Azerbaijan and the ways to overcome them?
- 2. What needs to be done to make SEA and EIA operational (i.e. that is it applied as a standard tool)?

Considering the view on the questions above, the participants were asked to suggest up to three specific actions/activities to enhance environmental assessment system in Azerbaijan which they see as the most important and/or urgent.

The results of the group discussions are summarised in the Conclusions section of this report.

In conclusion, Ms. Babayeva and Mr. Jafarov summarized the key points discussed during the seminar and expressed thanks to all participants.











Ms. Babayeva also thanked all participants for their active work, and noted that enhancing the legislative framework and capacity building for SEA and EIA belong to the priorities of the Ministry of Ecology and Natural Resources.











4. Conclusions

The following conclusions can be summarized from the discussions held during the event:

- 1. Main problems regarding SEA and EIA:
 - Revised legislative framework not yet adopted;
 - The absence of the information systems that would support consultations in SEA and EIA procedures;
 - Low institutional and expert capacity for managing and coordinating SEA and EIA procedures;
 - General low awareness on environmental issues;
- 2. Priorities for further development of SEA and EIA systems:
 - Speed up the process of adoption of the national legislative framework i.e. the draft revised Law on EIA, and developing and adoption secondary legislative acts;
 - Improving the human resources capacity of MENR on SEA; and establishing new sector (unit) on SEA/EIA within the SEE Department of the MENR after the adoption of the Law;
 - Financial resources for conducting SEA and EIA have to be identified;
 - Continuing awareness raising on SEA among governmental institutions and public;
 - Conduct further SEA pilot projects in other sectors (e.g. in transport or forestry sectors);
 - Establishing SEA expert groups in governmental bodies and organize training for these groups;
 - Establish an electronic database/portal of SEA and EIA as a networking tool for consultation, information and experience sharing;
 - Integrating SEA and EIA in university curricula, in particular for masters' degree students.

It was concluded that the above proposals should be reflected the project proposal for the EaP GREEN follow-up project (EU4Environment).











5. Public visibility of the event

The information about the workshop were disseminated by the Ministry through the letters to relevant stakeholders including governmental organisations and academia, as well as the information was provided on the official website of the Ministry.

After the event, the presentations and other materials were published at the Ministry's and UNECE's websites.











Annexes

Annex 1: List of participants

Greening Economies in the European Union's Eastern Partnership Countries (EaP GREEN): From Commitments to Results

Final Dissemination Event on SEA and EIA component within the EU EaP GREEN

Start Date: Wendsday, April 4, 2018 End Date: April 5, 2017
Participants: 28 Female participants: 8

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Annex 2: Agenda

Environmental assessment system in Azerbaijan: The benefits and way forward

Final dissemination event on SEA and EIA component within the EU EaP GREEN

6 April 2018

Venue: Central Park Hotel Conference room,

Baku, Azerbaijan

The "Greening Economies in the European Union's Eastern Neighbourhood" (EaP GREEN) project assists six countries of the European Union Eastern Neighbourhood Partnership including Azerbaijan in progressing faster towards a green economy framework. Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) and Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) have been promoted within the EaP GREEN as tools to integrate green economy targets and other sustainability issues into strategic and project-related decision-making to ensure environmental and health implications of decisions are taken into account before they are made.

Since 2013, the UNECE within the EaP GREEN framework has been supporting Azerbaijan in developing the national SEA and EIA system. The objective of the final event is to:

- To present the outcomes and results regarding SEA and EIA achieved within the EaP GREEN;
- To summarize the key principles of efficient SEA and EIA practice and is benefits;
- To discuss priorities and needs regarding further development of SEA and EIA system in the country.

The event is organized by the Ministry of Ecology and Natural Resources of Azerbaijan in cooperation with the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) within the framework of the EaP GREEN.

The workshop will invite representatives of all relevant stakeholders – environmental and health authorities, spectral governmental authorities, planning agencies and institutes, experts and practitioners, as well as representatives of NGOs.

Agenda

09:30 - 10:00	Registration
10:00 - 10:10	Welcome addresses
	Representative of the Ministry of Ecology and Natural Resources of Azerbaijan (tbc)
	Representative of EU Delegation to Azerbaijan (tbc)
	Martin Smutny, EaP GREEN project coordinator, consultant to UNECE
10:10 – 11:00	UNECE technical assistance on SEA and EIA in Azerbaijan
	A brief introduction of UNECE activities within the EaP GREEN Martin Smutny, EaP GREEN coordinator, consultant to UNECE

¹ The EaP GREEN programme is implemented with the financial support of the European Union and other donors, and is jointly implemented by the four partner organisations: OECD, UN Environment, UNECE and UNIDO. More information can be found at http://www.green-economies-eap.org/.











	Lessons learned on the implementation of SEA and EIA activities under the EaP GREEN in Azerbaijan Aysel Babayeva, Ministry of Ecology and Natural Resources of Azerbaijan Fikret Jafarov, National SEA Expert
11:00 - 11:20	Coffee break
11:20 – 12:00	Good SEA practice – case examples from EU countries
	Matthew Cashmore, consultant to UNECE
12:00 – 12:50	What needs to be further enhanced – remaining challenges for establishing a fully-fledged SEA and EIA system and way forward Moderated by Ms. Aysel Babayeva, Mr. Fikret Jafarov, and Mr. Martin Smutny • Main elements of a well-developed SEA and EIA system – what is important for efficient practice • Discussion in groups – identification of priorities and needs to further develop national SEA and EIA system • Presentation of results by each group
12:50 – 13:00	Closing remarks – way forward
	Representative of the Ministry of Ecology and Natural Resources of Azerbaijan (tbc)
	Martin Smutny, EaP GREEN project coordinator, consultant to UNECE
13:00	Lunch







