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Introduction to SEA & EIA

*Subregional Workshop on the Practical Application of SEA and
Transboundary EIA, 26 – 27 October 2020*

Action implemented by:



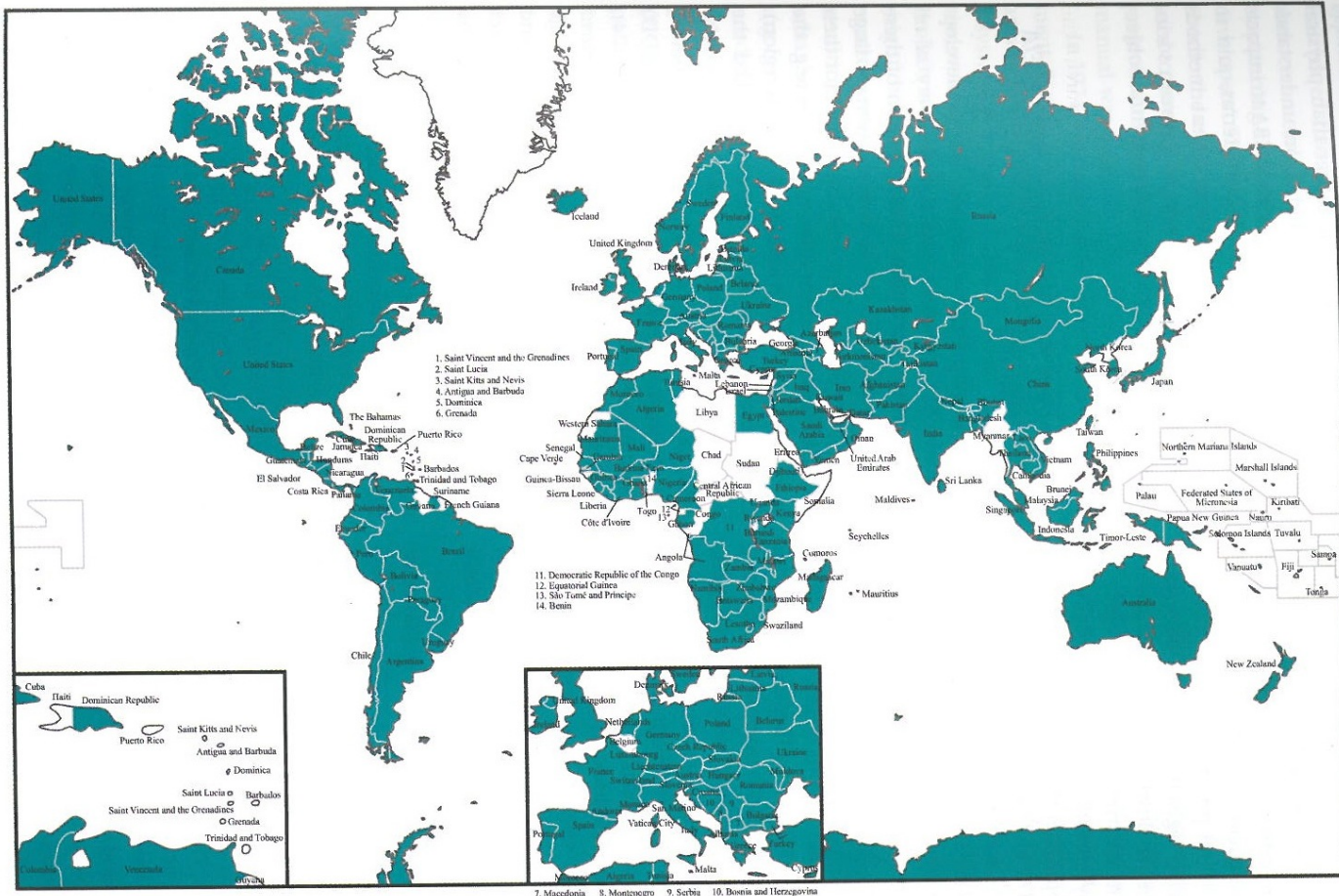


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Environmental Assessment – A globally significant policy innovation



Circa 180 countries have EA
systems (primarily EIA)

Source: Glasson et al. 2018

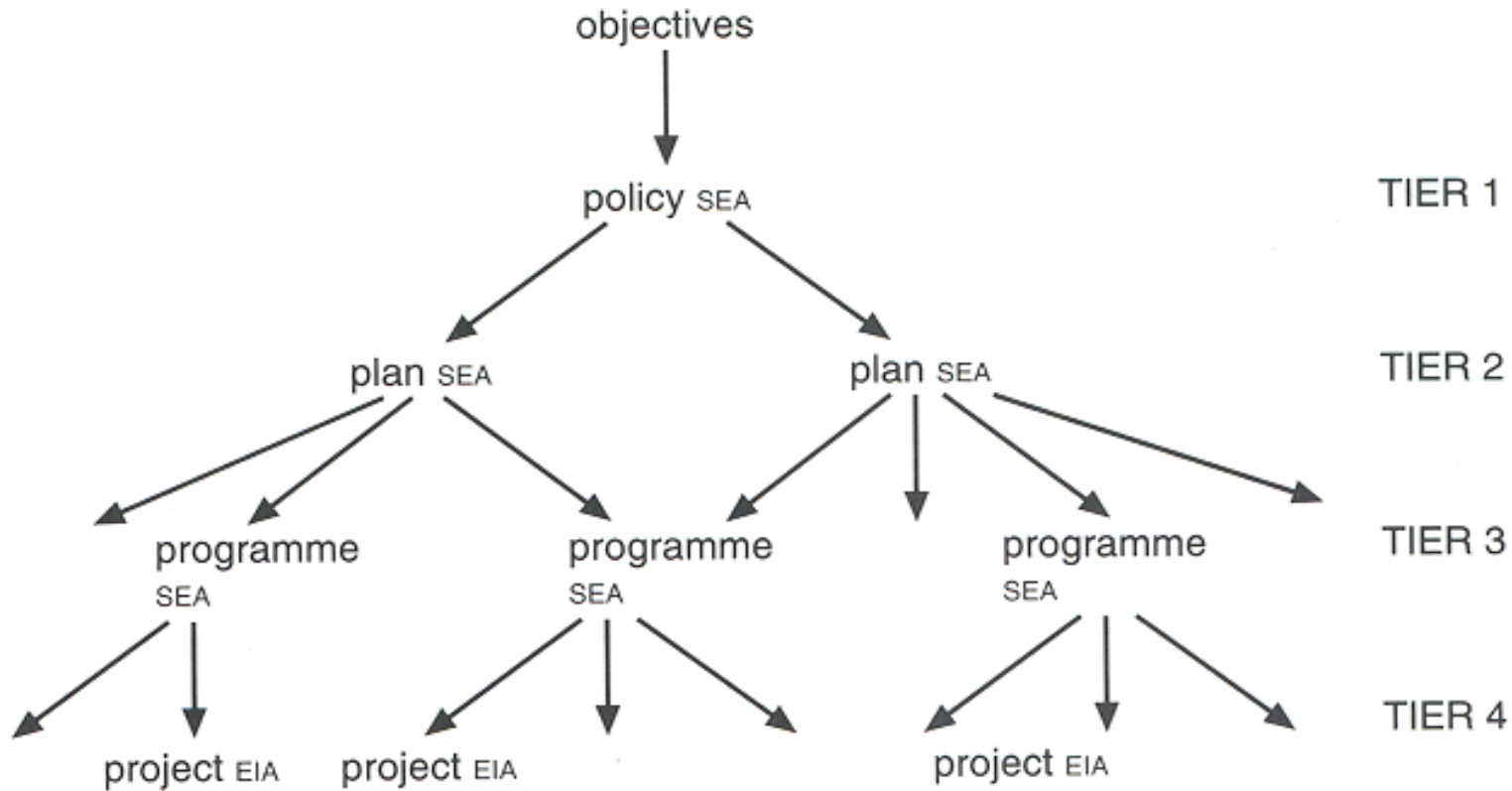


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The relation between SEA & EIA





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Strategic Environmental Assessment

- “SEA is a systematic, on-going process for evaluating, at the earliest appropriate stage of publicly accountable decision-making, the environmental quality, and consequences, of alternative visions and development intentions incorporated in policy, planning or programme initiatives, ensuring full integration of relevant biophysical, economic, social and political considerations.” Partidario, 1999.

Application under the UNECE SEA Protocol

- A strategic environmental assessment shall be carried out for plans and programmes which are prepared for agriculture, forestry, fisheries, energy, industry including mining, transport, regional development, waste management, water management, telecommunications, tourism, town and country planning or land use, and which set the framework for future development consent for projects listed in annex I and any other project listed in annex II that requires an environmental impact assessment under national legislation.



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Environmental Impact Assessment

- “Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) is a process of evaluating the likely environmental impacts of a proposed project or development, taking into account inter-related socio-economic, cultural and human-health impacts, both beneficial and adverse.” (from the website for the Convention on Biological Diversity.

Application under the EU EIA Directive

- The EIA procedure can be summarized as follows: the developer may request the competent authority to say what should be covered by the EIA information to be provided by the developer (scoping stage); the developer must provide information on the environmental impact (EIA report – Annex IV); the environmental authorities and the public (and affected Member States) must be informed and consulted; the competent authority decides, taken into consideration the results of consultations. The public is informed of the decision afterwards and can challenge the decision before the courts



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EIA – scope of application

EU EIA Directive:

Compulsory: crude oil refinery, thermal power stations (≥ 300 mw), asbestos extraction, chemical installations, long distance railway lines, waste disposal installation, quarries, etc.

Discretionary: Various agriculture, silviculture and aquaculture projects; extractive industry projects; energy projects; mineral industry projects; infrastructure projects; and, tourism and leisure projects.



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The Purposes of SEA & EIA (1)

- Modify and improve design.
- Ensure efficient resource use.
- Enhance social aspects.
- Identify key impacts and measures for mitigating them.
- Inform decision-making and condition setting.
- Avoid serious and irreversible damage to the environment.
- Protect human health and safety.

Source: UNEP, 2002



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The Purposes of SEA & EIA (2)

- Provide for a high level of environmental protection.
- Improve the quality of plan and programme making.
- Increase the efficiency of decision-making.
- Facilitate the identification of new opportunities for development.
- Increase capacity to adapt to climate change.
- Help to prevent costly mistakes.
- Strengthen governance.
- Facilitate transboundary cooperation.

Source: UNECE, 2009 (Applying the Protocol on SEA, Informal Pamphlet).

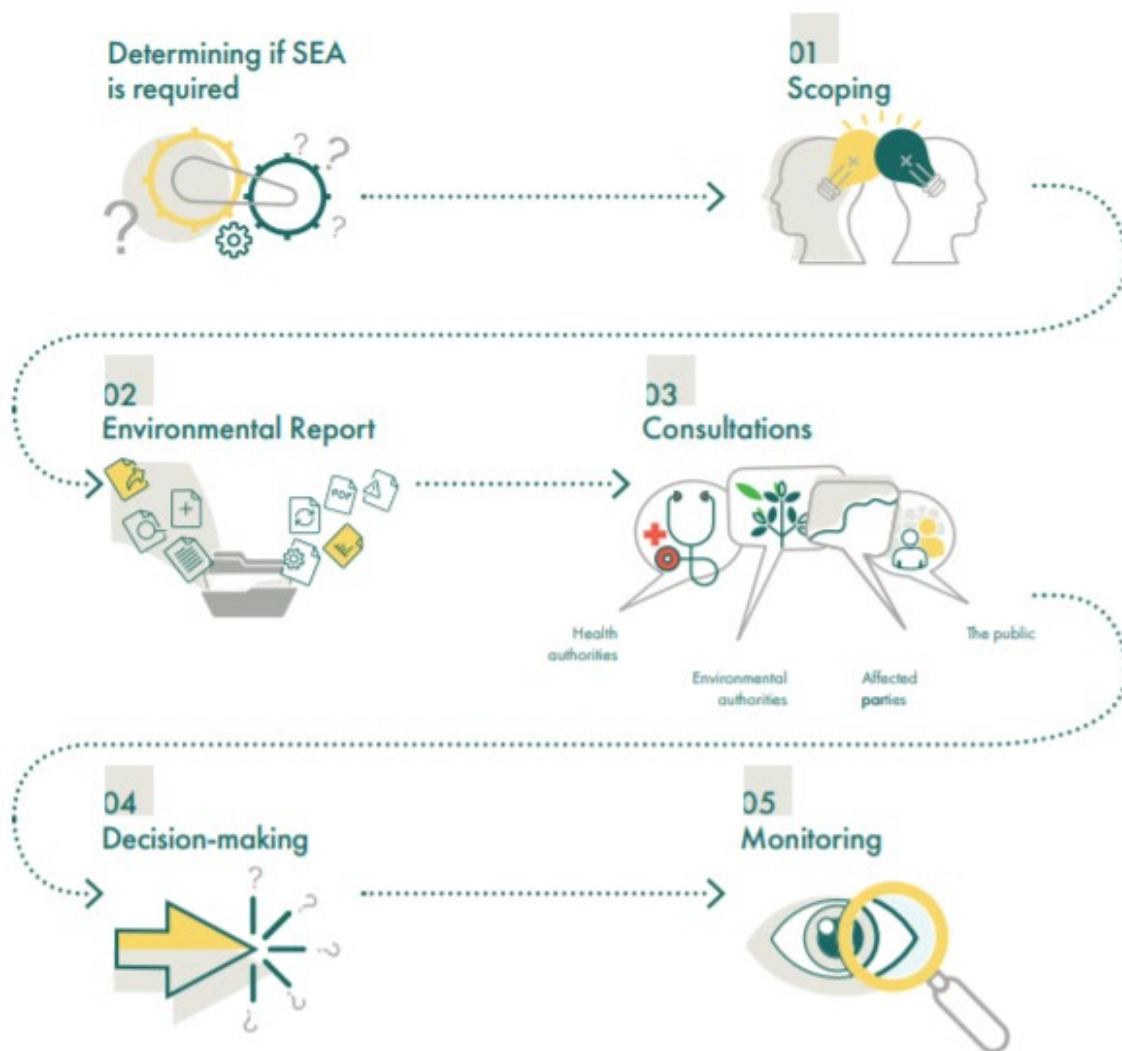


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Main steps in SEA under the SEA Protocol: A Simplified Version



Source: UNECE, 2016, Protocol on Strategic
Environmental Assessment: Facts & Benefits,



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Main steps in EIA & SEA

- Screening
- Scoping
- Preparation of the environmental report
 - Context & baseline environment
 - Consideration of alternatives
 - Impact evaluation & mitigation
- *Decision-making*
- Monitoring & auditing after the decision

- Public participation (national & transboundary)
- Consultation with environmental and health authorities (national & transboundary)



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Transboundary aspects

- Principle 21 of the 1972 Stockholm Declaration requires nation states to ensure that activities undertaken within their territory or under their control do not cause extraterritorial environmental damages.
- Transboundary impact assessment extends environmental governance beyond the national borders of a sovereign state, based on the principle of non-discrimination.
- Transboundary impact: “any impact, not exclusively of a global nature, within an area under the jurisdiction of a Party caused by a proposed activity the physical origin of which is situated wholly or in part within the area under the jurisdiction of another Party” (Article 1, viii, Espoo Convention on EIA).



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Transboundary aspects (cont'd)

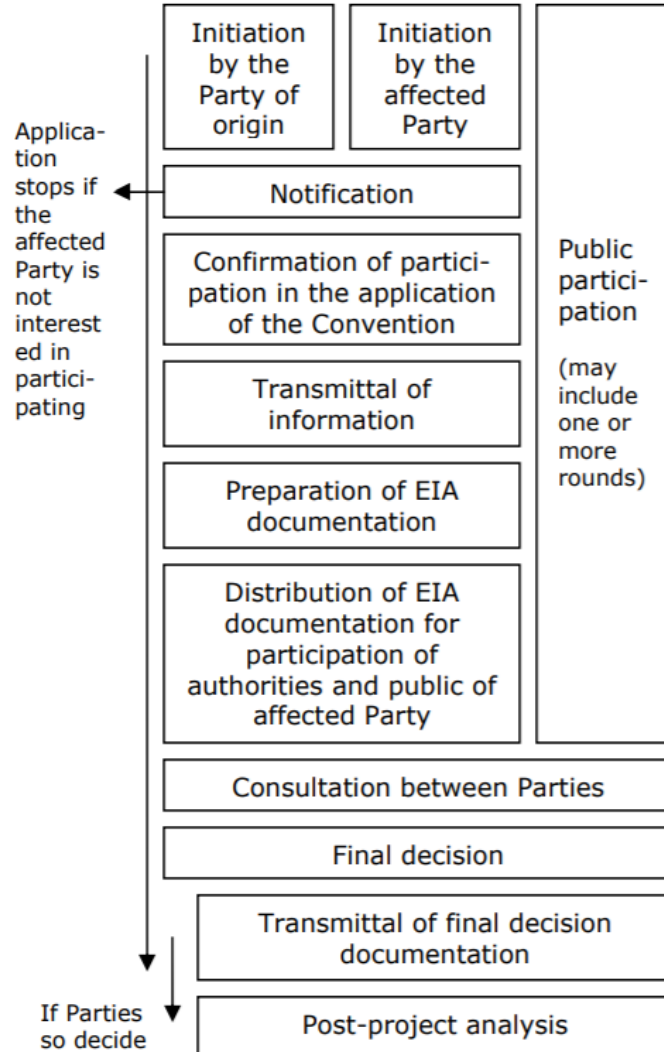
- Under general international law, all States must undertake an environmental impact assessment of their planned activities that may have a significant impact in a transboundary context.
- In 1992, as part of the Rio Declaration principles (Principle 19), all the UN States Members undertook to provide “a prior and timely notification and relevant information to potentially affected States” and to “consult with those States at an early stage and in good faith” on such planned activities.



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Transboundary Environmental Impact Assessment under the Espoo Convention

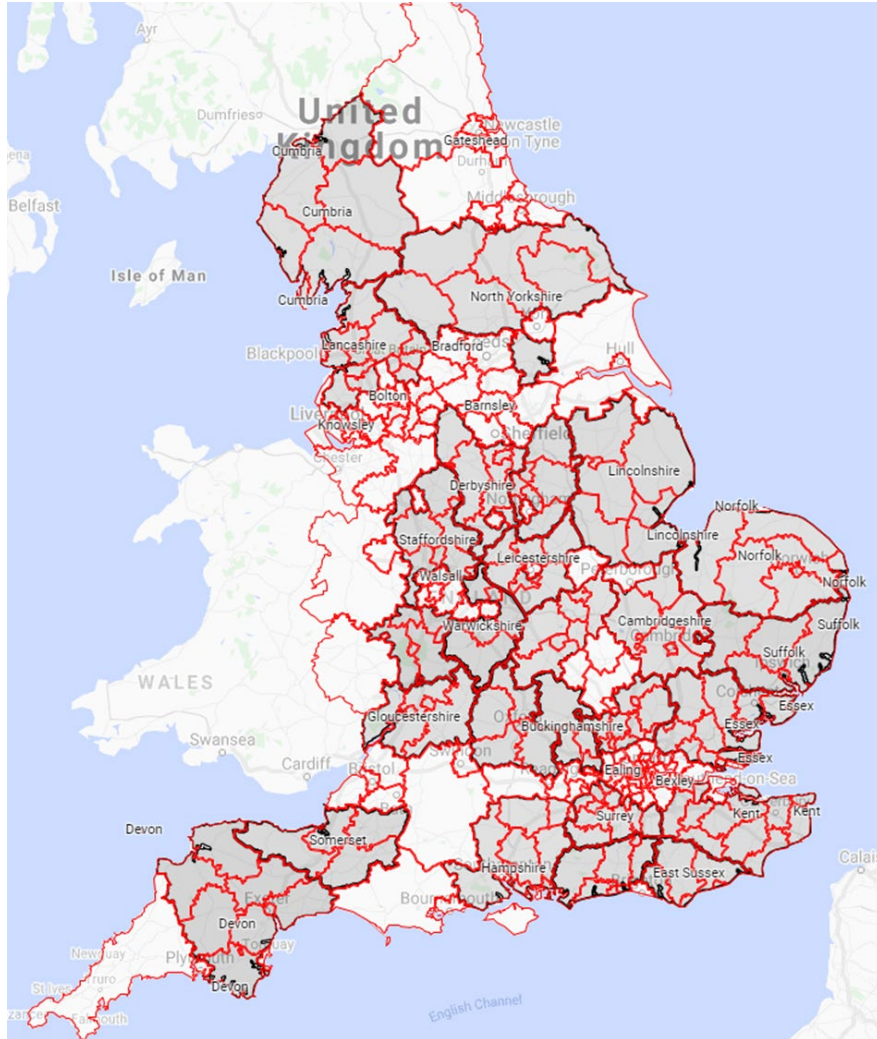
Source: UNECE, 2007, Benefits and Costs of
Transboundary EIA



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SEA & Spatial Planning in England

- An accepted and respected practice for planners.
- Fairly high level of integration between SEA & spatial plans.
- Relatively high level of public engagement with appraisal system.
- Strengthened governance.
- Improved quality of plans.