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# Quality Control in SEA & EIA

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

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## Quality Control in SEA & EIA

- A topic of considerable interest .... reflecting observations of, and concern with, an 'implementation gap' or 'deficit'.
- Tools, techniques & approaches include:
  - Review of reports (from simple checklists to in-depth analysis by subject specialists)
  - Public inquiries
  - Auditing of EA studies (Were the predictions accurate? Were mitigation measures implemented? Did the mitigation measures work as envisaged? etc.)
  - Publication of guidance (steering and educating)
  - Accreditation of EA practitioners
  - Capacity development (training of practitioners, regulators, NGOs; support for recruitment, the introduction of new technology; pilot studies).



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## Quality Control Systems in Practice: Experiences from 6 countries

- Mode 1: Quality Control limited to procedural matters; consultation and public scrutiny considered as adequate quality control (ENG, DEN, IT)
- Mode 2: Quality Control of procedural matters plus a formal review of Environmental Reports which includes substantive considerations (i.e. conclusions, recommendations etc.) (NL)
- Mode 3: More comprehensive Quality Control provisions, e.g. licensing of competent practitioners, advisory committee, a stronger role of competent authority (CRO & CZE)
- Third party initiatives: e.g. the Chartered Environmentalist & Quality Mark (ENG)



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## Quality Control Systems in Practice: Findings

- Mode 2 & 3 systems do not always result in better results: e.g.
  - No statistically significant difference in stakeholders' perceptions of effectiveness in the Netherlands (the 'Rolls Royce' of EA) and Denmark.
  - Only 53% of Dutch survey respondents agreed or strongly agreed with a statement that EIA report were 'credible'.
- Rather, more demanding QC procedures (e.g. CZE, CRO) tend to focus attention on procedural aspects instead of substantive purposes
- Practice indicates that simple and 'easy' procedures are more flexible and facilitate adjustments of SEA process depending on the planning context (e.g. NL)
- National 'political climate' and the willingness of planning agencies to integrate SEA outcomes have a more significant effect on SEA practice than complex QC systems.
- Quality control should also be seen as a mechanism to support integration of the SEA conclusions with decision-making.



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## Recommendations

- Accreditation/ licensing systems tend to be popular ‘solutions’, but their impact on quality in practice is questionable.
- Market-led (non-governmental) accreditation systems show some promise.
- The impact on quality of public scrutiny may be underestimated (cf. Denmark).
- Building political will & commitment may be the key to enhancing system performance, supplemented by prudent quality control measures.