







European Union Water Initiative Plus for the Eastern Partnership EU4Environment

STRATEGIC ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT (SEA)

for the draft National Strategy of Water Resources

Management in the context of Climate Change for the

period until 2030

REPORT

on

Kick-off meeting in Minsk, Belarus

11 July 2019

August 2019









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1. BACKGROUND

Under the EU's Greening Economies in the European Union's Eastern Neighbourhood (EaP GREEN) project (2013 – 2018), UNECE assisted Belarus in making very significant progress towards adopting national legislation and institutional frameworks in compliance with the requirements of the Protocol on Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA), and the EU SEA and EIA Directives.

In particular, a new law on State Ecological Expertise, Strategic Environmental Assessment and Environmental Impact Assessment was adopted in 2016, and respective secondary legislation - in January 2017, with some inconsistencies still remaining with respect to the compliance with all the requirements of the Protocol on SEA, Espoo Convention, and the EU SEA and EIA Directives. Belarus has also some SEA practice (including based on training delivered under the EaP GREEN and within previous UNDP pilot projects), which the country seeks to further develop.

Recognizing SEA as an efficient tool for the comprehensive integration of environmental and health concerns into a wide range of development activities, plans and programmes, in all economic sectors, including water, and considering the possibility of joining the Protocol on SEA in the future, the Government of Belarus (in particular, the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environmental Protection of the Republic of Belarus) requested UNECE to provide support in pilot application of SEA for the draft *Strategy of Water Resources Management in the context of Climate Change for the period until 2030* (hereinafter – the Water Strategy-2030).

The development of the draft Water Strategy-2030 was facilitated by OECD in 2017-2018 within the European Union Water Initiative plus (EUWI+). It is a 4-year regional program that started in 2016 for the Eastern Partnership countries where Belarus is one of the target countries. A first national EUWI+ Interagency Steering Committee meeting was held at the end of 2018 in Minsk. The overarching objective of the EUWI+ in the countries of Eastern Europe and the Caucasus is to improve the management of water resources, in particular of transboundary rivers. The EUWI+ is funded by the European Union. It builds on the results of previous EU-funded regional projects in the field of water including a previous phase of the EU Water Initiative.

2. MEETING OBJECTIVES AND ORGANIZATION

The kick-off event within the framework of the pilot application of SEA for the draft Water Strategy-2030 took place on 11 July 2019 in Minsk. The aim of the meeting was to raise awareness on SEA objectives and benefits, and the involved actors and their roles among the sectoral ministries, state bodies and research institutions whose activities relate to or may relate to the planning and implementation of the Water Strategy-2030.

The kick-off meeting for the pilot SEA was organized by the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environmental Protection of the Republic of Belarus (the Ministry) in cooperation with UNECE. It gathered around 30 participants from relevant governmental agencies and academia to discuss the aims and objectives of the activity, roles and responsibilities, and the expected benefits of the SEA for the finalization of the draft Water Strategy-2030. Necessary logistical support was provided by UNDPBelarus.



The event was supported by the UNECE secretariat to the Convention on the Protection and Use of Transboundary Watercourses and International Lakes (Water Convention) with funding from the European Union Water Initiative Plus programme for the Eastern Partnership Countries (EUWI+). Additional support was provided by the UNECE secretariat to the Convention on Environmental Impact Assessment in a Transboundary Context (Espoo Convention) and its Protocol on Strategic Environmental Assessment (Protocol on SEA) within the EU4Environment action.

The agenda of the event is found in Annex 1, and the list of the participants is presented in Annex 2 of this report.

3. SUMMARY OF THE EVENT

Opening session

Ms. Lukina, Head of the Department of International Cooperation of the Ministry, opened the meeting. She emphasized the high importance that Belarus attaches to environmental protection in domestic and foreign policies and thanked the international partners, including EU and UNECE, for helping organize the meeting and for their efforts to exchange relevant international experience.



Mr. Kalashnyk, EU4 Environment Project Manager in UNECE, joined in the welcome words and pointed out the European Union Water Initiative Plus (EUWI+) support to Belarus, including the pilot SEA for the draft Water Strategy-2030. He thanked the Ministry for the fruitful cooperation in the organization of the meeting and expressed his gratitude to the EU for its continued support.

Ms. Slizh, Head of the Department of Protection and Use of Water Resources of the Ministry, welcomed the participants of the meeting and spoke about the water policy implementation in the Republic of Belarus and the expected outcomes of the implementation of the SEA pilot, including strengthening the capacity for conducting SEAs in the water management sector.

Tour de Table



Morning presentations and discussions

Ms. Zdanevich, Deputy Head of the Directorate for Regulating Effects on Atmospheric Air, Climate Change and Expertise of the Ministry, delivered a presentation on the SEA requirements of the national legislation. She drew attention to the fact that many of the existing strategic documents in the country were valid until 2020. Relevant authorities and agencies that were to update respective state programs and strategies for the next five-year period would therefore need to be envision time and resources for SEA during the planning process.

Mr. Kalashnyk made a presentation about the EU4Environment programme with a focus on its SEA and transboundary EIA component. He outlined the goals and elements of the technical assistance to be provided by UNECE within EU4Environment to the six EU Eastern Partnership countries, including Belarus, from 2019 to 2022. He further amplified on the two broad areas of the support that include assistance for finalizing the legal reforms on SEA and on transboundary EIA as well as comprehensive capacity and institutional building. EU4Environment was expected to reinforce and sustain the results achieved under the previous EaP GREEN project.

In her presentation, Ms. Slizh talked in more detail about EUWI+ activities with the specific focus on Belarus providing insights into concrete tasks and expected results.



Dr. Maia Gachechiladze-Bozhesku, UNECE International Consultant on SEA, delivered a presentation on the SEA application to the state plans/programmes and talked about SEA principles, benefits, roles of involved actors, interaction with the planning process, and prerequisites for an effective SEA. She drew attention to the difference in the definition of SEA in Law No. 399-z of Belarus, the SEA Protocol and the SEA Directive. She indicated the place of the SEA instrument among other environmental assessments, including in the context of the Republic of Belarus. She stressed that SEA and EIA are different notions and presented typical stages of the SEA under the Protocol, described the benefits of using SEA, the practice of applying SEA in the EU, the cost of conducting SEA. She specifically talked about the integration of climate change in SEA, touched upon the climate vulnerability assessment that covered Belarus as part of ENVSEC II project, and described the principles of effective implementation of the SEA (the methodology can be found in the UNECE SEA Manual). Mr. Kalashnyk added more details about the environment and security ENVSEC II project in relation to climate issues and the publications issued within its framework.

Each presentation was followed by a range of questions aimed at clarifying various practical aspects of the national SEA regulations and the international SEA practice. Some key questions and respective comments are summarised below:

- whether a strategic document should be disclosed together with its SEA report. It was
 responded by Ms. Zdanevich that only the SEA report should be disclosed and the SEArelated questions posed by the public or other stakeholders should be responded to the largest
 extent possible.
- whether scientific state programmes fall under the SEA. Ms. Zdanevich explained that those such programmes could qualify for SEA application that included strategic decisions that would be implemented through specific facilities requiring EIA. Ms. Gachechiladze-Bozhesku added that the screening procedure should be applied to determine the need for SEA. Ms. Zdanevich noted that the results of the screening should be written in the body of the strategic document itself and these strategic documents would be subsequently agreed with the Ministry. Ms. Gachechiladze-Bozhesku added that the Protocol requires that the

- screening consultations should engage the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Environment and the public.
- whether any new by-laws on SEA would be enacted to supplement the Council of Ministers resolutions. Ms. Zdanevich replied that the Ministry was in the process of developing the environmental rules and regulations (EcoNiP) that would detail the procedure, method of implementation and proposed content of SEA. Once ready, the EcoNiP would only apply to newly written strategic documents.
- whether to discuss the SEA at the Coordination Council of the Ministry and to place information on the website of the Ministry/the developer would be sufficient for public discussions. Ms. Zdanevich clarified that as per Resolution No. 458, the public discussion should be held in a geographical region to be affected by the strategic document submitted for discussion. In the case of the Water Strategy, all rivers are affected, therefore the discussion would be brought to the republican level. Within 10 days of announcing the commencement of public discussions, any citizen or public organization may submit a request for a public hearing. Public hearings should be held no earlier than on the 25th day of public discussions. The organizer of public hearings has 15 days to decide, on the basis of the received requests, where and how it would be best to hold the meeting.



In addition, a number of important pieces of information regarding the SEA procedure were shared by the representatives of the Ministry. In particular, Ms. Zdanevich made a note that programmes and strategies were not subject to state ecological expertise (SEE), and the SEA report would only be consulted and agreed with the Ministry. However, urban planning strategic documents were subject to SEE, as well as to SEA. It was also noted that the list of SEA objects in Belarus did not include concepts or projections by definition. Furthermore, Ms. Zdanevich announced that in connection with the amendment of the Law on SEE, SEA and EIA, Resolution No. 47 would be aligned with it and the aspect of climate change will be included in the SEA procedure.

Afternoon presentations and discussions

Ms. Dubenok, Deputy Director for Research, Central Research Institute for Complex Use of Water Resources (CRICUWR) (a developer of the draft Water Strategy-2030), made a presentation on the prerequisites for developing the Water Strategy-2030, its goals and objectives, the content and linkages with other strategic documents. One of the participants asked about specific climate change adaptation measures set out in the Water Strategy-2030, and Ms. Dubenok explained that the strategy is a conceptual document. More concrete activities would be developed and implemented within the framework of other state scientific and technical programmes.

Dr. Gachechiladze-Bozhesku demonstrated a video on SEA that was prepared within the framework of the EaP GREEN project (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iAOkskySYt0). Many participants found it useful and easy to understand.



In her next presentation, Dr. Gachechiladze-Bozhesku talked about how to structure the SEA for the draft Water Strategy-2030, especially in terms of an approach, methodology, mains steps and participants. She also mentioned the experience of previous SEA pilot projects in Belarus (it turned out that Mr. Novitsky, a national SEA expert, led the expert group that conducted the SEA for the project "Scheme of the integrated territorial organization of the Myadel District" some year ago). It was discussed with the participants that the SEA for the Water Strategy was retrospective, but the strategy could still be amended and, thus, it was needed to consider how to link the SEA stages with the further revision process. It was also discussed that the initial consultations on the strategy were already conducted separately from the SEA consultations. Ms. Slizh noted that if conceptual changes were to be made to the draft Water Strategy-2030 as a result of the SEA, it would need to be reconciled with all stakeholders and the minimum period for the agreement process would be one month. The participants further discussed the types of analysis that could be used in the pilot SEA and who the key stakeholders could be. It was decided to appoint a responsible person to ensure that the SEA recommendations and opinions were taken into account following the consultations.

Ms. Gachechiladze-Bozhesku presented the concept of transboundary consultations under the Protocol on SEA. She talked about the analysis of potential transboundary effects, as well as on the ways to determine the necessity for and possible directions of transboundary consultations. She provided some examples from Poland and the Czech Republic. The participants discussed the potential for transboundary consultations, the national team noted that while these are not required by the national regulations, the effects should, however, be assessed.

The final presentation of Ms. Gachechiladze-Bozhesku was devoted to setting the scope of SEA in general and of the SEA for the draft Water Strategy in particular in accordance with both, the national law, and the EU Directive and the Protocol on SEA. She spoke about the purpose and procedure for determining the scope of the SEA and the expected results of the scoping stage. She explained that according to the legislation of the Republic of Belarus, a scoping report was not required to be prepared, and the presentation covered the best international practices that typically based scoping consultations on scoping reports. Ms. Slizh confirmed that the SEA pilot project would be conducted in line with requirements of both the national legislation and the Protocol . As a result one or two separate documents would need to be prepared to reflect the differences in the requirements. Mr. Kalashnyk advised not to overlook international recommendations in the framework of the SEA pilot.

Following the presentation, the participants started filling out an initial scoping matrix for the draft Water Strategy-2030 for the topics related to biodiversity and public health.

In addition, the participants discussed the need for conducting the SEA, amounts of funds having to be earmarked for this purpose, and eligibility criteria for staff/experts engaged in conducting SEA in Belarus. Aspects related to the staff/experts' experience in the field of environmental protection, specialized education and courses on SEA were highlighted by the representatives of the Ministry in this context.



4. CONCLUSIONS AND NEXT STEPS

The participants discussed various procedural and substantive aspects related to practical implementation of SEA in the context of Belarus and specifically, in relation to the draft Water Strategy. Numerous case examples of SEAs in various countries were considered to enrich the participants' understanding of tools and approaches used when undertaking SEA.

The participants noted that the meeting was very useful and provided a lot of information for consideration and application to actual cases. They wondered if this would be the only event in the framework of the SEA pilot project. Mr. Kalashnyk and Ms. Gachechiladze-Bozhesku explained that similar events would be held at various stages of the SEA pilot project. In particular, a similar event would be held to discuss results of the SEA scoping report and one more event was planned to discuss a draft SEA report. In addition, separate expert meetings and trainings would be conducted with a focus on the preparation of the SEA scoping report and SEA report.

Ms. Slizh, Mr. Kalashnyk and Ms. Gachechiladze-Bozhesku summed up the key messages of the meeting and thanked all the attendees for their active participation in the discussions.









Annex 1. Agenda









EU4Environment

European Union Water Initiative Plus for the Eastern Partnership

STRATEGIC ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT (SEA)

for the draft National Strategy of Water Resources Management in the context of Climate Change for the period until 2030

Minsk, Belarus

11 July 2019



Venue: Hotel Belarus (Minsk, ul. Storozhovskaya, 15), conference room, ground floor

The objective of the meeting is to raise awareness on SEA objectives, benefits and involved actors. Introduction of the Pilot SEA project for the draft national Strategy of Water Resources Management in the context of Climate Change for the period until 2030.

AGENDA

	REGISTRATION AND OPENING
9:30 – 10:00	Opening and welcoming statements Ms. Larissa Lukina – Head of International Affairs Department, Ministry of Natural Recourses and Environment of the Republic of Belarus (Minprirody) Mr. Leonid Kalashnyk – Environmental Affairs Officer, UNECE
SESSION 1	STRATEGIC ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT: KEY INFORMATION Facilitated by Ms. Nadezhda Zdanevich, Minprirody and Mr. Leonid Kalashnyk, UNECE
10:00 – 10:30	Requirements of the national legislation of the Republic of Belarus on SEA application for draft plans/programmes Ms. Nadezhda Zdanevich, Deputy Head of the Department of Managing the Impacts on the Air, Climate Change and Expertise, Ministry of Natural Resources and Environmental Protection of the Republic of Belarus Q&A followed by discussion
10:30 – 11:00	UNECE technical assistance on enhancing SEA in Belarus in line with EU directive on SEA and UNECE Protocol on SEA within EU4Environment action and EU Water Initiative Plus Mr. Leonid Kalashnyk, UNECE Implementation of the EU Water Initiative Plus in Belarus









	Ms. Tatiana Slizh, Head of the Water Resources Management and Protection, Department of Natural Resources, Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment Protection of the Republic of Belarus Q&A followed by discussion				
11:00 – 11:30	Coffee break				
11:30 – 12:30	 SEA application for the state plans/programmes: principles, benefits, roles of involved actors, interaction with the planning process Ms. Maia Gachechiladze-Bozhesku, international consultant on SEA, UNECE Q&A followed by discussion 				
12:30 – 14:00	Lunch break				
SESSION 2	INTRODUCTION OF THE SEA PILOT PROJECT IN THE FIELD OF WATER RESOURCES MANAGEMENT				
14:00 – 14:30	 Presentation of the draft national Strategy of Water Resources Management in the context of the Climate Change for the period until 2030 (Water Strategy) Ms. Snezhana Dubenok, Deputy Director for Research, Central Research Institute for Complex Use of Water Resources Q&A followed by discussion on the different key points 				
14:30 – 15:00	 SEA for the draft Water Strategy: an approach, methodology, mains steps and participants Ms. Maia Gachechiladze-Bozhesku, international consultant on SEA, UNECE Q&A followed by discussion on the different key points 				
15:00 – 15:30	 Transboundary consultations: analysis of potential transboundary effects, a need and possible directions for transboundary consultations Ms. Maia Gachechiladze-Bozhesku, international consultant on SEA, UNECE Q&A followed by discussion on the different key points 				
15:30 – 16:00	Coffee break				
16:00 – 17:40	 SEA Scoping in line with the EU Directive on SEA and UNECE Protocol on SEA Ms. Maia Gachechiladze-Bozhesku, international consultant on SEA, UNECE Brain storming on key environmental and health issues related to the draft Water Strategy (all participants) Q&A followed by discussion on the different key points 				
	END OF THE MEETING				
17:40 – 18:00	Summary of the discussion and next steps Ms. Tatiana Slizh, Head of the Water Resources Management and Protection, Department of Natural Resources, Ministry of Natural Resources and Environmental Protection of the Republic of Belarus				









Annex 2. List of Participants

	Имя, фамилия	Должность, организация	Контактная информация Contact information	First name, surname	Job title
1	Зданевич Надежда Евгеньевна	Заместитель начальника управления регулирования воздействий на атмосферный воздух, изменение климата и экспертизы Министерство природных ресурсов и охраны окружающей среды Республики Беларусь	nzdanevich@tut.by +375 17 200-27-67	Nadezhda Zdanevich	Deputy Head of the Department of Managing the Impacts on the Air, Climate Change and Expertise, Ministry of Natural Resources and Environmental Protection of the Republic of Belarus
2	Мацевич Наталья Анатольевна	Заместитель начальника управления экономики и финансов Министерство природных ресурсов и охраны окружающей среды Республики Беларусь	+375 17 200-71-90	Natalia Mazevich	Deputy Head of the Department of Economics and Finance Ministry of Natural Resources and Environmental Protection of the Republic of Belarus
3	Кузьмич Андрей Николаевич	Заместитель начальника управления биологического и ландшафтного разнообразия Министерство природных ресурсов и охраны окружающей среды Республики Беларусь	a.kuzmich.belarus @gmail.com +375 17 200-53-34	Andrei Kuzmich	Deputy Head of the Department of biological and landscape diversity Ministry of Natural Resources and Environmental Protection of the Republic of Belarus
4	Слиж Татьяна Вячеславовна	Начальник отдела использования и охраны водных ресурсов Министерство природных ресурсов и охраны окружающей среды Республики Беларусь	tanya.sl@tut.by +375 17 200-61-92	Tatsiana Slizh	Head of the Water Resources Management and Protection, Department of Natural Resources, Ministry of Natural Resources and Environmental Protection of the Republic of Belarus
5	Станкевич Александр Петрович	Директор Республиканское унитарное предприятие "Центральный научно-исследовательский институт комплексного использования водных ресурсов" (ЦНИИКИВР)	aps_stankevich@m ail.ru +375 17 267-65-23	Alexandr Stankevich	Director Republican Unitary Enterprise "Central Research Institute for Complex Use of Water Resources" (CRICUWR)
6	Дубенок Снежана Анатольевна	Заместитель директора по научной работе Республиканское унитарное предприятие "Центральный научно-исследовательский институт комплексного использования водных ресурсов" (ЦНИИКИВР)	olsnega@list.ru +375 29 620-64-69	Snezhana Dubenok	Deputy Director for Research, Republican Unitary Enterprise "Central Research Institute for Complex Use of Water Resources" (CRICUWR)









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		Республиканское унитарное предприятие "Центральный научно-исследовательский институт комплексного использования водных ресурсов" (ЦНИИКИВР)			Republican Unitary Enterprise "Central Research Institute for Complex Use of Water Resources" (CRICUWR)
8	Гипчик Виктор Иванович	Директор, Филиал «Институт геологии» республиканского унитарного предприятия «Научно-производственный центр по геологии»	+375 29 503-13-60	Viktar Hipchyk	Director Branch "Institute of Geology" of the Republican Unitary Enterprise "Scientific and Production Center for Geology"
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11	Новицкий Руслан Викторович	Заведующий сектором экологической оценки преобразований окружающей среды ГНПО "НПЦ НАН Беларуси по биоресурсам"	nramphi@mail.ru +375 29 611-23-68	Ruslan Novitsky	Head of Sector of Environmental Assessment of Environmental Changes SSPA "SPC NAS of Belarus for Bioresources"
12	Бобко Алексей Валентинович	Старший научный сотрудник НИЛ экологии ландшафтов Белорусский государственный университет	alexeibobko@gmail .com +375 29 548-23-84	Aliaksei Babko	Senior Researcher Laboratory of Landscape Ecology Belarusian State University
13	Лукина Лариса Сергеевна	Заместитель начальника главного управления экологической политики, международного сотрудничества и науки - начальник отдела международного сотрудничества Министерство природных ресурсов и охраны окружающей среды Республики Беларусь	loralukina@gmail.c om +375 17 200-43-28	Larissa Lukina	Deputy Head of the Main Department of Environmental Policy, International Cooperation and Science - Head of the Department of International Cooperation Ministry of Natural Resources and Environmental Protection of the Republic of Belarus
14	Козел Максим Алексеевич	Старший научный сотрудник Государственное научное учреждение «Объединенный институт энергетических и ядерных исследований – Сосны» Национальной академии наук Беларуси	maxkozel@sosny.b as-net.by +375 29 570-07-50	Maxim Kozel	Senior Researcher State Scientific Institution «The Joint Institute for Power and Nuclear Research – Sosny» of the National Academy of Sciences of Belarus

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15	Коваль Елена Николаевна	Ведущий инженер Институт природопользования НАН Беларуси	laboratoria.gg@tut. by +375 29 601-02-44	Alena Koval	Leading Engineer Institute for Nature Management of the National Academy of Sciences of Belarus
16	Гулик Марина Сергеевна	Главный специалист отдела гигиены Министерство здравоохранения Республики Беларусь	5303623@mail.ru +375 44 530-36-23	Maryna Hulik	Chief Specialist of the Department of Hygiene Ministry of Health of the Republic of Belarus
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19	Владимир Николаевич	Начальник отдела мониторинга и государственного водного кадастра Республиканское унитарное предприятие "Центральный научно-исследовательский институт комплексного использования водных ресурсов" (ЦНИИКИВР)	+375 29 615-75-38	Vladimir Korneev	Head of the Department of Monitoring and the State Water Cadastre Republican Unitary Enterprise "Central Research Institute for Complex Use of Water Resources" (CRICUWR)
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