EU4Environment

Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Republic of Moldova, Ukraine

Subregional Workshop on the Practical Application of Strategic Environmental Assessment and Transboundary Environmental Impact Assessment

Virtual event, 26 – 27 October 2020

Workshop Report

Contents

1.   Background

Within the framework of the European Union-funded EU4Environment programme (2019 – 2022), the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) is assisting Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Republic of Moldova and Ukraine in comprehensive capacity-building and institution building on strategic environmental assessment (SEA) and transboundary environmental impact assessment (EIA) and in finalizing legal reforms in this area. The EU4Environment programme succeeds the European Union's EaP GREEN programme[1] (2013–2018) with the aim to reinforce and sustain the results achieved in the countries so far by ensuring that their newly established legislation on SEA and EIA is complemented with secondary regulations, fully aligned with the UNECE Convention on Environmental Impact Assessment in a Transboundary Context (Espoo Convention)[2], its Protocol on Strategic Environmental Assessment (Protocol on SEA)[3], the European Union's Directives on EIA and SEA and systematically applied for greening national economies and for sustainable development. The programme component on SEA and transboundary EIA is also expected to improve environmental governance by enhancing transparency of decision-making, cross-sectoral cooperation, public participation and stakeholder consultation, and to promote transboundary and regional cooperation in assessing environmental impacts.[4]

Two subregional events with a focus on SEA and transboundary EIA have been planned to be organized by UNECE under EU4Environment: (i) a workshop in 2020, and (ii) a subregional event in 2022. The 2020 subregional workshop was built on the results, progress and lessons learnt by the countries in the development of their SEA and EIA systems in line with the Protocol on SEA, Espoo Convention, and the European Union's relevant directives – the Directive on SEA[5] and the Directive on EIA[6]. The workshop made the best use of case examples from SEA and EIA practice in the EU countries. In line with topical issues on SEA and EIA identified by the beneficiary countries prior to the workshop, the event provided targeted training opportunities including through group exercises and assignments.

A total of 52 participants attended the workshop (see the list of participants in Annex 1). Most of the participants represented central environmental authorities (i.e. the ministries responsible for environmental issues) and other governmental agencies of the six beneficiary countries, however also representatives of NGOs as well as experts and consultants attended the workshop. The participants were selected based on the nomination by the Ministries of Environment which are UNECE's partners in the beneficiary countries for the implementation of the activities under the EU4Environment programme.

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[1] See https://www.unece.org/env/eia/about/eap_green.html

[2] https://www.unece.org/env/eia/eia.html

[3] https://www.unece.org/environmental-policy/conventions/environmental-assessment/about-us/protocol-on-sea/enveiasea-protocol/about-the-sea-protocol.html

[4] More information about the EU4Environment can be found at https://www.unece.org/environmental-policy/conventions/environmental-assessment/about-us/protocol-on-sea/eu4environment.html and https://www.eu4environment.org

[5] Directive 2001/42/EC on the assessment of the effects of certain plans and programmes on the environment, https://ec.europa.eu/environment/eia/sea-legalcontext.htm

[6] Directive 2011/92/EU on the assessment of the effects of certain public and private projects on the environment, https://ec.europa.eu/environment/eia/eia-legalcontext.htm

2.   Workshop objectives and design

The workshop aimed to achieve the following objectives:

- facilitate information exchange and experience sharing on SEA and transboundary EIA among the six beneficiary countries and with the EU/UNECE countries;
- address topical issues identified by the beneficiary countries for the workshop, along with examples of international good practices in SEA and transboundary EIA.

In addition, the workshop provided an opportunity to discuss the way forward for the countries to further develop SEA and EIA systems, in particular, regarding capacity-building activities for SEA and transboundary EIA.

Although the workshop had been originally planned as a physical event to be carried out in one of the EU4Environment programme's beneficiary countries, as a result of the Covid-19 related travel and logistical limitations and restrictions, it was organized as a virtual event (using the Kudo platform for remote simultaneous interpretation and videoconferencing). It consisted of two consecutive days with 4-hour sessions per day facilitated by the team of international and national consultants to UNECE (Ms. Maia Gachechiladze-Bozhesku, Ms. Marina Khotuleva, Ms. Maryna Shymkus, Mr. Matthew Cashmore, and Mr. Martin Smutny) with the support and guidance of UNECE's project team (Mr. Leonid Kalashnyk and Ms. Elena Kashina).
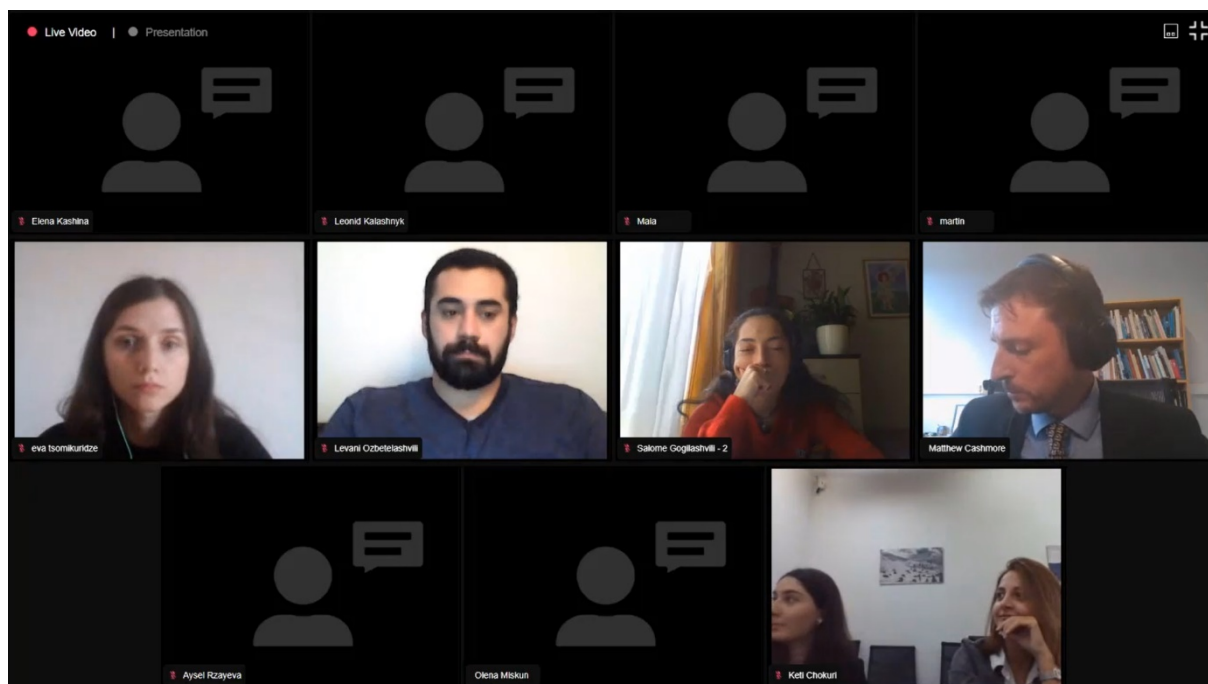
Picture 1: Screenshot of the introductory session

The case examples of good SEA and EIA practice from, mainly, the EU countries represented th core of the workshop, combined with theoretical background and group discussions and exercises. A home assignment between day 1 and 2 was developed and introduced to the participants. The agenda of the event can be found in Annex 2.

In order to identify the topics of interest, a survey among the beneficiary countries had been conducted prior the workshop. Based on the feedback by the countries, the following issue were selected to be addressed at the event:

- Typical challenges in SEA and EIA practice (including transboundary aspects)
- SEA in selected sectors (transport, energy, and regional development)

- Determining a need for transboundary EIA

- Post-project analysis in transboundary EIA

- Monitoring in SEA

- Quality control in EIA and SEA

- Databases and information systems for EIA and SEA

To support the participants' more effective preparation, a template for the presentation on the progress achieved in development of SEA and EIA since the end of the EaP GREEN programme (see Annex 3), and the description of the home assignment had been shared with the participants prior the workshop.

Presentations made during the workshop, as well as the other relevant information can be found at http://unece.org/environmental-policy/events/sub-regional-workshop-practical-application-strategic-environmental

3.   Summary of the discussions and outcomes

Session 1: Introduction to SEA and EIA

In this session, a brief overview of the basic information on SEA and EIA was presented, including the linkages between these two tools, the scope of their application, purposes and objectives, main steps in the SEA and EIA processes, as well as the transboundary aspects. This theoretical introduction was supported by a presentation of the role of SEA in spatial planning in England. The discussion focused mainly on an identification of the likely affected countries in SEA or EIA. In other words,it explored if only directly neighboring countries should be notified or the countries more distant from the country of origin should be notified as well. An example of Hungary's radioactive waste management programme was referenced, when Hungary notified 13 countries and 11 countries expressed their request to proceed with transboundary consultations.

Session 2: Country presentations and discussion

Each country was invited to present the progress achieved regarding SEA and EIA since the end of the EaP GREEN programme (sincelate 2018) as well as identifying existing challenges and priorities for the future development of SEA and EIA in a respectivecountry.

Armenia described existing legislation on SEA and EIA and the recent status of the legal reforms, indicating that the draft law on amendments to the 2014 Law on EIA was being discussed by the Parliament. The capacity building strategy and the booklet on SEA developed under the EaP GREEN were mentioned as useful documents to raise awareness on SEA. A need to further strengthen the capacity of environmental authorities with regard to both SEA and EIA was emphasized.

Azerbaijan presented that since 2018 – following adoption of the Law on EIA – several pieces of secondary implementing legislation (regulations) were adopted in 2019 – 2020, including the regulation on the Control under SEA and EIA, the regulation on Expert Commission implementing State Ecological Expertise, and the regulation on Implementation of State and Public Ecological Expertise. Inter-ministerial discussions were in progress for the draft regulation on the implementation of SEA and the draft regulation on EIA including transboundary EIA. Furthermore, certain institutional changes were made, in particular, the State Ecological Expertise Agency (SEEA) was established in 2019 as a public legal entity under the Ministry of Ecology and Natural Resources, and the EIA division was separated from other units dealing with SEA and EIA at the SEEA. It was mentioned that there is neither SEA practice, nor there has been any transboundary EIA case since 2018. For this reasonthere is a strong need to carry out awareness raising events among civil servants outside environmental administration, as well as there are rather insufficient human resources at the SEEA to deal with SEA. Also, there is a need to establish a system or common methodological approach to estimate the costs of SEA and EIA to help to initiate the wider application of SEA and EIA. More specific screening criteria for EIA – based on Annex 1 of the Espoo Convention – would need to be developed, and the quality control scheme for SEA and EIA has to be enhanced further.

Belarus mentioned that although the country is still at the early stage of SEA and EIA implementation, certain positive experience was gained since 2018 with the application of SEA and EIA. A total of 48 SEA and EIA reports with regard to spatial planning documents and construction projects as well as two environmental reports for governmental programmes were produced in 2018 – 2020 and considered by the Competent Authorities. Two EIA transboundary consultations were carried out in 2019 – 2020 (Khmelnitsky nuclear power plant in Ukraine, and electric transmission lines and station), while transboundary consultations regarding Rivne Nuclear Power Plant are ongoing recently. Many

training courses on SEA and EIA for the environmental agencies were organized in the last two years, and the brochure on environmental assessment was prepared and distributed. As for the challenges, the Institute of Public Expert Examination (established in 2010) needs to strengthen its role and mandate in the area of SEA and EIA, and its expertise has to be enhanced. Water resource management represents one of the priority sectors for environmental assessment, and there is a need to organize trainings for relevant stakeholders on environmental assessment. There is also a need to improve transboundary EIA – ideally, bilateral agreements should be developed considering good international practice.

Georgia informed that the Environmental Assessment Code, which is in line with the international legal framework on SEA and EIA, entered into force in 2018. The requirements regarding the transboundary consultations will became effective after the Espoo Convention and the Protocol on SEA enter into force in the country. In 2018 – 2020 (until 1 September 2020), more than 500 hundred EIA screening decisions and 265 EIA scoping opinions were issued, as well as a total of 181 environmental decisions on EIA. Collectively, 4 SEA screening decision, 7 SEA scoping conclusions, and 1 recommendation on SEA report and strategic document were issues during the same period. Also, more than 300 public hearings were organized in 2018 – 2020 (until 1 September 2020). It was mentioned that due to Covid-19 related restrictions, public consultations were carried out online via Zoom or Webex platforms in the last months. With UNECE's support under EU4Environment, several training workshops on specific SEA aspects were conducted in the last two years. In 2019, the Ministry of Environmental Protection and Agriculture was involved in delivering trainings on environmental democracy for municipalities and NGOs. Recent work on finalizing an Environmental Assessment Electronic Assessment and Public Portal was mentioned as well as its expected important role in disseminating information on SEA and EIA. Thelow quality of EIA reports as well as a lack of methods for quality control was mentioned among the challenges, together with post-project analysis and monitoring.

Moldova briefly introduced its current legal framework on SEA and EIA, as well as existing guiding documents. The Environmental Agency started to apply SEA and EIA procedure, and the SEA and EIA register had been launched. From April 2018 until September 2020, a total of 28 requests to determine a need for SEA were submitted, and 25 preliminary assessment opinions were issued. Two workshops were organized in 2019 to strengthen the institutional capacity of the central governmental authorities i.e. the Ministry of Agriculture, Regional Development and Environment (MARD) and Environmental Agency, which are responsible for administration of SEA processes, as well as the other ministries and experts. A possibility to establish a permanent training scheme on environmental assessment is recently under discussion. Challenges include limited human capacity for SEA and EIA at the MARD and Environmental Agency, low awareness on EIA and SEA among the project developers, planning agencies and decision-makers, the lack of experience with quality control, and weak monitoring and post-project analysis. Further legal amendments, preparation of the guiding documents, and institutional changes to better promote SEA and EIA, as well as the training scheme on SEA for environmental and health authorities and the practitioners belong to the priorities for future.

Ukraine informed the participants that the country aligned the national legal framework on SEA to the international legal framework by adopting the Law on SEA in 2018. This can be considered as a very important step, which is the key precondition for the application of SEA. Also, the guidelines on SEA implementation were adopted, and the governmental decisions on SEA screening and environmental monitoring at the strategic level prepared providing details on relevant procedures. Since the entry the Law on SEA into force, over 500 consultations were caried out in Ukraine. An

absence of monitoring procedure adopted by the government, and a lack of common approaches to the preparation of SEA report were mentioned among the challenges, while priorities include enforcement of SEA application among planning agencies, developing details on the procedure to carry out consultations with public, and preparation of the guidelines and organisation of the trainings regarding the SEA for urban development plans.

Session 3: Topics of special interest in SEA and EIA identified by the countries

The following presentations were delivered by the experts along with dedicated discussions and guidance:

- *Typical challenges in SEA/EIA practice and possible ways to address them*: This presentation addressed late initiation of SEA, too wide focus of SEA, changes of the project design, and Insufficient baseline in EIA. An example of the SEA scoping report for Operational Programme Technology for Competitiveness (Czech Republic) was introduced to illustrate an important to scope out certain issues from the scope of SEA.
- *Transboundary SEA and transboundary EIA, related challenges, and examples*: A summary of frequent challenges discussed among the Parties to the Espoo Convention and the Protocol on SEA was presented, including linguistic issues (quality of translation, not enough material translated, need to translate into additional language(s), delays/barriers to participation – and additional costs – caused by a lack of/poor translation, etc.), difficulties in identifying which decision constitutes the 'final decision' and in determining whether or not an activity, and in particular a modification to an existing activity, fell under the provisions of the Espoo Convention, differences between the procedural and methodological practices in the Party of origin and affected Party, or different interpretations of legal provisions. A question was raised what to do if criteria to determine a need for EIA differ between the countries – involving the Implementation Committee in such cases was recommended.
- *Sectoral SEA examples*: SEA of the Bratislava Port Master Plan (Slovakia) to illustrate the approach regarding evaluation of spatial alternatives, SEA of Offshore Wind Energy to provide examples of methods for assessment of the likely effects (e.g. constraints mapping), and SEA of the National Fuel and Energy Development Concept of Kazakhstan as an overall example of SEA including consultations with relevant stakeholders.
- *Databases for EIA and SEA*: Examples from Ukraine (joint EIA register) and Scotland (SEA database) were presented, both emphasizing an important role of these tools to effectively disseminate information about the ongoing cases of SEA and EIA as well as recording previous SEAs and EIAs.

Section 4: Home assignment – group presentations and discussion

The description of the home assignment had been shared with the participants prior the workshop, providing for the three following options:

- Option 1: Undertake a preliminary analysis of a proposed activity to determine if it is subject to a transboundary EIA procedure.
- Option 2. Develop a consultation plan for an SEA in a transboundary context.

- Option 3. Explain the benefits of SEA or EIA to your country's politicians. Use examples from your country or elsewhere to illustrate the benefits.

At the end of day 1, the participants were asked to work in their respective country groups to prepare and deliver a brief presentation on the results at the beginning of day 2.

Armenia (option 3) emphasized that human activities have impacts on the environment and human health. Therefore, SEA and EIA are important tools to prevent or minimize any irreversible effects on the nature and environment. These tools can also help the planners and project developers to enhance the planning documents and project design and can support selection of the best alternative or option, which in result may lead to reduced costs. Decision-makers should understand that by involvement of the public in the planning, the SEA makes planning and decision-making more efficient, and therefore strengthens the governance. However, to fulfil this role, the SEA needs to be applied soon in the planning process.

Azerbaijan (option 1) concluded that a new hydropower plant with capacity of 80 MW does not belong the activities listed in Appendix 1 to the Espoo Convention. However, considering the criteria Appendix III to the Espoo Convention, it can be considered as a large hydropower installation, located in potential sensitive natural habitat and likely to affect approx. 7,000 inhabitants, with likely significant transboundary impacts, and therefore it should be a subject to the transboundary EIA procedure.

Belarus (option 1) concluded that a new hydropower plant with capacity of 80 MW can result in changes of the riverbed as well as may cause other significant environmental impacts. Also, considering requirements of the national legislation and Appendix I, which includes large dams, the project should be a subject to transboundary EIA procedure. However, further data and information would be needed to confirm this conclusion.

Georgia (option 3) first presented the challenges the country faced before introducing SEA including development of strategic documents without participation of public and with only limited involvement of environmental and health authorities resulting in the strategic documents not integrating relevant environmental and health issues. Also, overlapping documents and/or specific actions could be observed as well as problems at the project level. Institutional benefits of SEA were then introduced – better planning processes, increased quality of strategic documents, enhanced cooperation and coordination among governmental authorities, improved communication between governmental institutions and other stakeholders. Also, it was argued that SEA should lead to environmental and health benefits – prevention of possible risks, more efficient EIA processes, addressing likely cumulative effects, integration of sustainability goals and climate change adaptation policies in strategic documents, and introduction of health impact assessment. It was concluded that to achieve above mentioned, there are challenges in existing SEA system, which need to be solved. These challenges include lack of coordination with health agencies, and limited expertise to review the SEA reports.

Moldova (option 1) explained that line with the Law on EIA of Moldova, a new hydropower plant with capacity of 80 MW does not belong the activities listed in Annex I to the Law on EIA, which requires mandatory EIA only for hydropower plants with capacity over 1,000 MW. Therefore, a preliminary assessment should be carried out by the Environmental Agency. According to the Law on EIA, the project developer is obliged to submit to the Competent EIA Authority a written application. Following factors should be considered in the preliminary assessment: scale and capacity of the project, location, and the likely impacts including the impacts on water resources, water protected areas, flora and fauna, and the population. Taking into account the fact, that a neighbouring country

is only 8 km downstream, and the above factors, the transboundary impacts are likely, and therefore the project should be subject to the transboundary EIA procedure in line with the Espoo Convention. In Moldova, this procedure would be initiated and coordinated by the Ministry of Agriculture, Regional Development and Environment (MARDE).

Ukraine (option 3) indicated that by the Constitution of Ukraine the environment and health has to be protected by the state. It however does not mean that no development is allowed, but any development should not harm the environment and the health of people. Therefore, as one of the main benefits, SEA is an efficient tool to find options and alternatives of development, which are in line with these principles. An example of the waste disposal project including biogas installation was presented, which had been proposed to be located near residential area, and this location was not in accordance with the regulation of Ministry of Health, which stipulates that such type of installation has to be located at least 300m from the residential area. SEA analysed the likely health effects and an alternative location was selected.

Session 5: Topics of special interest in SEA and EIA identified by the countries (continuation)

The following presentations were delivered by the experts along with dedicated discussions and guidance:

- *Typical challenges in SEA/EIA practice and possible ways to address them*: This presentation addressed late initiation of SEA, too wide focus of SEA, changes of the project design, and Insufficient baseline in EIA. An example of the SEA scoping report for Operational Programme Technology for Competitiveness (Czech Republic) was introduced to illustrate an important to scope out certain issues from the scope of SEA.

- *Determining a need for transboundary EIA:* A difference between determining a need for transboundary EIA according the Espoo Convention and EIA screening as stipulated by the EU EIA Directive for Annex II projects was explained, and criteria listed in Appendix III of the Espoo Convention were introduced. Pros and cons of two possible options on when to determine a need for transboundary EIA (i.e. early or later in the EIA process) were presented.

- *Post-project analysis in transboundary EIA and monitoring in SEA:* A scheme of post-project assessment activities was introduced, and requirements of the Protocol and SEA and the EU SEA Directive regarding monitoring, as well as requirements on post-project analysis in EIA as stipulated by the Espoo Convention and the EU EIA Directive, were compared. The key tasks to be carried out and the key actors in monitoring and post-project analysis were presented. Examples from the Netherlands, UK and Poland were provided to illustrate the practical aspects, and links to relevant guiding documents were shared with the participants.

- *Quality control system in EIA and SEA:* Tools, techniques and approaches to be used for quality control were introduced, including review and auditing of reports at different level of detail, public inquiries, or accreditation of EA practitioners. Based on experience from six EU countries, the three modes of quality control were summarized – (i) quality control limited to procedural matters, when consultation and public scrutiny considered as adequate quality, (ii) quality control of procedural matters plus a formal review of environmental reports which includes substantive considerations (i.e. conclusions, recommendations etc.), and (iii) more comprehensive quality control scheme including licensing of competent practitioners, advisory committee, with a stronger role of competent EIA or SEA authority. It was concluded that more demanding quality control procedures tend to focus attention on procedural aspects instead of substantive purposes, while – as practice indicates – simple and 'easy'

procedures are more flexible and facilitate adjustments of SEA process depending on the planning context.

After the presentations, an assignment for the group exercise on quality control was introduced. The participants were asked to describe the elements of the quality control in their national EIA system, and to briefly present what works well and what are the challenges.

- In *Armenia* the Law on EIA stipulates requirements on the content and information to be provided in the EIA reports. The Ministry of Environment plays a pivotal role in the quality control, however feedback from other governmental organisations and other stakeholders including public also represents an important part of the quality control system. The EIA report can be returned back and its update can be required by the Ministry in case of its insufficient quality.

- *Azerbaijan* explained that the State Ecological Expertise Agency under the Ministry of Ecology and Natural Resources is the main governmental body responsible for quality control in EIA. The expert commission assessed the quality of the EIA report with a focus on the quality of information provided by the reports. Also, a public participation represents a part of the quality control. A scheme of licensing the EIA consulting companies and consultants to prepare the EIA reports has also been established. There is a need to enhance coordination of quality control, and the MENR have already undertaken some steps in this regard.

- *Belarus* provided that the national legislation established a framework for the EIA quality control scheme, which includes mainly the public scrutiny and the review by the State Ecological Expertise Centre. Each EIA report is a subject to the public consultation and to the review of the Centre – if the public and/or the Centre find the quality of the EIA report insufficient, it has to be updated. The revised report can be again consulted with the public. There is also a possibility of the public ecological expertise, however this is applied only rarely as there is only limited capacity to carry it out.

- *Georgian* legislation on EIA stipulates that within the 3 working days after submitting the screening or scoping application, the Ministry checks its quality, and if minimum requirements on the content are not met, the application is send back to the project developer. The same applies to the EIA report, however with the period of 15 working days. After the EIA report is submitted, the Ministry establishes an expert commission consisting of independent experts and relevant staff of the Ministry. Also, feedback from other governmental organisation and the public on the EIA reports can be considered as an important element of the quality control. There is no licensing or accreditation scheme in Georgia. The low quality of the EIA reports represents a problem as the quality control often reveals insufficiencies and the reports have to be updated. Non-governmental organisations often focus only on procedural matters, rather than on the content of the reports. Also, there is only a limited number of independent experts, which can be involved in the expert commission, and there is a need to expand the expertise.

- In *Moldova* the requirements regarding the quality control are stipulated by the national legislation (Law on EIA) including the responsibilities and competence of the Environmental Protection Agency to review information included in the EIA reports. The Agency can issue a substantiated refusal and return the EIA report for update. Guidance on EIA, adopted by the Ministry of Agriculture, Regional Development and Environment, also includes a section on quality control with a quality control checklist. Consultations with public is another important

element of the quality control, public comments are addressed by the Environmental Protection Agency. Limited human resources in the Agency represents the key problem for the EIA quality control. Also, there is a need to enhance the expertise of experts preparing the EIA reports.

- *Ukraine* provided that the according the Law on EIA, the Ministry reviews the quality of the EIA report, which – if the quality is found insufficient – can be return with a request for update. Also, both scoping and EIA reports are subject to the public consultation, which is also considered as a part of the quality control. There is no compulsory licensing scheme for EIA experts.

Session 6: Way forward for the countries to develop SEA and EIA systems further

The session was opened by a brief summary of the capacity-building activities on SEA and EIA carried out under the EU4Environment programme. This includes assistance for finalizing the legislation, support through the implementation of the pilot SEAs, preparation of the sector- or issue-specific guidelines on SEA or transboundary EIA, and training on SEA/transboundary EIA and awareness raising events and materials. Furthermore, the development of a model for SEA on-line database to support the application of SEA procedures, and two sub-regional events part of the EU4Environment activities on environmental assessment.

The participants were then asked to provide feedback on the following questions:

- Which needs and priorities in the area of SEA and transboundary EIA would you identify as most important in the near term i.e. in 2021?

- At which stage is your country in the process of establishing an SEA database?

- How do you see Covid-related implications for the SEA and EIA practice in your country?

Also, the countries, where the SEA and EIA capacity-building strategies or roadmaps were developed under the EaP GREEN, were asked to comment on the implementation of these strategies.

Ms. Aysel Babayeva from *Azerbaijan* mentioned there are implications of Covid, some activities planned under the Roadmap could not be implemented, and there is a perhaps need to revise future activities. Also, she stressed out that online trainings and consultations are in general less efficient than standard 'physical' training workshops and consultation meetings. Implementation of the pilot SEA was highlighted as a priority for 2021, as well as availability of the video on transboundary EIA in Azerbaijan language will be important for awareness raising. A sub-regulatory act has been prepared, which stipulates a need to establish the SEA database.

Ms. Maria Nagornii from *Moldova* explained that Moldova elaborated the Roadmap on SEA and EIA capacity building, and its implementation already started. The activities include amendments to existing the Law on EIA and the Law on SEA, preparation of quality control guidelines, to be followed by the training on quality control. A University course on EIA and SEA should be established, and a permanent training scheme on environmental assessment for public officials should be developed under the Academy of Public Administration.

For *Georgia*, the priority for 2021 is to update existing guidelines on SEA and EIA and to prepare the guidelines on EIA in hydropower sector, which will help to raise awareness of the SEA and EIA procedures among the public. Covid-19 affected organisation modalities of public hearings, which had been moved to online platforms. The work on the country's EIA database is ongoing, while

preparation of database on SEA has not started yet. Both databases should be part of the overall public portal of the Ministry of Environmental Protection and Agriculture.

Mr. Amin Mammadov from *Azerbaijan* suggested that support and funding should be provided to the civil society to raise public awareness with regard to SEA and EIA.

5.   Evaluation

The participants were asked to evaluate the event at the end of the workshop. However, due to the platform-related technical problems, only an incomplete rating was produced through the online platform. In order to provide more for the beneficiary countries to comment on the the sub-regional event, the representatives of the beneficiary countries were asked to speak of the event during the Meeting of the Parties to the Espoo Convention and its Protocol on SEA, organized in 8 – 11 December 2020   (https://unece.org/environmental-policy/events/meeting-parties-espoo-convention-8th-session-and-meeting-parties).

6.   Conclusions

During the workshop, an emphasis was given on the presentation and discussion of cases of various aspects of good SEA and EIA practice, with a focus on the topics identified by the countries prior the event. Considering the participants' feedback during workshop discussions, the quality control represents one of the main issues for further enhancement of SEA and EIA systems in the countries.

In line with the requests and needs expressed by the beneficiary countries in the run-up to the workshop, the workshop's focus was custom tailored to include training opportunities and interactive discussions for its participants who were then issued respective certificates.

Needs of the countries regarding further capacity-building activities that were expressed or reiterated by the beneficiary countries during the workshop, will be reflected and followed up consistent with the work plans in the remaining period of the implementation of the EU4Environment programme.

It should also be noted that a virtual format of the workshop requires an approach different from the standard workshops – the presentations should be shorter, and sufficient room for questions should be provided rather frequently.

Annex 1: List of participants

Subregional Workshop on the Practical Application of Strategic Environmental Assessment and Transboundary Environmental Impact Assessment

List of Participants

CET: 26-27 OCT 10:00 – 14:00
CHISINAU, KYIV: 26-27 OCT 11:00-15:00
MINSK: 26-27 OCT 12:00-16:00
BAKU, TBILISI, YEREVAN: 26-27 OCT 13:00-17:00

Total number of participants: 52
Female participants: 35

EaP government representatives			
Armenia	1.	Mr Gagik Gevorkyan – Deputy Director, Center of Expertise on Environmental Impact Assessment	gagikaaa@yandex.ru
	2.	Mr Eriknaz Mkrtchyan – Chief specialist, Center of Expertise on Environmental Impact Assessment	nazeco@mail.ru
	3.	Ms Gayane Atoyan – expert on environmental and social impact assessment	g_atoyan@yahoo.com
	4.	Ms Elyanora Grigoryan – Legal Adviser to the Minister of Environment, National focal point of Armenia to the Espoo Convention	interdpt@yahoo.com
	5.	Ms Larisa Haratova – International Affairs Department	
Azerbaijan	6.	Ms. Aysel Rzayeva - Espoo Convention NFP, SEA specialist	ayselbabasoylu@yahoo.com
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	8.	Ms. Nigar Tanirverdiyeva - specialist at EIA division of State Ecological Expertize Agency under MENR	nigar.geoqraf@gmail.com
	9.	Mr. Fikrat Jafarov - Chairman, Society for Sustainble Development, SEA specialist	fjafarov@mail.ru
	10.	Mr. Amin Mammadov - Deputy head of Public Union under MENR, SEA specialist	amigo.ihp@gmail.com
Belarus	11.	Ms Larissa Lukina, Head of the International Cooperation Department – Deputy Head of the General Directorate for Environmental Policy, International Cooperation and Science	lukina.icd.belarus@gmail.com
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		Mr Uladzimir Hameza, Deputy Head for State Ecological Expertise Division,	gamwowa@gmail.com
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Annex 2: Workshop agenda

EU4Environment
Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Republic of Moldova, Ukraine

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Subregional Workshop on the Practical Application of Strategic Environmental Assessment and Transboundary Environmental Impact Assessment

AGENDA

26-27 October 2020
Start: 10h CET
End: 14h CET

Technical equipment: web-based video conferencing (Kudo)
Language: English – Russian (simultaneous interpretation)

Logistical note: Due to COVID-19 related restrictions, this workshop will be delivered as a virtual event, using the *Kudo* platform. All registered participants will be given a unique link to access the platform's meeting room. To get familiar with the platform, a dry-run session will be conducted by UNECE prior to the workshop.

Action implemented by:

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Subregional Workshop on the Practical Application of Strategic Environmental Assessment and Transboundary Environmental Impact Assessment

CET: 26-27 OCT 10:00 – 14:00
BAKU, TBILISI, YEREVAN: 26-27 OCT 13:00-17:00
CHISINAU, KYIV: 26-27 OCT 11:00-15:00
MINSK: 26-27 OCT 12:00 -16:00

Background

Within the framework of the EU-funded EU4Environment programme (2019 – 2022), UNECE is assisting Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Republic of Moldova and Ukraine in comprehensive capacity-building and institution building on SEA and transboundary EIA and in finalizing legal reforms in this area.

Two subregional events with a focus on SEA and transboundary EIA are to be organized by UNECE under EU4Environment: a workshop in 2020 followed by a subregional event in 2022. The subregional workshop will be organized on 26-27 October 2020 as a virtual event. It will build on the results, progress and lessons learnt by the countries in the development of their SEA and EIA systems in line with the UNECE Protocol on Strategic Environmental Assessment, Convention on Environmental Impact Assessment in a Transboundary Context, the EU Directive on SEA and the EU Directive on EIA. Selected topics of interest/issues identified by the countries in a survey will be further addressed. The workshop will be facilitated by UNECE international consultants on SEA and EIA.

Meeting objectives, expected outputs and outcomes

The subregional workshop will:

- facilitate information exchange and experience sharing on SEA and transboundary EIA among the six beneficiary countries and with the EU/UNECE countries;
- address topical issues identified by the beneficiary countries for the workshop, along with examples of international good practices in SEA and transboundary EIA.

Participants

The workshop will gather representatives of government authorities and entities, and other relevant stakeholders from Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Republic of Moldova and Ukraine.

Practical Information

The online workshop will run for two consecutive days with 4-hour sessions per day. Participants are invited to register online by **20 October 2020** through the following link: https://indico.un.org/event/34928.

Simultaneous interpretation in English and Russian will be provided.

Information on how to connect to the web-based video conferencing platform Kudo will be provided separately to the registered participants.

AGENDA

DAY I: 26 OCTOBER 2020, Monday

Time (CET)	Item
10:00 – 10:10	**Opening (10 min)** *Mr. Leonid Kalashnyk, EU4Environment Project Manager at UNECE, UNECE secretariat to the Espoo Convention and its Protocol on SEA*
10:10-10:40	**Session 1: Brief introduction to SEA and EIA (30 min)** Aims and benefits Main procedural steps Transboundary aspects and cases examples *Presented by Mr. Matthew Cashmore, consultant to UNECE; introductory remarks by Mr. Leonid Kalashnyk, UNECE*
10:40-12:10	**Session 2: Country presentations and discussion (90 min)** *15 min per country (10 min presentation + 5 min Q&A)* *Facilitated by Mr. Martin Smutny and Ms. Maia Gachechiladze-Bozhesku, consultants to UNECE*
12:10-12:20	**Break**
12:20-13:50	**Session 3: Topics of special interest in SEA and EIA identified by the countries (90 min)** Presentation 1: Typical challenges in SEA/EIA practice and possible ways to address them, including examples - 15 min Presentation 2: Transboundary SEA and transboundary EIA, related challenges, and examples - 15 min Presentation 3: Sectoral SEA examples (transport, off-shore wind energy, energy strategy, development strategy) – 40 min Presentation 4: Databases for EIA and SEA – 20 min *Presented by Ms. Marina Khotuleva, Ms. Maryna Shymkus, Mr. Matthew Cashmore, Mr. Martin Smutny, and Ms. Maia Gachechiladze-Bozhesku, consultants to UNECE*
13:50-14:00	**Introduction to home assignment (10 min)** Option 1: Undertake a preliminary analysis of a proposed activity to determine if it is subject to a transboundary EIA procedure. Option 2. Develop a consultation plan for an SEA in a transboundary context. Option 3. Prepare a presentation explaining the benefits of SEA or EIA to your country's politicians. Use examples from your country or elsewhere to illustrate the benefits. *Presented by Ms. Maia Gachechiladze-Bozhesku, consultant to UNECE*
	Off-line work on home assignment (approx. 2 hours)

DAY II: 27 OCTOBER 2020, Tuesday

10:00-11:30	**Session 4: Group presentations and discussion (90 min)** *Facilitated by Ms. Maia Gachechiladze-Bozhesku and Mr. Martin Smutny, consultants to UNECE*
11:30-12:15	**Session 5: Topics of special interest in SEA and EIA identified by the countries (cont'd) (45 min)**

	Presentation 1: Determining a need for transboundary EIA – application of general criteria to assist in the determination of the environmental significance of activities not listed in Appendix I to the Espoo Convention - 15 min Presentation 2: Post-project analysis in transboundary EIA and monitoring in SEA: case examples - 15 min Presentation 3: Quality control system in EIA and SEA, including examples from EU countries – 15 min *Presented by Mr. Matthew Cashmore, Ms. Maia Gachechiladze-Bozhesku, and Mr. Martin Smutny, consultants to UNECE*
12:15-12:50	**Group exercise on quality control (35 min)** *Facilitated by Mr. Martin Smutny and Ms. Maia Gachechiladze-Bozhesku, consultants to UNECE*
12:50-13:00	**Break (10 min)**
13:00-13:50	**Session 6: Way forward for the countries to develop SEA and EIA systems further (50 min)** Presentation 1: Capacity-building for SEA and transboundary EIA – 10 min Feedback from the countries on the implementation of their capacity-building strategies – 20 min (5 min per country x 4 countries with CB strategies[7]) Discussion on the way forward – 20 min *Facilitated by Mr. Leonid Kalashnyk, UNECE; Mr. Martin Smutny, Ms. Marina Khotuleva and Ms. Maia Gachechiladze-Bozhesku, consultants to UNECE*
13:50 - 14:00	**Closing of the workshop and electronic evaluation questionnaire (10 min)** *Facilitated by Mr. Leonid Kalashnyk, UNECE*

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[7] Capacity-building strategies were prepared within the EU-funded EaP Programme (2013-2018) in Armenia, Georgia, Republic of Moldova and Ukraine.

Annex 3: Template for the presentation on the progress achieved in development of SEA and EIA

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2

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Existing challenges

- *Please list up to 5 main existing challenges for the SEA and EIA practice in your country*

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Priorities for future

- *Please list up to 5 priority actions needed to further develop and improve SEA and EIA practice in your country*