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# EU4Environment

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

## Awareness Raising Workshop on the Application of Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) in the Republic of Moldova

**23 April 2021**  
**Chisinau, Republic of Moldova**

### Workshop Report

Due to COVID-19, this workshop will be delivered as a virtual event, using the Zoom platform. All registered participants will receive connection details to access the platform.

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## 1. Background

Within the framework of the European Union-funded EU4Environment programme (2019-2022), UNECE is assisting the Eastern Partnership countries, including the Republic of Moldova, in comprehensive capacity-building and institutional building on Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) and transboundary EIA and in finalizing legal reforms in this area.

SEA is a well-established, practical, and efficient planning and environmental governance tool applied in order to ensure that a wide range of public plans, programmes, and other strategic documents that can have severe impacts on the environment (e.g., draft government plans or programmes concerning land use, transport, energy, waste, agriculture, etc.) are developed while taking into account environmental, climate and health considerations. Following the principles and procedures laid down in the UNECE Protocol on SEA to the Convention on Environmental Impact Assessment in a Transboundary Context (Espoo Convention) and the European Union's Directive on SEA (2001/42/EC), the Republic of Moldova is implementing SEA to allow for identification of the most sustainable and cost-effective strategic development alternatives and attracting new investments, while safeguarding and improving the environment. When applied effectively, SEA also helps strengthen the country's environmental governance through fostering transparency and consultation with relevant stakeholders and the public before the approval of plans and programmes. SEA in a transboundary context can also greatly facilitate regional cooperation on environmental matters.

With the economic recovery from the COVID-19 crisis, the need for systematic and practical environmental assessment of recovery initiatives is pressing. The EU SEA Directive and the Protocol on SEA provide a robust legal and institutional framework to help the Republic of Moldova "build back better" by making this recovery healthy and green.

However, the application of SEA in practice remains very limited in the country as the overall institutional capacities for SEA require significantly more strengthening to be fully fit for purpose. The high turnover of SEA-related staff in the environmental authorities and associated institutional memory remains a challenge. There is still a continued need to support environmental, health, and sectoral planning authorities through awareness-raising and capacity-building activities addressing, among other things, the benefits of SEA, relevant procedures, and challenges, as well as respective roles of different authorities in the implementation of SEA procedures.

Since 2004, UNECE has provided technical assistance and capacity-building support related to SEA and transboundary EIA, including in Eastern Europe. This support was provided under the European Union funded EaP GREEN programme in 2013-2018 and is currently being provided under EU4Environment

The workshop was the second one out of two such events planned and organized under the EU4Environment workplan for the Republic of Moldova to promote the more systematic and practical application of SEA following the EU SEA Directive, UNECE Protocol on SEA, and the national legislation on SEA. The first event was held in November 2019 (<https://unece.org/environmental-policy/events/awareness-raising-workshop-sea-republic-moldova>).

## 2. Meeting objectives, expected outputs, and outcomes

The main objectives of the workshop are to:

- Promote the application of SEA in Moldova in line with the requirements of the UNECE Protocol on SEA, EU SEA Directive, and the national legislation on SEA.
- Support relevant national authorities by raising awareness about the benefits of SEA, including as a tool for making post-COVID-19 economic recovery initiatives green and sustainable.
- Facilitate the engagement of key stakeholders in the process of refining Moldova's national SEA system.
- Take stock of the already existing experience and capacity for SEA application in Moldova and the needs in this area.

## 3. Approach and Methodology

The Ministry of Agriculture, Regional Development, and Environment (MARDE) of the Republic of Moldova invited representatives of the following stakeholders to take part in the workshop:

- sectoral authorities/line ministries likely to be involved in the preparation of government plans and programs subject to SEA at the national level,
- environmental and health authorities responsible for coordinating and contributing to the SEA process and likely to be involved in SEA-related consultations,
- municipalities responsible for undertaking SEA at the local level, and relevant NGOs/CSOs.

The workshop consisted of the following key components:

- I. Introduction of the SEA concept, including information on the international legal framework and requirements laid down in the UNECE Protocol on SEA and the European Union's SEA Directive, and the rationale for implementing SEA in the Republic of Moldova.
- II. Presentation of the national framework for SEA in the Republic of Moldova, including updates on recent developments and changes to the normative acts.
- III. Presentation of SEA cases/good practice examples from several countries in Central and Eastern Europe, including EU Member States.
- IV. Discussion of the practical aspects and challenges related to the SEA implementation, roles and responsibilities of national and local actors.

## 4. Summary of the Workshop outcomes

On 23 April 2021, due to COVID-19, the workshop took place in a virtual format, through the Zoom platform. The event gathered 41 participants, representing various national and regional/local institutions, directly or indirectly related to SEA application and/or monitoring:

These included the Ministry of Agriculture, Regional Development and Environment (MARDE); Environmental Agency, Ministry of Economy and Infrastructure, Ministry of Health, District Councils, NGOs, and others.

The screenshot shows a Zoom meeting in progress. The main content is a presentation slide titled "EU4Environment" with the subtitle "Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Republic of Moldova, Ukraine". The slide is funded by the European Union. The slide content is as follows:

**b) elaborarea raportului ESM;**

- se bazează pe informațiile agreate reciproc, identificate în procesul de determinare a domeniului de aplicare (etapa a);
- raportul ESM *identifică, descrie și evaluează posibilele efecte semnificative asupra mediului*, inclusiv asupra *sănătății populației*, pe care le poate avea implementarea P/P, precum și *alternativele rezonabile*, ținând cont de *obiectivele și suprafața geografică* acoperită de P/P.
- Intre P/P elaborate trebuie să existe o corelare național – local, local-național;

**c) consultarea raportului privind evaluarea strategică de mediu cu autoritățile publice, cu publicul interesat și, după caz, desfășurarea consultărilor transfrontaliere;**

- Consultările cu autoritățile centrale și teritoriale se face în dependență de nivelul documentului (național sau local);
- Consultarea pe P/P și pe Raportului ESM se face în paralel;
- Autoritatea competentă face verificarea calității Raportului ESM;
- Inițiatorul, de comun acord cu autoritatea competentă, asigură informarea și participarea publicului în procesul ESM;
- Termenul de prezentare a propunerilor 10 zile calendaristice;
- toata informația la orice etapă se plasează pe pag web al inițiatorului și autorității competente;

**d) emiterea avizului de mediu.**

- Decizia autorității competente poate fi de: emitere a Avizului de Mediu sau remiterea P/P și Raportului ESM pentru definitive, indicind măsurile ce urmează a fi luate;
- Termenul de examinare este de 45 zile , examinarea repetata poate fi in 20zile lucrătoare;

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Logos for OECD, UNECE, UN environment, and WORLD BANK GROUP are shown at the bottom of the slide.

The Zoom interface shows a recording in progress, the name "Iordanca-Rodica Iordanov is talking...", and a list of participants including Vicepresedinte, Angela Panciuc, Irina Punga, and Leonid Kalashnyk. The bottom toolbar shows options like Unmute, Stop Video, Participants (88), Chat, Share Screen, Record, Interpretation, and Reactions.

### ***Following key topics were discussed:***

In the workshop opening, Ms. Valentina Tapes, State Secretary of MARDE highlighted the need for, and importance of such events, especially in the context of a challenging post-COVID economic and environmental recovery. She noted that achieving the sustainable economic development requires having SEA, as well as other environmental assessment tools, fully operational. the country's Law on SEA was adopted 2017, and entered into force in 2018; however, its practical implementation is still lagging behind. Since 2018, no fully-fledged SEA has been completed for any government programme or plan developed by central or local authorities. This is caused by several factors, such as: a lack of continuity and experience among relevant staff of the authorities responsible and related lack of institutional capacity to implement and supervise the SEA processes; a lack of resources to undertake entire SEA. Thus, the workshop constituted a much needed opportunity to reiterate the principles and benefits of SEA, as well as raising the awareness of the new SEA-related obligations and promoting its effective application in the country. The State Secretary thanked the EU and UNECE for their assistance offered under the European Union-funded EU4Environment programme in supporting the application of SEA in Moldova in line with the international standards.

Mr. Gintautas Baranauskas, Deputy Head of Operations, EU Delegation to the Republic of Moldova focused his welcoming remark on the importance and linkages between environmental protection and economic development. He indicated that the application of SEA brings benefits to both decision-makers and developers of strategic documents by ensuring sustainable economic growth and public engagement, and contributing also to conflict prevention.

Mr. Leonid Kalashnyk, Environmental Affairs Officer, EU4Environment Project Manager at UNECE, indicated that SEA allows countries, including the Republic of Moldova, to mainstream environmental, climate, and health objectives into strategic documents, being an effective tool to achieve Sustainable Development Goals and global climate commitments.

### Presentations:

**The first presentation** was made by the UNECE International Consultant Mr. Michal Musil, an international SEA consultant to UNECE outlining the purpose process, and benefits of SEA. He addressed the aim and principles of SEA, timing of SEA application, roles of different stakeholders. In addition, he presented the steps of SEA procedure, including consultations with competent authorities and the public, and the nature of main deliverables.

A particular focus was placed on the international legal framework, namely the the Protocol on SEA to the Espoo Convention, and EU Directive 2001/42/CE, and their most significant provisions. This was supported with practical case examples presented by the international consultant, where he explained in detail an environmental assessment approach, an evaluation of alternatives and other typical SEA-related tasks.

During the ensuing Q&A session, a participant from MADRE directed the following question to Mr. Musil: *“Currently, a new Strategy for Agriculture is being developed in the country, and it has been decided that the undertaking of SEA is needed. The existing Strategy does not contain either a budget or an action plan, because usually, sectoral authorities are developing their action plans and budget by themselves. If SEA applies to this general Strategy, what is the need to perform further SEAs for sectoral plans/programs? Is there a sense, in the interest of cost-effectiveness, to undertake SEA in this case for sectoral plans only”*. The second comment: *“In this case, MARDE is not only an author of the Strategy, but also it is an evaluator (in terms of SEA). In this context, when and where is a limit for the competencies and responsibilities starting and finishing for each process/procedure”*.

The international SEA consultant explained that *“Largely, the answer depends on the whole planning system. If a detailed program is prepared along with the general Strategy, it can be reasonably presented jointly, and SEA can be applied on the whole package. If the documents are prepared under separate processes, it may be necessary to carry out two SEAs if both documents can reasonably have significant environmental effects. The role of the screening process is crucial for determining the right approach. The situation when the Ministry is assuming the role of the SEA Competent authority (initiator of a Strategy to which SEA is applicable) as well as the role of the SEA-supervision authority shall not affect the integrity of the SEA process. Each role will be performed by separate department operating each within a separate mandate”*.

**The second presentation** made by Ms. Natalia Guranda, national SEA consultant to UNECE, was dedicated to the development of the SEA framework in the Republic of Moldova since 2013 that resulted in the adoption of the *SEA Law* by Parliament, and the endorsement of the *Guideline for SEA application* by MARDE. Further, two SEA pilot projects have been performed in Moldova: the first one - for a draft master plan of Orhei Town (first ever SEA performed in the country), and the other one – for a draft national Road Map on Green Economy. The main challenges faced by the SEA project team while carrying out SEA were described, as along with the main findings and results achieved.

**The third intervention** was dedicated to a comprehensive overview of the national legal framework for the SEA application and related key challenges faced by the actors involved. The presentation was delivered by Ms. Maria Nagornii, Head of the Pollution Prevention and Environmental Assessment Policy Division, MARDE, and Ms. Iordanca – Rodica Iordanov, Executive Director of the PA EcoContact.

Ms. Nagornii focused mainly on a normative framework in the field of SEA, while Ms. Iordanov described the more practical aspects of the procedure, roles and benefits of SEA. Ms. Iordanov further explained to the workshop participants the difference between the two tools - Strategic Environmental Assessment, and Environmental Impact Assessment.

**The next presentation** was made by Ms. Irina Punga national legal expert to UNECE, with a focus on the anticipated amendments to the national legal framework on SEA. Ms. Punga explained that a legal review of the existing legal framework for SEA was performed earlier under the EU4Environment programme. An objective of the review was to analyze the existing legislation on SEA and EIA vis-à-vis the provisions of the two respective UNECE treaties and the respective EU directives (on EIA and on SEA). It aimed to provide concrete recommendations on how to address some still existing gaps with the provisions of the above. As results of the review, and based on further consultations with MARDE, a complete list of future legislative amendments was finalized and the drafting of amended legal text was currently in progress.

During the Q&A session, participants exchanged their experience regarding the actual situation of the SEA application in Moldova. A representative of MARDE Ministry provided further clarifications regarding the procedure in general and answered specific questions related to data collection and preparation of consultations.

**The last presentation** made by Mr. Leonid Kalashnyk, UNECE indicating the following activities on SEA and on transboundary EIA under EU4Environment to support the strengthening of the SEA system in the country in 2021. It is planned/to be finalized in 2021 the following documents:

- Finalization of the draft Law on amendments to the law on SEA and the law on EIA, and other relevant laws (Q3);
- Finalization of 2 Guidelines on Quality Control of SEA and Transboundary EIA Documentation (Q3);
- Training Workshop on Quality Control of SEA and Transboundary EIA Documentation (after the finalization of the draft Guidelines above);
- Launch of the pilot project in SEA (or transboundary EIA), including identification of a draft plan/programme and the establishment of an SEA team (Q4);

- Finalization of the SEA learning course for public servants along with a university-level course on SEA and transboundary EIA (provisionally, by the end of the year);
- Finalization of a Romanian version of the Espoo Convention video (in Q3); development of awareness-raising materials (Q3-Q4);
- Initiation of the development of a model for a SEA on-line database for six beneficiary countries.

## 5. Conclusions

In conclusion, Mr. Michal Musil, international consultant to UNECE, summarized the key factors that make the SEA procedure effective. Among them, he listed: an appropriate participatory process, scientifically sound SEA report where both, risks and opportunities, are identified, the solid estimation of the probable effects taken into consideration, and the prevention and mitigation measures are elaborated accordingly. These would ensure an effective process of SEA, using all opportunities to influence the planning process accordingly, and facilitate the decision-makers' commitment to the SEA results.

Overall, the workshop further facilitated the application of SEA in the country and supported national authorities by highlighting the benefits of SEA as well as taking stock of the existing challenges and opportunities in the country's evolving SEA system. The event involved a broad range of stakeholders, in particular, at the local level.

## 6. Acknowledgments

The workshop was jointly prepared within the EU-funded EU4Environment programme by the UNECE secretariat to the Espoo Convention and its Protocol on SEA, and the Ministry of Agriculture, Regional Development and Environment of the Republic of Moldova.

The workshop was facilitated by the consultants to UNECE: Mr. Michal Musil (Integra Consulting Ltd.), and Ms. Natalia Guranda (EcoContact /Aarhus Centre for Environmental Information and Consultation).

## Annex 1: Agenda of the event

**AGENDA**  
**23 April 2021**  
 Chisinau time: 9:30 – 12:35  
 CET: 08:30 – 11:35

Time (Chisinau)	Item
9:00 – 09.30	Connection testing (30 min)
9:30 – 09.45	<p><b>Welcoming remarks</b></p> <p><b>Ms. Valentina Țapeș</b>, State Secretary, Ministry of Agriculture, Regional Development and Environment, Republic of Moldova</p> <p><b>Mr. Gintautas Baranauskas</b>, Deputy Head of Operations, EU Delegation to the Republic of Moldova</p> <p><b>Mr. Leonid Kalashnyk</b>, Environmental Affairs Officer, EU4Environment Project Manager at UNECE</p>
9:45 – 10.00	<p><b>Meeting objectives and agenda, introduction of participants</b>  <i>Facilitated by Mr. Michal Musil and Ms. Natalia Guranda, consultants to UNECE</i></p>
10:00 – 10.20	<p><b>Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA): Purpose, process, and benefits</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Objective, principles, and benefits</li> <li>• Procedural steps</li> <li>• UNECE Protocol on SEA and EU SEA Directive</li> </ul> <p><i>Presentation by Mr. Michal Musil, consultant to UNECE</i></p>
10.20 – 11.30	<p><b>SEA in Moldova: Legislation and practical experience</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Practical experience from the pilot SEA application in the Republic of Moldova  <i>Presentation by Ms. Natalia Guranda, consultant to UNECE</i></li> <li>• Current state and practical aspects of SEA in Moldova (national legal framework, experience with SEA application, typical issues etc.)  <i>Presentation:</i>  <i>Ms. Maria Nagornii, Head of Pollution Prevention and Environmental Assessment Policy Division, MARDE</i>  <i>Ms. Iordanca – Rodica Iordanov, Executive Director PA EcoContact</i></li> <li>• Recent developments: amendment of the national legal framework for SEA  <i>Presentation by Ms. Irina Punga, legal consultant to UNECE</i></li> </ul>

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<b>11.30 – 11.40</b>	<b>Break</b>
<b>11:40 – 12.20</b>	<b>SEA implementation in the Republic of Moldova: What next?</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• SEA legislation refining</li><li>• Guidelines and Quality control</li><li>• Capacity building</li><li>• Other</li></ul> <i>Facilitated by consultants to UNECE and Mr. Leonid Kalashnyk, UNECE</i>
<b>12:20 – 12.35</b>	<b>Closing: summary and further steps</b> <i>Mr. Leonid Kalashnyk, UNECE</i>

## Annex 2: List of Participants

### LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

**Total number of participants: 80**

**Female participants: 46**

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