

STRENGTHENING NATIONAL AND REGIONAL
CAPACITIES AND CO-OPERATION ON
STRATEGIC ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT
(SEA) IN CENTRAL ASIA, INCLUDING AS A
RESPONSE TO CLIMATE CHANGE

KAZAKHSTAN: NEEDS ASSESSMENT
REPORT

Final version, 9 November 2020

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AAP	Advisory Assistance Programme for environmental protection in the countries of Central and Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia and other countries neighbouring the European Union
CSO	Civil Society Organization
E&S	Environmental and social
EIA	Environmental Impact Assessment (OVOS)
ESIA	Environmental and Social Impact Assessment
EU	European Union
MEGNR	Ministry of Ecology, Geology and Natural Resources of the Republic of Kazakhstan
OSCE	Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe
SEA	Strategic Environmental Assessment
SEE	State Environmental Expertise (Review)
UNECE	United Nations Economic Commission for Europe

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1. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

This draft report has been prepared in the framework of the project “Strengthening national and regional capacities and co-operation on Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) in Central Asia, including as a response to climate change”¹ (hereinafter also “the SEA Project”). It summarises the results of the needs assessment survey carried out by a team of international and national consultants from January to March 2020 with an analysis of the existing and required national capacities for introducing a national strategic environmental assessment system in Kazakhstan in line with the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) Protocol on SEA². The outcomes and conclusions of the needs assessment represent a basis for developing an action plan for introducing a national SEA system in Kazakhstan.

This draft report will be distributed for comments to the national stakeholders in November 2020 followed by the presentation and discussion at an online workshop scheduled to take place by the end of 2020 or in early 2021.

1.1. Introduction to the project

The project ‘*Strengthening national and regional capacities and co-operation on Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) in Central Asia, including as a response to climate change*’ aims to support development of the national and regional capacities on SEA as an essential tool for sustainable economic development and as a means to address specific environmental challenges, including climate change. The project focuses mainly on the environmental and sectoral planning governmental authorities, however other relevant stakeholders have also been invited to participate in the project activities. The SEA project will result in:

- Enhanced awareness on SEA – its benefits, principles, and steps to be carried out in SEA;
- Better capacities to coordinate SEA processes (by competent environmental authorities);
- Improved co-operation within and across the countries involved in the SEA project.

The beneficiary countries of the project are Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan.

The project implementation involves the following main steps:

- Step 1: Conducting needs assessment survey on SEA in the beneficiary countries and drafting the national needs assessment reports.
- Step 2: Organizing 1-day national awareness workshops on SEA to discuss the findings of the needs assessment report survey.
- Step 3: Preparing the initial draft of the action plans to introduce and further develop a national SEA system.

¹ The project was launched in October 2019 and will be finalized in 2021. It has been implemented by the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) in close co-operation with the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) with the funding from the German Federal Ministry for the Environment, Nature Conservation, Building and Nuclear Safety by the Advisory Assistance Programme for environmental protection in the countries of Central and Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia and other countries neighbouring the European Union (AAP).

² More information about the Protocol on SEA can be found on the UNECE website: https://www.unece.org/env/eia/sea_protocol.html.

- Step 4: Organizing regional conference, which will invite representatives of all beneficiary countries, to present and discuss the results of the project.
- Step 5: Finalizing the country reports.

1.2. **Structure of the needs assessment report**

The report includes the following chapters:

- *Introduction to SEA* (chapter 2) explaining the purpose and objectives as well as the key principles of SEA application and expected benefits.
- *Methodological approach* (chapter 3) which describes the design of the needs assessment survey including assumptions made and challenges encountered.
- *An overview of the legal framework for environmental assessment* (chapter 4) providing a brief information about the existing (both in force and draft) national legislative framework for environmental assessment in Kazakhstan.
- *Summary of results and interpretation* (chapter 5) with an overview of feedback received through the needs assessment survey, and a summary of the results together with comments on the main findings.
- *Conclusions* (chapter 6) summarizing needs and priorities for introducing the SEA practice in accordance with the Protocol on SEA and outlining initial suggestions to be reflected in the action plan.

2. INTRODUCTION TO SEA

2.1. Purpose and objectives

SEA is internationally recognized as the key instrument for integrating environmental and health considerations into strategic planning and decision-making to prevent and mitigate possible damage from economic and regional development³. It sets out the obligatory consultation of environmental and health authorities and the public to provide decision-makers early warning of unsustainable options and contributes to the reduction and management of health risks. It promotes sustainable development goals and principles, supports efforts towards the transition to a green economy, and increases the legitimacy of planning and decision-making processes and their outcomes. Moreover, it may allow countries to consider health risks and mitigation measures for pandemics as part of their planning processes, promoting healthy lifestyles, enhancing socioeconomic conditions to enable people to thrive and improving access to good quality health and social care.

The UNECE Protocol on SEA⁴ defines SEA as “...*the evaluation of the likely environmental, including health, effects, which comprises the determination of the scope of an environmental report and its preparation, the carrying-out of public participation and consultations, and the taking into account of the environmental report and the results of the public participation and consultations in a plan or programme.*” (Article 2.6).

According to the Protocol on SEA, the objective of SEA is to ensure that environmental, including health, considerations are thoroughly taken into account in the development of plans and programmes in support of environmentally sound and sustainable development. In particular, SEA assists authorities responsible for plans or programmes, as well as decision-makers, to take into account:

- Key environmental trends, potentials and constraints that may affect or may be affected by the plan or programme.
- Environmental objectives and indicators that are relevant to the plan or programme.
- Likely significant environmental effects of proposed options and the implementation of the plan or programme.
- Measures to avoid, reduce or mitigate adverse effects and to enhance positive effects.
- Views and information from the relevant authorities, the public and, as relevant, potentially affected States.

SEA can be applied to a wide range of governmental plans, programmes, policies, and other strategic documents, which establish the basis for future decisions on projects (which may require Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA or OVOS, as it is abbreviated in Russian language) in such diverse fields as agriculture, forestry, fisheries, energy, industry (including mining), transport, regional development, waste management, water management, telecommunications, tourism, town and country planning, and land use.

³ See e.g. Manual for Trainers on Application of the Protocol on Strategic Environmental Assessment (UNECE, 2018, <https://www.unece.org/index.php?id=48758>) or Protocol on Strategic Environmental Assessment: Facts and Benefits (UNECE, 2016, <https://www.unece.org/index.php?id=42853>).

⁴ Protocol on Strategic Environmental Assessment to the Convention on Environmental Impact Assessment in a Transboundary Context (Espoo Convention).

2.2. **Benefits of SEA**

In general, the effective and consistent application of SEA to economic and regional development planning can considerably assist countries in attaining sustainable development goals, greening their economies, and addressing climate change. Particular benefits include:

- **Higher level of environmental and health protection:** SEA identifies likely significant environmental and health effects of proposed strategic development options, and it equips planning authorities with suggestions to mitigate adverse effects and opens the planning to alternative development opportunities early in decision-making cycle.
- **Promoting sustainable economic development and facilitation of the green economies:** SEA helps reaching green economy targets by considering sustainable alternatives and innovations and encouraging the search for win-win options for further economic development within the carrying capacity of ecosystems.
- **Improved planning by encouraging planners to consider a full range of risks and opportunities for more sustainable forms of development:** introducing a well-structured SEA framework makes national planning more systematic, less sporadic and ultimately more effective.
- **More efficient decision-making:** Decision-making at the strategic level, which considers SEA outcomes, usually leads to fewer appeals and less discussion at the operational level. Such decision-making processes save time and are thus cost-effective.
- **Improved governance by fostering higher transparency in planning and programming:** SEA provides clear procedures for consultation and communication between the key national and local planning authorities, business and civil society (including CSOs).
- **Prevention of costly mistakes that arise from neglecting environmental and health effects** by providing early warning signals about environmentally unsustainable development options. SEA reduces the risk of costly remediation of harm or corrective actions, such as relocating or redesigning facilities.
- **Strengthened environmental assessment processes at the project level⁵:** SEA can address effects that are difficult to grasp at the project level; in particular, SEA can provide an early warning of large-scale and cumulative effects. Therefore, certain aspects can be solved already at the strategic level, which streamlines application of environmental assessment at the project level.
- **Prevention of intersectoral conflicts between various economic sectors within the country** by examining the relationship of a plan or programme to other plans and programmes at the earliest stage of planning and offering alternatives that can help to avoid conflicts.
- Providing a **tool for climate change adaptation and mitigation** by introducing climate change considerations into development planning.
- Promotion of **effective regional cooperation** to address environmental issues and facilitation of **transboundary consultations** between the relevant national authorities and the public concerned regarding a plan or programme that could have adverse transboundary effects on the environment of a neighbouring state (e.g. shared protected areas, waterways, transport connections or and transboundary pollution).

⁵ This includes mainly EIA or OVOS.

2.3. **Key principles of SEA application**

To leverage on its benefits described above, SEA should be conducted effectively following a set of general guiding principles⁶ below providing that SEA should:

- Be undertaken by an authority responsible for a plan or programme and be integrated into and customized to the logic of the plan- or programme-making process.
- Be applied as early as possible in the decision-making process, when all the alternatives and options remain open for consideration.
- Focus on the key issues that matter in the relevant stages of the plan- or programme-making process. This will facilitate the process being undertaken in a timely, cost-effective and credible manner.
- Evaluate a reasonable range of alternatives, recognizing that their scope will vary with the level of decision-making. Wherever possible and appropriate, it should identify the best practicable environmental option.
- Provide appropriate opportunities for the involvement of the authorities, the public and other key stakeholders throughout the process, starting from its earliest stages, and in accordance with clearly formulated procedures. Ideally, it should employ easy-to-use consultation techniques that are suitable for the target groups.
- Be carried out with appropriate and cost-effective methods and techniques of analysis. It should achieve its objectives within the limits of the available information, time and resources, and should gather information only in the amount and detail necessary for sound decision-making.

⁶ Adapted from UNECE Resource Manual on SEA (2012) and IAIA. 2002. Strategic Environmental Assessment: Performance Criteria. Fargo, ND: International Association for Impact Assessment.

3. METHODOLOGICAL APPROACH TO THE NEEDS ASSESSMENT

3.1. Purpose and objectives

The needs assessment represents a basis for preparing the action plan to introduce a national SEA system in Kazakhstan, and thus its objectives are defined as follows:

- To identify the current status of the environmental assessment system in Kazakhstan and existing challenges in application of the national environmental assessment procedures to plans and programmes or other governmental strategic documents;
- To determine gaps in the existing national environmental assessment system vis-à-vis SEA systems in the Parties to the Protocol on SEA, which apply SEA as a standard tool in accordance with the Protocol and also the European Union (EU) SEA Directive;
- To estimate capacities (both current and needed in future) for conducting SEA processes in line with the Protocol on SEA;
- To identify the needs of the key stakeholder groups to undertake SEA, as well as priorities and specific actions necessary to introduce and further develop a national SEA system (including actions to promote acceptability of introducing the SEA system by the key decision-makers);
- To identify potential challenges which may slow down or prevent further progress in establishing/developing national SEA systems;
- To identify main target groups and a desired focus for further capacity building and awareness raising activities on SEA.

3.2. Design of the needs assessment survey

The needs assessment employed the following three methods for collecting the relevant information:

- A questionnaire survey among the participants of the study tour to Germany⁷ (which also served as an initial feedback to the draft questionnaire for fine-tuning the questions);
- Semi-structured face-to-face interviews with the key stakeholders during the first mission of the international consultants to Kazakhstan (Nur-Sultan, 20 – 21 January 2020);
- A questionnaire survey among other relevant national stakeholders via follow-up email communication (February 2020).

A questionnaire prepared for the survey covered the following topics:

- General information on the respondent's (personal and/or institutional) background;
- Past experience of the respondents with environmental assessment;
- Planning and environmental (including health) context in the country;
- Existing strengths of the current environmental assessment system and challenges in application of the national OVOS and State Ecological Expertise (SEE) procedures for plans and programmes;

⁷ Organized within the SEA project from 2 till 6 December 2019, relevant information and documents are available at <https://www.unece.org/index.php?id=53288>.

- State of play with regard to SEA legal framework and SEA practice, and their inter-relation;
- Existing capacities for SEA and likely future needs; and
- Priorities and actions needed to introduce and further develop a national SEA system.

An additional set of questions was designed to encourage interviewees to provide broader views on each topic during face to face interviews.

The target group for the needs assessment survey included mainly the organisations and individuals who were and/or potentially would be involved in any SEA-related activities in the country, such as pilot applications of SEA, training workshops and awareness raising events, legislative reforms, and potential future application of SEA. An initial identification of the participants of the needs assessment survey was conducted during the study tour on SEA to Germany. In addition, further contacts were provided by the national experts.

Altogether eight interviews with selected stakeholders were carried out during a fact-finding mission of the international consultants to Kazakhstan (Nur-Sultan, 20 – 21 January 2020). The questionnaire was distributed to 12 respondents (organisations and individuals) out of whom 9 respondents submitted the responses.

A questionnaire and the list of interviewees are provided in Annex 1 and Annex 2, respectively, to the report.

3.3. Main elements of an effective SEA system

To identify the gaps in the current national environmental assessment system in Kazakhstan vis-à-vis the SEA systems in the Parties, which apply SEA as a standard tool in accordance with the Protocol in SEA, the following list of the main elements of an effective SEA system – designed taking into account the key principles for effective SEA application presented in section 2.3 above – was used to guide the needs assessment:

- Legislative framework on SEA is in force and aligned with the Protocol on SEA;
- Procedural steps of SEA, including consultations with environmental and health authorities, public participation and transboundary consultations, are well established and followed in practice;
- Authorities responsible for preparation of the plans and programmes:
 - Are aware of their SEA-related responsibilities and tasks;
 - Have sufficient capacities to perform these tasks;
 - Allocate appropriate financial means for carrying out SEA;
- Environmental authorities:
 - Are aware of their SEA-related responsibilities and tasks;
 - Have sufficient capacities to perform these tasks;
- Health authorities:
 - Are aware of their SEA-related responsibilities and tasks;
 - Have sufficient capacities to perform these tasks;
- The public is aware of the opportunities to participate in SEA processes;
- The decision-makers:
 - Are aware of their SEA-related responsibilities and tasks;
 - Have sufficient capacities to perform these tasks;
- There are practitioners/experts able to conduct SEA;

- Relevant methods and techniques are known and used/can be used in SEA by SEA practitioners;
- A quality control system is established and performed;
- Mechanism/platform enabling information sharing on SEA processes is in place.

4. DEVELOPMENT OF SEA IN KAZAKHSTAN

Since 2017, the Republic of Kazakhstan, being a Party to the UNECE Convention on Environmental Impact Assessment in a Transboundary Context (Espoo Convention) since 2001 and aiming to support its “green economy” reform, has been making progress in introducing a national institutional and legislative framework on SEA and EIA in line with the Espoo Convention and its the Protocol on SEA

In particular, with assistance from the UNECE secretariat to the Espoo Convention and funding from the EU project ‘Supporting Kazakhstan’s Transition to a Green Economy Model’, the Government of Switzerland and the OSCE Programme Office in Nur-Sultan⁸, Kazakhstan initiated a legislative reform of its national environmental system. At the end of 2018 the draft legislation on SEA was developed. As of June 2020, the draft was still to be adopted further to the extensive consultation with the national stakeholders carried out in the course of 2019 and 2020. In parallel with developing its new SEA legislation, Kazakhstan also conducted its first ever pilot SEA of the national Concept for development of fuel and energy complex until 2030.⁹

Draft provisions on SEA and EIA¹⁰ were integrated in the draft Environmental Code of Kazakhstan that has been discussed by the Parliament since February 2020. According to the draft Environmental Code, SEA should apply to only certain plans and programmes, but not policies and legislation. If adopted, the SEA provisions shall enter into force only in 2025.

⁸ The information about the project can be found at <https://www.unece.org/environmental-policy/conventions/environmental-assessment/areas-of-work/by-subregion/enveiasubregionscentral-asia/kazakhstan.html>

⁹ Both activities were implemented with the assistance of the UNECE with funding from the EU project “Supporting Kazakhstan’s Transition to a Green Economy Model”. More information is available at: <http://www.unece.org/environmental-policy/conventions/environmental-assessment/areas-of-work/by-subregion/enveiasubregionscentral-asia/kazakhstan.html>

¹⁰ The draft amendments can be found at <https://www.unece.org/index.php?id=50432>

5. SUMMARY OF RESULTS AND INTERPRETATION

The detailed findings and results of the needs assessment survey are presented in Annex 3.

5.1. **Consideration of environmental and health issues in the planning processes – current practice**

First, the survey focused on the extent to which environmental and health issues were covered in the strategic planning processes in Kazakhstan. The opinions of the respondents varied significantly. For instance, one respondent believed that such issues were not analysed at all, while the other two respondents indicated that environmental and health issues were analysed and taken into account during decision-making.

Such differing opinions may be attributed to diverse personal experiences of the respondents. For effective SEA application, the consideration of both environmental and health issues needs to be strengthened when preparing the plans and programmes.

The respondents considered that plans and programme developed for such sectors of Kazakhstan as i) industry, ii) energy, iii) water management, and iv) agriculture were likely to have significant environmental and/or health effects. These results reflect the current economic profile of Kazakhstan with energy and mining being the main sectors. Water management was also highly rated, possibly owing to a good understanding of the importance of water resources for the overall economic development and human health. The responses demonstrate a clear understanding of the sectors with a higher potential to cause significant environmental and health effects in the national context.

The respondents were asked to name the strategic documents, prepared by their agencies, likely requiring SEA, if any. The respondents representing the Ministry of Ecology, Geology and Natural Resources of Kazakhstan (MEGNR) listed several strategic documents prepared by the Ministry in the area of the environment, natural resources, and waste management, the state programmes for municipal waste management, management of fish resources, development of the geological industry, and Strategic Development Plan of the MEGNR for 2017-2021¹¹. The respondents stated that although none of these documents had been previously a subject to SEA due to the absence of the legislation, the Ministry considers a possibility of conducting SEAs for the currently developed plans/programmes to test the SEA procedure proposed by the draft Environmental Code.

One of the respondents also noted that the strategic documents currently being developed by the Ministry (listed above) should undergo the SEE procedure, and that the resultant SEE Conclusions should contain relevant environmental requirements to be further implemented.

5.2. **Existing challenges and strengths of current application environmental assessment tools in the country**

The respondents were asked to indicate the existing challenges for and strengths of the application of environmental assessment tools – EIA/OVOS, ESIA, SEE etc. in Kazakhstan, including those that can be expected in relation to SEA.

The existing challenges for carrying out environmental assessment within the current system in the country (i.e. OVOS/SEE), including the experience related to the pilot SEA application, as indicated by the respondents, can be grouped into four categories, namely:

1. **Capacities**, notably the lack thereof, within both the governmental authorities and environmental assessment expert/practitioners;

¹¹ It should be noted that if this plan only outlines some strategic directions of the institutional development of the Ministry, it won't be subject to SEA. However, in case the plan is intended to stipulate the priorities and objectives for managing the issues / natural resources under the Ministry's responsibility, it may require an SEA.

2. **Institutional arrangement**, including unclear roles and responsibilities of the main actions, such as sectoral, environmental and health authorities, in SEA;
3. **Limited monitoring and evaluation mechanisms** to ensure that SEA conclusions are followed during implementation of the strategic documents; and
4. **Non-existing national legal framework for SEA.**

In view of the respondents, making SEA systems operational might face a number of challenges, including those related to low awareness about SEA among the state planning and environmental bodies, as well as some reluctance to apply it, and limited capacities at the national and regional levels among the authorities. While the lack of the capacities and no clarity about the roles of SEA actors could have been expected in the light of the absent SEA legislation and limited SEA practice in the country, a high ranking of weak monitoring for SEA indicates a lack of such a system (in this context it needs to be noted that environmental monitoring during the implementation of plans or programmes often represents a practical challenge).

Insufficient capacities of environmental authorities and expert capacities to coordinate and carry out SEA processes relate directly to the key factors necessary for effective SEA application. Efforts to launch a working SEA system should obviously focus on raising both institutional and expert capacities.

The respondents stressed that a legal act regulating the SEA procedure should be developed and adopted, and that SEAs should be implemented at the regional and district *oblast* levels, optimally in advance of the SEA provisions of the Environmental Code entering into force in 2025. These responses link further to the priorities and actions that need to be implemented in the future to make SEA useful and effective in Kazakhstan.

In addition, it should be noted that a high ranking of 'weak monitoring and post-project analysis' in EIA raises a concern on how the recommendations of EIAs are practically delivered by the developers when implementing the projects (construction, operation, or decommissioning) and/or are controlled by the state authorities (e.g. in terms of compliance with the requirements set out in SEE conclusions). This is an important aspect to be reflected when introducing SEA practice i.e. with an emphasis to be given to establishment of a proper monitoring scheme for strategic documents.

The key strengths of the environmental assessment tools, as perceived by the respondents, can be grouped as follows:

1. **Funding:** Sufficient finances for conducting SEAs were mentioned to be a major strength. This may stem from the recognition that Kazakhstan – as a country with a strong economy – is well-positioned to allocate necessary funds. However, it needs to be noted that no commitments have been made by the Government to finance SEA application so far.
2. **Legislation:** Although the draft SEA legislation has not been adopted yet, the existing draft was perceived as 'profound and clear' by two respondents.
3. **Capacities:** Several respondents believe that there are sufficient capacities among the experts to carry out relevant SEA analyses and prepare good-quality environmental reports.

5.3. State of development of legal SEA framework and SEA practice, and their inter-relation

While the legal requirements on SEA have been drafted (not adopted yet), the practice of SEA is obviously lagging behind. It is therefore advisable that any future SEA pilots or national SEA cases should be conducted in line with the national SEA regulations, even if not adopted yet (while the SEA pilot carried out in 2017 – 2018 was based on the provisions of the Protocol on SEA). Wherever the SEA provisions in the draft Environment Code lack specifics, their delivery can rely on existing international guidelines on SEA (developed under UNECE Secretariat, EC, or other international institutions e.g. the OECD DAC).

5.4. Existing capacities for SEA and likely future demand for SEA capacities

Perception of SEA benefits and added value

The respondents were given a set of statements about SEA, reflecting its benefits or potential associated concerns, and were asked to rank them according to the extent the respondents agree with them.

The responses demonstrate the overall familiarity of the respondents with certain benefits of SEA, including those related to: i) a consensus building, ii) greening economies and moving towards achieving sustainable development goals, and iii) improved quality of plan/programmes via public consultations. They also reveal that Kazakhstan may also leverage on these benefits when applying SEA to its plans and programmes.

The responses regarding SEA benefits implicitly refer to the pilot SEA and associated capacity building events, carried out in 2017 – 2018 for the updates of the Concept for Development of Fuel and Energy Complex of the Republic of Kazakhstan until 2030¹², as majority of the respondents were involved in these activities.

In view of the respondents, further application of SEA in an effective manner is needed to establish routine procedures – this requires additional pilot application at the initial phase of the introduction of the national SEA system.

Use of guidelines and instruction

The respondents were asked to list environmental assessment guidelines and instruction documents, in case such were used in their / their institutions' practice. One of the respondents indicated that no environmental assessment guidelines were used in his/her practice, whereas the others named numerous documents. In particular, the respondents also found themselves familiar with the available national guidance documents and guidelines on EIA and SEE, guidance and methodological recommendations produced by the Russian Federation, and the UNECE Resource Manual on SEA that were referred to during the training sessions delivered under the pilot SEA for the Energy Strategy.

On the other hand, the existing guidelines or guiding documents on EIA, including those produced under the Espoo Convention, were not named and thus are considered as not known to the respondents. This may indicate that no trainings on EIA practice have been conducted recently, and therefore there is a limited awareness about the existence of such guiding documents that subject among the respondents.

Advice of environmental assessment

The respondents were asked where they usually sought advice on environmental assessment (e.g. methods to be applied). The responses show that advice on environmental assessments is often sought from 'environmental consultancies'. This indicates that there are competent companies in Kazakhstan that should be able to carry out SEA. This finding links back to the previous conclusion that there are sufficient capacities among the experts to carry out relevant SEA analyses and prepare good-quality environmental reports (Section 5.2 above).

It is noteworthy that the actors engaged in environmental assessment more often seek advice from the relevant officials of the environmental and/or health institutions, from friends and/or acquaintances from abroad working on similar tasks, and/or from the relevant officials of other sectoral institutions than from researchers / research institutions. This leads to the conclusion

¹² The information about the pilot project on Strategic Environmental Assessment in energy sector of Kazakhstan (2017 - 2018) can be found at <https://www.unece.org/environmental-policy/conventions/environmental-assessment/areas-of-work/by-subregion/enveiasubregionscentral-asia/kazakhstan.html>

that the research institutions, although having a strong hard and soft science standing, have limited expertise in teaching or conducting environmental assessment.

Managing future SEA

The respondents were asked whether it was clear who would be in charge of managing the SEA(s) on behalf of their institutions when SEA becomes a legal requirement or on a pilot basis. The respondents from the MEGNR, suggested that two structural units of the MEGNR – Department of Environmental Policy and Sustainable Development and the Committee for Environmental Regulation and Control – should be responsible for the implementation of the SEA regulations at the MEGNR.

The respondents also suggested that staff of the environmental departments at the regional and district levels requires training to be able to coordinate and oversee SEA and/or quality control SEA reports as needed. In the absence of any responses from sectoral authorities it was not possible to identify their internal division of SEA responsibilities that would help designing in the future a process for managing SEA procedures.

The needs assessment further looked into the “who would be expected to conduct the SEA and prepare the SEA reports”. The common opinion was that the actual preparation of SEA reports could be delegated / outsourced to external consultancies / groups of environmental experts. The latter could combine their competencies with strategic planning experts, if needed. The respondents also acknowledged that the preparation of the SEA reports would require specialist inputs from the staff of the ‘contracting’ planning authority.

The respondents did not provide any estimates of a number of plans/programmes to be subject to SEA.

5.5. Future priorities and actions (including needs for capacity development)

The respondents were asked to select and prioritise actions needed to introduce and establish a SEA system. In view of the respondents, the adoption of the legislative framework on SEA is the key priority actions. However, recognising that the mere availability of the Law cannot guarantee an effective application of SEA, a great importance was also assigned to the preparation of the guiding documents on specific SEA topics or procedural aspects, and the support of the national networking and establishment of an information sharing system.

Taking into account the experience gained during the pilot application of SEA in Kazakhstan, the respondents also prioritised further pilot applications of SEA, in particular in combination with capacity building and awareness raising activities. In fact, awareness raising events for various stakeholders would be instrumental for completing the legislative reforms.

6. CONCLUSIONS

6.1. Summary of the identified gaps between the current environmental assessment system and the main elements of an effective SEA system

This section summarizes the findings from the needs assessment survey and interviews conducted in Nur-Sultan vis-à-vis the main elements of a SEA system enabling an effective application of SEA in accordance with the Protocol on SEA as referred to in section 3.3 above. The findings regarding the draft national legislation on SEA are made on the SEA provisions of the draft Environmental Code i.e. paragraph 2 on SEA, sections 62 – 74 (version as of 30 December 2019), hereinafter the ‘draft SEA provisions’.

6.1.1. Legislative framework is in force and aligned with the Protocol on SEA

The draft Environment Code has not been adopted as of September 2020 (the draft was submitted to the Parliament in February 2020 after the intergovernmental consultations carried out in the course of 2019, however the discussion was interrupted before summer and continue in September 2020). If adopted, the SEA provisions shall enter into force only in 2025 having only recommendatory nature between 2021 and 2025.

Concerns were raised during interviews that the SEA provisions can be significantly reduced or completely excluded from the Environmental Code during its further consideration at the Parliament. It was mentioned that this might be due to a lack of general awareness about the benefits of SEA for Kazakhstan, and perhaps also because of belief that decision-making powers with regard to strategic planning could be shifted from sectoral to environmental authorities as a result of SEA. In this regard, it is important to emphasize that in line with the general principles of SEA as well as according to the Protocol on SEA, the SEA is of a recommendatory nature. The SEA conclusions have to be ‘taken into account’ in the decision-making and a statement summarising how the environmental, including health, considerations have been integrated into the plan or programme (as adopted) has to be made available after the plan or programme is adopted.

In the absence of a national legislative framework on SEA, the SEA application will only be possible on a pilot or voluntary basis, with a very limited scope without leveraging on the SEA benefits.

To this end, the project team notes that although a pilot SEA application provides an important opportunity to ‘test’ SEA approaches and build necessary capacities, it cannot fully replace regular SEA application following the national legislation.

Regarding the compliance of the draft national SEA legislation with the Protocol on SEA, the project team notes that the draft SEA provisions require carrying out SEA only for the state programmes in the sectors of agriculture, forestry, fisheries, energy, industry (including exploration and mining), transport, waste management, water management, telecommunications, tourism, development planning of urban and rural territories, and use and protection of land. Thus, a number of strategic documents referred to in articles 2(5), 4(2) and 4(3) of the Protocol on SEA, including territorial development programmes, have been excluded from the scope of application of SEA in Kazakhstan at the time of drafting this report. However, it needs to be stressed out that an in-depth legal analysis was not intended to be carried out as a part of this needs assessment survey.

Moreover, provisions of Article 11 of the Protocol on SEA do not seem to be fully transposed, in particular regarding the statement summarizing how the environmental, including health, considerations have been integrated in the strategic document, how the comments during public participation, consultations with environmental and health authorities, and transboundary consultations have been taken into account, and the reasons for adopting the strategic document in the light of the reasonable alternatives considered.

6.1.2. Procedural steps of SEA including consultations are well established and followed in practice

The draft SEA provisions stipulate the following stages of the SEA procedure:

- Determining the need for SEA (screening);
- Determining the scope of SEA report (scoping);
- Preparation of SEA report;
- Quality assessment of SEA report;
- Consideration of SEA in the strategic document before its approval; and
- Monitoring.

In addition, there are provisions regarding public participation and consultations with the environmental and health authorities during the SEA process, and the requirements on information to be provided to the public. Thus, it can be concluded that the stages outlined in the draft SEA provisions reflect main stages of SEA – however, an in-depth legal analysis would be needed to be carried out to confirm this conclusion. The application of SEA procedure in practice could not be evaluated due to not yet adopted national SEA legislation.

The respondents and interviewees also suggested that arranging a SEA process in parallel with planning process – as a precondition for an efficient SEA application – might be challenging in Kazakhstan without necessary adjustments of its current planning practice. Therefore, the detailed methodological guidelines will be needed to ensure effective application of the SEA procedure in the country.

6.1.3. Authorities responsible for preparation of the plans and programmes:

- **Are aware of their SEA-related responsibilities and tasks;**
- **Have sufficient capacities to perform these tasks;**
- **Allocate appropriate financial means for carrying out SEA;**

As no feedback from the planning authorities was provided during the needs assessment survey, their awareness about SEA-related responsibilities, capacities and funds could not be evaluated.

However, the survey results received from the other respondents indicates that the limited awareness about SEA and its benefits and capacities within governmental authorities to coordinate environmental assessment procedures may be assumed in Kazakhstan. Despite awareness raising efforts during the 2017 – 2018 legislative drafting and the pilot application of SEA in Kazakhstan in 2018, due to a high turnover of the governmental staff in the recent years, additional and continuous efforts are still needed to reach and sustain the results achieved at the time.

The results of the survey suggest that respondents do not consider budgetary aspects as a significant challenge on the way to introduce SEA. However, further dedicated discussions might be necessary to properly address budget implications for carrying out SEA for governmental strategic documents, including with regard to involving ‘in-house’ expertise (i.e. governmental staff), sub-contracting practitioners and consulting companies¹³, organizing efficient public participation, collecting environmental and health data, and conducting relevant analyses.

¹³ It was pointed out during interviews that ‘outsourcing SEA’, i.e. sub-contracting environmental experts and/or consulting companies to carry out SEA, may be the option preferred by the governmental planning agencies.

6.1.4. Environmental authorities:

- **Are aware of their SEA-related responsibilities and tasks;**
- **Have sufficient capacities to perform these tasks;**

The Ministry of Ecology, Geology and Natural Resources of the Republic of Kazakhstan (MEGNR) is the lead environmental authority involved in the ongoing legislative reforms on SEA and in the pilot SEA application for the Concept for development of fuel and energy complex until 2030. A number of the Ministry's staff has been aware of its SEA-related tasks and able to perform them. However, when a legislation is adopted the Ministry's capacity to coordinate SEA processes might appear insufficient, also owing to already mentioned regular staff rotation.

The survey results also reveal that a role of regional and district authorities in SEA should additionally be examined, in particular focusing on environmental departments within the regional authorities that might need to enhance their skill sets when tasked with coordinating regional/district level SEAs.

6.1.5. Health authorities:

- **Are aware of their SEA-related responsibilities and tasks;**
- **Have sufficient capacities to perform these tasks;**

According to the draft SEA provisions, health authorities should be involved in the SEA processes – to provide their opinion in the screening, scoping, on the quality of the environmental report, as well as to publish relevant information on their websites. In the absence of the responses to the questionnaire from the health authorities, it was not possible to verify an assumption (based on the experience from other regions, e.g. from the EU Eastern Partnership countries¹⁴) that health authorities in Kazakhstan are not yet well equipped to perform its functions within the proposed SEA system. However, taking into account the experience in other countries, the below sections on the capacities needed for SEA and preliminary suggestions on how to reflect survey's findings in the action plan addressing health authorities and a necessity to build their capacities to enable them to be properly involved in the SEA application.

6.1.6. The public is aware of the opportunities to participate in SEA processes

The survey results reveal that the public awareness regarding public participation opportunities afforded to it within the SEA procedure is limited, in particular at the regional and local level. Moreover, the recent capacity building activities on SEA in Kazakhstan have mainly invited governmental officials from planning agencies and environmental and health authorities.

6.1.7. The decision-makers:

- **Are aware of their SEA-related responsibilities and tasks;**
- **Have sufficient capacities to perform these tasks;**

There have been only limited opportunities for the decision-makers so far to get familiar with SEA (e.g. the final events organized within the legislative drafting and SEA pilot, or a high-level event organized in February 2020). Therefore, considering also previously mentioned

¹⁴ <https://www.euneighbours.eu/en/policy/eastern-partnership>

high turnover of governmental staff, it can be concluded that their level of awareness on SEA and capacities to perform relevant tasks is also limited.

6.1.8. There are practitioners/experts able to conduct SEA

The survey results and previous experience with the pilot application of SEA suggest that Kazakhstan has sufficient expert potential to carry out SEAs on regular basis. These experts can likely be recruited from EIA/OVOS practitioners of numerous companies performing EIAs in the current environmental assessment system. Although – as in many other countries – such approach may result in the first SEAs being influenced by EIA methodologies, it is still a good starting point for developing SEA capacities.

There are several other organisations that should likely be able to provide its services in SEA. For example, the Green Technologies Centre funded by the national budget or CSOs, including the Human Health Institute, Regional Environmental Centre of Central Asia, Ecological Forum of Non-governmental Organizations of Kazakhstan, Coalition for Green Economy and Global Partnership, Association of Environmental Non-governmental Organizations of Kazakhstan (EcoForum), and Astana Ecological Association.

Subsequently, providing training and methodological support on SEA to national research institutes, the national environmental experts, and CSOs and should be considered as one of the crucial elements in developing good national SEA practice. Optimally, experts should receive training on SEA and establish their network before the draft SEA provisions enter into force.

6.1.9. Relevant methods and techniques are known and used/can be used in SEA

The respondents of the survey are aware of a number of existing guiding documents on SEA – indicating that there is a certain level of awareness about methods and techniques to be used in SEA. However, only further national SEA practice, including examination of data availability, can help identify and develop SEA methods and techniques most suitable for the planning practice and the content of the plans and programmes developed by the governmental authorities of Kazakhstan.

6.1.10. A quality control system is established and performed

The draft SEA provisions stipulate ‘assessing the quality of the environmental report’ as one of the components of the SEA process. It further provides that *“the developer is required to submit the environmental report to the competent environmental and public health authorities for quality assessment. Based on the results of the environmental report quality assessment, the competent environmental authority decides whether the quality of the environmental report is satisfactory or unsatisfactory.”* The procedure of environmental report quality assessment is to be set out in the secondary legislation. Besides a formal quality control to be performed by the environmental and public health authorities, consultations with the relevant authorities and public participation can be considered as an element of a quality control system. Performance of the quality control outlined in the draft SEA provisions should be evaluated after the SEA practice starts.

6.1.11. Mechanism/platform enabling information sharing on SEA processes is in place

Establishing a database or register for SEA is not included in the draft SEA provisions, while such a need was mentioned during the interviews. As experience from other countries show, developing and launching similar system register is a challenging process. Therefore, initiation of the debate about the design, functions and technical features of the register in parallel with adoption process of the Environmental Code is recommended.

6.2. Needs for introducing the SEA practice in accordance with the Protocol on SEA

There is a clear need to introduce SEA practice in the country as the key tool for greening the national economy (and for providing other benefits as outlined in section 2.2). This, however, is strongly linked to entering into force of the Environmental Code as only with the national

legislation in place a regular SEA application can begin and evolve. In addition, once the Environmental Code is adopted, certain time will be needed to find an efficient institutional setting for the SEA system and to raise awareness of all relevant stakeholders of the principles of SEA application, its benefits and costs.

SEA is also expected to strengthen performance of the project level assessment by addressing relevant environmental and health issues already at the strategic level, which may also include suggestions towards monitoring at the project level that was considered a challenge by the respondents of the survey. Thus, some SEA capacity building activities are likely to address, at least partially, some EIA-related topics (e.g. approach to impact analyses, cumulative impacts, types of alternatives etc.). Subsequently, further SEA capacity development may provide opportunities to enhance governmental and expert capacities for EIA application.

6.3. Capacities needed for SEA

This section provides estimates of capacities needed to carry out SEA processes in Kazakhstan in terms of the forecasted workload (number of working days), in particular, the capacities of:

- Ministry of Ecology, Geology and Natural Resources in coordinating and supervising SEA procedures,
- Ministry of Healthcare in providing expert opinions/inputs in the main SEA steps, and
- the key planning ministries (i.e. Ministry of Energy, Ministry of National Economy, Ministry of Agriculture, Ministry of Industry and Infrastructural Development) and the planning agencies at the regional and district levels in carrying out SEA.

The estimates are based on the overview of the main planning schemes in Kazakhstan (see table below), and the workload anticipated for performing various tasks in the SEA process. As the scope of SEA application outlined in the draft Environmental Code differs from the requirements of the Protocol on SEA, two estimates are presented – one considering the current draft SEA provisions and another one considering the national SEA scheme fully in line with the Protocol.

It is important to note that costs in terms of financial means vary significantly among the countries – Parties to the Protocol – depending on types of the strategic documents, approaches to SEA, basis disposable income, GDP, etc. The recent evaluation of the SEA Directive¹⁵ concludes regarding the costs that *‘Nonetheless, the available data do not allow an understanding of the costs of the SEA process at EU level, or average estimates by type and plan/programme or even by a Member State. There is consensus among the stakeholders that in principle the costs of SEA are reasonable and that the benefits of carrying out a SEA outweigh the costs.’*

According to another EU study, the main costs related to SEA arise from the use of internal staff time, payments for expert advice and consultancy time, and publicity and publications. Of these, the staff and consultancy costs typically account for over 90% of all SEA costs¹⁶. In terms of time inputs, a UK study showed that most SEAs required approximately 70-80 person-days to be completed (roughly half of that time for scoping and the other half for the

¹⁵ European Commission, 2019: REFIT Evaluation of the SEA Directive. Available at <https://ec.europa.eu/environment/eia/sea-refit.htm>.

¹⁶ European Commission (1996), A study on costs and benefits in EIA/SEA. Available at <http://ec.europa.eu/environment/archives/eia/eia-studies-and-reports/eia-costs-benefit-en.htm>.

preparation of the environmental report)¹⁷. According to a survey from the Czech Republic¹⁸ on the efficiency of the SEA application, about 50% of SEAs required about 2 – 10 person-days from the planning authority. The recent Handbook of the Ministry of Defence of United Kingdom provides that ‘SEA could take 6 to 24 months and costs could be in the tens or hundreds of thousands of pounds’¹⁹.

Taking into account the experience of SEA application in various countries, the project team made the following estimates that can further be discussed and adjusted based on the consultations with the national stakeholders” (Table 1).

Table 1. Estimated workloads in relation to SEA tasks by state actor

Institution / organisation	Main tasks related to SEA	Estimate ^{20, 21} of person-days needed for one SEA	Comments
MEGNR	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Carrying out screening • Defining the scope of SEA report • Quality assessment of SEA report • Consultations with interested governmental bodies²² • Coordinating public participation 	30 – 40 person-days	The estimated number of days include also inputs of various MEGNR departments, which probably will provide expert opinions in various SEA stages
Ministry of Healthcare	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Providing expert opinion regarding the scope of SEA report • Providing expert opinion on the SEA report 	10 person-days	
Planning authority – ministry or regional/district authority (including the MEGNR and the Ministry of Healthcare if they are the owners of the strategic document)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Preparing the ToR for SEA practitioners and carrying out tender procedure • Coordinating communication between SEA and planning teams • Ensuring internal quality control • Communicating with MEGNR • Integrating SEA inputs in the strategic documents 	40 – 60 person-days	It is assumed that the strategic documents are prepared ‘in-house’ i.e. by internal expert team of the planning authority. It means that integration of the SEA inputs in the strategic document will require internal capacities.

¹⁷ R. Therivel and F. Walsh (2005), “The Strategic Environmental Assessment Directive in the UK: One Year On”, submitted to Environmental Impact Assessment Review.

¹⁸ Experience with application of SEA in the Czech Republic and UK: A Public Authorities’ Point of View (Musil, M. at el, EIA-IPPC-SEA Bulletin, 2010, in Czech language).

¹⁹ Ministry of Defence of United Kingdom, 2019: Sustainability & Environmental Appraisal Tools Handbook.

²⁰ It needs to be noted that this estimate is based on personal experience of the authors of this report with SEA application in EU and non-EU countries, as well as it reflects their knowledge of SEA systems in other countries.

²¹ This estimate assumes that SEA is largely carried out by the SEA practitioners (i.e. external experts) as this considered by the authors of this report as the most probable evolution of SEA practice in Kazakhstan (based on experience e.g. from the countries of the Eastern Partnership).

²² According to the draft SEA provisions, interested state bodies include state bodies and the local executive bodies, the functions of which may be affected by the implementation of the strategic document. The list of interested state bodies for each individual SEA is to be determined by the authorized body in the field of environmental protection (however, relevant health authorities and the local executive bodies have to be consulted in any case).

6.3.1. Capacities needed considering the scope of SEA application stipulated by the draft Environmental Code

The draft SEA provisions requires SEA only for the state programmes in the sectors of agriculture, forestry, fisheries, energy, industry (including exploration and mining), transport, waste management, water management, telecommunications, tourism, development planning of urban and rural territories, and use and protection of land. As provided in the table below, there are altogether 7 state programmes, which are to be updated every 5 years. It means that the first SEA application – on a voluntary basis – can be expected only in 2023 – 2024, followed by the first mandatory SEA in the period 2028 – 2029. It is probable that these SEAs will run in parallel over approximately a 1-year strategic planning period, i.e., as a maximum, 7 SEAs altogether will require between 210 – 350 working days of the MEGNR staff, approximately 70 working days of the Ministry of Healthcare, and between 280 – 420 working days on the side of a responsible planning ministry.

6.3.2. Capacities needed considering requirements of the Protocol on SEA and the EU SEA Directive

Table 2 below presents the scope of SEA application when the Protocol's provisions would be fully transposed to the Environmental Code. In this case, only another 3 strategic documents would require SEA at a national level.

However, at a sub-national, i.e. regional and district levels, a high number of territorial development programmes would require a SEA. It is estimated that there should be altogether 194 territorial development programmes out of which 14 regional, 3 for the cities of the national importance, and 177 at the district level. Similar to the state programmes, the territorial development programmes are supposed to be updated every 5 years (and then SEA should be applied according to the screening conclusion). It means there may be 194 SEA processes during 5-year long period i.e. around 40 SEA each year, which would represent a very high workload for the MEGNR (1,200 – 1,600 working days per year) as well as the Ministry of Healthcare (400 working days per year).

Table 2. Overview of existing strategic documents and planning schemes in Kazakhstan which may require SEA²³

Type/name of the strategic document	Description	Requirements regarding updates	Subject to SEA according to the draft Environmental Code	Subject to SEA according to the Protocol on SEA/SEA Directive
The Strategy for Development of the Republic of Kazakhstan until 2050	The key strategic document of the country with the main objective to become one of the thirty developed countries of the world.	NA	No	Yes ²⁴
The Strategic Plan for Development of the Republic of Kazakhstan until 2025		Every 10 years	No	Yes ²⁵
The National Security Strategy for 2017 –2020		At least every 5 years	No	No
Forecast of socio-economic development for 2020 – 2024		NA	No	No ²⁶
Forecast scheme of the spatial territorial development of the country until 2020	Approved by the Decree of the President of the Republic of Kazakhstan as of July 21, 2011 No. 118. There is also a draft Decree of the President of the Republic of Kazakhstan "On approval of the Forecast Scheme of the country's spatial territorial development until 2030".	Probably every 10 years	No	Yes
State Programmes	The strategic documents of an inter-sphere, inter-sectoral and inter-departmental nature that define goals, objectives and expected results in priority strategic areas of the country's development. The action plan for the implementation of the state programme is an integral part of the state programme and is developed with the aim of	Every 5 years	Yes	Yes

²³ This list follows the information about the State Programme provided at the official site <http://government.kz/public/ru/documents/gosprograms?page=1>. There may be other strategic documents under preparation, therefore this list requires updates reflecting the outcomes of the consultations on the needs assessment report.

²⁴ 'Yes' if it sets the framework for future development consent of projects, otherwise it is rather 'policy' for which SEA is only recommended by the Protocol.

²⁵ 'Yes' if it sets the framework for future development consent of projects, otherwise it is rather 'policy' for which SEA is only recommended by the Protocol.

²⁶ The title suggests it is rather analytical document than strategic one.

	<p>organizing and coordinating the implementation of the state programme for the timely and full achievement of its goals, objectives and obtaining the planned results.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The state programme for the development of regions for 2020 – 2025 (developed by the Ministry of National Economy, approved by the Decree of the Government of the Republic of Kazakhstan as of December 27, 2019 No. 990) 2. The state programme of infrastructure development "Nurly Zhol" for 2020 – 2025 (developed by the Ministry of Industry and Infrastructural Development, approved by the Decree of the Government of the Republic of Kazakhstan as of December 31, 2019 No. 1055) 3. The state programme of housing and communal development "Nurly Zher" for 2020 – 2025 (developed by the Ministry of Industry and Infrastructural Development, approved by the Decree of the Government of the Republic of Kazakhstan as of December 31, 2019 No. 1054) 4. The state programme of forced industrial and innovative development of the Republic of Kazakhstan for 2020 – 2025 (developed by the Ministry of Industry and Infrastructural Development, approved by the Decree of the Government of the Republic of Kazakhstan as of December 31, 2019 No. 1050) 5. The state programme for the development of the tourism industry of the Republic of Kazakhstan for 2019-2025 (developed by the Ministry of Culture and Sport, approved by Resolution of the Government of the Republic of Kazakhstan as of May 31, 2019 No. 360) 6. The state programme for the development of the agro-industrial complex of the Republic of Kazakhstan for 2017 – 2021 (developed by the Ministry of Agriculture, approved by the Decree of the Government of the Republic of Kazakhstan as of July 12, 2018 No. 423) 7. The state programme of business support and development "Business Roadmap 2020" (developed by the Ministry of National Economy, approved by the Decree of the Government of the Republic of Kazakhstan as of August 25, 2018 No. 522) 			
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Governmental strategic plans	The strategic plan of the state body is developed every three years for a five-year period on the basis of strategic and programme documents, and the forecast of socio-economic development. The plans are developed by specific line ministries, responsible for the sector.	Every 3 years for a 5-year period	No	? ²⁷
Territorial Development Programmes	(To be) developed for: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regions (oblast) – 14 altogether in Kazakhstan: prepared by regional government, adopted by regional assembly (Maslikhat) • Cities of the national importance – 3 (Almaty, Nur-Sultan, Shymkent): prepared by the city municipal government, adopted by the city municipal assembly (Maslikhat) • Districts – 177 altogether in Kazakhstan: prepared by district government, adopted by district assembly/council (Maslikhat) 	Every 5 years	No	Yes
Development strategies of the national management holdings, national holdings and national companies with state participation in the authorized capital		10 years	No	No

²⁷ A content of the strategic plan needs to be examined to determine whether SEA is required in accordance with the Protocol on SEA.

6.4. Summary of the preliminarily identified priorities and specific actions

Following the results of the needs assessment survey the project team outlined following priority actions necessary to introduce and further develop a national SEA system:

- **Adopting new legislation** as the ‘top’ priority: without existing national legislative framework the SEA application will remain at a pilot or voluntary basis;
- **Supporting application of SEA:** conducting pilot SEAs has proven to be the most efficient capacity building as it provides ‘hands-on’ opportunity for the relevant stakeholders to participate in the SEA, and can be effectively combined with training and awareness raising activities;
- **Preparing guiding documents on SEA** to facilitate application of SEA: launching SEA practice (after adopting the SEA legislation) is often challenging due to a lack of understanding on how the legal provisions should be practically carried out; therefore it is necessary to provide detailed guidance on SEA procedure as well as on the specific SEA-related topics;
- **Organising trainings and awareness raising events** for environmental and health authorities, decision-makers, environmental experts and practitioners, and CSOs.
- **Supporting the national networking and establishing an information sharing system** to enable exchange of experience and distribution of information on SEA, which is very important for enhancing the SEA practice as well as for efficient public participation and consultations.

6.5. Topics to be addressed in the action plan

The list below outlines topics and questions, which need to be discussed / determined within preparation of the action plan, in order to operationalize the priority actions identified above:

- **Developing and adopting new legislation:** The action plan should define activities needed to support the adoption of the draft Environmental Code including SEA provisions, which would fully transpose the requirements of the Protocol on SEA. This may include high-level awareness raising events for the key decision-makers, promotional materials, etc.

- **Supporting practical application of SEA:** The action plan should identify sectors and optimally the specific plans and programmes to be a subject of the pilot SEAs. This will require an extensive communication of the environmental and health authorities (in particular the MENGR and the Ministry of Healthcare), optimally supported by international organisations and donor community, to the relevant planning agencies to ensure their commitment to SEA pilot application (including the readiness to integrate SEA suggestions in the strategic document, its adoption and/or implementation). The action plan can also outline main conditions/principles to be applied when selecting a strategic document for SEA pilot and designing the SEA approach. At the initial stages of introducing SEA system, Kazakhstan may consider focusing its efforts on application of SEA to the plans and programmes in the sectors of industry, energy, water management, and agriculture (i.e. sectors with high potential to cause significant environmental and health effects as resulted from the survey). Such approach may facilitate easier recognition of the benefits of the SEA by the sectoral authorities. It may also allow to, as needed, suggest some possible enhancements of the new system before it is widely applied to all plans/programmes listed in Art. 4(2) of the Protocol on SEA.
- **Specific topics to be addressed by the guiding documents on SEA:** Although preparation of general detailed guidelines on the SEA procedure can be seen as the priority for the initial stages of establishing SEA system, it will also be important to define topics to be addressed by specific guidelines (e.g. focusing on specific SEA steps – screening, scoping, public participation, or specific issues – and considering climate change or health in SEA).
- **Information sharing system on SEA and EIA:** It can be recommended that this system should be established as the centralised register for SEA and EIA documents and other relevant information (e.g. information about the public consultation meetings, etc.). The action plan can outline the requirements for the register including its technical features – suitable examples from other countries (the Czech Republic, Ukraine, Georgia, etc.) can be used as a basis.
- **Facilitating the discussion on the budgetary aspects:** SEA application beyond the pilot stage will have to be financed from the national budget. Therefore, it is important to ensure the necessary funds are available when the SEA will be required by the national legislation. As allocation of finances may be relatively long process, it would be important to launch an initial discussion together/soon after adoption of the Environment Code (with SEA provisions). The action plan can define activities needed such as dedicated high-level events for the key decision makers, establishing an expert group on SEA across governmental institutions, preparation of precise SEA-related cost estimates, presentation of examples from other countries regarding SEA-related costs etc.

- **Organising trainings and awareness raising events for environmental and health authorities, decision-makers and environmental experts and practitioners (both individual and from consulting companies):** The action plan should (i) define specific topics for the training and awareness raising events, and (ii) types of institutions and organisations and other participants to be invited to specific events. Integrating or linking the trainings / capacity building and awareness raising events with the SEA pilots should be discussed and considered as such synergies yield the most efficient results.
- **Establishing an institutional structure for SEA:** As estimated in section 6.3.2, application of SEA in the scope stipulated by the Protocol on SEA will represent a significant workload, in particular for the MEGNR and the Ministry of Healthcare. Therefore, the action plan can elaborate options on how the institutional structure should be arranged to manage expected number of SEA procedures, which may also include certain level of decentralisation of SEA-related tasks to sub-national levels involving e.g. regional representations of the Committee of ecological regulations and control of the MEGNR.
- **Developing capacities for transboundary consultations:** Transboundary consultations represent an important part of SEA, therefore the action plan should – reflecting relevant provisions of the draft Environmental Code – outline activities to ensure there are sufficient capacities of relevant governmental agencies to carry out transboundary consultations and to consider its outcomes in SEA procedures.

Questionnaire for the SEA needs assessment survey in Kazakhstan

Dear participant,

Thank you for taking part in this survey! Your feedback is highly valued and will be carefully considered when analysing the results.

Introduction to the survey

This survey is a part of the technical assistance provided by the UNECE and OSCE regarding strategic environmental assessment (SEA), which shall result in *development of action plans or recommendations for establishing national SEA systems*.

The survey is to be carried out through questionnaire, which covers following topics:

- General information on the respondent's (personal and/or institutional) background
- Planning and environmental (including health) context
- Existing capacities for SEA and likely future needs
- Priorities and actions needed to introduce and further develop a national SEA system.

Introduction to SEA and its benefits

SEA is a step-by-step procedure to analyse and communicate environmental and health considerations related to development strategies, plans and programmes prepared by the governments. These considerations are collected in consultation with relevant authorities and the public so that decision makers can compare all the pros and cons of each planning option. Thus, SEA is a tool for governments to ensure sound economic development choices that benefit human health and the environment alike.

SEA can be applied to a wide range of governmental plans, programmes, policies, and other strategic documents, which establish the basis for future decisions on projects (which may require EIA or OVOS) in such diverse fields as agriculture, forestry, fisheries, energy, industry (including mining), transport, regional development, waste management, water management, telecommunications, tourism, town and country planning, and land use.

Effective application of SEA should result in a number of benefits including:

- Higher level of environmental and health protection: SEA identifies likely significant environmental and health effects of proposed strategic development options, and it equips planning authorities with suggestions to mitigate adverse effects and opens the planning to alternative development opportunities.
- Promoting sustainable economic development and facilitation of the green economies: SEA helps reach green economy targets by considering sustainable alternatives and encouraging the search for win-win options for further economic development within the carrying capacity of ecosystems.
- Improved planning by encouraging planners to consider a full range of risks and opportunities for more sustainable forms of development. Introducing a well-structured SEA framework in these countries makes planning more systematic, less sporadic and ultimately more effective.
- More efficient decision-making: Decision-making at the strategic level, which considers SEA outcomes, usually leads to fewer appeals and less discussion at the operational level. Such decision-making processes save time and are thus cost-effective.

- Improved governance by fostering higher transparency in planning and programming. SEA provides clear procedures for consultation and communication between the key national and local planning authorities, business and civil society.
- Prevention of costly mistakes that arise from neglecting environmental and health effects by providing early warning signals about environmentally unsustainable development options. SEA reduces the risk of costly remediation of harm or corrective actions, such as relocating or redesigning facilities.
- Strengthened EIA (or OVOS) processes: SEA can address effects that are difficult to grasp at the project level; in particular, SEA can provide an early warning of large-scale and cumulative effects. Therefore, certain aspects can be solved already at the strategic level, which streamlines application of environmental assessment at the project level.
- Prevention of inter-sectoral conflicts between various economic sectors within the country by examining the relationship of a plan or programme to other plans and programmes at the earliest stage of planning and offering alternatives that can help to avoid conflict.
- Tool for climate change adaptation and mitigation, by introducing climate change considerations into development planning. It is a particularly useful mechanism for introducing the consideration of climate change impacts in plans and programmes that are prepared for regional development planning and for town and country planning or land-use planning.

Questionnaire

General background and past experience

1. Name (leave blank if you want to keep anonymity): _____
2. Organisation/ institution _____

Considering environmental (including health) concerns in strategic planning and programming

3. To what extent are the environmental and health issues considered in the strategic planning process in your sector? Please think about the preparation and implementation of **plans and programmes** (i.e. 'strategic documents'), not the design or implementation of concrete projects. Please use the table below for your feedback – note that environmental and health issues should be ticked **separately**.

To what extent are the environmental and health issues considered in the strategic planning process in your country?	Environmental issue	Health issues
Not at all		
At minimum level – some environmental/health issues are mentioned in the documentation,		
To a certain extent – only certain/the most important environmental/health issues are considered,		
Environmental/health issues are analysed, but not taken into account when decisions are made,		
Environmental/health issues are analysed and the findings are used in the decision-making.		

4. In your opinion, which sectors in your country prepare and implement plans, programmes or other strategic initiatives that can cause the largest environmental and/or health impacts? (select up to four sectors)
 - Water management

- Transport
- Energy
- Agriculture
- Fisheries
- Forestry
- Industry
- Mining
- Regional development planning
- Urban, rural and land-use planning
- Waste Management
- Telecommunications
- Tourism
- Other: _____

5. Is your institution responsible for preparation and/or adoption of any strategic documents?

Yes / No

A. If yes, please provide details, i.e. the names of plans and programmes, main focus, how often they are prepared/updated, how long planning process usually takes, what the approval procedure is.

B. Do these plans, programmes, or other strategic documents undergo any type of environmental assessment (i.e. OVOS, SEE, or other tools)?

Yes / No

If yes, how it is implemented in practice?

Existing capacities for SEA and future needs

6. When you/your institution are dealing with environmental assessment, do you use some guidelines and instruction documents? If so, please list these guidelines, instructions and/or methodological recommendations that you [your institution] use.

7. Where do you usually seek advice on environmental assessment (e.g. methods to be applied)?
- environmental and/or health authorities – friends and acquaintances working there
 - environmental and/or health authorities – officials in charge of the relevant issue
 - other sector institutions (e.g. other ministries) – friends and acquaintances working there that work on similar tasks
 - other sector institutions (e.g. other ministries) – officials in charge of similar tasks
 - environmental consultancies
 - Relevant researchers at various research institutions
 - CSOs
 - Friends and acquaintances from abroad that work on similar tasks or issues
 - Other, please specify:

8. For likely forthcoming SEAs (whether a pilot or systematic application):
- Is it clear who will be in charge of managing these SEA(s) on behalf of your institution?

 - Can you estimate the scope of SEA-related tasks your institution is supposed to perform?

 - Who will be most likely undertaking these SEA(s) - i.e. planning teams with internal environmental experts or external sub-contractors (consultancy companies)?

 - Have budgetary aspects been already discussed i.e. how to fund future SEAs/SEA-related activities?

 - Do you know suitable institutions/experts who would be able to carry our SEA?

 - What main challenges related to SEA application you would see?

Future priorities and actions

9. Which actions should be taken as a priority to introduce and establish a SEA system in your country? Please rank each option below using the scale from 1 (least needed) to 10 (most needed) and/or formulate additional actions [note that the same score cannot be used more than once]:

Recommendation / action	Score (1 to 10)
Developing and adopting new legislation	
Preparing guiding documents on specific topics (methods and tools for evaluating the impacts, quality control, how to consider climate change, biodiversity or else in SEA, etc.) or procedural aspects (screening, scoping, public participation, etc.)	
Preparing awareness raising materials (e.g. a leaflet on efficient public participation in SEA)	
Organising trainings and awareness raising events for	
i. Environmental and health authorities	
ii. Decision-makers	
iii. Environmental experts and practitioners	
iv. CSOs and public	
v. Other target group(s) – please specify:	
Supporting practical application of SEA (i.e. conducting pilot SEA)	
Organising exchange of experience in SEA with other countries from i. Central Asian region, ii. Eastern Partnership countries ²⁸ , iii. EU Member States (please indicate preferred region)	
Supporting the national networking and establishing an information sharing system (e.g. introducing national SEA and EIA database and establishing a network of environmental experts)	
Other (please specify): _____ _____ _____	

10. Please add any other points, comments, or suggestions regarding the current environmental assessment application and further development of SEA in your country.

²⁸ Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova, and Ukraine

Annex 2. LIST OF INTERVIEWEES

- Mr. Nurzhan Begalin, Expert, Ministry of Energy
- Ms. Natalya Dauletyarova, Deputy Head, Department of ecological policy and sustainable development, Ministry of Ecology, Geology and Natural Resources
- Ms. Sara Iskakova, Committee of Ecological Regulations and Control, Ministry of Ecology, Geology and Natural Resources
- Ms. Maira Kadyrbekova, Expert, Department of ecological policy and sustainable development, Ministry of Ecology, Geology and Natural Resources
- Mr. Vitaliy Kuzin, Green Bridge (consulting company)
- Ms. Sholpan Sulemenova, Agency of Applied Ecology
- Mr. Aidar Kapasov, Human Health Institute (CSO)
- Mr. Adletbek Bekeev, Independent Expert

Consideration of environmental and health issues in the planning processes – current practice

Environmental (including health) and planning context

The respondents were asked to what extent the environmental and health issues were considered in the strategic planning process in the country. 8 out of 9 respondents answered the part of the question regarding the environmental issues, and 6 out of 9 – regarding the health issues.

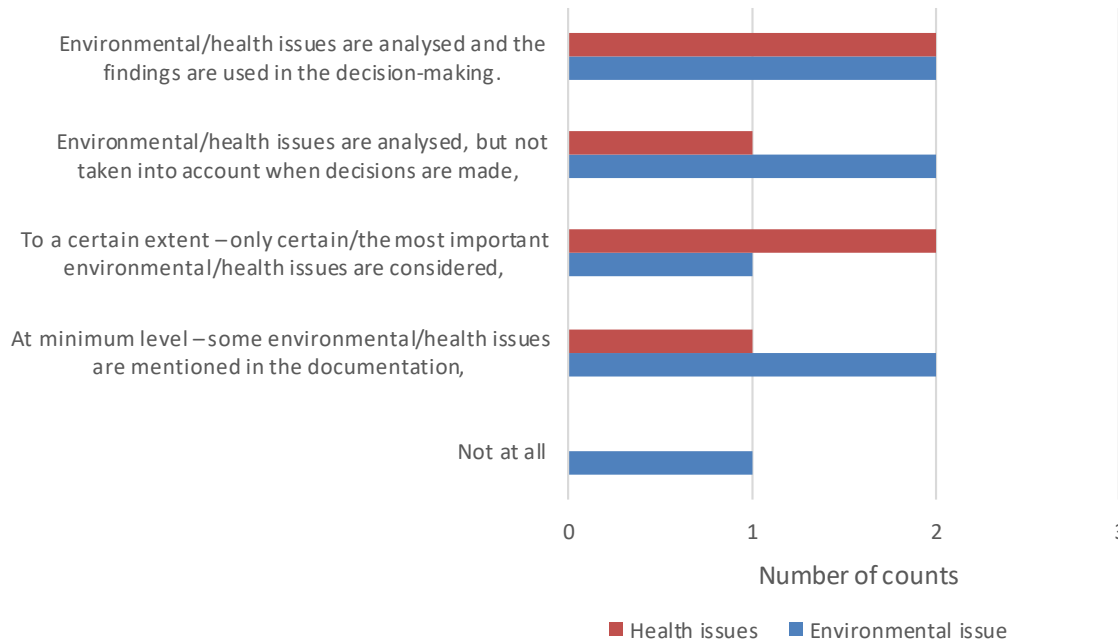


Figure 1. Extent to which the environmental and health issues are believed by the respondents to be considered in the strategic planning process in the country

With regards to environmental issues:

- 2 of the respondents said that environmental issues were considered in the strategic planning process in the country at a minimum level, with some environmental issues being simply mentioned in the documentation,
- 2 claimed that they were analysed, but not taken into account when decisions are made,
- 2 believe that the issues are analysed and the findings are used in the decision-making,
- 1 thinks that environmental issues are considered to a certain extent – only certain/the most important issues are considered, and
- 1 stated that environmental issues were not considered in the strategic planning process at all.

With regards to health issues:

- 1 of the respondents believes that they are considered at a minimum level (some health issues are mentioned in the documentation),
- 2 think that health issues are considered to a certain extent – only certain/the most important health issues,

- 1 believes that health issues are analysed, but not taken into account when decisions are made, and
- 2 state that health issues are analysed and the findings are used in the decision-making.

Strategic initiatives with likely significant effects

The respondents were asked to select four sectors of Kazakhstan, where plans, programmes or other strategic initiatives that can cause the most significant environmental and/or health effects. All the respondents answered this question, however two of them selected more than four sectors.

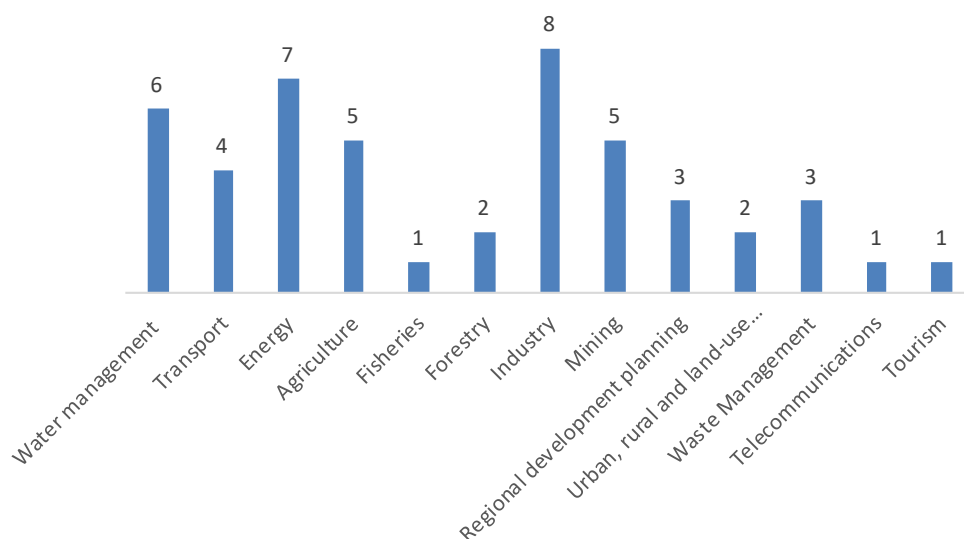


Figure 2. Sectors chosen by the respondents where the prepared and implemented plans, programmes or other strategic initiatives are believed to cause the largest environmental and/or health effects

To sum up the responses in the descending order of counts:

- the **industry** sector was chosen by 8 respondents,
- the **energy** sector – 7,
- **water management** was selected by 6,
- the sections of **agriculture and mining** were picked by 5 respondents, each,
- the **transport** sector was selected by 4,
- the sectors of **regional development planning and waste management** were opted by 3, each,
- two sectors - **urban, rural and land-use planning, and forestry** - were chosen by 2 of the respondents, each, and
- three sectors - **fisheries, telecommunications, and tourism** - by 1 respondent, each.

Responsibility for preparation and/or adoption of strategic documents and a consideration of a need for SEA

The respondents were asked if their institutions were responsible for preparation and/or adoption of any strategic documents. The question was answered by 8 out of 9 respondents, and 4 of those who answered stated that their institutions were not responsible for preparation and/or adoption of any strategic documents. Those who responded “Yes” were asked to provide details, i.e. the names of plans and programmes,

main focus, how often they are prepared/updated, how long planning process usually takes, what the approval procedure is. 3 respondents out of 4 provided some limited details as follows:

- 2 of the respondents specified that “*Such state programmes for waste management (MSW), management of fish resources and development of the geological industry are currently in progress of development*”.
- 1 indicated a “*Strategic Development Plan of MEGNR for 2017-2021, which objective is creating conditions for conservation, restoration and improvement the protection of environment, biodiversity, promotion of water supply to industries and natural water resources, management of natural resources and environmental security for human life and health, economy, business, increasing geological exploration of the territories and replenishment of mineral and raw materials of the Republic of Kazakhstan. Ensuring the transition of the Republic of Kazakhstan to low-carbon development and “green” economy to meet the needs of present and future generations, sustainable development of water, forestry and wildlife, development of waste management system of production and consumption*”.

As a follow up, the respondents were asked if these plans, programmes, or other strategic documents undergo any type of environmental assessment (i.e. OVOS, SEE, or other tools). The question was answered by all the 9 respondents, 6 of them chose “No” to it. 3 respondents that chose “Yes” were asked if the application of environmental assessment required by the legislation. To this:

- 1 specified that “*The draft Environmental Code includes a Chapter on SEA*”.
- 2 respondents specified that these plans, programmes or other strategic documents undergo SEE.

Another follow-up question was how this assessment was implemented in practice. 1 respondent said that “*The SEE conclusions include environmental requirements that should be implemented in practice.*” The other added that the above-mentioned programmes would undergo environmental assessment.

To answer the next follow-up question: *If your institution develops strategic planning documents, have you considered (or internally discussed) the application of SEA to any of them?* If so, please provide details, 1 of the respondents said: “*We discussed and wanted to conduct a pilot SEA of the Ministry’s state programmes, to test all the procedures.*”

Existing strengths and challenges of current application of environmental assessment tools in the country

The respondents were asked to select the existing challenges for the application of environmental assessment tools (EIA/OVOS, ESIA, SEA, SEE etc.) in Kazakhstan. 7 out of 9 respondents gave an answer to the question.

With regards to SEA three factors were listed as the main existing challenges by 5 respondents each:

- i) the lack of capacities within governmental authorities to coordinate environmental assessment procedures,
- ii) the lack of expert capacities to carry out relevant environmental (and health) analyses i.e. to evaluate the likely impacts, formulate relevant mitigation measures, prepare environmental report, etc. and
- iii) weak monitoring and post-project analysis schemes (i.e. limited control on how environmental assessment conclusions are implemented in practice).

For SEE, two main challenges included the lack of capacities within governmental authorities to coordinate environmental assessment procedures and the lack of expert

capacities to carry out relevant environmental (and health) analyses i.e. to evaluate the likely impacts, formulate relevant mitigation measures, prepare environmental report, etc., each indicated by 3 respondents.

For EIA (OVOS) weak monitoring and post-project analysis schemes (i.e. limited control on how environmental assessment conclusions are implemented in practice) was believed to be the main challenge by 4 survey participants.

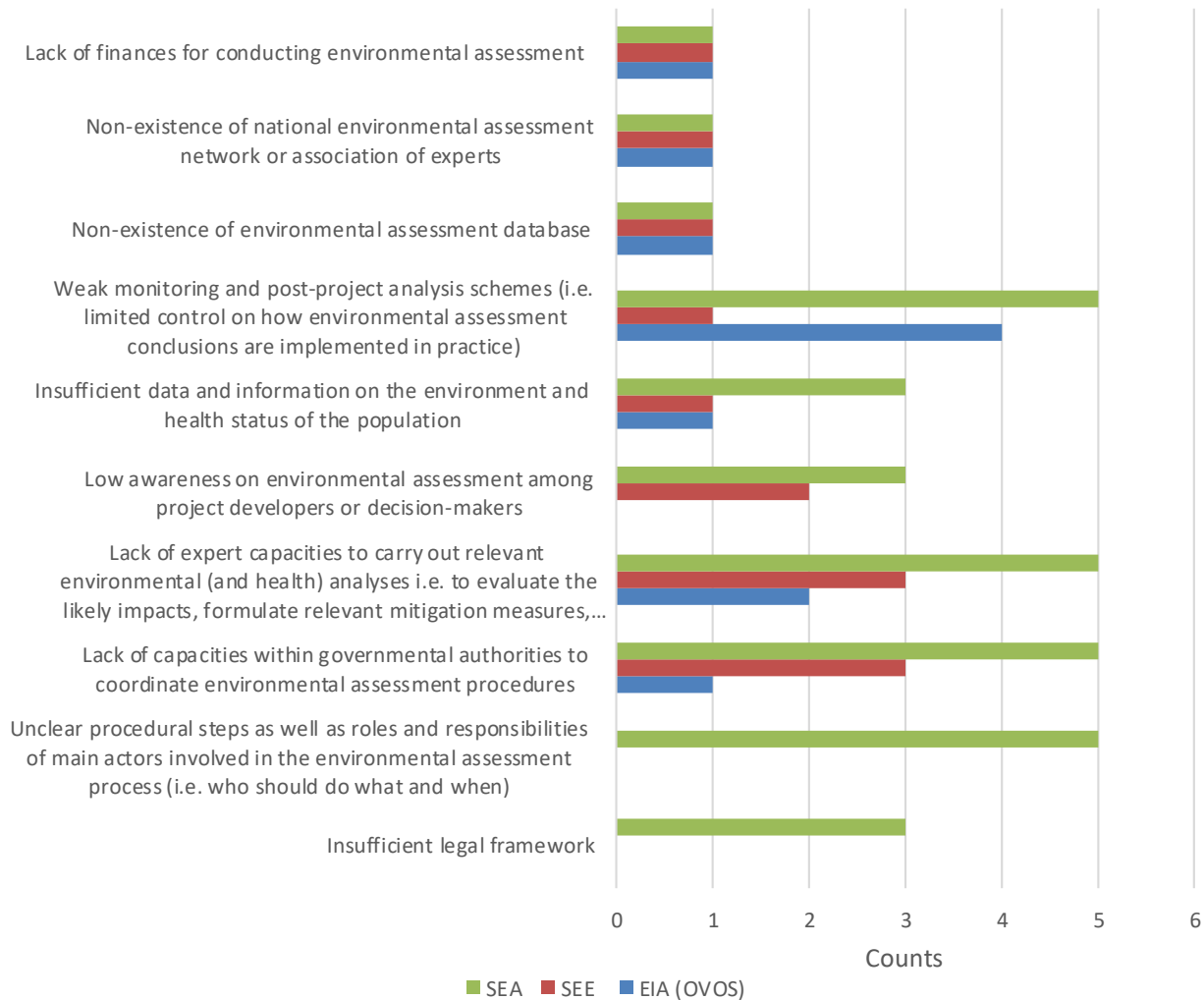


Figure 3. Challenges indicated by the respondents in relation to the application of environmental assessment tools

The respondents were asked to indicate the key strengths of the environmental assessment tools (EIA, ESIA, SEA, OVOS, SEE etc.) in Kazakhstan. 6 respondents out of 9 answered the question.

For EIA (OVOS), 2 key strengths selected, each, by 4 survey participants as follows i) profound and clear legal framework and ii) available guidelines / manuals / procedures on how to conduct the environmental assessment process.

Whereas for SEE, 4 respondents agreed that the main strength was the available guidelines / manuals / procedures on how to conduct the environmental assessment process.

When it came to SEA, 3 experts indicated that ‘sufficient finances’ for conducting SEAs was the major strengths. In addition to this, i) profound and clear legal framework and ii) sufficient capacities among the experts to carry out relevant environmental (and health)

analyses and prepare good-quality environmental report were indicated as the other key strengths by 2 respondents each.

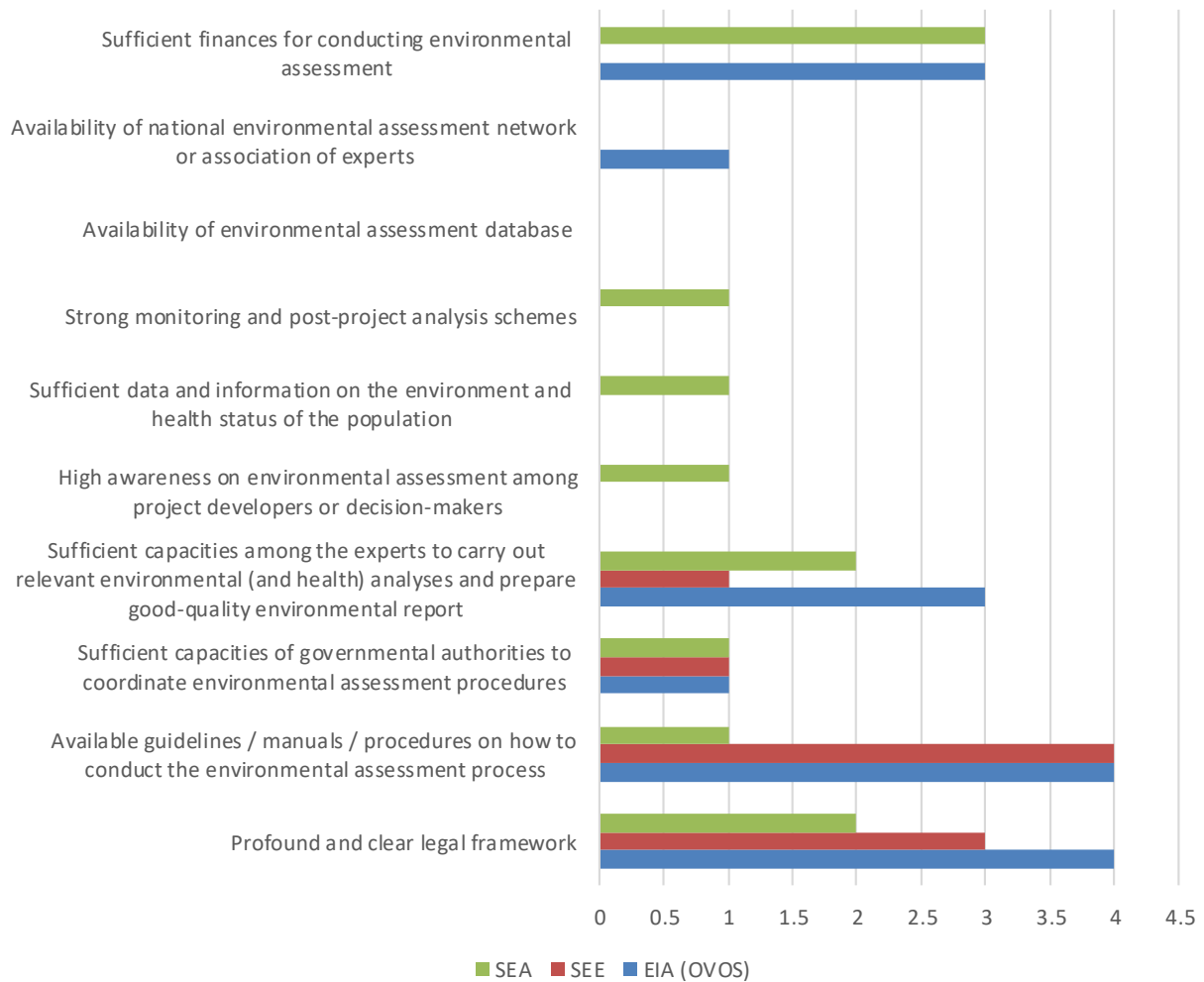


Figure 4. Strengths of the environmental assessment tools indicated by the respondents

State of development of legal SEA framework and SEA practice, and their inter-relation

The respondents were asked to evaluate the current state of the legal SEA framework and SEA practice. 7 out of 9 respondents answered this question. None of them believed that the legal SEA framework, SEA practice or correspondence between the legal framework and practice were fully developed (see the figure below). However, 5 respondents agreed that the legal SEA framework was somewhat developed with 2 respondents indicating “SEA Chapter under the new Environmental Code”. SEA practice and ‘Correspondence between the legal framework and practice’ is perceived to be not developed by 3 respondents each.

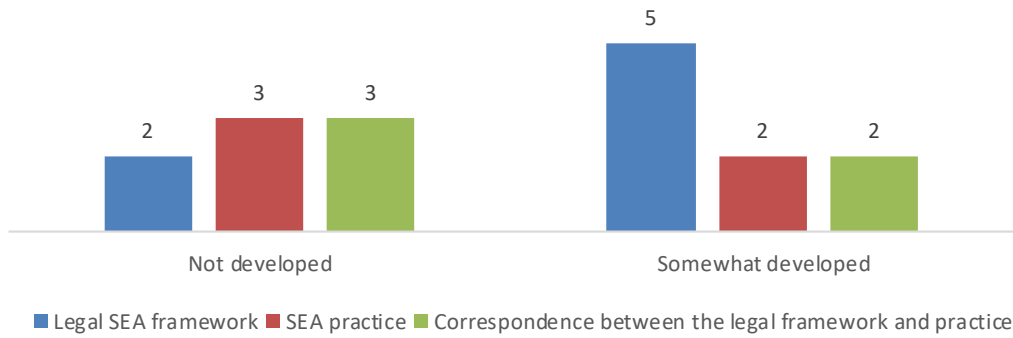


Figure 5. Evaluation of the current state of the legal SEA framework and SEA practice as well as the correspondence between the legal framework and practice by the respondents

Existing capacities for SEA and likely future demand for SEA capacities

Perception of SEA benefits and added value

The respondents were given a set of statements about SEA and were asked to rank them according to what extent the respondents agreed with them (**Figure 6**). 8 out of 9 respondents ranked the statements. **Figure 6** demonstrates the number of times a particular statement was chosen by the respondents. Thus, 6 respondents agree that SEA can be used as a consensus-building tool and 5 respondents believe that SEA is a useful tool for greening economies. Then, 5 respondents strongly agree that public consultation improves the quality of results of SEA and therefore the plan/programme.

4 respondents believe that i) SEA is time-consuming, ii) SEA can be used to attain the sustainable development goals, and iii) SEA is useful in assessing and mitigating significant adverse effects of strategic initiatives.

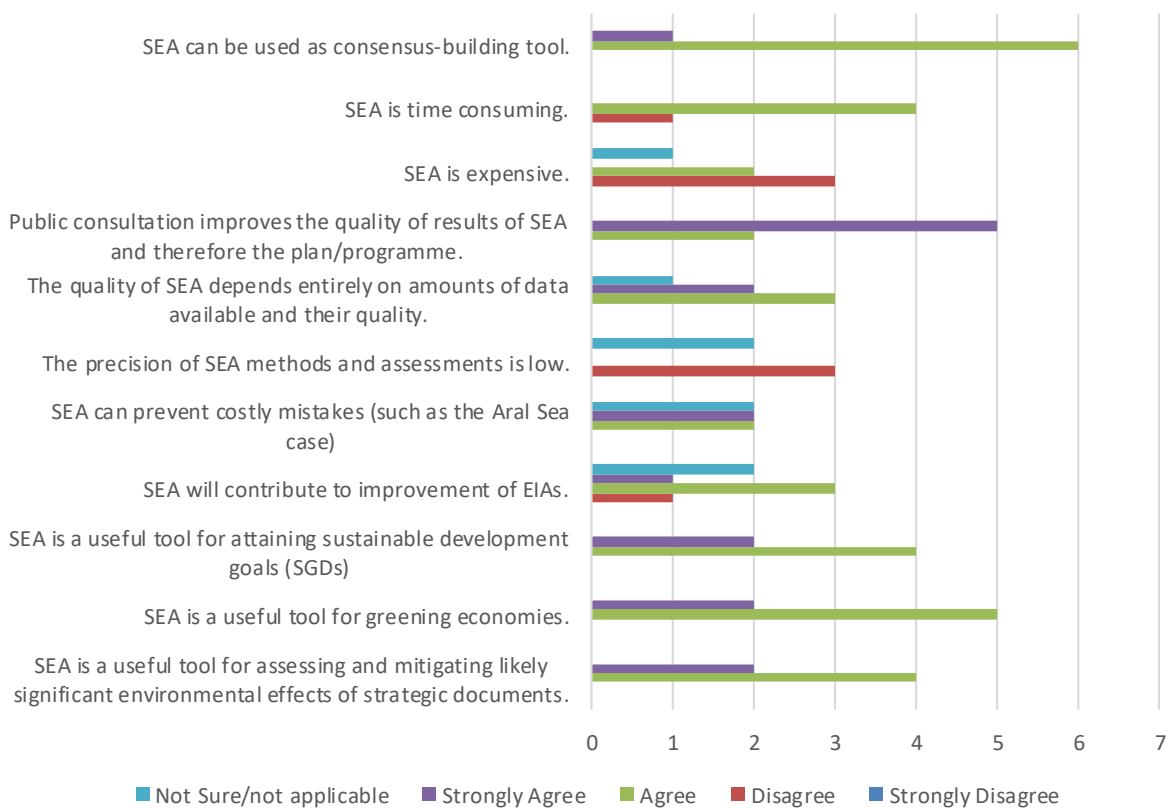


Figure 6. Counts of SEA's capacity statements selected by the respondents

Use of guidelines and instruction

The respondents were asked to list environmental assessment guidelines and instruction documents, in case such are used in their / their institutions' practice. The question was answered by 7 participants out of 9. 1 respondent out of 7 answered "No", while the rest listed the following:

- *Instructions for conducting an environmental impact assessment. Order No. 204-n of the Minister of environmental protection of the Republic of Kazakhstan as of 28 June 2007.*
- *Rules for conducting state environmental expertise. Order No. 100 of the Minister of energy of the Republic of Kazakhstan as of 16 February 2015.*
- *UNECE handbook on SEA; some recommendations, developed under the UNECE/EU/UNDP project.*
- *Chapter on SEA in the draft Environmental Code and draft instructions for SEA implementation.*
- *Espoo Convention, Protocol on SEA.*
- *Practical guide to conduct strategic environmental assessment in the energy sector of Russia (taking into account the tasks of biodiversity conservation) (working materials for the Russian Federation conference on SEA practices dissemination, October 25, 2016, Moscow).*
- *Practical guide to conduct strategic environmental assessment in the energy sector of Russia.*
- *Strategic environmental assessment. A practice-oriented training course for policy makers, ministries and agencies officials, consultants, and representatives of CSOs.*

Advice of environmental assessment

The respondents were asked where they usually sought advice on environmental assessment (e.g. methods to be applied) (for response options refer to the figure below). 7 respondents out of 9 answered this question.

'*Environmental consultancies*' was the most frequently chosen source of getting a piece of advice on environmental assessment - it was chosen by 6 respondents.

Advice is also sought from the environmental and/or health institutions/officials in charge of the relevant issues (3 respondents), and from friends and/or acquaintances **from abroad** working on similar tasks (3 respondents).

Very rarely advice is sought at NGOs, research institutes or relevant officials from other sectoral institutions (e.g., ministries).

None of the respondents seeks for the advice from their friends and/or acquaintances working on similar tasks in other sector institutions (e.g. other ministries).

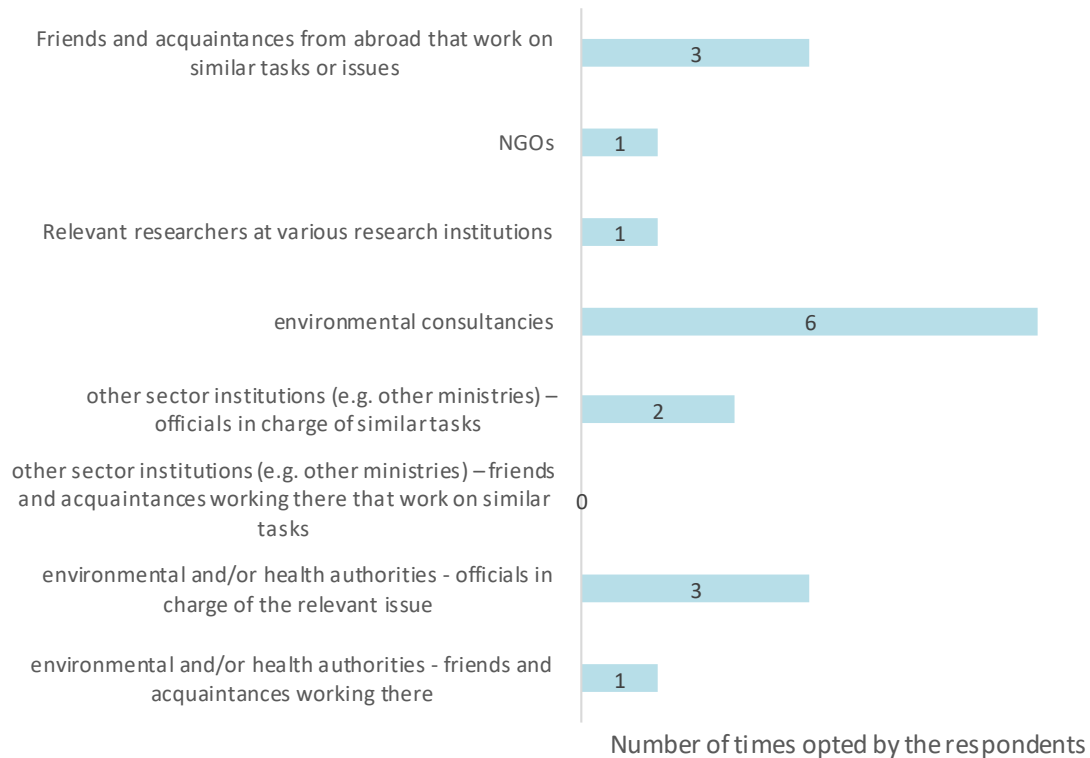


Figure 7. Sources for the advice on the environmental assessment versus number of times opted by the respondents

Managing future SEA

The respondents were asked the following questions: For likely forthcoming SEAs (whether a pilot or systematic application):

- Is it clear who will be in charge of managing these SEA(s) on behalf of your institution?
- Can you estimate the scope of SEA-related tasks your institution is supposed to perform?
- Who will be most likely undertaking these SEA(s) - i.e. planning teams with internal environmental experts or external sub-contractors (consultancy companies)?
- Have budgetary aspects been already discussed i.e. how to fund future SEAs/SEA-related activities?
- Do you know suitable institutions/experts who would be able to carry our SEA?
- What main challenges related to SEA application you would see?

The responses were received as follows:

- 5 of the survey participants said that it was clear who would be in charge of managing the SEA(s) on behalf of their institutions. 2 indicated the Committee of Ecological Regulations and Control of the Ministry of Ecology, Geology and Natural Resources; and 1 – the Department of Environmental Policy and Sustainable Development of the Ministry of Ecology, Geology and Natural Resources. 1 of the respondents hesitated to answer and stated the following: *“SEA for plans and programmes is at the implementation stage. In this regard, the answers the questions can’t be provided.”* 1 of the respondents stated that it was not clear because *“such decisions are made individually depending on the performer’s qualifications and the task at hand.”* Whereas 3 of the participants didn’t give a reply to the question.
- 4 respondents said that they could estimate the scope of SEA-related tasks that their institution would be supposed to perform:
 - 2 respondents just circled “Yes”, without providing details;
 - 1 respondent stated that the scope of their institution would be to train regional staff, project organizations and environmental departments in the local municipalities.
 - 1 respondent claimed that their institution’s scope would be to organize a system of the SEA implementation at the state level.
 - 1 respondent found it difficult to estimate the volume, because there is no complete clarity of the SEA procedure. Three of the respondents did not answer the question.
 - whereas 4 respondents did not provide an answer to the question.
 - 2 respondents indicated that external subcontractors would be most likely to undertake the SEA, another 2 respondents said that it would be state officials together with sub-contracted consultants, and 1 added that it would be external sub-contractors and project consultancy companies. *‘A group of environmental experts is most likely to implement the SEA’* is also believed by 1 of the respondents. 1 of the respondents added the following: *“Since this area is quite narrow it requires combining the competencies of environmental specialists and strategy consultants.”* 1 of the respondents stated that he/she could not provide an answer, and there was no answer from another 1.
 - 5 respondents said that budgetary aspects had not been discussed, and 1 respondent said that there was no separate funding for SEA related activities. 1 added that this issue had been raised and discussed during the training workshops of the UNECE/EU/UNDP project. The other 1 believes that syndicated funding by industry associations and international organizations is optimal from the point of view of conflicts of interest exclusion. 1 survey participant did not answer the question.
 - 6 respondents claimed that they knew suitable institutions/experts who would be able to carry out SEA, whereas 2 said that they did not. And 1 of the respondents did not reply to the question.
 - 2 of the respondents did not answer the question about challenges including one finding it difficult to answer. The following challenges were listed by other 7 respondents:
 - a. Unwillingness and lack of understanding of state bodies, both developers and the authorities on environmental protection; national capacity building; implementation of the SEA at the oblast level (was mentioned twice);

- b. It is necessary to develop normative-legal acts, regulating the SEA procedure;
- c. A narrow expert market, SEA requires effective organization at the inter-agency level, which is difficult without a coordinator. The coordinator should / can be at a level of the Ministry of ecology's management;
- d. Experts training;
- e. As many pilot projects as possible should be implemented to test the SEA procedure before the SEA Chapter of the Environmental code comes into force (in 2025).

Future priorities and actions (including needs for capacity development)

Actions required to introduce and establish a SEA system

The respondents were asked to select and prioritise actions needed to introduce and establish a SEA system. Multiple choice was possible. The question was answered by 8 respondents out of 9 (however not everyone provided responses to all parts of this multi-layer question).

Table 3. Recommendation/action to introduce and establish SEA system in the country ranked on scale from 1-10 by the respondents

Recommendation / action	Score (1-10)			
	0	1-4	5-7	8-10
Developing and adopting new legislation			2 counts	7 counts
Preparing guiding documents on specific topics (methods and tools for evaluating the impacts, quality control, how to consider climate change, biodiversity or else in SEA, etc.) or procedural aspects (screening, scoping, public participation, etc.)			1 count	8 counts
Preparing awareness raising materials (e.g. a leaflet on efficient public participation in SEA)		1 count	2 counts	6 counts
Organising trainings and awareness raising events for:				
Environmental and health authorities			2 counts	5 counts
Decision-makers			3 counts	3 counts
Environmental experts and practitioners			3 counts	4 counts
CSOs and public		1 count	4 counts	2 counts
Other target group(s) – please specify:				
Supporting practical application of SEA (i.e. conducting pilot SEA)				6 counts
Organising exchange of experience in SEA with other countries from i. Central Asian region, ii. Eastern Partnership countries ²⁹ , iii. EU Member States (please indicate preferred region)		1 count		3 counts
Supporting the national networking and establishing an information sharing system (e.g. introducing national SEA and EIA database and establishing a network of environmental experts)		1 count		8 counts
Other (please specify): _____				

The table illustrates the recommendations / actions believed to be needed in order to introduce and establish the SEA system in Kazakhstan, ranked on scale from 1 -10 by the respondents.

The following recommendations/actions were ranked **the highest (8-10)** by the respondents:

²⁹ Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova, and Ukraine

- Developing and adopting new legislation;
- Preparing guiding documents on specific topics (or procedural aspects ;
- Preparing awareness raising materials (;
- Organising trainings and awareness raising events for environmental and health authorities, decision-makers and environmental experts and practitioners;
- Supporting practical application of SEA;
- Organising exchange of experience in SEA with other countries, in particular with the EU Member States an;
- Supporting the national networking and establishing an SEA information sharing system.

When asked to indicate the preferred region for organising the exchange of experience in SEA, 3 of the respondents suggested the EU member states, 1 preferred the exchange with the countries from the Eastern Partnership and the EU member states, and 1 expert opted for the exchange of experience with countries where the SEA procedure is in place. 3 respondents did not indicate their preferences.

Further recommendations for setting up and developing SEA

The respondents were asked to add any other points, comments, or suggestions regarding the current environmental assessment application and further development of SEA in Kazakhstan. 4 respondents did not answer the question, and one did not state to have suggestions. The suggestions from the remaining 4 survey participants, who answered the question, are as follows:

- *The initial stage should envisage the SEA training of public authorities with reference to the best practices of one of the European countries (was suggested twice);*
- *Most likely, an expert advice and extended technical assistance will be needed within the next 10 years to further promote the SEA national scheme in Kazakhstan. An information sharing with other countries within and outside the Central Asia region would help to ease the transition process.*
- *If this norm is adopted in the Republic of Kazakhstan, it is necessary to train specialists in for environmental assessment delivery.*