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Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA): Rationale for application of SEA to urban planning documents

Online event on the Initiation of the Pilot SEA for Ganja City Master Plan, Azerbaijan
25 July 2022

11:00 – 13:00 Baku time / 9:00 – 11:00 CEST

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SEA International Legal Framework: EU SEA Directive

The EU Directive 2001/42/EC on the Assessment of the Effects of Certain Plans and Programmes on the Environment

- Implemented in EU countries
- Transposed in accession countries => different levels of implementation

In force since July 2004 (EU)

- Varying integration of SEA Directive into national and regional legislation
- Varying practice and flexibility

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International Legal Framework: EU SEA Directive

Defines plans and programmes that need to undergo SEA

- An SEA is mandatory for plans/programmes which are:
 - are prepared for agriculture, forestry, fisheries, energy, industry, transport, waste/ water management, telecommunications, tourism, town & country planning or land use **and** which set the framework for future development consent of projects listed in the EIA Directive.
- Defines topics to be assessed: roughly 4:
 - environment,
 - nature,
 - human health and
 - cultural heritage

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International Legal Framework: SEA Protocol

Protocol to the so-called Espoo Convention (Convention on Environmental Impact Assessment in a Transboundary Context)

Signed in 2003 in Kyiv, entry into force July 2010

- also known as „Kyiv“ Protocol
- Signatories: 38; Parties: 25

Similar to SEA Directive, but additional focus on:

- Impacts on human health
- Public consultation

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SEA: What does it take?

- SEA runs in parallel with Planning (drafting of the Plan or Programme)
- SEA team of environmental specialists looks into the draft Plan/Programme and provide comments to planning (drafting) team about:
 - Potential impacts(risks) from the proposed actions to the environment, and
 - Measures to prevent, mitigate, and minimize identified risks
 - Measures to enhance likely positive effects
- SEA team put together Environmental Report summarizing its findings and recommendations
- SEA Environmental Report together with the draft plan are made available for public consultations
- Planning institution takes the SEA findings (Environmental Report) together with feedback from the public consultations into consideration when finalizing and approving the draft Plan or Programme

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SEA: Key tangible deliverables

1. Scoping Report, which outlines the scope of assessment and suggests further analyses – submitted to the governmental authorities and other stakeholders for consultations to determine of the scope and focus of the future SEA Report.
2. SEA Report summarizing all environmental expert analyses, assessment findings and recommendations – subject of stakeholder consultations and basis for SEA conclusion.

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Environmental analysis: Planning and SEA

- Spatial Plans standardly contain dedicated Environmental chapter(s)
 - Baseline conditions
 - Outline of “environmental infrastructure” (parks, bio-corridors, etc.)
 - Compliance with formal (environmental) spatial limits (buffer zones, etc.)
 - (Environmental) conditions for acceptable land-use in different zones
 - Plan as a whole should demonstrate that the planned development is sustainable/balanced (Justification/reasoning of the proposed plan contains also environmental perspective)

• Do we still need SEA than?

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Spatial Planning: Why SEA?

- Environmental issues without clear spatial dimension tend to get neglected
- Spatial planning tend to take into account only formal spatial limits (regulations)
- Environmental data often outdated/not reflecting reality (i.e. where the biodiversity hot-spots really are)
- Specific expertise often not available (i.e. biodiversity, air quality, hydrology,..)
- Planning process too long and complicated for non-specialist to participate: SEA simplify and singles out the key concerns and communicates them to the relevant stakeholders

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Executing SEA successfully

1. Understanding to the Content and Context of the Plan

- Baseline conditions – Social, Economic, Environmental
- Implementation of the old (existing) (Master)plan?
- Planning objectives: Sectoral, spatial, ..
- Thematic concepts (transport system, residential areas, technical infrastructure, natural risks and limits,...)
- Key question to ask: What is proposed by the new Masterplan? i.e. What will be different compared to the existing land-use and spatial limits??

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2. Meaningful SEA Scoping:

- Baseline conditions - existing environmental issues
- Environmental objectives
- Identification of environmental issues that can be potentially affected by the Plan

Environmental issues Plan components	Water	Air	Noise	Biodiversity
New residential areas					
Transport infrastructure					
....					
...					



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3. Good participatory SEA process

Scoping Report:

Identification/Verification of what is important and worth further analyses

- SEA Report: Evolution of likely effects:
 - Specific analyses (Spatial conflicts, pollution dispersion studies? transport modelling?, biodiversity surveys?)
 - Potential effects assessment: Quantitative? Qualitative?
- SEA Report: Mitigation measures – changes in the Plan, adjusting limits and conditions for development, monitoring
- Working cooperation between Planners and SEA team crucial

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Thank you

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