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The implementation of the Gegharkunik-2 SEA in accordance with the requirements of national and international law

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National and International law

- The RA Law "On Environmental Impact Assessment and Expertise" adopted by the RA National Assembly on 21.06.2014 .
- Strategic Environmental Assessment Protocol to the Convention on Environmental Impact Assessment in a Transboundary Context.
- EU SEA Directive (2001/42/EC).

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Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA)

- SEA is a globally recognized and widely used procedure in international practice, which guarantees the integration of environmental and human health protection interests into the process of state conceptual, strategic documents and relevant decision-making processes in various areas. SEA contributes to the implementation of the principles of sustainable development, thereby also to the development of green economy.
- The SEA also ensures proper participation of relevant government agencies and the public in this process.
- EIA Law defines the SEA process as a comprehensive assessment of the possible impact as a result of the operation of the fundamental document *which includes determining the scope of the EIA report, preparation of EIA report, ensuring public participation and holding consultations, with due consideration of the EIA report, and the results of the public engagement and discussion in the fundamental document.*

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Pilot project

- Aims at strengthening the capacity of Armenia to apply SEA: from April 2022, at the request of the RA Ministry of Environment and the State Committee for Urban Development, the UNECE supported the implementation of a pilot SEA of the "Microregional level integrated spatial planning" project (Gegharkunik-2) in the largest region of Armenia - Gegharkunik.
- Gegharkunik-2 planning document includes the city of Gavar, and Berdkunk, Gandzak, Gegharkunik, Lanjaghbyur, Lchap, Tsaghkashen, Tsovazard, Karmirgyugh, Hayravank, Noratus, Sarukhan villages.

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Spatial planning document of Gegharkunik-2. SEA phases

- Determining whether the fundamental document is subject to SEA (screening)
- Determining SEA Scope (scoping)
- Development of a SEA report
- Conducting consultations
- According to the national law, the provision of an expertise report

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SEA directions of Gegharkunik-2

- Urban Development
- Water resources and water systems
- Biodiversity
- Health impacts
- Resource efficiency, including waste and land management

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Key steps of SEA

- Highlight the key activities of Gegharkunik 2 micro-regional planning document.
- Identify the possible impacts of the main activities on environmental components and human health (Lake Sevan, biodiversity, human health. etc.)
- Develop alternative options for the main actions of the document (also with due consideration of the zero alternative)
- Develop mitigation and prevention measures
- Public and stakeholder engagement via public hearings and consultations.
- Submit the received analysis and recommendations to the planning team.
- Summarize the results in the SEA report.

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SEA expectations

- It will enable the planning team to consider all possible risks and identify the most sustainable directions of development.
- The implementation of SEA can contribute to more systematic, predictable and therefore effective planning.
- Will bring long-term financial benefits through the preservation of natural resources necessary for key sectors of the economy (for example, the SEA can prevent the exploitation of agricultural land, overexploitation and additional pollution of water resources, including Lake Sevan, will contribute to the preservation of biodiversity, landscape, etc.)
- The SEA procedure will provide an opportunity at the early stage of the development of the micro-regional document to consider its connection with the strategic documents developed in other sectors of the economy, preventing possible contradictions between the development directions of different sectors.

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SEA expectations

- The implementation of the SEA will contribute to resolving controversies that alternatively may come out at the implementation phase.
- It will possibly guarantee prevention of large-scale and cumulative impacts, which individually may not be a source of significant impacts, however, their cumulative impact can be significant (for example, exploitation of mineral resources in Gegharkunik region, etc.).
- The process of decision-making time and resource efficient.

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SEA challenges

- Inconsistency of the SEA process and the deadlines set by the RA Government.
- Inconclusiveness of solutions presented in the planning document.
- Legislative gaps and inconsistencies.
- Conflicts with activities envisaged in other development documents.
- Possible integration of SEA results in the Gegharkunik-2 document.

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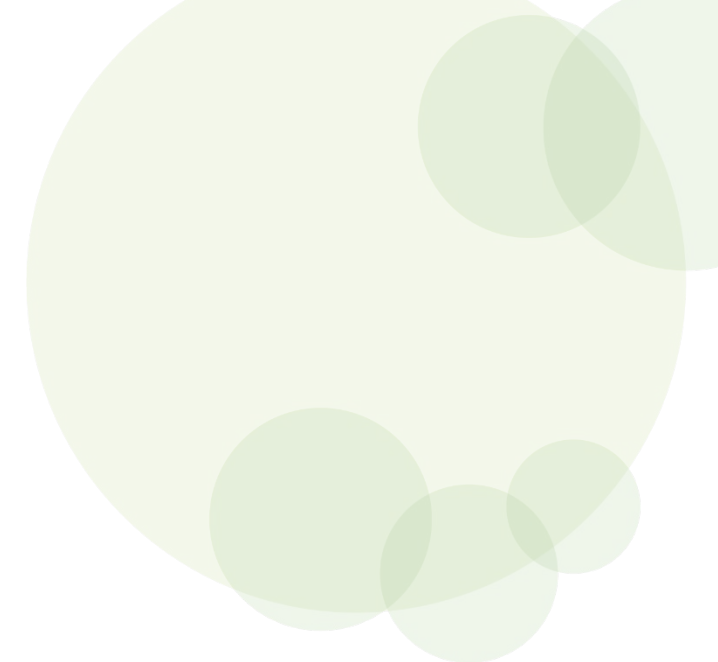
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