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# EU4Environment

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

## Second Training Workshop on the Practical Application of Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) in Regional and Spatial Planning

### Workshop Report

15 October 2021, 10:00-16:00 Baku time  
Baku, Azerbaijan

Action implemented by:



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## 1. Background

Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) is a tool for examining the environmental risks associated with implementation of plans or programs (such as those elaborating reforms and medium – and long-term investments in a specific sector or several sectors, e.g., water, energy, transport as well as spatial and urban planning). This enables a framework for environmental management and monitoring to be agreed and built into the elements of both the urban planning and sector-specific strategic plans and their implementation mechanisms. Integration of the environmental (include climate and public health) concerns while preparing and implementing plans or programs ensures that investments and related operations are designed and implemented in ways that take into account environmental policy priorities and objectives. This ensures that potentially negative impacts of development are identified early on in the planning process; actions can then be taken to either adjust development plans in order to avoid these negative impacts, or parallel actions can be taken to Following the principles and procedures laid down in the UNECE Protocol on SEA to the Convention on Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) in a Transboundary Context (Espoo Convention) and in the European Union's Directive on SEA (2001/42/EC), Azerbaijan is implementing the SEA to allow for identification of the most sustainable and cost-effective strategic development alternatives and attracting new investments, while safeguarding and improving the environment. When applied effectively, the SEA also helps strengthen the country's environmental governance through fostering transparency and consultation with relevant stakeholders and the public prior to the approval of plans and programmes. SEA in a transboundary context can also greatly facilitate regional cooperation on environmental matters. Spatial planning, including regional plans, is one of the biggest and most comprehensive sectors of SEA application with considerable developments over the past decades and the vast experience available, in particular, from countries in the European Union.

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

The application of SEA in practice however remains rather limited in the country as the overall institutional capacities for SEA require significantly more strengthening to be fully fit for purpose. There is still a need to support environmental, health and sectoral planning authorities through capacity-building and awareness-raising activities addressing, inter alia, relevant procedures and challenges as well as respective roles of different authorities and stakeholders in the implementation of SEA procedures.

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

This workshop was the second of two SEA training workshops under the EU4Environment workplan for Azerbaijan. Along with the workplan's other SEA-related activities, it promotes more systematic and effective application of SEA in accordance with the UNECE Protocol on SEA, EU SEA Directive and the national legislation on SEA. It is dedicated to the application of SEA in the context of Regional and Spatial Planning, which constitute a very significant but also specific and challenging domain of SEA application. The webinar was facilitated by SEA consultants to UNECE.

## 2. Workshop objectives

As a result of restrictions applied in global as well as in national scale due to COVID 19 pandemic the events and trainings are transferred to online platforms using various software applications and programs. The online Workshop on Practical Application of Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) in Regional and Spatial Planning was designed as a combined SEA training and awareness raising event with a focus on the implementation of the SEA procedures in upcoming future in Azerbaijan. Therefore, the main objectives of the workshop are to:

- Enhance capacities for the application of SEA in Azerbaijan in line with the requirements of the UNECE Protocol on SEA, EU SEA Directive and the national legislation on SEA.
- Support the Ministry of Ecology and Natural Resources in raising awareness about the SEA, SEA-related regulatory framework and its application;
- Facilitate the engagement of key stakeholders and exchange of experience on SEA in the Regional and Spatial planning context.

The workshop is expected to help to further engage relevant stakeholders to participate in SEA implementation effort and to facilitate expert discussion on practical application of SEA in Azerbaijan.

## 3. Approach and methodology

In line with the above objectives, the Workshop was organized based on the following approach: Its participants were selected with the intention of raising awareness among key stakeholders of the SEA, i.e. line ministries and agencies likely to be involved in the preparation of plans and programs subject to SEA is applicable, as well as representatives of environmental authorities responsible for the SEA process and likely to be involved in SEA-related consultations, and other potential stakeholders.

The meeting was organized as a virtual event via Zoom. All registered participants received connection details to access the platform. Simultaneous interpretation in English and Azerbaijani had been provided.

Design of the workshop program included the following key components in line with the event's objectives described above:

- Review of the current situation regarding the implementation of the SEA in Azerbaijan,
- including information on the relevant international legal framework (the SEA Protocol, and the EU Directive 2001/42/EC on the Assessment of the Effects of Certain Plans and Programs on the environment) Typical SEA steps and procedures implemented within the application of SEA, key deliverables.
- Benefits of SEA, including: provision of high level of environmental protection, Improvement of quality of P/P making, increasing efficiency of decision-making, facilitation of identification of new development opportunities, assisting in prevention of costly mistakes, strengthening governance, enhancing transboundary cooperation.
- Key challenges and barriers to the SEA implementation and ways to tackle them

The workshop agenda concentrated on presentation and discussion of selected case examples of SEA application in different countries to illustrate its value-added in the planning context, but also to present various typical challenges and implementation problems. In addition, a guest speaker Mr. Gennadii Marushevsky shared his experience with preparation of a guidelines for SEA in spatial

planning in Ukraine, which provided a good opportunity for the participants to discuss their experiences with the challenges of the SEA implementation.

A significant portion of the allocated time was dedicated to the interactive discussion of 2 real urban plans recently developed in Azerbaijan. Selected pieces of information and maps taken from these real cases were used to demonstrate typical environmental issues and challenges encountered when conducting SEA for urban and regional planning documents. The discussion was facilitated by the national consultant familiar with the background and local context of the case studies and participants were encouraged to make use of their respective knowledge of the real situation.

The final session of the agenda included a brief SEA-related quiz for participants to allow for self-evaluation of the gained knowledge and understanding to the matters discussed in the workshop.

#### 4. Summary of the online webinar outcomes

The webinar had been conducted on October 15, 2021 with participation of the representatives of UNECE, international expert, representative of the Ministry of Ecology and Natural Resources of the Republic of Azerbaijan and participants of the meeting from various stakeholder institutions. Close to 30 participants from state bodies, private sector and civil society organizations of the country (relevant departments of the Ministry of Ecology and Natural Resources, State Committee on Urban Planning and Architecture, Ministry of Transportation, Communication and High Technologies, Ministry of Agriculture, NGOs, consulting companies) took active part in webinar through online platform.

The UNECE SEA consultants actively engaged with the participants namely through a discussion of the practical aspects of the SEA application, and existing barriers and challenges hindering the SEA practice development.



The image shows a Zoom meeting interface. On the left, a presentation slide is displayed. The slide features the EU4Environment logo (European Union, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Republic of Moldova, Ukraine) and the name Amin Mammadov. The main title of the slide is "Strateji Ekoloji Qiymətləndirmə (SEQ): İşğaldan Azad Olunmuş Qarabağ bölgəsinin Ümumi Planı üzrə nəzəri SEQ". Below the title, it states "Strateji ekoloji qiymətləndirmənin (SEQ) regional və məkan planlaşdırmasına praktik tətbiqinə dair" and "İstiqqatlı təlim: 15 oktyabr 2021-ci il Bəli, Azərbaycan". Logos for OECD, UNECE, UN, and THE WORLD BANK are visible at the bottom of the slide. On the right, a gallery view shows several participants in a grid. The names of the participants are: Sahib Khallov, Ahmadiya, AZE.MENR.A, Mihal Musil, Argul Valiyeva, UNECE Leonid, Amin Mammadov, Konul Abmad, UNECE Elena, and Ramiz Ağajiyev. At the bottom of the gallery, the names Vaqif Voliyev and cemil.babayev are also visible.

***Following key topics were addressed and discussed:***

The event was opened by the Head of Subdivision of International Cooperation Department of the Ministry of Ecology and Natural Resources Ms. Aysel Rzayeva on October 15, 2021. She highlighted the importance of environmental protection through two important instruments/procedures, SEA and EIA. The application of these instruments in Azerbaijan needs to be strengthened for the authorities to apply them effectively, and for the proponents and initiators to use them competently when planning and implementing a specific activity that fall under the national legislation.

EU4Environment Project Manager at UNECE, Mr. Leonid Kalashnyk, in his subsequent statement highlighted the importance of the EU-funded EU4Environment Program to address needs identified by Azerbaijan for further capacity building for the effective SEA application and outlined activities to assist the country in this area.

In the opening session, international consultant Mr. Michal Musil introduced the objectives and agenda of the event, and following up on the outcomes of the previous SEA workshop, he provided a brief summary of the SEA principles and key deliverables.

Following these introduction presentation, Mr. Gennadii Marushevsky, an expert from Ukraine, one of the Eastern Partnership countries, made a presentation on "Guidelines on SEA for Urban Planning Documents in Ukraine under development with EU4Environment assistance". In his presentation, Mr. Marushevsky provided information for Ukraine on the following topics: Legal Basis Urban Planning, Composition of Urban Planning Documentation, SEA Procedure, Current Status of SEA and key challenges in its implementation. His presentation attracted number of questions from the participants interested in learning from the experience of Ukraine, i.e. country in a similar stage of the SEA implementation.

After Mr. Gennadii Marushevsky's presentation, Mr. Amin Mammadov addressed a question about the differences between approaches to environmental assessment in the Soviet Union time and modern approaches based on EU standards in countries of the former Soviet Union. Mr. Marushevsky gave extensive information on this question.

In the subsequent session, Mr. Michal Musil presented various case examples of SEA for Regional and Spatial Plans from countries in the EU and UNECE region (e.g. Moldova, Czech Republic, Turkey). He illustrated approaches, methods, typical tasks, and interesting problems of SEA practice. The session was followed by interactive discussions with participants addressing questions and comments.

Then the local consultant Mr. Amin Mammadov continued with the sessions where master plans of 2 cities of Azerbaijan had been used as examples for providing background information about the land use plans for those cities – i.e. introducing a realistic context in which the SEA will be applied in the future. He also informed about other issues such as the Strategic Environmental Assessment of the General Plan in one region, the conceptual plan for Fuzuli city, the transport network under construction. Following those presentations the national consultant encouraged participants of the webinar to share their comments and ideas along with the questions related to various aspects of SEA. Participants gave their comments and proposals taking into account the facts they were provided and employing the general SEA-related knowledge obtained from the previous sessions delivered by the UNECE consultants.

In conclusion, Mr. Michal Musil summarized key takeaway points and specific concerns related to the SEA applied on the Regional and Spatial Plans. Following this presentation, participants took a brief quiz containing SEA-related questions covering selected aspects covered in the training, followed by a discussion of their answers.

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The concluding remarks for the webinar were made by Leonid Kalashnyk (UNECE) and Mrs. Aysel Rzayeva (MENR Azerbaijan).

## 5. Conclusions

The webinar successfully followed up on the discussions held during the previous related SEA Workshop and contributed to raising awareness of the key stakeholders about the SEA in general, and recent SEA-related obligations introduced into the legal framework in the Republic of Azerbaijan. The participants displayed good understanding to the SEA principles and procedural steps, but acknowledged a need for further capacity building in SEA to tackle challenges of the practical aspects of the SEA implementation. In this regard, they appreciated the assistance provided by the UNECE under the EU-funded EU4Environment Programme.

## 6. Acknowledgements

The workshop was jointly prepared by the UNECE Secretariat and the Ministry of Ecology and Natural Resources (MENR) of the Republic of Azerbaijan.

The Workshop was facilitated by Michal Musil (Integra Consulting Ltd.), Leonid Kalashnyk (UNECE) and Mrs. Aysel Rzayeva (MENR Azerbaijan).



## Annex 1: Workshop agenda



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## Second Training Workshop on the Practical Application of Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) in Regional and Spatial Planning

### Agenda

**15 October 2021, 10:00-16:00,  
Baku time  
Baku, Azerbaijan**

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

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## DRAFT AGENDA

Time (Baku)	Item
10:00 – 10:10	Connection testing (10 min)
10:10 – 10:25	<b>Welcoming remarks</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Representative of the Ministry of Ecology and Natural Resources of Azerbaijan</i></li> <li>• <i>Representative of the EU Delegation to Azerbaijan (tbc)</i></li> <li>• <i>Mr. Leonid Kalashnyk, Environmental Affairs Officer, EU4Environment Project Manager at UNECE</i></li> </ul>
10:25 – 10:40	<b>Meeting objectives and agenda</b>
10:40 – 11:10	<b>SEA and Regional and Spatial Planning</b>  <i>Questions and answers</i>
11:10 – 11:30	<b>Experience from another Eastern Partnership country: Guidelines on SEA for Urban Planning Documents in Ukraine under development with EU4Environment assistance</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Gennadii Marushevsky</i></li> </ul>
11:30 – 13:00	<b>SEA for Regional and Spatial Plans: Selected case examples</b>  <i>Interactive discussion/group work</i> <i>Survey/scoping exercise</i>
13:00 – 14:00	<b>Lunch break</b>
14:00 – 15:00	<b>SEA in Spatial Planning: Key issues in Azerbaijan</b>
15:00 – 15:50	<b>Concluding discussion and quiz</b>
15:50 – 16:00	<b>Concluding remarks</b>

## Annex 2: List of Participants



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## Second Training Workshop on the Practical Application of Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) in Regional and Spatial Planning

**15 October 2021, 10:00-16:00,  
Baku time**

### LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

**Total number of participants: 34**

No.	First Name, Last Name:	Name of Institution / Organization / Enterprise, Position:	Contact Data:
1.	Ms. Aysel Rzayeva	Head of International Agreements Subdivision at International Cooperation Division, Ministry of Ecology and Natural Resources of the Republic of Azerbaijan  Focal point of Azerbaijan to UNECE Espoo Convention	Email: <a href="mailto:ayselbabasoylu@yahoo.com">ayselbabasoylu@yahoo.com</a> Aysel.rzayeva@eco.gov.az Tel.: +994559005521

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		of Emergency Situations of the Republic of Azerbaijan	
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15.	Mr.Ramil Quliyev	Senior advisor of the State Environmental Security Service of MENR	Email: <a href="mailto:ramil8434@mail.ru">ramil8434@mail.ru</a>
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25.	Mr. Nijat Allahverdiyev	Leading specialist of the Division of Ecology, Azerenerji Open Joint Stock Company	Email: <a href="mailto:nicat.allahverdiyev@azerenerji.gov.az">nicat.allahverdiyev@azerenerji.gov.az</a>
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34	Ms. Qizilgul Hasanova	Senior advisor, Department of Environmental policy Ministry of Ecology and Natural Resources of the Republic of Azerbaijan	Email: <a href="mailto:qizilgulhesenova92@gmail.com">qizilgulhesenova92@gmail.com</a> Tel.: +99412 5387073