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EU4Environment

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

TRAINING WORKSHOP 2 ON PRACTICAL APPLICATION OF SEA IN ARMENIA (ASSESSMENT, MITIGATION, CONSIDERATION OF SEA RESULTS, MONITORING, AND DEVELOPMENT OF TERMS OF REFERENCE FOR SEA)

23-24 NOVEMBER 2023

Yerevan, Armenia

WORKSHOP REPORT

Action implemented by:



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1. Background

Within the framework of the European Union-funded EU4Environment programme, the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) has been assisting the Eastern Partnership countries, including Armenia, in comprehensive capacity-building and institutional building on Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) and transboundary Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) since 2019.

The support included the provision of two interlinked training workshops on SEA that were organized in Yerevan on 30-31 October and on 23-24 November 2023.

This report was prepared to summarise the outcomes of the second training workshop (23-24 November 2023). This Training Workshop 2 built on Training Workshop 1 delivered on 30-31 October 2023 and aimed at raising awareness and build capacities of the national stakeholders on such key elements of SEA as strategic policy and objective-led analysis, assessment of effects, development of mitigation measures and monitoring proposals, reviewing the quality of SEA reports, consideration of the SEA recommendations in the strategic planning document and decision making. The event was organized by the Ministry of Environment of the Republic of Armenia and UNECE and facilitated by the international and national SEA consultants to UNECE, and delivered by the international and national SEA consultants to the UNECE.

2. Workshop objectives, expected outputs and outcomes

The objectives of the event were to:

- raise awareness and build capacities of national sectoral planning authorities, regional planning authorities, local self-governing bodies, consultancies, and other stakeholders in Armenia about the analytical approaches used in SEA concept, development of mitigation and monitoring proposals, reviewing the quality of SEA reports, consideration of the SEA recommendations in the strategic planning document and decision making, and aspects to be considered when developing terms of reference for SEA.
- raise awareness and build capacities of sectoral planning authorities, decision-makers, local self-governing bodies, consultancies and other stakeholders in Armenia about the SEA process according to:
 - the amended national legislation on SEA;
 - the Protocol on SEA to the Convention of Environmental Impact Assessment in a Transboundary Context (Espoo Convention) and SEA Directive 2001/42/EC;
- to enhance the capacities of the training workshop participants in undertaking the assessment and quality review during the SEA process using practical exercises.

3. Approach and methodology

The 1.5-day workshop was held at DoubleTree by Hilton Yerevan City Centre, 4/2 Grigor Lusavorich

Yerevan, Armenia.

The workshop utilised a highly interactive design. Almost each theoretical block was followed by practical exercises and discussion blocks (see Annex 1 and the photos below). Where relevant, the presentations contained practical recommendations and references to case examples.



The workshop was attended by 47 participants including:

- sectoral bodies/ministries that may be involved in the preparation of government plans and programs subject to SEA at the national level,

¹ This is the total number excluding the UNECE staff and consultants, as well as the Espoo Convention's Focal Point in Armenia.

- environmental and health authorities responsible for coordinating and facilitating the SEA process and likely to be involved in consultations related to SEA,
- municipalities responsible for carrying out SEA at the regional / local levels and relevant environmental consulting companies, NGOs/CSOs and Armenian State University of Economy running the EIA & SEA courses.

The workshop consisted of the following main components:

- I. Introduction to the workshop: objectives and agenda.
- II. Analyses in SEA: policy analysis, objectives-led analysis, assessment of effects, identification and review of alternatives – Part I. and Part II. – each followed by an exercises, namely: Exercise 1: Policy analysis and objective-led analysis in SEA with reference to the example of the SEA for the Waste Management Plan of Armenia; Exercise 2: Can we supplement the Effect Assessment Matrix – identification and ranging of effects?
- III. Mitigation in SEA
- IV. Monitoring in SEA
- V. Preparation of the SEA Report: national requirements. Preparation of the SEA Report: SEA Protocol and good practice.
- VI. Quality control/quality assurance in SEA.
- VII. State Environmental Review (Expertise) of the SEA Report: national requirements. Exercise 3: Use of the Quality Review Criteria in SEA.
- VIII. Taking SEA results into account in planning documents and the related decision-making process: national and international requirements and practice.
- IX. What the planning authorities are to consider when preparing the terms of reference for SEA: practical considerations.

4. Summary of the Workshop outcomes

The opening speech of the Workshop was given by Ms. Elyanora Grigoryan, legal consultant to the Ministry of Environment, national focal point for the Espoo Convention. On behalf of the Ministry of Environment of the Republic of Armenia, Ms. Elyanora Grigoryan welcomed all participants of the training seminar and wished them fruitful, productive and active work. Ms. Grigoryan also informed the attendees that the UNECE team of the Convention Secretariat is not present at this second event due to the Secretariat being busy in connection with preparations for the next Meeting of the Parties to the Espoo Convention and the Protocol on SEA.

Dr. Maia Gachechiladze-Bozhesku, International SEA Consultant to UNECE, welcomed the participants, noted that the second workshop, as well as the first one, was organised within the framework of the EU4Environment programme and stressed the long-lasting cooperation between with the Ministry of Environment and UNECE. She then made an introduction to the workshop objectives and agenda.

Following this, Ms. Azganush Drnoyan, National SEA Consultant to UNECE, and Dr. Maia Gachechiladze-Bozhesku made a presentation of the participants and held a short discussion on their expectations.

Dr. Maia Gachechiladze-Bozhesku then presented several sessions on analyses typically conducted in SEA, such as policy analysis, objectives-led analysis, and assessment of effects. The theoretical aspects were discussed in more details during Exercise 1: Policy analysis and objective-led analysis in SEA with reference to the example of the SEA for the Waste Management Plan of Armenia. The exercise was followed by the second analytical block that focused on the identification and review of alternatives and another Exercise 2 that allowed the participant to use a checklist approach to identify and range the effects of the strategic documents of their own choice.

Later on the same day, Dr. Maia Gachechiladze-Bozhesku presented the concepts of Mitigation in SEA and Monitoring in SEA that were followed by Wrap-up of Day 1 and presentation of agenda for Day 2.

The next morning was dedicated to the Preparation of SEA Report approached from two angles. First, Ms. Azganush Drnoyan presented the national requirements for the SEA Report, then Dr. Maia Gachechiladze-Bozhesku discussed the provisions SEA Protocol and good practice approaches regarding the content of the environmental report.

Dr. Gachechiladze-Bozhesku then spoke about quality control and quality assurance in SEA discussion, that was consolidated by Exercise 3: Use of the Quality Review Criteria in SEA.

After a break, on the same day, Ms. Azganush Drnoyan spoke about the national requirements for the State Environmental Review (Expertise) of the SEA Report.

This was followed by the presentation and discussion of how to take SEA results into account in planning documents and the related decision-making process. National and international requirements and practice were covered by Ms. Azganush Drnoyan and Dr. Maia Gachechiladze-Bozhesku, respectively.

The practical part of the Workshop was concluded by the presentation and discussion of what the planning authorities are to consider when preparing the terms of reference for SEA. Dr. Maia Gachechiladze-Bozhesku elaborated on the capacities of various SEA actors to prepare SEA and presented practical considerations and the typical terms of reference for SEA.

During the question-and-answer sessions conducted during/after the above presentations, the workshop participants raised the following questions and topics:

- If the SEA uses old data and new data are not available, what are the possible solutions?
- What is liquid-free cleaning of solar panels?
- Who is responsible for monitoring the implementation of plans/programs?
- If the negative consequences are too extensive, is it possible to abandon the development plan?
- If the plan's implementation is generally positive, but it interferes with the economic interests of some groups, what should be done in this case?
- Are activities carried out in specially protected areas subject to SEA?
- Is it mandatory to conduct an EIA after SEA?

- Cost of developing a SEA report.
- Who finances the SEA?
- How effective is SEA if it is done by the Ministry of Natural Resources itself and at the same time it must control the quality of SEA (conduct a Review/ Expertise).
- Is there a difference in the quality of SEA reports if in one case they are developed by planning authorities, and in the other - by consultants?
- Who accredits SEA experts?
- Who will decide which SEA recommendations need to be taken into account?
- Availability and provision of methodological materials for conducting SEA?
- Validity period of the Conclusion on SEA, which is issued by the State Environmental Review.

The trainers answered the raised questions using various examples. The participants also noted that the national legislation on SEA needs to be further applied and tested and then potentially improved (e.g., the validity of the Conclusion may need to be revised).

The Workshop participants completed the exercises on the following topics:

- Exercise 1: Policy analysis and objective-led analysis in SEA with reference to the example of the SEA for the Waste Management Plan of Armenia.
- Exercise 2: Can we supplement the Effect Assessment Matrix - identification and ranging of effects?
- Exercise 3: Use of the Quality Review Criteria in SEA.

All exercises were jointly facilitated by Dr. Maia Gachechiladze-Bozhesku and Ms. Azganush Drnoyan and all participants took a very active part in them. The participants asked questions during / after the presentations and readily participated in debates and group work. Assisted by the consultants to UNECE, the groups presented their group work results that were followed by a general discussion.

The participants expressed their gratitude to the organizers of the event. It was noted that the workshop provided a great opportunity to gain a clearer understanding of SEA.

5. Workshop conclusions

In conclusion, Ms. Elyanora Grigoryan expressed her gratitude to the organizers of the seminar: the EU4Environment Programme, the UNECE Secretariat for the Espoo Convention and the Protocol on SEA, in particular to Mr. L. Kalashnyk, E. Kashina and the Ministry of Environment of the Republic of Armenia. Ms. Elyanora Grigoryan noted that the seminar contributed to further application of SEA in Armenia and provided support to the national authorities, highlighting the benefits of SEA, as well as assessing existing challenges and opportunities in the developing SEA system in the country.

Ms. Elyanora Grigoryan thanked Dr. Maia Gachechiladze-Bozhesku, International SEA Consultant to UNECE, and Ms. Azganush Drnoyan, National SEA Consultant to UNECE, for their brilliant work. Ms. Grigoryan also noted the active and effective work of all participants, as well as the words of appreciation received from them.

6. Workshop evaluation

The workshop participants have been provided with evaluation forms to present their feedback to the organizers. In total 32 out of 41 distributed questionnaires have been recovered and analysed. The summary of the results is presented below.

The overall participants' evaluation was very positive; the participants reported that:

- The workshop topics were "important" or "very important" for most participants (25% and 72% respectively). One participant considered it to be "partly important";
- The delivery of information was "absolutely clear" (34%) or "almost clear" (66%);
- The most useful for the participants were:
 - (i) The effectiveness and importance of implementing SEA;
 - (ii) High quality level of the workshop;
 - (iii) The format of the seminar was very important, the opportunity of free, unrestricted communication with trainers, the workshop was very effective.
- The participants thought that practical exercises were "useful" (28%) or "very useful" (72%).

Several proposals for improving the efficiency and effectiveness of further similar workshops have been suggested, in particular:

- continuing trainings in the same format;
- presenting experience of other countries using specific examples;
- sending presentations to participants;
- considering the complexity of the topic, to increase the duration of the workshops to 3-4 days, and hold them more often;
- the workshop was attended by the University students and professors, who asked Ms. Elyanora Grigoryan and Ms. Azganush Drnoyan to hold a lecture at the University on SEA and EIA topics.

In addition, many of the participants verbally noted that all the questions covered during the whole training were interesting to them.

7. Acknowledgements

The Workshop was organised and delivered within the framework of the EU-funded EU4Environment Programme jointly by the UNECE Secretariat of the Espoo Convention and its Protocol on SEA and the Ministry of Environment of the Republic of Armenia.



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Annex: Agenda of the event

DAY 1. 23 November

Time	Item
9:30 – 10:00	Registration of participants
10:00 – 10:15	Opening the training workshop and welcome of the participants <i>Representative of the Ministry of Environment of the Republic of Armenia Ms. Elyanora Grigoryan, legal consultant to the Ministry of Environment</i>
10:15 – 10:25	Introduction to the workshop objectives and agenda <i>Dr. Maia Gachechiladze-Bozhesku, International SEA Consultant to UNECE</i>
10:25 – 10:35	Presentation of the participants and determination of their expectations <i>Facilitated by Ms. Azganush Drnoyan, National SEA Consultant to UNECE, and Dr. Maia Gachechiladze-Bozhesku</i>
10:35 – 11:15	Analyses in SEA: policy analysis, objectives-led analysis, assessment of effects, identification and review of alternatives – Part I <i>Dr. Maia Gachechiladze-Bozhesku Presentation and discussion</i>
11:15 – 11:30	Coffee break
11:30 – 12:20	Exercise 1: Policy analysis and objective-led analysis in SEA with reference to the example of the SEA for the Waste Management Plan of Armenia <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Assignment definition ○ Work in pairs/groups ○ Presentation of results <i>Instructors: Dr. Maia Gachechiladze-Bozhesku and Azganush Drnoyan</i>
12:20 – 13:10	Analyses in SEA: policy analysis, objectives-led analysis, assessment of effects, identification and review of alternatives – Part II <i>Dr. Maia Gachechiladze-Bozhesku Presentation and discussion</i>
13:10 – 14:00	Exercise 2: Can we supplement the Effect Assessment Matrix? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Assignment definition ○ Work in a single group ○ Presentation of results <i>Instructors: Dr. Maia Gachechiladze-Bozhesku and Azganush Drnoyan</i>
14:00 – 15:00	Lunch break
15:00 – 15:50	Mitigation in SEA <i>Dr. Maia Gachechiladze-Bozhesku Presentation and discussion</i>
15:50 – 16:05	Coffee break
16:05 – 17:00	Monitoring in SEA <i>Dr. Maia Gachechiladze-Bozhesku Presentation and discussion</i>
17:00 – 17:20	Wrap-up and agenda for Day 2

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DAY 2. 24 November

Time	Item
9:30 – 10:00	Summary of Day 1: Participants' feedback and expectations for Day 2 <i>Facilitated by Ms. Azganush Drnoyan and Dr. Maia Gachechiladze-Bozhesku</i>
10:00 – 10:20	Preparation of the SEA Report: national requirements <i>Ms. Azganush Drnoyan</i> <i>Presentation and discussion</i>
10:20 – 10:50	Preparation of the SEA Report: SEA Protocol and good practice <i>Dr. Maia Gachechiladze-Bozhesku</i> <i>Presentation and discussion</i>
10:50 – 11:20	Quality control/quality assurance in SEA <i>Dr. Maia Gachechiladze-Bozhesku</i> <i>Presentation and discussion</i>
11:20 – 11:40	Coffee break
11:40 – 12:10	State Environmental Review (Expertise) of the SEA Report: national requirements <i>Ms. Azganush Drnoyan</i> <i>Presentation and discussion</i>
12:10 – 12:40	Exercise 3: Use of the Quality Review Criteria in SEA <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Assignment definition ○ Work in pairs/groups ○ Presentation of results <i>Instructors: Dr. Maia Gachechiladze-Bozhesku and Azganush Drnoyan</i>
12:40 – 12:50	Taking SEA results into account in planning documents and the related decision-making process: national and international requirements and practice <i>Ms. Azganush Drnoyan</i> <i>Dr. Maia Gachechiladze-Bozhesku</i> <i>Presentation and discussion</i>
12:50 – 13:20	What the planning authorities are to consider when preparing the terms of reference for SEA: practical considerations <i>Dr. Maia Gachechiladze-Bozhesku</i> <i>Presentation and discussion</i>
13:20 – 13:40	Final remarks, feedback from the participants and closure of the workshop
13:40 – 14:40	Lunch break