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# EU4Environment

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

## TRAINING WORKSHOP 1 “ON PRACTICAL APPLICATION OF SEA IN ARMENIA”

30-31 OCTOBER 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 first training workshop. This Training Workshop 1 on practical application of SEA in Armenia aimed at raising awareness and build capacities of the national stakeholders on such key elements of SEA as screening, scoping, baseline analysis, consultations and public participation in the SEA process, and procedural integration of SEA with the strategic planning process.

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 bodies, local self-governing bodies, and other stakeholders in Armenia about the concept and benefits of SEA, screening in SEA, preconditions for effective implementation of SEA and its integration with the strategic planning documents.
- raise awareness and build capacities of sectoral planning authorities, decision-makers, local self-governing bodies, 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;
- enhance the capacities of the training workshop participants in undertaking the screening, scoping, baseline analysis, stakeholder engagement and procedural integration of SEA and its planning subject 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 44 participants including:

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

The workshop consisted of the following main components:

- I. Introduction of the concept of SEA, including information on the international legal framework and requirements set out in the UNECE Protocol on SEA and the European Union Directive on SEA, as well as the rationale for the need to introduce SEA in the Republic of Armenia.
- II. Presentation of the national SEA requirements in the Republic of Armenia, including information on recent developments and changes to the Law “On Environmental Impacts Assessment and Expertise”.
- III. Illustration of SEA/good practice examples from several Central and Eastern European countries and EU member states across the presentations on various SEA topics.
- IV. Discussion of practical aspects and problems associated with the implementation of SEA, the roles and responsibilities of national, regional and local participants and non-state actors.

#### **4. Summary of the Workshop outcomes**

The opening speech of the Workshop was given by Mr. Sergo Atanesyan, Secretary General of the Ministry of Environment of the Republic of Armenia. Mr. Atanesyan noted that Armenia had ratified the Protocol on SEA to the Espoo Convention and had the relevant national legislation and thus the organized seminar would help strengthen the practical capacity of actors engaged in SEA.

Following this, Mr. Frank Hess, Head of Cooperation Section of the EU Delegation to Armenia, gave a welcoming speech and emphasized the importance of implementing the SEA as a tool that helps integrate environmental considerations into planning.

Mr. Leonid Kalashnik, environmental officer, Head of the EU4Environment Project at the UNECE, noted that SEA allows countries, including the Republic of Armenia, to include environmental and public health objectives in strategic documents, being an effective tool for achieving the sustainable

development goals and implementation of global planning commitments. He stressed a strong support from and long-lasting cooperation with the Ministry of Environment of Armenia during the EU4Environment Program.

Mr. Kalashnik noted that the European Union – funded EU4Environment Program helps the Eastern Partnership countries preserve natural capital and improve the environmental well-being of the population by supporting measures related to environmental protection, demonstrating and revealing opportunities for greener growth, as well as creating mechanisms to more effectively manage environmental risks and impacts.

Ms. Eleonora Grigoryan, Ministry of Environment, legal consultant, national focal point for the Espoo Convention, welcomed the participants of the seminar and expressed hope that improving the SEA process would contribute to proper planning of the country's economic development and sustainable development.

Following a brief warm-up and introduction round, Dr. Maia Gachechiladze-Bozhesku, International SEA Consultant to UNECE, presented the SEA concept, information on the international legal framework and requirements - the UNECE Protocol on SEA and the European Union Directive on SEA, emphasized the need for implementation of SEA in the Republic of Armenia, explained the difference between SEA and Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA), etc.

Ms. Lusine Avetisyan, Head of the Strategic Policy Department, Ministry of Environment presented the amendments adopted in the Law “On Environmental Impacts Assessment and Expertise”, which came into force on June 9, 2023.

Following this, Ms. Azganush Drnoyan, National SEA Consultant to UNECE, presented a comprehensive analysis of the national legal framework for the application of SEA and spoke about the key problems associated with it.

Dr. Maia Gachechiladze-Bozhesku then spoke about the strategic planning process and the integration of SEA into it detailing various integration models and providing examples from different countries. She also noted international legal requirements and practical considerations and discussed how the SEA process was integrated into the development of the Waste Management Plan of Armenia.

In the next session, Dr. Maia Gachechiladze-Bozhesku presented the definition of ‘scoping’ in SEA and unveiled the relevant provisions of the Protocol on SEA and SEA Directive. She explained what kind of actions can practically be implemented in order to determine the scope of SEA and ensure that the professional opinions of the consultees are considered in the process. She made references to the examples from different countries.

Ms. Azganush Drnoyan presented the national requirements regarding the consultations with the competent environmental and health authorities and the public that need to be held during SEA. She demonstrated the amendments to the Law regarding consultations and noted various departments to be engaged in the consultation process, provisions for public participation, timing of the consultation process, etc.

Dr. Maia Gachechiladze-Bozhesku then discussed how the baseline information can be collected for the purpose of SEA and reported upon. She drew attention of the participants to the important of understanding the dynamics of the baseline information and driving forces behind changes in the

baseline environmental, health and social data. She also talked about how to compile a SEA scoping report and presented various examples of such reports.

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

- Where can we get funding for the implementation of SEA?
- Who initiates the screening?
- Who is responsible for conducting SEA?
- Are investment programs subject to SEA?
- In which case are projects subject to SEA and in which case to EIA?
- How does the amended Law reflect consultations with various departments and the public?
- Are water supply and sanitation infrastructure projects subject to SEA?
- What should be done if the draft fundamental document is already drafted? Is it necessary to start preparing the SEA for it right now or can it be approved as is?
- What recommendations can be made based on the analysis of the strategic context of the fundamental document?
- Is it necessary to conduct a SEA for an urgent program?

The trainers answered the raised questions in detail using various examples. The differences between EIA and SEA were highlighted and presented based on national and international legislation.

The Workshop participants completed exercises on the following topics:

- Exercise 1: Is your draft strategic planning document subject to SEA?
- Exercise 2: How to integrate the SEA process into the development of a strategic planning document (using the example of the SEA of the Waste Management Plan of Armenia).
- Exercise 3: Defining the scope of the SEA: identifying key environmental and health issues (using the example of the SEA of the Waste Management Plan of Armenia).
- Exercise 4: Consultations with stakeholders in SEA.
- Exercise 5: Reviewing the results of baseline data analysis.

All participants were very active. They asked questions during / after the presentations and readily and enthusiastically 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, Mr. Leonid Kalashnik summarized the key factors that ensure the effectiveness of the SEA procedure. Among them, he listed: public participation in the SEA process, in which both risks and opportunities are identified, and measures to prevent and mitigate consequences are developed. All this will ensure an effective SEA process, using every opportunity to influence the planning process appropriately, and will encourage decision makers to take the SEA results into account.

Ms. Eleonora Grigoryan expressed her gratitude to the EU4Environment Program, organisers of the event and the engaged consultants and noted that in general, 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.

The workshop was attended by a wide range of stakeholders.

## 6. Workshop evaluation

The workshop participants have been provided with evaluation forms to present their feedback to the organizers. In total 17 out of 25 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 (29% and 65% respectively). One participant considered it to be “partly important”;
- The delivery of information was “absolutely clear” (59%) or “almost clear” (41%);
- The most useful for the participants were:
  - (i) The effectiveness and importance of implementing SEA, organizing the correct planning process;
  - (ii) High quality level of the seminar. The format of the seminar was very important, direct communication with the trainers was very effective; and
  - (iii) Analysis of changes to the new Law, provision of clear distinction between EIA and SEA;
- All participants thought that practical exercises were “useful” (24%) or “very useful” (76%).

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;
- conducting similar seminars on EIA;
- holding such seminars more often and increase their duration to 3-4 days.

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 Program jointly by the UNECE secretariat of the Espoo Convention and its Protocol on SEA and the Ministry of Environment of the Republic of Armenia.

## Annex: Agenda of the event

### DAY 1. 30 October

Time (Yerevan)	Item
9:30 – 10:00	<b>Registration of participants</b>
10:00 – 10:15	<b>Opening of the training workshop and welcoming of the participants</b> <i>Mr. Sergo Atanesyan, Secretary General, Ministry of Environment of the Republic of Armenia</i> <i>Mr. Frank Hess, Head of Cooperation Section, EU Delegation to Armenia</i> <i>Mr. Leonid Kalashnyk, EU4Environment Manager at UNECE</i>
10:15 – 10:25	<b>Introduction to the workshop objectives and agenda</b> <i>Dr. Maia Gachechiladze-Bozhesku, International SEA Consultant to UNECE</i>
10:25 – 10:35	<b>Presentation of the participants and determination of their expectations</b> <i>Facilitated by Ms. Azganush Drnoyan, National SEA Consultant to UNECE, and Dr. Maia Gachechiladze-Bozhesku</i>
10:35 – 11:15	<b>Introduction to SEA: the concept, international legal instruments, key elements, actors and roles, benefits, costs, and good practice principles</b> <i>Dr. Maia Gachechiladze-Bozhesku</i> <i>Presentation and discussion</i>
11:15 – 11:30	<b>Coffee break</b>
11:30 – 12:20	<b>National Legal Requirements for SEA: Law “On Environmental Impacts Assessment and Expertise” (as amended in 2023 versus the earlier provisions)</b> <i>Ms. Lusine Avetisyan, Head of the Strategic Planning Department, Ministry of Environment</i> <i>Ms. Azganush Drnoyan</i> <i>Presentation and discussion</i>
12:20 – 13:00	<b>Exercise 1: Is your draft strategic planning document subject to SEA?</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Assignment definition</li> <li>○ Work in pairs/groups</li> <li>○ Presentation of results</li> </ul> <i>Instructors: Dr. Maia Gachechiladze-Bozhesku and Ms. Azganush Drnoyan</i>
13:00 – 13:40	<b>Strategic planning process and integration of SEA into it: national legal requirements and practical considerations</b> <i>Dr. Maia Gachechiladze-Bozhesku</i> <i>Presentation and discussion</i>
13:40 – 14:30	<b>Lunch break</b>
14:30 – 15:10	<b>Exercise 2: How to integrate the SEA process into the development of your strategic planning document (with reference to the SEA of the Waste Management Plan of Armenia)</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Assignment definition</li> <li>○ Work in pairs/groups</li> <li>○ Presentation of results</li> </ul> <i>Instructors: Dr. Maia Gachechiladze-Bozhesku and Ms. Azganush Drnoyan</i>



15:10 – 15:40	<b>Determining the scope of SEA (scoping)</b> <i>Dr. Maia Gachechiladze-Bozhesku</i> <i>Presentation and discussion</i>
15:40 – 16:20	<b>Exercise 3: SEA scoping: identification of key environmental and health issues (with reference to the SEA of the Waste Management Plan of Armenia)</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Assignment definition</li> <li>○ Work in pairs/groups</li> <li>○ Presentation of results</li> </ul> <i>Instructors: Dr. Maia Gachechiladze-Bozhesku and Ms. Azganush Drnoyan</i>
16:20 – 16:30	<b>Coffee break</b>
16:30 – 16:50	<b>Consultations with competent authorities and the public: previous versus new national requirements</b> <i>Ms. Azganush Drnoyan</i> <i>Presentation and discussion</i>
16:50 – 17:10	<b>Consultations with environmental and health authorities and the public: Protocol on SEA and good practice</b> <i>Dr. Maia Gachechiladze-Bozhesku</i> <i>Presentation and discussion</i>
17:10 – 17:20	<b>Wrap-up and agenda for Day 2</b>

## DAY 2. 31 October

Time (Yerevan)	Item
9:30 – 10:00	<b>Summary of Day 1: Participants' feedback and expectations for Day 2</b> <i>Facilitated by Ms. Azganush Drnoyan and Dr. Maia Gachechiladze-Bozhesku</i>
10:00 – 10:30	<b>How to prepare the SEA Scoping Report?</b> <i>Dr. Maia Gachechiladze-Bozhesku</i> <i>Presentation and discussion</i>
10:30 – 11:10	<b>Exercise 4: Consultations with stakeholders in SEA</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Assignment definition</li> <li>○ Work in pairs/groups</li> <li>○ Presentation of results</li> </ul> <i>Instructors: Dr. Maia Gachechiladze-Bozhesku and Ms. Azganush Drnoyan</i>
11:10 – 11:30	<b>Coffee break</b>
11:30 – 12:10	<b>Baseline analysis in SEA</b> <i>Dr. Maia Gachechiladze-Bozhesku</i> <i>Presentation and discussion</i>
12:10 – 13:00	<b>Exercise 5: Reviewing the provided baseline analysis section</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Assignment definition</li> <li>○ Work in pairs/groups</li> <li>○ Presentation of results</li> </ul> <i>Instructors: Dr. Maia Gachechiladze-Bozhesku and Ms. Azganush Drnoyan</i>

**13:00 – 13:20**      **Outlook into Training Workshop 2**  
**Final remarks and closure of the workshop**

**13:20 – 14:30**      **Lunch break**

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