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EU4Environment
Green Economy in Eastern Partner Countries

Training Workshop on SEA in the Republic of Moldova

29 February 2024,
9.00-13.00 (Chisinau EEST)

Training Report

Action implemented by:



Abbreviations

EIA	Environmental Impact Assessment
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
SEA	Strategic Environmental Assessment
CE	Expert Commission
UNECE	United Nations Economic Commission for Europe
UNEP	United Nations Environment Programme
UNIDO	United Nations Industrial Development Organization

Background

Within the framework of the European Union-funded EU4Environment programme (2019-2024), UNECE is assisting the Eastern Partnership countries, including the Republic of Moldova, in comprehensive capacity-building and institutional building on Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) and transboundary Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) and in finalizing legal reforms in this area.

In the Republic of Moldova, the amendments of the Law on SEA entered into force in October 2023, expecting to improve the legal framework for developing a sound practice and strengthen the overall institutional capacities for strategic environmental assessment application. Also, with the UNECE assistance under the EU4Environment, the draft Regulation on the organization and functioning of the Expert Commission for the quality analysis of the environmental strategic assessment report and the analysis of the draft policy and planning document was developed in the end of 2023. Therefore, the Ministry of Environment of the Republic of Moldova requested further support to organize the training to explain the main requirements stipulated by the national SEA legislation and the key steps in the SEA procedure.

Therefore, the training workshop served as a platform for discussing the key issues related to effective SEA practice and how to address potential challenges related to the SEA procedure outlined in the amended Law and the related Regulation. The workshop was facilitated by the national and international consultants to the UNECE.

The “European Union for Environment” (EU4Environment – Green Economy) Action helps the Eastern Partnership countries preserve their natural capital and increase people's environmental well-being by supporting environment-related action, demonstrating and unlocking opportunities for greener growth, and setting mechanisms to manage environmental risks and impacts better. It is funded by the European Union and implemented by five Partner organisations - OECD, UNECE, UNEP, UNIDO, and the World Bank – over 2019-2024 period, with a budget of EUR 20 million.

Training objectives

- To promote the sound application of the SEA in the Republic of Moldova in line with the European Union’s Directive on SEA and the UNECE Protocol on SEA
- To introduce the amended Law on SEA, its main requirements, and the key steps in the SEA procedure
- To increase the participants' understanding of the principles of the effective SEA application and to discuss how to address potential challenges related to the SEA practice.

Approach and methodology

The event was organized online through the Zoom platform. English and Romanian were the training languages, and English-Romanian simultaneous interpretation was provided.

The training was divided into two main parts in line with the above objectives. Part 1 was – after providing a short introduction to the SEA – dedicated to the national legal framework for SEA in Moldova, explaining the main requirements, key stages in the SEA procedure, relevant authorities, and other main actors. The second part was subdivided into a series of short presentations covering the main stages of the SEA process and addressing potential challenges related to implementing a given stage. The final presentation focused on the practical aspects of the effective SEA application, including the transboundary consultations. The room for the questions was provided after each presentation.

All presentations and the agenda can be found at <https://unece.org/info/Environmental-Policy/events/388469>.

Summary of the training outcomes

The training workshop gathered over 70 participants from the Ministry of Environment and other central governmental authorities, as well as representatives of local governments, environmental practitioners, and experts from environmental consulting companies active in environmental assessment.

The following key topics were addressed and discussed:

The event was opened by **Mrs. Iordanca-Rodica Iordanov, Minister of Environment**, who welcomed the participants and emphasized the benefits of effective implementation of SEA in the country as one of the main tools for environmental and health protection at the strategic level.

EU4Environment Project Manager at UNECE, Mr. Leonid Kalashnyk, endorsed the achievements of the Republic of Moldova in the field of SEA, in particular the recent adoption of amended Law on SEA, including the regulations of the Expert Commission (CE), which will be responsible for the quality review of the SEA Report. Further in his statement, Mr. Kalashnyk highlighted the importance of the EU-funded EU4Environment Programme to address needs identified by the Republic of Moldova for further capacity building for the effective EIA and SEA application and outlined the past and current activities undertaken by UNECE under the EU4Environment to assist the country in this area.

Following these introductory remarks, Ms. Natalia Guranda, National Consultant to UNECE, and Mr. Michal Musil, International Consultant to UNECE, presented the agenda. Mr. Martin Smutny then gave a short general introduction to SEA, explaining why SEA is needed and the objectives and fundamental principles of its effective application. He also mentioned differences between SEA and EIA, the main actors involved in the SEA, and their tasks and responsibilities.

In the following presentation, **Mrs. Carolina Eremei, consultant, Department of Pollution Prevention Policies, Ministry of Environment**, informed the auditorium about the current status of the SEA in the Republic of Moldova, including the existing legal framework, i.e., the amended Law on SEA and the Regulation on the organization and functioning of the Expert Commission for the quality analysis of the SEA report and the analysis of the draft policy and planning document. Also, it was pointed out that we are currently updating the Guidelines for implementing the SEA Law.

Mr. Jerzy Jendrośka, International Legal Expert, then presented in detail the SEA procedure according to the amended Law on SEA. He explained the need for and aims of the amendment, its structure, and the key concepts. For each main stage, he addressed the legal requirements and the detailed procedural aspects, using the scheme of the preliminary assessment and a full assessment. He also covered the topics of public participation and the transboundary SEA procedure. One aspect addressed by participants was the connection between SEA and EIA related to the same type of activity, one being reflected in a policy document (like urban/land plans) and one specific that emerges from the policy document that undertook SEA. Mr. Jerzy explained that such issues have been raised in many countries if these documents are subject to SEA or EIA. Some countries combine these two procedures, making one report but following two procedures. Respectively, SEA is an umbrella mechanism covering many planned activities/projects, while EIA focuses solely on one specific project.

After the short break, **Mr. Michal Musil, International Consultant to UNECE**, presented the topic of the establishment of the need to carry out SEA preliminary assessment, starting with its purpose of deciding whether SEA is needed for a particular document. He explained the key principles and the criteria stipulated by the Law on SEA. Ms. Natalia Guranda then summarized the legal requirements and facilitated the discussion.

Mr. Martin Smutny, International Consultant to UNECE, continued with the presentation on determining the scope of SEA as the next step. He provided that this stage aims to determine the level of detail of the information to be included in the SEA report. He explained the procedural steps and the tasks to be performed by the initiator and competent authority. As a case example, he presented the scoping results for the Transport Sectorial Strategy of the Czech Republic. Ms. Natalia Guranda then summarized the legal requirements and facilitated the discussion.

The next session continued with the presentation of the SEA report, and its quality analysis was conducted by Mr. Michal Musil. He emphasized that the SEA report shall identify, describe, and evaluate the likely significant effects of the strategic document, and it has to be reliable, accurate, complete, and up-to-date, summarizing all analyses, findings, and conclusions, as well as reflecting feedback from consultations from previous SEA stages. He then went through the key environmental topics and briefly presented possible methods and approaches to analyze the likely effects used in the SEA. He further explained that the SEA report is subject to public consultations and to quality control, which – according to the Guidelines on Assessment of the Quality Control of Strategic Environmental Assessment (UNECE, August 2023) – is to be carried out by the Panel of Experts, taking into account:

- decision on the determination of the scope of the strategic environmental assessment report;
- comments and proposals of the public concerned;
- compliance with the framework content of the strategic environmental assessment report, provided for in Annex no. 2 of the Law on SEA, taking into account its fields of implementation;

- formulation of technical, procedural, and other difficulties and explanation of any uncertainties;
- submission of studied alternatives and the reasons that were the basis for choosing one of them;
- presentation of the graphic information: maps, figures, and diagrams;
- existence of an adequate program for monitoring the environmental effects of the policy and planning document;

The session was followed by interactive discussions with the participants addressing questions and comments, facilitated by Ms. Natalia Guranda. One specific intervention referred to institutional reform and the representation in the CE, as well as the need to consider these aspects when the CE is created. It was explained that the Ministry of Environment would consider this aspect, the institution responsible for creating the CE, and some Ministries' institutional reform and separation. More than that, it was highlighted that based on the specificities of the policy documents, the CE will be completed with additional representatives of authorities and experts depending on needed expertise.

In the next session, Mr. Michal Musil presented the integration of environmental aspects in the draft policy and planning document as the next stage of SEA, which should result in the environmental opinion being issued by the Competent Authority based on the opinion of the panel of experts regarding the draft policy and planning document according to Article 8³ para. (2) of the Law on SEA, as well as the results of public consultations and, as the case may be, transboundary consultations. Environmental opinion is legally required to approve the given policy or planning document.

In his presentation on the practical aspects related to SEA, Mr. Martin Smutny covered topics of coordination between the SEA experts and the planning authority and its planning experts, tasks to be ensured by the SEA experts, and the legal requirements for their qualification, composition of the SEA team, budgetary aspects, and the issue of the transboundary consultations. Ms. Natalia Guranda then facilitated the discussion.

The concluding remarks were made by Ms. Natalia Guranda, Mrs. Angela Panciuc, and Mr. Leonid Kalashnyk.

Conclusions

The training workshop raised awareness among the participants about SEA in general, as well as about the recent development in the field of SEA in the Republic of Moldova and the legal requirements stipulated by the amended Law on SEA. It addressed the main stages of the SEA procedure, which allowed participants to relate the content of the training with the implementation of SEA. Their active participation in the discussions focused mainly on the practical aspects and potential challenges related to the SEA application.

Acknowledgments

The training was prepared by the UNECE secretariat for the Espoo Convention and its Protocol on SEA in coordination with the Ministry of Environment of the Republic of Moldova. The event was facilitated by Ms. Natalia Guranda, National Consultant to UNECE.

Annex 1: Training Workshop Agenda

Training Workshop on SEA in the Republic of Moldova

29 February 2024,
9.00-13.00 (Chisinau EEST)

DRAFT AGENDA

Moderator: Natalia Guranda, National Consultant to UNECE

Time (Chisinau)	Item
08:45 – 09:00	Connection testing
09:00 – 09:15	Opening and welcome remarks <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mrs. Iordanca-Rodica Iordanov, Minister of Environment • Representative of the EU Delegation to the Republic of Moldova (tbc) • Mr. Leonid Kalashnyk, EU4Environment Project Manager, United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE)
09:15 – 09:30	Meeting objectives and agenda, introduction of participants <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Facilitated by Mr. Michal Musil and Ms. Natalia Guranda, consultants to UNECE
09:30 – 09:45	Introduction to SEA – purpose and objectives, main principles of effective application, international legal framework <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mr. Michal Musil, Consultant to UNECE
09:45 – 10:00	Current status of SEA application in the Republic of Moldova: legal framework, existing guiding documents, relevant authorities and other main actors <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ms. Carolina Eremei, consultant, Dpt Pollution prevention policies, Ministry of Environment
10:00 – 10:45	Amended Law on SEA – main requirements, key stages of SEA procedure including the transboundary consultations <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mr. Jerzy Jendroška, International legal expert
10:45 – 11:00	Q&A to the amended Law on SEA <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Facilitated by Mr. Michal Musil and Ms. Natalia Guranda, consultants to UNECE
11:00 – 11:10	Break
11:10 – 11:30	Main steps in SEA: Establishment of the need to carry out the SEA – purpose, results, tasks of the main actors, recommendations for practice <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Initial presentation by Mr. Michal Musil and Mr. Martin Smutny, consultants to UNECE • Q&A facilitated by Ms. Natalia Guranda, consultant to UNECE

11:30 – 11.50	<p>Main steps in SEA: Determining the scope of the SEA report – purpose, results, tasks of the main actors, recommendations for practice</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Initial presentation by Mr. Michal Musil and Mr. Martin Smutny, consultants to UNECE • Q&A facilitated by Ms. Natalia Guranda, consultant to UNECE
11:50 – 12.10	<p>Main steps in SEA: Preparation of SEA report and its quality analysis – purpose, results, tasks of the main actors, recommendations for practice</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Initial presentation by Mr. Michal Musil and Mr. Martin Smutny, consultants to UNECE • Q&A facilitated by Ms. Natalia Guranda, consultant to UNECE
12:10 – 12:30	<p>Main steps in SEA: Expert panel and integration of environmental aspects in the draft policy and planning document – purpose, results, tasks of the main actors, recommendations for practice</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Initial presentation by Mr. Michal Musil and Mr. Martin Smutny, consultants to UNECE • Q&A facilitated by Ms. Natalia Guranda, consultant to UNECE
12:30 – 12:50	<p>Practical aspects – coordination between SEA and planning process, composition of SEA team, budget and timeline, transboundary consultations, etc.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Initial presentation by Mr. Michal Musil and Mr. Martin Smutny, consultants to UNECE • Q&A facilitated by Ms. Natalia Guranda, consultant to UNECE
12:50 – 13:00	<p>Concluding remarks</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ms. Angela Panciuc, Acting Head, Dpt Pollution Prevention Policies, Ministry of Environment • Mr. Leonid Kalashnyk, EU4Environment Project Manager, United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) <p>Closure of the event</p>

Annex 2: List of participants

Training Workshop on SEA in the Republic of Moldova

List of Participants

29 February 2024,
9.00-13.00 (Chisinau EEST)



Training Workshop on SEA in the Republic of Moldova

29 February 2024,
9.00-13.00 (Chisinau EEST)

LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

Total participants – 70

Female participants –45

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