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EU4Environment
Green Economy in Eastern Partner Countries

**Awareness-Raising Event on the SEA and EIA Component of the
EU4Environment Programme in Azerbaijan**

29 September 2023, Ganja city, Azerbaijan

Event Report

Action implemented by:



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 Azerbaijan, 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 since 2019.

The event was organized by the Ministry of Ecology and Natural Resources of Azerbaijan and UNECE to raise awareness of the benefits of environmental assessment and relevant results of the EU4Environment-supported activities in Azerbaijan among a variety of stakeholders, particularly those at the local level.

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 better manage environmental risks and impacts.

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.

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For more information, please visit our website: www.eu4environment.org.

Event objectives

- To present the key outcomes and results regarding SEA and EIA achieved in Azerbaijan within the EU4Environment programme;
- To summarize the main principles of efficient SEA practice and benefits of SEA with a focus on stakeholders at the local level;
- To discuss priorities regarding further development of the SEA and EIA system in the country.

Approach and methodology

In line with the above objectives, the Event was organized based on the following approach: Its participants were selected with the intention of raising awareness among key local stakeholders of the EIA and SEA processes, i.e. local representatives of agencies likely to be involved in the planning and preparation of projects and plans subject to EIA/SEA, as well as representatives of environmental authorities likely to be involved in EIA/SEA-related consultations, and other potential stakeholders. In particular, the ongoing SEA for the Masterplan of the City of Ganja, which is a pilot project supported by UNECE under the EU4Environment, served as a basis for identification of relevant stakeholders and consultees to be invited.

The meeting was organized as a workshop, also allowing on-line participation via Zoom, however majority of participants chose to attend in person. 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:

- A brief introduction of UNECE activities with support from the EU4Environment programme, including the recent and ongoing national capacity-building activities on EIA\SEA under the EU4Environment in Azerbaijan
- Recapitulation of the key features as well as differences between EIA and SEA concepts and their rationale for implementing in the context of Azerbaijan, including information on the international legal framework and commitments of the Republic of Azerbaijan under the Espoo Convention and Azerbaijan's plans to join the SEA Protocol in the future.
- Discussion of benefits of EIA and SEA, including: provision of a high level of environmental protection, improvement of quality of planning, increasing efficiency of decision-making, facilitation of identification of new development opportunities, assisting in prevention of costly mistakes, strengthening governance, and enhancing transboundary cooperation.
- Discussion of further needs and challenges in terms of effective implementation of the EIA and SEA in Azerbaijan, especially in the regional and local context.

A significant portion of the allocated time was dedicated to the interactive discussion of the ongoing SEA of the Masterplan of the City of Ganja. Workshop participants were encouraged to bring forth their perspectives on the environmental and social issues and challenges related to Ganja's urban planning.

Summary of the Event outcomes

The Event had been conducted on September 29, 2023, at Leon Hotel, Ganja, with participation of the representatives of UNECE, UNECE international expert, and UNECE national experts, as well as representatives of the Ministry of Ecology and Natural Resources of the Republic of Azerbaijan, and participants from various stakeholder institutions. Over 40 participants from state bodies (relevant departments of the Ministry of Ecology and Natural Resources, State Committee on Urban Planning and Architecture, Ganja City Authority), private sector, academia and civil society organizations of the country took active part in the discussions (see the list of participants attached).

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

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. She highlighted the importance of environmental protection through two important instruments/procedures, SEA and EIA. And then she recent legislation developments in this regard.

EU4Environment Project Manager at UNECE, Mr. Leonid Kalashnyk, in his brief statement delivered via Zoom highlighted the importance of the EU-funded EU4Environment Programme to address needs identified by Azerbaijan 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, session presentations were made by the international consultant Mr. Michal Musil. He had covered such topics as SEA for Regional and Spatial Plans: On selected case examples based on real SEAs from countries in the EU and UNECE region (e.g. the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Turkey) he illustrated approaches, methods, typical tasks, interesting

problems of EIA and SEA practice. The session was followed by interactive discussions with the participants addressing questions and comments.

The participants brought up a number of relevant questions covering a wide range of issues such as challenges in addressing and managing urban environmental problems in Ganja, identification of priorities in urban planning. In particular, waste management and management of the City green areas were intensively discussed. The Ganja Masterplan's envisaged solution for the city's road infrastructure development was also debated from the different stakeholders' perspectives.

Feedback

A brief questionnaire was distributed among the participants to obtain feedback related to the event and potential follow-up. The overall rate of satisfaction reflected in the participants responses is presented in the table below:

| | Excellent | Good | Satisfactory | Unsatisfactory |
|------------------------------------|-----------|------|--------------|----------------|
| Format of the meeting | 16 | 9 | | |
| Preparation of documents | 16 | 8 | 1 | |
| Quality of discussions | 15 | 8 | 2 | |
| Timing of the workshop | 15 | 9 | | |
| Venue | 21 | 2 | 2 | |
| General organization and logistics | 16 | 8 | 1 | |
| Quality of presentations | 14 | 10 | 1 | |

The participants also used the questionnaire to comment on the subject matter of the seminar, e.g.:

- It would be good to cover other regions as well. Especially, with regard to the Liberated Areas State Program.
- To hold more such events in parallel with planning activities
- To involve more authorities and active youth (volunteers) studying the relevant subjects
- Expand cooperation with relevant agencies, offices and organizations in Ganja

Conclusions

The Event succeeded in raising awareness of the participants about the EIA and SEA in general, as well as about the recent EIA/SEA-related obligations introduced into the legal framework in the Republic of Azerbaijan. It addressed audience and stakeholders in the specific region and in the context of the ongoing SEA for the Ganja city Masterplan, which allowed for participants to relate the content of the Event with the currently ongoing urban planning process. Their active participation in the discussions focused on pressing environmental problems of their city reflected this.

The Event highlighted the pressing need of the relevant authorities to increase their capacities for the effective application of the EIA and SEA procedures. In that respect, the envisaged EIA/SEA-related activities to be completed by UNECE under the EU4Environment Programme were noted as a substantial benefit for Azerbaijan in this area.

Acknowledgements

The Event was jointly prepared by the UNECE secretariat to the Espoo Convention and its Protocol on SEA and the Ministry of Ecology and Natural Resources (MENR) of the Republic of Azerbaijan, and supported by the Ganja City Executive Authority, and the State Committee on Architecture and Urban Planning (SCUPA)

The Event was facilitated by Mrs. Aysel Rzayeva (MENR Azerbaijan)



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Appendix I:

Awareness-Raising Event on the SEA and EIA Component of the EU4Environment Programme in Azerbaijan 29 September 2023, 10.00-13.00 (Baku time)

AGENDA

| Time (Baku) | Item |
|---------------|---|
| 09:30 – 10:00 | Registration |
| 10:00 – 10:15 | Opening and welcome remarks <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ms. Aysel Rzayeva, Head of subdivision, International Cooperation Division, Ministry of Ecology and Natural Resources of Azerbaijan, National Focal Point to the Espoo Convention Mr. Leonid Kalashnyk, EU4Environment Project Manager at UNECE |
| 10:15 – 11:00 | UNECE technical assistance and capacity building activities on SEA and EIA in Azerbaijan <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A brief introduction of UNECE activities with support from the EU4Environment Programme Mr. Michal Musil, International SEA/EIA Expert to UNECE National capacity-building activities on EIA\SEA under the EU4Environment in Azerbaijan, outcomes and lessons learned Ms. Aysel Rzayeva, Ministry of Ecology and Natural Resources |
| 11:00-11:15 | Q&A |
| 11:15-11:30 | Coffee break |
| 11:30-12:10 | Principles of efficient SEA practice and benefits of SEA for strategic documents Mr. Michal Musil, International SEA/EIA Expert to UNECE |
| 12:10-12:40 | Priority areas and remaining challenges for enhancing the SEA and EIA system in Azerbaijan - moderated by Ms. Aysel Rzayeva, Ministry of Ecology and Natural Resources, and Mr. Michal Musil, International SEA/EIA Expert to UNECE |
| 12:40-12:55 | Discussion |
| 12.55-13.00 | Closing remarks Ms. Aysel Rzayeva, Ministry of Ecology and Natural Resources |
| 13:00 | Lunch |

Action implemented by:

Appendix II:

**Awareness-Raising Event on the SEA and EIA Component of the
EU4Environment Programme in Azerbaijan**

List of Participants

**29 September 2023,
09.30-13.00 (Baku time)**

Ganja city, Azerbaijan

LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

Total participants: 41

Female participants: 20

Male participants: 21

| # | Title and full name | Job title and institution | Contact information |
|----|-----------------------------|---|--|
| 1. | Ms. Aysel Rzayeva | <p>Head of subdivision, International Cooperation Division</p> <p>National focal point to UNECE Convention on Environmental Impact Assessment in a Transboundary Context (Espoo Convention)</p> <p>Ministry of Ecology and Natural Resources of the Republic of Azerbaijan (MENR)</p> | <p>Address: Kazim Kazimzadeh st. 100A, Baku, Azerbaijan</p> <p>E-mail: aysel.rzayeva@eco.gov.az</p> <p>Mobile: +994556001538</p> |
| 2. | Mr. Amin Mammadov | SEA Expert, National Team Leader | <p>Address: Kazim Kazimzadeh st 100A Baku, Azerbaijan</p> <p>Email: amigo.ihp@gmail.com</p> <p>Phone: +994703510603</p> |
| 3. | Mr. Michal Musil | International SEA and EIA Expert to UNECE | <p>Email: michal.musil@integracons.com</p> <p>Phone: +420 774 132 319</p> |
| 4. | Ms. Shahnaz Badalova | Deputy Head of Urban planning and land development Division, State Committee on Architecture and Urban Planning (SCUPA) | <p>Address: AZ 1014, Fuzuli str. 65, Baku city, Azerbaijan</p> <p>Email: shahnaz.badalova@arxkom.gov.az</p> <p>Phone: +99412 595 94 50 / 595 89 27 (514)</p> |
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| 7. | Mr. Rusif Hokmaliyev | Senior Specialist, State Expertise Agency, Ministry of Ecology and Natural Resources of Azerbaijan (MENR) | Address: Heydar Aliyev ave.10, Baku, Azerbaijan, Email: rusif.hokmeliyev@eco.gov.az Tel: +994125666531 |
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| 10. | Mr. Javid Kazimov | Senior Advisor, Division on Socio-economic Development, Analysis and Prognosis, Ganja City Executive Authority | Address: AZ2000, Ganja city, Heydar Aliyev Square, Building 231 E-mail: umumi@ganja-ih.gov.az Mobile: +99450 212-25-55 |
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| 13. | Mr. Elbrus Hajiyev | Head of Division at "Ganja Water Canal" Subsidiary Shareholder, Azersu JSC | Address: Uzeyir Hajibayli st, 76, Ganja city, AZ2001 Phone: (+994 222) 55-74-01 Mobile: +99450-347-22-69 |
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