

# **UN ECE support for the conducting a pilot SEA process for the Master Plan of the Orhei city, Republic of Moldova**

## **Summary of the statement**

### ***Added value of the SEA process and SEA Protocol application***

The SEA team and UN ECE experts has made significant effort to deliver added value not only form the point of view of conduction of the SEA process in line with the established international standards and producing high quality deliverables such as the SEA Report, but also to effectively contribute to the high quality of the planning (i.e. Master Plan development) process itself.

The participatory approach, involvement of national and local NGOs in the process, efficient communication with local stakeholders and the information campaign contributed to the increasing of the level of trust between beneficiaries and general population, and, as a result, to the sustainability of the process.

The following aspects of the SEA process can be listed in this context:

- The SEA process provided support to the Master Plan development team in the identification of the major environmental problems and in obtaining new data, necessary for the environmental chapter and environment related maps of the Master Plan (e.g. new maps and borders of the natural monument, river basin protection zones, data on businesses in the territory).
- SEA facilitated the dialogue between local authorities and municipal services in the city, environmental and health authorities have participated on the Master Plan development and environmental problems evaluation through the SEA-initiated consultations;
- The local priority environmental problems were highlighted and will be presented at the national level, where solutions could be found, actions planed or funds made available or mobilized from internal or external sources;
- Alternatives for the by-pass national road, placement of the new WWTP, transfer of the city landfill and protection of the natural area from the territory of the city proposed and included in the final document;
- Local authorities identified some gaps in their agenda (e.g. lack of clear division of responsibilities on certain issues), in the field of environment and urban planning, which partially were already reflected during the Master Plan and SEA process. Other identified issues will be likely solved through the development of the Local Environmental Action Plan or integration of the main issues (landfill, highway) in the sectorial development plans at the national/regional level;
- Data gaps identified during the evaluation helped to formulate the needs to change/upgrade the data collection schemes for rayon and national statistical reporting, as well as the internal/departmental and administrative needs for specific data which

have not been subject of regular statistics. The absence of data on level of noise and impact of the stone mines operations on the surrounding urban areas can be an example;

- Measures and indicators for the monitoring of the performance of the new Master Plan from environmental point of view were developed in the framework of the SEA;
- Cooperation between central environmental authorities and local public authorities was enlarged;
- Central environmental authorities learned more about particular problems of the rayon centre/Orhei city, which face similar problems in its development and environmental protection as many other localities, but have its specific;
- The SEA facilitated identification of potential for improvement in the existing draft Law on SEA in Moldova, namely in aspects concerning scoping phase of SEA process, system of monitoring and evaluation, the roles of the environmental inspection in providing control and monitoring of the implementation of the recommendations stipulated in the SEA Report, financial issues, institutional system on SEA at local authorities, public consultations and awareness campaign, data sources availability,

### ***Lessons learned***

- Local authorities (the mayor and his office) recognised the importance and supported the SEA process, but could not influence all stakeholders or solve all problems, which need significant funding or decision making at Government/Parliament level.
- The SEA process has to be accompanied with a well-structured and funded information and awareness campaign, focused on the major target groups, vulnerable people, gender, etc.
- The SEA process should be based on cooperation approach between LPA, SEA team and the program / plan elaboration team; such approach will bring to the sustainable decision.
- The SEA would benefit from allocating more time for the joint work of the planning team, SEA team, authorities and local environmental and health institutions, provided that the relevant institutions are ready to actively take part in the planning deliberations.
- A Master Plan of the city is a very complex and complicated document (considering the complexity of information conveyed in maps), which makes the related SEA particularly demanding in terms of structuring the SEA process and involvement of experts in urban/territorial planning;
- Technical and methodological support from the international SEA consultants (especially with UN ECE and EU experience) was crucial for the strengthening of the capacity of the local team, development of the documents and efficient implementation of the pilot project.
- Strengthened the role of the NGOs in participating and conducting SEA in Moldova.
- SEA and UN ECE tools as important transboundary collaboration mechanism to solve key environmental problems of concern for neighboring countries.