

Should Climate Change be included in EIA and SEA?

**MOPs to the UNECE Espoo Convention and the Protocol
on SEA**

7th and 3rd sessions

**Panel discussion on the role of the Protocol and the Convention in
addressing climate change**

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Minsk, Belarus**

Pan-European Coalition of Environmental Citizens Organisations

Coalition of more than 200 Environmental Citizens' Organisations (ECOs or NGOs) from all the UNECE region created in 1993 to follow up on the UNECE "Environment for Europe" process and its outcomes. The European ECO Forum has been and still is playing a crucial role in several Multilateral Environmental Agreements (MEAs) developed within this process. The Aarhus Convention and its PRTR Protocol as well as Espoo Convention and the SEA Protocol are just a few two to be mentioned.



Three key issues to address

Benefits of addressing climate change in the SEA and EIA

Challenges for the efficient practice and/or its mainstreaming and how to overcome them

Proposals for follow-up activities

Benefits of addressing climate change in SEA and EIA - why do we want/need that?

SEA

- SEA provides a framework for influencing decision-making at an earlier stage when Plans and Programmes (PPs)(also Policies) are being developed
- The process of SEA can help to identify PPs which are sensitive to climate change and provide decision makers with better information on the impacts of climate change and alternatives to deal with climate change
- Other relevant PPs such as adaptation strategies or sectoral adaptation plans which can influences the PPs need to be taken into account in the development of the PPs and will lead to mainstreaming PPs
- Integrating (addressing) climate change adaptation into the SEA process will avoid the risk of maladaptation
- Can change established routines and enables attitudes leading to increased climate change awareness and raising awareness of the environmental impacts of PPs



Benefits of addressing climate change in SEA and EIA - why do we want/need that?

EIA

Integration of climate change and its impacts in development of projects is critical (consideration of climate change risks and incorporation of suitable adaptation measures)

* e.g. infrastructure projects are particularly sensitive due to their long lifetimes

The EIA is relevant and involves assessing likely possible significant impacts (adverse or beneficial) on the environment where the environment includes natural and built environment

Including climate change in EIA enables decision-makers to assess the potential impacts of climate change on a project and surrounding environment before the project is implemented leaving open possibility to modify the project, develop alternatives or adopt other measures to mitigate climate related risks)

Enables to assess impacts of the project on climate (nature, magnitude of GHG emissions ...) and project also may affect vulnerability of natural and human systems to climate change



Benefits of addressing climate change in the SEA and EAI – why do we want/need that?

For example – Revised EU Directive 2014/52/EU refers to climate:

Art. 3 para 1

The environmental impact assessment shall identify, describe and assess in as appropriate manner, in the light of each individual case, the direct and indirect significant effects of a project on the following factors:

... (c) land, soil, water and climate; ...

Annex III – Selection criteria referred to in Article 4(3) [Criteria to determine whether the projects listed in Annex II should be subject to an environmental impact assessment]

1. Characteristics of projects – (f) the risk of major accidents and/or disasters which are relevant to the project concerned, including those caused by climate change, in accordance with scientific knowledge



Benefits of addressing climate change in the SEA and EAI – why do we want/need that?

For example – Revised EU Directive 2014/52/EU refers to climate:

Annex IV – Information referred to in Article 5(1) [Information for the Environmental Impact Assessment report]

Para 4 – A description of the factors specified in Article 3(1) likely to be significantly affected by the project: population, human health, biodiversity (for example flora and fauna), land (for example land take), soil (for example organic matter, erosion, compaction, sealing), water (for example hydromorphological changes, quantity and quality), air, climate (for example greenhouse gas emissions, impacts relevant to adaptation) material assets, cultural heritage, including architectural and archeological aspects, and landscape.

Para 5 – A description of the likely significant effects of the project on the environment resulting from, inter alia:

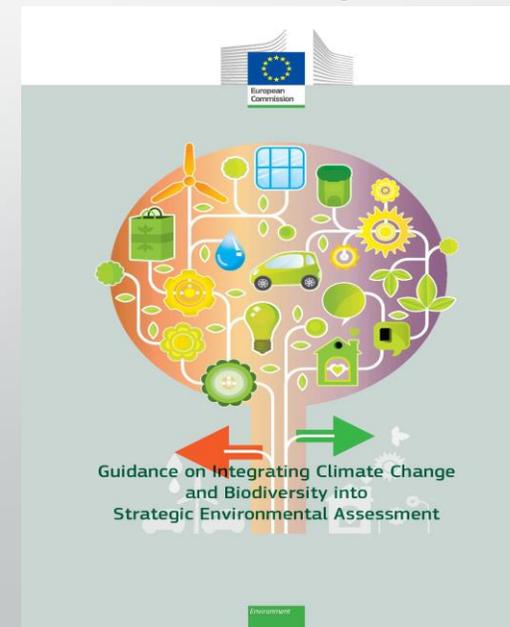
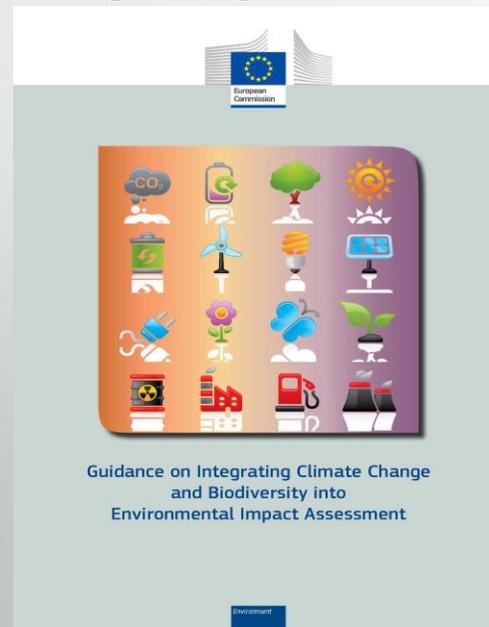
... (f) the impact of the project on climate (for example the nature and magnitude of greenhouse gas emissions) and the vulnerability of the project to climate change; ...

Benefits of addressing climate change in the SEA and EAI – why do we want/need that?

Guidance documents prepared:

Guidance on Integrating Climate Change and Biodiversity into Environmental Impact Assessment

Guidance on Integrating Climate Change and Biodiversity into Strategic Environmental Assessment





Challenges for the efficient practice and/or its mainstreaming and how to overcome them

Lack of proper legal basis in many countries (climate related issues mostly not included in the EIA/SEA legislation)

Low level of effective implementation and enforcement of legislation

Relatively low (or low) awareness and interest about these issues and their interlinkages

Scattered experience in different countries etc.

Other challenges – e.g. trade and climate interlinkages

Proposals for follow up activities

Should be done at different levels

- ***UNECE secretariat/treaty bodies:*** Strategic plan for both instruments and work plans where climate change is included; links with other relevant MEAs, close cooperation with UNFCCC and IPCC; good practice guide(s); joint events, recommendations for countries how to integrate climate change into SEA and EIA processes, clearinghouse mechanism etc.
- ***UNECE region:*** possibilities for sharing experience and information within and beyond the region (e.g. through workshops, but also via online platforms) and collection of this material and preparing good practice guide(s)
- ***National:*** possible revision of the legal basis of SEA and EIA aiming at inclusion of climate change in these processes; a lot of educational work is still needed for developers and authorities to understand the importance of EIA and SEA and what they can do, broad awareness raising campaigns
- ***Local:*** apart from educational work there could be small scale practical pilot projects where climate change is included in local development planning or in specific projects

Strong and timely involvement of all stakeholders including civil society organizations at all levels!!!



Thank you!

For more information, please contact

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