

Economic Commission for Europe

Meeting of the Parties to the Convention
on Environmental Impact Assessment
in a Transboundary Context

Meeting of the Parties to the Convention
on Environmental Impact Assessment in
a Transboundary Context serving as the
Meeting of the Parties to the Protocol on
Strategic Environmental Assessment

**Working Group on Environmental Impact Assessment
and Strategic Environmental Assessment****Eighth meeting**

Geneva, 26–28 November 2019

Item 7 (a) of the provisional agenda

**Exchange of good practices: Workshop on the assessment of health impacts
and health sector involvement in strategic environmental assessment**

**Provisional programme for the workshop on the assessment
of health impacts of plans and programmes in strategic
environmental assessment**

**Palais des Nations (E-building, room XVIII), Geneva,
Wednesday, 27 November 2019 (10 a.m. – 1 p.m.)**

Note by the secretariat

I. Introduction

1. The workshop on the assessment of health impacts of plans and programmes in strategic environmental assessment is held under the framework of the Protocol on Strategic Environmental Assessment¹ (SEA) to the Convention on Environmental Impact Assessment in a Transboundary Context (Espoo Convention) of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (ECE). It takes place during the eighth meeting of the Working Group on Environmental Impact Assessment and Strategic Environmental Assessment under the two treaties.
2. The workshop has been organized jointly by the Convention and the Protocol secretariat and the Regional Office for Europe of the World Health Organization (WHO), in consultation with the Environment Investment Bank (EIB) and two consultants, who will also be

¹ The text of the Protocol on SEA (ECE/MP.EIA/SEA/8) is available at:
<http://www.unece.org/index.php?id=46020>

moderating the workshop. The participation of health sector representatives at the event is funded by WHO.

3. A workshop on improving intersectoral cooperation for the application of the Protocol is foreseen in the workplan for the implementation of the Convention and its Protocol for the period 2017–2020.² It was later agreed that the workshop should focus specifically on health and support the preparation of draft guidance on assessing health impacts in SEA³, that is funded by EIB in accordance with the workplan.⁴

II. Background

4. The Protocol on SEA was adopted in 2003 (in Kyiv) and is in force since 2010. To date, the Protocol has 33 Parties, including the European Commission, in the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (ECE) region. The Protocol is open for accession by all the United Nations member States.

5. The Protocol aims to ensure that environmental, including health, considerations are integrated in the preparation and adoption of Government plans and programmes as well as, to the extent appropriate, of policies and legislation. It requires Parties to the Protocol to address these considerations throughout the SEA procedure, including through mandatory consultations with health authorities, alongside with the environmental ones. The Protocol's requirement to consult with health authorities is indeed central to the consideration of health in SEA and arises in articles 5 (screening), 6 (scoping), 9 (designation of authorities and consultation on draft plan or programme and environmental report), 10 (transboundary matters) and 11 (decision-making).

6. Health is also a central theme within the Sustainable Development Goals of the 2030 Agenda, with the goal 3 focusing explicitly on health, and almost all other goals being related to or contributing to health and well-being. Since the Parties have acknowledged that the Protocol plays an important role in supporting countries to translate SDGs into national practical action at the national level, it could contribute to the achievement to the health-related goals and targets.

7. Efficient consideration of health impacts and involvement of health authorities in SEA assessment remains however a challenge in several countries of the ECE region. One of the key conclusions from the reviews of implementation of the Protocol developed based on Parties reporting between 2010 and 2018⁵ is that Parties have difficulties in ensuring that the environmental report contains relevant information on health, covering, as needed, transboundary effects, pursuant to article 7 para. 2 and annex IV to the Protocol. The reviews also indicate that some Parties lack legislation and/or practices for the designation of, and consultation with, health authorities, in accordance with article 9. Other explanatory factors

² See decision VII/3-III/3, annex I, ECE/MP.EIA/23/Add.1-ECE/MP.EIA/SEA/7/Add.1.

³ See ECE/MP.EIA/WG.2/2019/5

⁴ See report of the Meetings of the Parties, at their intermediary sessions (5–7 February 2019) ECE/MP.EIA/27–ECE/MP.EIA/SEA11, paras. 29 and 35.

⁵ Parties' reports and the first (2010-2012) and the second (2013-2015) review of implementation are available on the Protocol's website. See

http://www.unece.org/env/eia/implementation/review_implementation.html. In addition, the draft third review of implementation (2016-2018) will be considered by the Working Group on EIA and SEA at its eighth meeting and subsequently finalized for consideration of the Meeting of the Parties to the Protocol in December 2020 (see:

http://www.unece.org/fileadmin/DAM/env/eia/documents/WG2.8_Nov2019/Advance_copies/ece.mp.eia.wg.2.2019.4e_Advance_copy.pdf)

for the generally weak practice include: the often-unclear role and the lack of capacities of the health authorities in SEA; uncertainty regarding the approaches and methods to be applied; and a limited availability of relevant data.

III. Objectives

8. The main aim of the workshop is to contribute to clarifying and improving the implementation of the Protocol with respect to the consideration of health and the involvement of health sector in SEA.

9. The workshop will provide a platform for thoroughly presenting and openly discussing the draft guidance on assessing health impacts in strategic environmental assessment that is being developed in consultation with the secretariat, WHO and EIB, with funding from EIB.⁶

10. Secondly, the workshop will allow showcasing and reflecting on selected good practices and challenges regarding the assessment of health impacts and the involvement of the health sector in SEA. Possible solutions to the challenges will also be considered, and how these could be addressed in the draft guidance. The good practice presented at the workshop will subsequently be annexed to the health guidance.

11. The presentations of the good practice have been prepared following consultations and cooperation between representatives of health sector and national focal points for the Protocol on SEA from the environment sector. The contribution from WHO and the experience shared by a number of health sector representatives at the workshop will be key to understanding the issues at stake more broadly, from various points of view.

12. The workshop will also provide an opportunity to reflect in general on various other related issues, such as the differences and interaction between SEA and other relevant assessment tools, in particular, health impact assessment, and the challenges that the multiplication and increasing complexity of the assessment tools may present for the effective implementation on the Protocol.

13. Immediately after the workshop the consultants will summarize the key points from the presentations and discussions and present them at the start of the afternoon session, between 3-3.15 p.m. (under item 7 (b) on Draft guidance on assessing health impacts in strategic environmental assessment of the provisional agenda of the Working Group). The Working Group will be invited to note the workshop's main points and conclusions. Subsequently, a brief, 2-page, summary report on the workshop will be presented as an annex to the report on the Working Group's meeting. The presentations will be made available on the meeting webpage upon agreement by the presenters.

14. The workshop's open and interactive discussions aim at contributing to the development of the draft guidance on health and contributing to the deliberations of the Working Group on EIA and SEA on that draft under agenda item 7 (b). The consultants will be prepared to provide any additional clarifications or further information to the delegations, and to take on board the feedback received in the subsequent preparation of a revised draft. The revised draft will be submitted for consideration of the Working Group on EIA and SEA at its ninth meeting (9-11 June 2020) prior to forwarding the document to the Meeting of the Parties to the Protocol at its fourth session, preliminarily scheduled for 8-11 December 2020.

15. After its endorsement by the Meeting of the Parties, and as requested by the Parties, the secretariat will issue the guidance on health as a publication. The published guidance will be supplemented with good practice cases, including those presented at the workshop.

⁶ See ECE/MP.EIA/WG.2/2019/5

IV. Provisional programme

Wednesday, 27 November

10.00-10.15 **Introductory remarks**
by UNECE, EIB, WHO

10.15-11.00 **Presentation of the draft guidance followed by Q&A**
by consultants Ben Cave and Thomas Fischer

11.00-13.00 **Sharing good practice and challenges in assessing health impacts and in involving health authorities in SEA:**

- (a) Available experience, expertise and good practices;
- (b) Common difficulties and main obstacles;
- (c) Possible solutions, including, how the issues could be addressed in the draft guidance document on assessing health impacts being developed under the Protocol

Presentations followed by Q&A and general discussion

1. **Czechia**
2. **The Netherlands**
3. **Estonia**
4. **Wales (United Kingdom)**

15-15.15: **Brief sum-up of the main conclusions**
