

EIA and SEA: their inter-relationship and role as instruments for sustainable development

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Context

Under the convention EIA and SEA treated separately, though connected (historically, parts of the same spectrum); same principles apply, but different techniques appropriate

- Have developed under different and evolving paradigms: EIA in era when integrating environment predominated (1970s); SEA when 'sustainable development' ascendant (1990s).

Theoretical links

Tiering

Alternatives/options

- Evaluation of options/alternatives; to enable the most sustainable/least environmentally damaging option(s) to be chosen; more alternatives available at more strategic levels; participation at most relevant levels

SEA and EIA therefore central to informed and transparent decision-making about sustainable development

Practical links

SEA setting framework for EIA of subsequent projects - tiering

- At what level should SEA and EIA apply – not always straightforward
- What alternatives are available and when? (e.g. transport/roads)
- What if both SEA and EIA should be applied?

Maximising benefits of linking EIA and SEA

Link programme SEA and project EIA (where tiered) explicitly, possibly programme/project SEA if project so large that meets SEA and EIA criteria

Parallel procedures where both EIA and SEA necessary

Joint procedures where EIA and SEA requirements can be met by one procedure

Remaining challenges

'Fuzzy' projects, e.g. with multiple consent procedures: '*principal project/accessory*' test?

Disjunction between law and practice/expectations: i) lack of statutory process, e.g. route corridors and modal alternatives; ii) lack of participation opportunities

Policy gap – should SEA apply to policy? Yes

Need ultimately for consolidation? (may help in looking at EIA and SEA strategically)

Conclusions

Deliver aspirations of the Convention/Protocol: re-make connections between EIA and SEA more explicitly, less ad hoc, and more transparently

Institutionally, more strategic thinking about SEA/EIA:-

- *At governmental level (assessment framework); At authority level ('strategic screening');* *At private sector level: well informed and tailored EIAs/SEAs.*