

# EaPGREEN

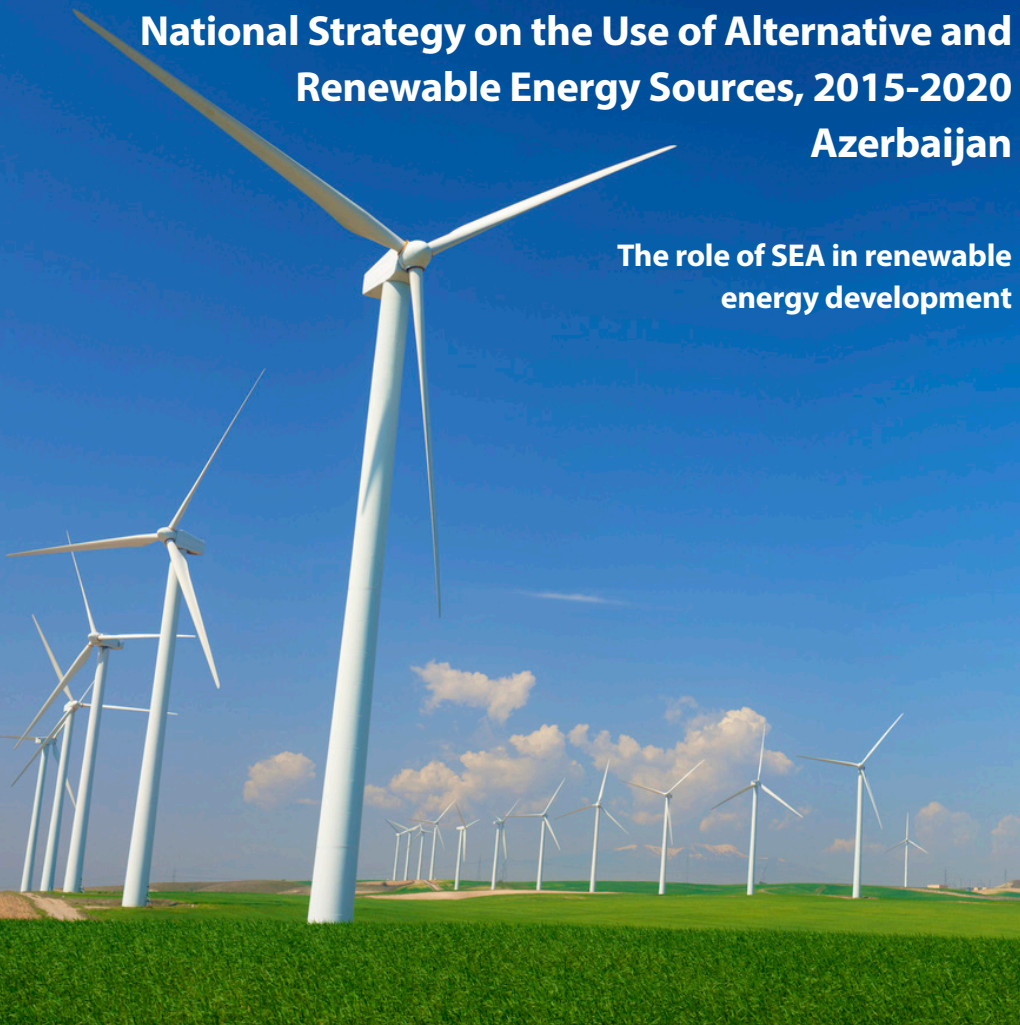
Partnership for Environment and Growth



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## Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) of the National Strategy on the Use of Alternative and Renewable Energy Sources, 2015-2020 Azerbaijan

The role of SEA in renewable energy development



# The SEA pilot in Azerbaijan

## What is SEA

Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) is an important procedural tool for evaluating the potential environmental and health impacts of proposed plans, policies, programmes and other strategic documents, such as national energy policies.

The outcomes of SEAs are used to advise planners, decision-makers and stakeholders of the likely environmental issues associated with the strategic proposals.

SEA is most beneficial when carried out early in the planning process, so that environmental considerations are effectively integrated into the preparation of plans, policies, programmes and related decision-making.

## SEA in the renewable energy sector

Renewable energy development helps to achieve environmentally sustainable development goals by reducing pressure on important ecosystems, minimizing CO<sub>2</sub> emissions, and increasing energy security. However, exploitation or mismanagement of renewable energy sources can lead to certain environmental problems or risks to human health.

Therefore, an SEA is an important tool for identifying and addressing these concerns, before a renewable energy scheme is adopted and implemented.

## Legal framework

The UNECE Protocol on SEA is an international instrument that promotes SEA as an important mechanism for achieving environmentally sustainable economic development. The Protocol on SEA entered into force in 2010 and currently has 30 Parties.

## SEA pilot application in Azerbaijan

A pilot SEA was conducted in Azerbaijan, which evaluated the potential environmental and health effects associated with the implementation of the *National Strategy on the Use of Alternative and Renewable Energy Sources, 2015 – 2020*.

The overall aim of the SEA pilot was to build capacities in Azerbaijan for the application of SEA procedures and to raise awareness of the benefits of SEA among stakeholders. The SEA pilot was implemented in the framework of the EU funded programme 'Greening Economies in the Eastern Neighbourhood' (EaP GREEN).

The pilot was initiated in January 2015 and the SEA process was jointly coordinated by Azerbaijan's Ministry of Ecology and Natural Resources, the State Agency on Alternative and Renewable Energy Sources, and the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE). The SEA Report was finalized in June 2016, and it outlines the main environmental analyses and findings, and provides recommendations on the Strategy's implementation.

*EaP GREEN Programme is assisting six countries in their transition to a green economy - Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, the Republic of Moldova and Ukraine. It is funded by the European Union and other donors, and is jointly implemented by the four partner organizations: UNECE, OECD, UNEP and UNIDO. In the framework of the EaP Green, UNECE supports countries in setting up and implementing their national SEA systems.*



# Key steps and outcomes

## Steps in the SEA process

The following steps were taken in the SEA pilot process:

### Scoping:

Determining the key environmental and issues relevant to the Strategy, including public consultation in Baku, May 2015.

### Environmental baseline:

Analyzing the existing situation and problems for the key issues determined in the scoping phase.

### Assessment:

Evaluating the likely environmental and health effects related to the Strategy.

### Draft SEA report:

Preparing the draft SEA report and public consultation in Baku, December 2015.

### Final SEA report and recommendations:

Detailing the key findings and recommendations for the Strategy, including measures to mitigate the likely environmental and health impacts.

Regular meetings were held with the expert SEA team and relevant authorities.

## Key SEA pilot recommendations

The SEA found that the Strategy would have an overall positive impact on the environment, due to a reduction in emissions and pollution (if renewables replace certain parts of energy production from fossil fuels) and enhanced energy security. In order to address the environmental and health risks posed by the Strategy, the following measures should be considered in further renewable energy planning:

- **Promote the recycling and reuse of precious natural resources and materials in renewable energy projects.**
- **Provide detailed siting guidance (indicated by SEA) for selecting locations, e.g. projects should not be located: (a) within bird migratory corridors, areas of importance for bird species, or Protected Nature Areas, (b) 0.5km-1km from residential buildings or 0.5km from work facilities, or (c) on prime agricultural land or forest land.**
- **Recommend measures for monetary contributions that the operators/developers should pay, which would directly fund local community enhancement projects (e.g. upgraded roads or new community buildings).**
- **Establish regular monitoring and reporting schemes to monitor the actual environmental and health impacts that occur during implementation.**



