



Seventh “Environment for Europe” Ministerial Conference

**Astana, Kazakhstan
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Report on the implementation of the Belgrade Initiative on Strategic Environmental Assessment

**Submitted by Armenia, Belarus and the Republic of Moldova, with the
support of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe, the
United Nations Development Programme and the Regional
Environmental Centre for Central and Eastern Europe**

INFORMATION DOCUMENT



UNITED NATIONS

Belgrade Initiative on Strategic Environmental Assessment

Report on implementation

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1. The Sixth “Environment for Europe” Ministerial Conference, held in Belgrade from 10 to 12 October 2007, noted with interest a proposal by Armenia, Belarus and the Republic of Moldova for an initiative on strategic environmental assessment (SEA) (ECE/BELGRADE.CONF/2007/18). The Initiative aims to provide for networking among Government officials so as to develop capacity for the introduction of SEA and the implementation of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) Protocol on Strategic Environmental Assessment to the Espoo Convention.¹ The present document reports on the implementation of the Belgrade Initiative on SEA.

Participation

2. The Initiative was proposed by Armenia, Belarus and the Republic of Moldova and was to be led jointly by the three countries with the support of a joint secretariat comprising UNECE, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the Regional Environmental Centre for Central and Eastern Europe (REC-CEE).
3. The following countries agreed in writing to participate in the Initiative: Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia and the Republic of Moldova.

Activities

4. The Initiative began with a side event on “Implementation of the Protocol on Strategic Environmental Assessment: from Kyiv to Belgrade and beyond” and a closed meeting for discussion on the work programme for implementation of the proposed Belgrade SEA Initiative during the Ministerial Conference in Belgrade. The work programme was developed further in a dedicated workshop held in Chisinau on 11 and 12 June 2008, in which the five countries mentioned in paragraph 3 participated.
5. The work programme was finalized at a workshop under the Initiative, held in Minsk on 15 and 16 December 2008.
6. The Minsk workshop brought together representatives of Armenia, Belarus, Georgia, the Republic of Moldova and Ukraine, with expert practitioners from Germany, Poland and Sweden, who shared their insights into legal and practical issues. Both the Chisinau and Minsk workshops were organized by UNDP.

¹ Convention on Environmental Impact Assessment in a Transboundary Context (Espoo, 1991).

7. The Initiative then encountered difficulties because of a lack of staff resources in the secretariat and, linked with the lack of staff resources for fund-raising and project implementation, a lack of financial resources.

8. Nonetheless, further activities related to the Initiative have been reported (these are also reflected in the overview of work programme implementation in the annex to this report):

(a) A UNDP/TACIS² project on building capacity for SEA and environmental conventions in Belarus. The project's aim was to introduce mechanisms that would facilitate integration of SEA into policy-making process, instil and ensure effective operation of SEA, and enhance awareness of the benefits of applying SEA. The project supported the development of a national strategy for conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity, and assisted in improving coordination of national agencies in order to enhance the implementation, monitoring and reporting on environmental conventions ratified by Belarus. The project began late in 2008 and was completed at the end of 2010. It included: the training noted in item (d) below; five national training events (15 and 16 October, and 25, 26 and 27 November 2009); a summer school related to training on SEA (31 May–4 June 2010); pilot projects on SEA of the regional plan of Myadel district, in the Minsk region, and on SEA of the programme of inland waterways and maritime transport development in 2011–2015; and methodological recommendations and general guidance on SEA;³

(b) SEA training for trainers from countries of Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia, organized through UNDP, 22–26 October 2007, in Prague. Participants were from Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, the Republic of Moldova and Ukraine.⁴ This and other training was based in part on an SEA training manual which had been developed by the German International Cooperation Agency (GIZ), further to the OECD/DAC⁵ Good Practice Guidance on Applying SEA in Development Cooperation. The training was supplement by resources based on the UNECE/REC-CEE Resource Manual to Support Application of the Protocol on SEA,⁶ as well as on case studies;⁷

(c) Technical assistance to Armenia in May and June 2009 that, while focused on the implementation of the Espoo Convention, also resulted in advice on the legal implementation of SEA;⁸

(d) Further training on SEA for participants from Belarus, provided by the Czech Republic through UNDP, 17–21 August and 2–6 November 2009, Prague;⁹

² A technical assistance programme stimulating partnerships between the European Union and the Community of Independent States.

³ Project information: http://un.by/pdf/SEA_Centre_ENG.pdf.

⁴ Evaluation report at: http://live.unece.org/env/sea/ecca_capacity.html.

⁵ Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development/Development Assistance Committee. Guidance at: <http://www.oecd.org/dataoecd/4/21/37353858.pdf>.

⁶ Available at: http://live.unece.org/env/eia/sea_manual/welcome.html.

⁷ Integra Consulting Services was involved in or led the design and delivery of many of these courses and the development of case studies (mention of any commercial firm in this document does not imply endorsement by the United Nations).

⁸ Report on technical assistance at: http://live.unece.org/fileadmin/DAM/env/eia/documents/ImplementationCommittee/2008-2011/eia.ic.ci.1_Report_technical_advice_Armenia_final.pdf.

⁹ Evaluation report at: http://live.unece.org/env/sea/ecca_capacity.html.

(e) A UNDP project under the Environment and Security Initiative¹⁰ on integration of the environment into the Autonomous Republic of Crimea (Ukraine) district development planning by applying SEA, from 2007 to 2009. The project aim was to promote implementation of SEA in Crimea as a well-recognized tool for sustainable development and conflict prevention.¹¹ Integration of environmental concerns into the development strategy for Bakhchisaraysky District was done by the very first and rather successful SEA application in Crimea. Besides influencing the final planning document, it has considerably increased awareness and capacity for SEA application. A video has been produced for this project;¹²

(f) A second UNDP project under the Environment and Security Initiative on SEA promotion and capacity-building in Azerbaijan, from 2008 to 2010. The main goal of the project was to improve the decision-making process and promote institutional development in Azerbaijan by promoting the implementation of SEA for integrating environmental concerns and sustainable development principles into national development.¹³ The project resulted in raised awareness and understanding of the SEA concept (some 50 people from approximately 15 ministries and agencies, state companies and civil society organizations introduced to and trained in SEA) and the elaboration of several documents (SEA capacity needs assessment, SEA guidance, recommendations for setting up the SEA legal system and the national SEA capacity development strategy);

(g) A UNECE subregional training workshop for strengthening capacities in Central Asia for understanding and implementing the Espoo Convention and, in particular, its Protocol, with a focus on water sector, 28 March–1 April 2011, Almaty (Kazakhstan). Participants were from Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan, with an expert from Belarus also contributing. The workshop was organized by the Regional Environmental Centre for Central Asia with the support of GIZ;¹⁴

(h) GIZ provided national training on SEA in Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia in late 2008 and early 2009, using the OECD/DAC guidance mentioned above. The trainers provided first-hand experience in applying SEA methodology, for example in regional and urban planning. The national workshops were followed by a subregional seminar in May 2009 in Germany.

Outcomes

9. A concrete outcome in part of the above activities has been Armenia's ratification of the Protocol on 24 January 2011. Other States in Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia have expressed their intention to join the Protocol soon.

10. But perhaps the most significant outcome of the above activities has been greater awareness of and interest in SEA and the Protocol across Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia. This awareness and interest has led to requests for support in development of SEA systems in several countries. Many of these requests have been expressed in the workplan adopted by the first session of the Meeting of the Parties to the Espoo Convention

¹⁰ Environment and Security Initiative is a partnership between the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), REC-CEE, UNDP, UNECE, the United Nations Environment Programme and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) as an associated partner.

¹¹ Project overview: http://www.undp.crimea.ua/subcomponent.php?type=wedo_sp&menu_id=126.

¹² http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pL_cDQPIF1A (Russian);

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bSF3beGCQTA> (English).

¹³ Project information: http://www.un-az.org/undp/doc/strategic_factsheet2.pdf.

¹⁴ Full documentation: <http://live.unece.org/index.php?id=24540>.

serving as the Meeting of the Parties to the Protocol, which was held in Geneva from 20 to 23 June 2011 (ECE/MP.EIA/SEA/2, decision I/9):

- Pre-accession legislative assistance: technical advice to Belarus and Ukraine on improving legislation to implement the Protocol and advice in drafting necessary amendments. Review of legislation and administrative measures with the aim of ratifying the Protocol;
- Workshops, including training, on the application of the Protocol for countries in the UNECE region and other Parties to the Protocol, in particular countries of South-Eastern and Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia. Each workshop would be led by the host country (for training: Armenia, Belarus, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Republic of Moldova, Russian Federation and Ukraine), with the support of experts from Austria and Slovenia, and from REC-CEE and the World Health Organization (WHO) (subject to the availability of funding) invited to share their experience;
- Pilot SEAs in selected countries, in selected sectors. Lead countries: Armenia, Azerbaijan and the Republic of Moldova, in collaboration with WHO, where relevant;
- Development of legislation on SEA. Lead country: Republic of Moldova.

Annex

Implementation of the work programme

<i>Pillar/Output</i>	<i>Lead country</i>	<i>Activities</i>	<i>Implementation</i>
A. Development of effective legal and regulatory systems for national transposition of the SEA Protocol requirements	Armenia	A.1 Elaborate subregional review of environmental assessment legislation, recommendations (+ model law development)	None.
		A.2 Organize subregional seminar on European Union and other countries' environmental assessment legislation	See paragraphs 5 and 6 above regarding workshop in Minsk.
		A.3 Develop background paper on financial and economic consequences and mechanisms for the implementation of SEA	None.
		A.4 Organize subregional workshop to present and discuss possible ways of introducing Protocol requirements in national legislation	None.
B. Development of procedural and methodological base (guidelines) for SEA Protocol application	Republic of Moldova	B.1 Organize seminar presenting recent international experience in applying SEA	See paragraphs 5 and 6 above regarding workshop in Minsk.
		B.2 Develop supplementary notes to the UNECE and REC-CEE Resource Manual on specific aspects and components of SEA process (4 notes maximum)	Two-page informal pamphlets on key issues in SEA practice are foreseen under the new workplan under the Protocol. This work has begun and is being led by the International Association for Impact Assessment, with the support of WHO, SEA and health experts, and the UNECE secretariat.
		B.3 Elaborate national guidelines for introduction and application of SEA (6 guidelines maximum)	See paragraph 8, item (a), above regarding materials prepared in Belarus.
		B.4 Organize subregional seminar or working meeting to discuss specific aspects of SEA process	None.
		B.5 Support national seminars or working meetings to discuss specific aspects of SEA processes (6 seminars maximum)	None.

<i>Pillar/Output</i>	<i>Lead country</i>	<i>Activities</i>	<i>Implementation</i>
C. Awareness-raising and institutional and human capacity development for SEA application	Belarus	C.1 Develop and organize subregional and national training courses, including training for trainers (2 subregional; 4 national)	See paragraph 8, items (a), (b), (d), (g) and (h), above regarding training for Armenia (twice), Azerbaijan (twice), Belarus (several times), Georgia (twice), Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, the Republic of Moldova, Tajikistan, Ukraine and Uzbekistan. Note that further training is foreseen under the new workplan under the Protocol.
		C.2 Implement national SEA demonstration or pilot projects (3 pilot projects)	See paragraph 8, items (a), (e) and (f), above regarding pilot projects in Azerbaijan, Belarus and Ukraine. Note that further pilot projects are foreseen under the new workplan under the Protocol. Note also earlier pilot projects in Armenia (Yerevan City Master Plan) and Belarus (National Tourism Development Plan).
		C.3 Prepare promotional and demonstration materials covering different aspects of SEA	See paragraph 8, item (a), above regarding materials prepared in Belarus.
		C.4 Develop and maintain the initiative-related website, CD-ROM resource library and SEA expert roster	In-kind assistance from UNECE. A website was also established in Belarus under the project cited in paragraph 8, item (a), above.
		C.5 Update or develop national SEA capacity needs assessment studies (6 studies)	None.
Joint secretariat	UNDP, UNECE, REC-CEE	Travel	In-kind contribution from UNDP, UNECE and REC-CEE for Chisinau (June 2008) and Minsk (November 2008) workshops.
		Communication	On-going.
		Management and administration costs	In-kind assistance from UNDP and UNECE.