

Application of SEA to the Orhei Town Master Plan: outline of activities

Aims of a SEA pilot project

The overall aim of a SEA pilot is to build capacities in application of SEA procedures at a national level and to raise awareness of SEA benefits among various national stakeholders.

Specific objectives include:

- testing and demonstrating opportunities of practical application of the draft law on SEA
- providing recommendations for environmental optimisation and modifications of the selected plan/programme, and
- developing recommendations for further improvement of national legislative and institutional frameworks on SEA in a country.

Organisation of work and tentative timeframe

A pilot project will be conducted by a team of national experts with support from qualified international consultants and the UNECE secretariat and in close cooperation with the Ministry of Regional Development and Construction (MRDC) of Moldova responsible for the preparation of the Orhei Town Master Plan development. The tentative timeframe of a pilot project extends from 30 June to 30 December 2014.

Activities

The pilot project on application of SEA procedure is implemented in several phases as described below.

1. Preparatory Phase: Setting up a national working group on SEA and a team of technical experts to carry out the SEA and prepare an environmental report.

The UNECE secretariat international consultant(s) will visit Moldova (inception visit) in order to assist in selecting the national experts based on the specifically designed terms of reference. The inception visit will take place in the second part of June. During the inception visit, the consultant(s) will meet with key actors in the SEA process, such as planners and key SEA experts. The working group on SEA will be established in order to undertake the pilot SEA and to coordinate/organise the public consultation events and workshops supporting the SEA process. The working group will include a national SEA Team Leader, Pilot Project Coordinator and a SEA technical expert team (SEA team).

One national expert will be contracted for the pilot project through the UNDP Moldova to coordinate the SEA process (National SEA Team Leader). The SEA team will consist of 4-8 key experts with complementary expertise, in order to cover all key environmental and social issues relevant for the selected strategic document. The team can also include experts from the planning team (not more than 25% of the SEA team). UNDP Moldova will support the contracting of the national experts.

The international consultant(s), the SEA Team Leader and the national focal point, together with the planners, will visit the project area, meet the representatives of the Orhei Town Administration and Ministry of Regional Development and Construction.

2. Implementation Phase: Carrying out the pilot SEA for the Orhei Town Master Plan based on the UNECE Resource Manual to Support Application of the UNECE Protocol on SEA¹.

2.1. SEA Scoping

Timing and duration: The scoping phase should take place shortly after the Master plan preparation begins, and when SEA team members are mobilized, e.g. within one month from the project approval.

Main activities:

Event 2: Start-up seminar

A one-day start-up seminar aims at raising awareness and clarifying roles of various stakeholders in the SEA process. The event will gather up to 30 participants from sectoral ministries and local authorities, in particular those responsible for economics, industry, agriculture and health, as well as civil society representatives, practitioners, planners and environmental authorities. It will be carried out back to back with the first training workshop described below.

Event 3: Scoping training workshops for the SEA team

A two-day training workshop (scoping workshop) will be delivered by the international consultants to support the SEA team in identifying potential environmental aspects that might be affected by the Master plan, and key problems related to the environment of the concerned territory. The workshop will gather up to 15 participants - SEA experts (pilot SEA team members), Orhei authority representatives (expert level), planners (representative of the Orhei Master plan preparation team). The detailed discussion of SEA stages will be organised for the experts. The special attention will be paid to the scoping exercise or identification of the content of the SEA report (on the basis of the Orhei Master Plan) and consultation process (see 2.3.).

Tangible output:

Scoping report including an introductory information on the Master Plan (i.e. main development priorities and/or major projects to be elaborated by the Master Plan), a list of key environmental issues for the SEA of the Orhei Town Master plan with brief justification for selected issues, and the preliminary recommendations towards the Master Plan (circa 20 – 25 pages).

2.2. Baseline analysis

Timing and duration: The analytical phase will take place in parallel with the initial Master plan preparation steps, e.g. 2 months from the project approval.

Main activity:

Preparation of the baseline analysis for the SEA report

This is the second stage of the preparation of the environmental report². During a practical section of the first training workshop, the SEA team, with assistance from the international consultants, will

¹ http://www.unece.org/env/eia/pubs/sea_manual.html

² The environmental report will be prepared by the SEA team within an iterative process comprising the following steps: scoping (see 2.1); analysis of the context and baseline (see 2.2.); development of contribution to the preparation of the Orhei Town Master Plan and its reasonable alternatives (see 2.3); preparation of the environmental report (see 2.4).

develop a SEA methodology. After the workshop, the SEA team will carry out a detailed assessment following the methodology. The baseline analysis will include assessment of the current state of the environment and existing trends for selected environmental issues and problems (as identified within the scoping) and estimation of likely future development of existing environmental situation. The SEA team will gather information/data about environmental situation. Each member of the SEA team will prepare written inputs for the SEA report, describing existing environmental conditions and trends for selected key issues/themes within concerned territory.

Tangible output:

Written inputs to the SEA report (descriptive and analytical parts, background documents of 10-15 pages and summaries for the SEA reports' chapters).

2.3. Analysis of likely environmental impacts and the Master plan optimization, mitigation measures, and environmental monitoring

Timing and duration: The evaluation phase should take place in parallel with preparation of the advanced draft of the Master plan, e.g. 2-6 months from the project approval.

Main activities

Event 4a: Scoping consultation with national authorities and public

The consultations with the authorities and the public participation process serve the purposes of providing information, gathering comments and engaging relevant stakeholders, including public concerned, in collaborative problem-solving. During the first training workshop the SEA team with support from the international consultants will identify relevant methods for consultations and public participation and develop relevant plan(s), comprising the following steps:

- Identifying the concerned public to participate, including relevant NGOs
- Making the environmental report available to the authorities and the public
- Formally notifying affected Parties as appropriate
- Consulting the authorities, providing for public participation on the environmental report, and selected alternatives.
- Consulting affected Parties as appropriate.
- Collecting comments to be taken into account in the decision.

The first consultations round will take place after the disclosure of the scoping report, whereas the second round will occur to consult on the draft SEA report and draft Master Plan (see below). The consultations will be organised for representatives of various stakeholders (to be decided during the inception mission), including participants of the below workshop (up to 30-40 participants).

Event 5: Impact training for SEA team

A two-day training workshop will be delivered by the international consultants to further support the SEA team in carrying out the SEA procedure, adjusting assessment techniques, preparing the environmental report, preparing for public participation and consultations with environmental and health authorities. It can be arranged so that to occur right before or after the scoping consultations. Additionally, the working meetings of the SEA team and international consultants could be organised, if needed, virtually. Overall, both international consultants will visit Moldova three times each.

The training will be organised for SEA experts (pilot SEA team members), Orhei local authority representatives (expert level), planners (representative of the Orhei Master Plan preparation team), National SEA Team Leader.

The practical part of the training workshop ('Impact workshop') will focus on the identification of potential impacts of the measures and activities proposed within the Master plan on the selected key environmental issues and formulation of mitigation measures (including modifications of the Master Plan) and discussion on how the mitigation measures should be considered in the Master Plan and its implementation.

Expert work on identification of impacts and alternatives

After the workshop the SEA team will work on the evaluation of potential impacts of the actions and activities proposed within the Master Plan on the selected key environmental issues and on the formulation of mitigation measures and provisions for monitoring.

Tangible outputs:

Written inputs to the SEA report by national experts (evaluation, mitigation and monitoring chapters).

First draft SEA Report prepared by the SEA Team Leader with support from the international experts.

The draft SEA report translated into English.

2.4. SEA reporting and decision making

Timing and duration: The Reporting phase should take place when the final draft of the Master plan is available for public discussion and before its formal approval, e.g. 5-6 months from the project approval.

Main activities:

Event 4b: Final consultation on SEA results

Following the public participation plan, the final public consultation meeting will be organised to discuss the draft Orhei Master Plan and the draft SEA Report with the relevant stakeholders (see 2.3. scoping consultations). Up to 40 representatives of the national stakeholders will take part in the event.

The SEA team will carefully record comments obtained from the stakeholders and prepare a report.

Finalization of the SEA report and integration of the SEA recommendations in the final version of the Master Plan

Based on the results of the consultations and public participation the SEA team will finalise the environmental report including description of alternatives, a list of comments from the consulted competent authorities and the public as well as a list of recommendation for improvements of the Orhei Town Master Plan. The report will be provided to the planning authority and/or the decision maker.

The Orhei municipality will decide which, if any, of the recommendations and alternative elements within a plan or programme, to adopt³. Following adoption of a plan or programme, the relevant environmental and health authorities, the general public (not just the public concerned) and any affected Parties should be informed of that decision. The adopted plan or programme must be made available to them together with a statement summarizing to be prepared by the National SEA Team Leader, with support from the international consultants:

- How the environmental and health considerations (as presented in the environmental report) have been integrated into the adopted plan or programme;
- How their opinions (as expressed by the public concerned in case of the public) have been taken into account;
- The reasons why the plan or programme has been adopted in light of the reasonable alternatives considered.

Preparation of the final report on the pilot project

The National SEA Team Leader in consultation with the international consultants will prepare the final report on the implementation of the pilot project. The report will include the description of the SEA process, reports of all conducted events, lessons learned and recommendations for further improvement of national legislative and institutional frameworks on SEA in a country. The content of the report will be agreed with the UNECE Secretariat.

Tangible outputs:

- final public consultation event is conducted
- report on the public / stakeholder comments is prepared
- reviewed SEA report is issued (both in English and Moldavian (or Russian is decided so by the National Focal Point and the Secretariat))
- final SEA project report

Preliminary Project plan

| Description of activity | June, 2014 | July, 2014 | August, 2014 | September, 2014 | October, 2014 | November, 2014 | December, 2014 |
|---|---------------------|---------------------|--------------|-----------------|---------------|----------------|----------------|
| <i>Setting up a national working group on SEA and a team of technical experts</i> | Second part of June | | | | | | |
| Implementation Phase | | | | | | | |
| <i>Event 1: Start-up seminar</i> | | Second part of July | | | | | |
| <i>Event 2: Scoping</i> | | Back to | | | | | |

³ As at this stage the UNECE secretariat, the international consultants and the SEA team have no possibility to influence the decision maker, there is a risk that this step might take much longer than the duration of a pilot project, unless the project also supports the decision maker in the preparation of the statement.

| Description of activity | June, 2014 | July, 2014 | August, 2014 | September, 2014 | October, 2014 | November, 2014 | December, 2014 |
|--|---------------|---------------------------------|------------------|--|------------------------|------------------------|-------------------------|
| <i>training workshops for the SEA team</i> | | back with the start-up workshop | | | | | |
| <i>Scoping report and Event 4a Scoping consultation</i> | | | August | Second-third week of September | | | |
| <i>Baseline studies</i> | June - August | | | | | | |
| <i>Event 5: Impact training for SEA team</i> | | | | Back to back with the scoping consultation | | | |
| <i>Assessment of environmental impacts and preparation of the draft environmental report.</i> | | | August - October | | | | |
| <i>Event 4b: Final consultation on SEA results: consultations with the national environmental and health authorities and a public participation workshop on the draft SEA / Master Plan.</i> | | | | | | | Second week of December |
| <i>Report on the public / stakeholder comments is prepared</i> | | | | | Second part of October | | |
| <i>Preparation of the final environmental report</i> | | | | | | First part of November | |

| Description of activity | June, 2014 | July, 2014 | August, 2014 | September, 2014 | October, 2014 | November, 2014 | December, 2014 |
|---|------------|------------|--------------|-----------------|---------------|--|------------------------|
| <i>Final SEA project report</i> | | | | | | Second part of November-first part of December | |
| <i>Adoption of the plan/programme⁴</i> | | | | | | | First part of December |

⁴ Beyond the control of the Secretariat and international consultants.

