Training on
Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA)

(Development and testing of a case study
and training for participants from Balkan
countries and territories
– Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo –
UN Administered Territory under UNSC 1244,
FYR Macedonia, Montenegro and Serbia)

Evaluation report

October 2008

Content:

1. Background

Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) offers a promising methodology to promote and improve planning processes in general and the integration of environmental aspects into policies, plans and programmes, in particular. SEA has been introduced as an obligatory instrument in many industrialised countries and is meeting with growing interest in developing and transition countries too.

SEA provides support to achieve the United Nations Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), agreed to by all the world's countries and the world's leading development institutions at the UN General Assembly in 2000. MDG 7 on Environmental Sustainability resolves "to integrate the principles of sustainable development into country policies and programmes and reverse loss of environmental resources".

Taking this into account, the OECD Development Assistance Committee (DAC) has established a Task Team on Strategic Environmental Assessment. This was established in 2004 as a response to the demand for guidance on the most efficient and effective way to apply SEA in the context of development cooperation. The product was the OECD publication "Applying Strategic Environmental Assessment. Good Practice Guidance for Development Cooperation".

Application of SEA in the Europe and the CIS region is driven by the EU SEA Directive and the UNECE SEA Protocol[1]. Development in South-Eastern European countries is very much oriented towards EU integration resulting also in higher interest and demand for introducing SEA in the countries. Despite the fact that some of these countries have recently introduced SEA requirements into national legislation level of understanding of SEA concept and benefits is still not sufficient. Since both the UNECE Protocol on Strategic Environmental Assessment and the EU SEA Directive are very important documents for further development of SEA in SEE region, the training for trainers from SEE countries aimed to promote the practical application of the Protocol and the Directive.

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[1] The UNECE Protocol on SEA (Kiev, 2003) was negotiated to supplement the Convention on Environmental Impact Assessment in a Transboundary Context (Espoo, 1991). The Protocol has been signed by 37 States and the European Community. It will enter into force once 16 signatories have ratified it and become Parties, and several States have already done so. Once in force, the Protocol will be open for accession by any Member State of the United Nations, subject to approval by the existing Parties, and may so become a global instrument for SEA.

2.   Objectives of the training course

The training course had four main objectives:

(i) To introduce participants the concept and use of SEA and illustrate the process through a hypothetical case study on a regional development programme;

(ii) To relate the lessons learnt from the case study to the context in the participants countries;

(iii) To illustrate possible ways on the effective SEA implementation following the provision of the UNECE SEA Protocol and EU SEA Directive;

(iv) To provide participants with examples of tackling specific environmental issues including the climate change within the SEA;

(v) To obtain and discuss recommendations on future actions for streamlining SEA in SEE region and networking among relevant stakeholders.

3. Training methodology and content

The training was based on SEA training manual which has been developed by the German Technical Cooperation (GTZ/InWEnt). This training package is based on both practical experiences with impact assessment tools in development cooperation, and the "Good Practice Guidance on Applying SEA in Development Cooperation", the official guidance of the OECD Development Assistance Committee (DAC). It employs innovative methods by intensively exploiting opportunities for action learning and group work. Being based on the case work methodology of the Harvard Business School, the training focuses on practical approaches to SEA.

In order to a) promote principles of the UNECE SEA Protocol and the EU SEA Directive, b) to accommodate the training to the context of SEE region, and c) integrate the issue of the climate change, the fictitious case study was modified (focused on SEA for regional / sub-national development plan) and the slides regarding the requirements of the UNECE SEA Protocol and EU SEA Directive and its practical application were integrate in the PowerPoint presentations, as well as slides referring to the appropriate consideration of the climate change within SEA.

The training was run over 4.5 days (the last half-day was dedicated to the concluding presentations and wrap-up discussions) and was subdivided into several modules. A special module dedicated to the presentation of the Czech SEA system was accompanied with the study visit of the Czech environmental information agency – CENIA, including presentation of the Czech EIA/SEA on-line information system (presented by Ms. Lucie Vravnikova, CENIA) and special lecture on the climate change modeling (presented by Mr. Vladislav Bizek, Technology Centre of Academy of Science Czech Republic). After introductory sessions the further modules were structured according to the case works from the fictitious case study (see detail schedule of agenda) i.e. participants went through following exercises:

a. Link programme and SEA
b. Determine the right issues and scope of assessment
c. Analyse the baseline trends
d. Analyze proposed development priorities and their alternatives
e. Assess cumulative impacts of proposed development activities and propose their optimization
f. Use effective means of participation
g. Ensure reflection of SEA results in decision-making as well as an adequate management and monitoring system for implementation
h. Manage SEA effectively within budgetary and time constraints

Each module was introduced by short presentation on a given SEA task focused on explanation of the task's purpose and relevant requirements of the UNECE SEA Protocol and EU SEA Directive. The main part was dedicated to the group work followed by the presentations and wrap-up discussions (including few PowerPoint slides with summary of key issues). The discussions were facilitated by the lecturers. The groups – i.e. SEA teams (three altogether) – were established before the first group work and the participants continued working in the same group during the whole training.

The hypothetical case study was elaborated for the preparation of the Regional Development Plan of fictitious Rumburec Region. It included map of the Region as well as detail map of proposed specific projects (industrial sites), and several exhibits for group work.

This approach allowed to the participants to compare different results (from groups) and discuss other possible approaches, methods and tools.

Working groups (SEA teams)

Plenary discussion on the group work results

4. Training agenda

Date /	Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
Timing	21	22	23	24	25	26
Venue		Hotel Na Ostrově, Beroun	Hotel Na Ostrově, Beroun	Field trip to Prague	Hotel Na Ostrově, Beroun	Hotel Na Ostrově, Beroun
08.30	Arrivals of participants	Introduction and training objectives • Introduction to training • Presentation of participants • Learning objectives • Practical information Corners game	Evolution and current status of SEA in participants´ countries • Presentations & discussions	Travel to Prague SEA/EIA Information System • Quantitative characteristics of the Czech SEA system • Operation of the SEA/EIA Information System (Czech Environmental Information Agency)	Assess cumulative impacts of proposed activities and propose their optimization • Introduction • Case work • Wrap-up & Discussion on how this relates to participants' context	Manage SEA effectively within budgetary and time constraints • Introduction • Case work • Wrap-up & Discussion on how this relates to participants' context
10.00		Coffee/Tea	Coffee/Tea	Coffee/Tea	Coffee/Tea	Coffee/Tea
10.30		Brief introduction to SEA • Basic information • Evolution of SEA Introduction to case study Reading time for participants	Determine the right issues and scope of the assessment • Introduction • Case work • Wrap-up & Discussion on how this relates to participants' context	SEA systems • SEA system in the Czech Republic • Main similarities and differences of the SEA system in the participants´ countries	Continued	Closing session • Wrap-up of the training • Training evaluation • Participants´ view • Distribution of certificates
12.00		Lunch arranged	Lunch arranged	Lunch arranged	Lunch arranged	Lunch arranged
13.00		Link programme and SEA • Introduction • Case work • Wrap-up & Discussion on how this relates to	Analyze the baseline trends • Introduction • Case work • Wrap-up & Discussion on how this relates to	Addressing climate change in the Czech Republic • Modelling of the climate change impacts – integrated approach (Technology Centre of	Use effective means of participation • Introduction • Case work • Wrap-up & Discussion	- End of training -

	participants' context	participants' context	Academy of Science Czech Republic)	on how this relates to participants' context	
14.30	Coffee/Tea	Coffee/Tea	Coffee/Tea	Coffee/Tea	
15.00 – 17.00	Continued Evolution and current status of SEA in participants´ countries • Assignment of tasks	Analyze proposed development priorities and their alternatives • Introduction • Case work • Wrap-up & Discussion on how this relates to participants' context	Continued	Ensure reflection of SEA results in decision-making & monitoring system • Introduction • Case work • Wrap-up & Discussion on how this relates to participants' context	
18.00	Dinner arranged	Dinner arranged	Dinner arranged	Dinner arranged	Individual dinner

5. Participants

The training course was held for a total of 19 participants. The participants included staff from the various ministries and one international organization:

- Albania: Ministry of Environment, Ministry of Public Works, Transport and Telecommunication
- Bosnia and Herzegovina: Ministry of Foreign Trade and Economic Relations, Ministry of Physical Planning, Civil Engineering and Ecology
- Kosovo: Ministry of Environment and Spatial Planning
- Macedonia: Ministry of Environment and Physical Planning
- Montenegro: Ministry of Economic Development, Ministry of Tourism and Environment, UNDP Montenegro
- Serbia: Ministry of Environment and Spatial Planning

As a part of the introductory sessions, the participants were asked to formulate their expectations from the training. As summary bellow shows, the participants expected to learn about following topics and issues:

- How to apply SEA in regional development and spatial planning
- How to ensure effective involvement and cooperation of responsible authorities
- How effectively implement and enforce relevant legislation
- Environmental assessment systems, including legal, in other SEE countries and on how can be experience gained in CEE countries (new EU members) applied in SEE countries
- Incentives for introducing and applying SEA in SEE countries
- Different ways to develop capacity for SEA application
- Methodologies and procedures used in SEA, in particular how to conduct scoping
- How to apply public participation in SEA
- How to build relations with responsible authorities
- Financial aspect / cost of SEA
- How to prepare good quality SEA report
- Post-SEA monitoring
- Links between SEA and planning

6. Summary of the training outcomes

As mentioned above each training module consisted from short introduction of the topic and case work, group work on the assigned task, presentations of the results and facilities wrap-up discussion. The presented results showed that it is possible to use different approaches and tools to fulfill the tasks of the case study. Groups were encouraged to use flipchart for preparation of the presentations (since the preparation of the presentation on flipchart papers better facilitate the discussions within the group compare to work with the laptop and MS PowerPoint), and resulting visuals further helped to facilitate discussions among the groups.

Evolution and current status of SEA in participants´ countries

The participants prepared the overview of the evolution and current status of SEA in their countries focused on:

- *Relevant legislation and other documents (methodologies etc.):* Some countries (Serbia) have already developed national systems for SEA and gained practical experience with its application. On the other hand, several countries adopted only very general brief SEA-related provisions into their respective legislative systems, and consequently face difficulties as to how to carry out the SEA procedures in practice without officially approved binding guidelines. In contrast, even where there is a well developed and detailed legislation (e.g. Serbia or Macedonia) a limited or no further progress can occur as a result of the complete lack of enforcement of the respective legislation.

- *Existing practice:* Several examples of the pilot SEA application was mentioned – usually funded by the international agencies (EBRD, the World Bank etc.). For example the World Bank has supported the SEA of National Spatial Plan and the SEA of the draft National Energy Strategy in Montenegro. Some of the participant's countries still don't have any SEA case carried out, opposite to this e.g. in Serbia an extensive application of SEA in the spatial planning can be found. The need of pilot SEA application was emphasized, since the practical examples can prove the usefulness and benefits of the assessment and so serve for capacity building in this field.

- *Scope of application:* Legal provisions on SEA usually cover plans and programmes, including spatial plans. As mentioned above, several countries have extensive SEA provisions, which reflect requirements of SEA Directive and/or SEA Protocol, including scope of application.

- *Procedure:* The procedures (legally stipulated and/or applied in practice) differ, but include stages of screening and scoping, impacts assessment and preparation of SEA report, and decision-making (approval of the plan/programme assessed). Relevant legal provisions also stipulate obligation regarding consultation with the relevant authorities and public involvement.

- *Key actors (planning authorities, decision-makers, environmental and health authorities, public involved):* The ministry responsible for environmental protection and related matters is also responsible for overall coordination of the SEA in participants' countries. Other key actors are: sectoral ministries responsible for preparation of strategic documents, other authorities (national,

regional and local levels) as decision-makers, spatial planning agencies, and general public including NGOs.

- *Key issues (problems / benefits / what works well / what shall be improved?):* The main issues mentioned include:
  - need of further capacity building, especially experts and state officials
  - awareness raising on SEA for decision-makers, public and NGOs
  - better coordination of the existing legal acts and among relevant authorities (ministries)
  - formal application of SEA without any real influence on the document assessed and the final decision / approval
  - need of modification of existing SEA legislation in order to cover higher level of the planning documents (strategies and policies)

The participating countries represent wide diversity as far as the level of adoption of relevant legislation and its actual implementation is concerned. Generally, a need for further support of the improvement of the situation was expressed within the discussions – as regards to capacity building of administrative capacities (SEA authorities) and other relevant stakeholder groups (planners, NGOs, public), carrying out pilot assessment and development of guidance.

Determine the right issues and scope of the assessment

The discussions following the presentations of the case work results were focused on the problems with the identification and specification of relevant environmental themes and objectives and their modification for the specific assessment. It was stressed out there is a strong link with overall system of country's strategic documents on the environmental protection. Another topic was procedural approach to the scoping i.e. need of iterative scoping exercise during the SEA procedure was discussed. Specific attention was paid to the climate change and other crosscutting issues as well as to the question to what extend the SEA should cover social and economy issues.

Baseline analysis

The discussion following the case work exercise focused on the issues related to the data quality and interpretation. On the basis of the case work as well as their own experience participants discussed frequently occurring data flaws and techniques for their mitigation. A sound and careful approach towards the data sources and their interpretation was stressed. A need to acknowledge clearly all uncertainties and data gaps experienced during the analysis in the final SEA report was pointed out. An involvement of experts with a local knowledge was suggested as a good way of reducing the risk of data misinterpretation.

Analyze proposed development priorities and their alternatives

Drawing on the results of the case work exercise the participants debated appropriate means of comparing development alternatives. A suitability of methods such as CBA, multi-criteria analysis, and others was discussed. Pros and cons of simple matrix-like techniques vis-à-vis more complex tools such as models were debated. The nature and quality of the strategic document itself, the reasonability of suggested alternatives and the level of their elaboration are of key importance for the decision on approach and methods to be used within the SEA.

Assess cumulative impacts of proposed activities and propose their optimization

Based on case work example, participants focused on possible cumulative effects of different interventions on individual environmental elements. The problem of how to compare direct impacts of specific projects and indirect effects of more general activities was discussed (examples were provided by the case study). The participants were interested in various techniques suitable for this type of evaluations.

Use effective means of participation

Participants within their group work outlined several strategies for enhancing the effectiveness of the public participation, stressing out the need for transparency and the information availability from the initial stages and throughout the whole SEA process. A suitability of different means of participation for different stake-holder groups was debated as well as the differences in level of details of information provided to different groups. The discussion confronting the experiences of trainers and those of the participants revealed a risk of the rapid fade of people's interest to participate in the SEA processes after first several pilot SEAs are completed.

Ensure reflection of SEA results in decision-making & monitoring system

The problem of the SEA influence on the actual decision making is of critical importance. The following principles were suggested in the discussion to ensure the SEA outcomes are taken into account: The employed methods and the form of presenting outcomes must be understandable for the decision makers. The SEA should intensively communicate with the planners so that the SEA proposed modifications could be considered at as early stage of the plan drafting as possible. The issue of as to what extend the SEA team should work together with the planners, triggered exchange of experiences with different approaches between the trainers and course participants. The follow-up activities and monitoring are key tools for assuring that the SEA outcomes were actually taken into account.

Manage SEA effectively within budgetary and time constraints

The case work mock budgeting exercise stimulated a fruitful debate on resources allocation within a SEA project. The pros and cons of employing short-time experts vis-à-vis having a broader team of core experts were discussed. A close cooperation with the authorities and plan developers helps to avoid dual work and reduce some of the costs of data gathering and public participation

Meeting with representatives of the Czech Environmental Information Agency

The presentation on the SEA informational system and the practical aspects its management, as well as the presentation of statistics on SEA application in the Czech Republic facilitated a discussion on strengths and weaknesses of the current Czech arrangement. The Czech internet based SEA/EIA information system enabling public to access the full documentation of individual SEA processes including all related documents and records from the public hearings was praised by the participants as a good model for the future development in their respective countries.

7. Course evaluation

The course was evaluated by using the evaluation form (see annex II) at the end of the training. The overall rating[2] is provided in the table bellow.

Categories	1	2	3	4	5	6	average rating
working methods			1	3	13	2	**4,8**
workshop content				5	5	9	**5,2**
learning aspect				5	9	5	**5,0**
trainers			1		10	8	**5,3**
group dynamics			2	5	9	2	**4,4**
applicability in your working area			1	9	5	4	**4,6**
degree of expectations met			2	5	6	6	**4,8**
organisation, logistics, venue		1	4	4	4	6	**4,5**
time-table			3	5	9	2	**4,5**

Rating scale: 1=very bad; 2=bad; 3=regular; 4=good; 5=very good; 6=excellent

Following suggestions for the further improvement of the training result both from the evaluation discussion with the participants and from observations of the trainers:

- To introduce illustrative examples taken from the real SEA reports as a supportive material during the slide presentations and as well as during each sum-up evaluation and discussions for individual modules.
- To include information on success stories and failures from concrete SEA applications;
- To include more presentations (and presenters) on specific issues, as was for example one on integrated approach to climate change modeling
- To focus more on methods and techniques applicable in the very environmental assessment, to allocate time on demonstration of practical use of certain techniques such as CBA or multi-criteria analysis.
- Locate the training in Prague (reduces transportation needs and enables for more effective planning of study visits at the relevant Czech institutions (MoE, CENIA)
- To provide working groups with computers allowing participants to complete and keep their course works in electronic form and present them as electronic presentations.
- Not to have all groups presenting results of each group work in order to avoid repetition and save time
- To provide participants with the training material, or part of it, in advance

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[2] Numbers in cells express the number of participants scoring given category by rating indicated in the first cell in column. The following rating scale was used: 1=very bad; 2=bad; 3=regular; 4=good; 5=very good; 6=excellent (columns in the table).

- To start daily program at 9 a.m. instead of 8:30.

8. Acknowledgements

The original training was developed by a consultant team consisting of Jiri Dusik, Alfred Eberhardt and Felipe Perez supported by Harald Lossack, Axel Olearius (GTZ) and Jan-Peter Schemmel (GTZ).

The set of PowerPoint slides for this particular training, incorporating the requirements of the UNECE SEA Protocol, was prepared by Jiri Dusik with inputs from Nicholas Bonvoisin (UNECE), and further modified by Martin Smutny, Michal Musil (Integra Consulting Services Ltd.) and Henrieta Martonakova (UNDP) in order to integrate relevant requirements of the EU SEA Directive and issue of the climate change.

The present fictitious case study on the Regional Development Plan of Rumburec Region has been prepared by Integra Consulting Services Ltd. (Martin Smutny and Michal Musil) in cooperation with Jiri Dusik, Henrieta Martonakova (UNDP), Nicholas Bonvoisin (UNECE) and Axel Olearius (GTZ).

The training has been conducted by Martin Smutny and Michal Musil from the Integra Consulting Services Ltd., and Henrieta Martonakova (UNDP). The logistical support to the training has been provided by Marie Machova from the Integra Consulting Services Ltd.

Annexes

Annex 1: List of participants

Name	Country	Organization
Miroslav Tosovic	Serbia	Ministry of Environment and Spatial Planning
Slobodan Sremcevic	Serbia	Ministry of Environment and Spatial Planning
Lana Ristic	Serbia	Ministry of Environment and Spatial Planning
Jelena Bajic	Montenegro	Ministry of Economic Development
Jelena Rabrenovic	Montenegro	Ministry of Tourism and Environment of Montenegro
Brankica Cmiljanovic	Montenegro	Ministry of Tourism and Environment of Montenegro
Predrag Dacovic	Montenegro	UNDP Montenegro
Igor Noveljic	Montenegro	Adviser to Minister for Economic Development
Kiril Kalkasliev	Macedonia	Ministry of Environment and Physical Planning, Sector for Sustainable Development and Investments
Dejan Gadzovski	Macedonia	Ministry of Environment and Physical Planning, Sector for Physical Planning
Bashkim Xhombaliq	Macedonia	Ministry of Environment and Physical Planning, Sector for General Affairs
Lendita Radoniqi	Kosovo	MESP Spatial Planning department
Enver Tahiri	Kosovo	MESP Environment Protection department
Merita Mehmeti	Kosovo	MESP/KEPA
Vehbi Ejupi	Kosovo	MESP
Ozren Laganin	BiH	Ministry of Physical Planning, Civil Engineering and Ecology
Nermina Skejovic-Huric	BiH	Ministry of Foreign Trade and Economic Relations - Department for Environment
Gavrosh Zela	Albania	Ministry of Environment
Kalterina Shulla	Albania	Ministry of Public Works, Transport and Telecommunication

SEA Training for Trainers
October 22-26, 2007

EVALUATION FORM

Dear participant!

Your opinion is very important to us. Therefore we kindly ask you to fill in this questionnaire for us. Your comments and recommendations will help us to improve the SEA training.

Please rate each of the following categories between 1 and 6 and mark the corresponding column.

(1=very bad; 2=bad; 3=regular; 4=good; 5=very good; 6=excellent)

Categories	1	2	3	4	5	6
working method						
workshop contents						
learning aspect						
trainers						
group dynamics						
applicability in your working area						
degree of expectations met						
organisation, logistics, venue						
time-table						

In this part of the evaluation, you are kindly requested to give us your opinions and comments on the different aspects of the workshop.

Working method:

Workshop contents:

Learning aspect:

Trainers:

Group dynamics:

Applicability in your working area:

Degree of expectations met:

Organisation, logistics, place:

Time-table:

Suggestions for improvement:

Would you recommend this SEA training to others?

Interest and possibilities of continuing the learning / training process after the workshop has ended: