



Espoo Convention
EIA/SEA UPDATE
Issue No. 5, September 2005



Welcome!

Welcome to the fifth issue of EIA/SEA UPDATE. The UPDATE provides a less formal means of letting you know what is happening with the Espoo Convention on Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) in a Transboundary Context and its Protocol on Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA). You can find out more about the Convention and Protocol on the Convention website, www.unece.org/env/eia.

This UPDATE follows on from the previous issue, presenting more activities that implement the workplan adopted by the 3rd meeting of the Parties to the Espoo Convention and the first meeting of the Signatories to the SEA Protocol, held in Cavtat (Croatia) in June 2004 (see also www.unece.org/env/eia/activities.htm).



In April 2005, Finland became the first signatory to ratify the Protocol on SEA. The Czech Republic joined Finland in July.

This UPDATE is being issued in the lead up to the International Association for Impact Assessment (IAIA) Conference on 'International experience & perspectives in SEA', to be held in Prague 26-30 September 2005. The Conference will be hosted by the REC-CEE (Regional Environmental Centre for Central & Eastern Europe) and the **Czech Agricultural University**. It is expected that the Protocol on SEA will receive considerable attention at this event. For information on the Conference, see www.iaia.org.

The **Czech Ministry of Environment** is producing a book on 'SEA at the Policy Level: A

Review of Recent Progress and Practice' to coincide with the IAIA meeting; we will provide information on this publication on the Convention's website in due course.

Danube-Black Sea Canal

At the request of **Romania**, an inquiry commission was established in January 2005 to advise on the likelihood of a significant adverse transboundary impact arising from the Danube-Black Sea Deep Water Navigation Canal in the **Ukrainian** Sector of the Danube Delta (Bystroie Canal). For the latest news on the inquiry commission, please refer to www.unece.org/env/eia/inquiry.htm.

Meetings in April 2005

At the end of April 2005, Geneva was the venue for two key meetings: the second meeting of the Signatories to the Protocol; and the eighth meeting of the Working Group on EIA. Most of the issues discussed at these meetings are described elsewhere in this UPDATE, but several that fall outside the Convention's workplan are summarized here:

- The Working Group sought clarification about draft guidelines on promoting the application of the principles of the Aarhus Convention in international forums, including meetings under the Espoo Convention and its Protocol.
- The Meeting of the Signatories said it was not against further discussion on a proposal for a joint workshop between the Protocol and the Aarhus Convention on public participation in strategic decision-making, but chose to wait and see whether it was adopted at the second meeting of the Parties to the Aarhus Convention. It was.

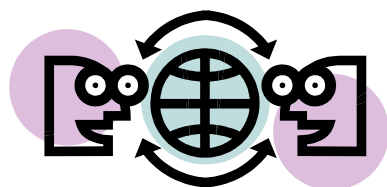
- A presentation by the representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran was greatly appreciated by the Working Group, and has been posted on the Convention's website, as requested: www.unece.org/env/eia/documents/april2005/Iranian_EIA_system.pdf. The Islamic Republic of Iran has confirmed its intention to become a Party to the Convention.

The Working Group meeting began with a workshop organized by **Switzerland** for the exchange of best practice in transboundary EIA of transboundary projects - projects that involve development on both sides of national borders. See www.unece.org/env/eia/activities.html#EIAexchange for the workshop papers and presentations. All delegations appreciated this informal and active exchange of information, and considered that similar workshops should accompany future meetings.

Activities supporting the Espoo Convention

Guidelines on the application of the Espoo Convention in Central Asia have been finalized and are now available on the Convention's website at www.unece.org/env/eia/activities.html#EIAbuilding. The guidelines were drafted at a workshop in **Kyrgyzstan** in October 2004 and reviewed by the Working Group on EIA in April of this year.

Further activities to build capacity are planned in **Armenia, Tajikistan** and **Ukraine**. Financial support is being sought for these activities.



Following on from a workshop in **Belgrade** in December 2004, a workshop was held in **Ohrid (the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia)**, 30 June - 1 July 2005, to develop a subregional agreement to support implementation of the Espoo Convention in South-East Europe.

Substantial progress was made in the drafting of this agreement, and a follow-up meeting is planned in **Sofia**, 3-4 November 2005.

Sweden will provide the venue for a subregional meeting for the Baltic states, 20-21 October 2005. A meeting for the **Mediterranean** subregion is expected in the near future.

In preparation for the next Review of the Implementation of the Convention, the **Implementation Committee** prepared a revised and simplified questionnaire. This was discussed and improved during and after the April 2005 meeting of the Working Group. The secretariat is now pre-filling the new questionnaires with responses from the previous questionnaire, where appropriate, so as to simplify completion by Parties. It is expected that the questionnaires will be sent out to Parties in October 2005, for return by April 2006. Completed questionnaires will then be posted on the Convention's website.

Activities supporting the Protocol on SEA

UNDP/RBEC (the UN Development Programme's Regional Centre for Europe and CIS), supported by the **REC-CEE**, completed a series of capacity-building needs analysis workshops in **Armenia, Belarus, Georgia, Republic of Moldova** and **Ukraine**. UNDP/RBEC presented subregional and country reviews at the April 2005 meetings under the Convention, and has initiated two pilot SEAs in the five countries, together with three national capacity development manuals (see below). Capacity-building action plans (or strategies) are now being developed.

The REC-CEE, UNDP/RBEC and the Convention Secretariat, with technical support from the **European Commission**, have produced a draft capacity development manual to support implementation of the Protocol on SEA. Their work was reviewed at three workshops: in Brussels; in Szentendre (Hungary); and, most recently, for the Caucasus subregion, in Tbilisi, 21-22 April 2005. The draft manual was reviewed by the Meeting of the Signatories to

the Protocol at the end of April, and a small editorial group was established. That group has worked by email so far, but will meet directly in Prague during the IAIA Conference.

Finally, a small group has been working to examine institutional and procedural issues for the entry into force of the Protocol, such as membership of the Bureau and Implementation Committee when these bodies are considering matters under the Protocol. The April 2005 meetings welcomed the group's work and encouraged it to work more closely with the Bureau, Implementation Committee and others.

The Budget

At the request of the Parties, the secretariat has provided to the Bureau, and copied to the Parties, a first detailed biannual financial report. The secretariat hopes to make this available on the website in due course.

Almost all contributions pledged for 2004 have been received and about half of those for 2005. Please continue to send in your contributions, whether or not pledged at the third meeting of the Parties. We are also able to identify particular activities requiring funding, for those governments or institutions interested in direct funding, for example for capacity-building activities in Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia.

Other secretariat activities

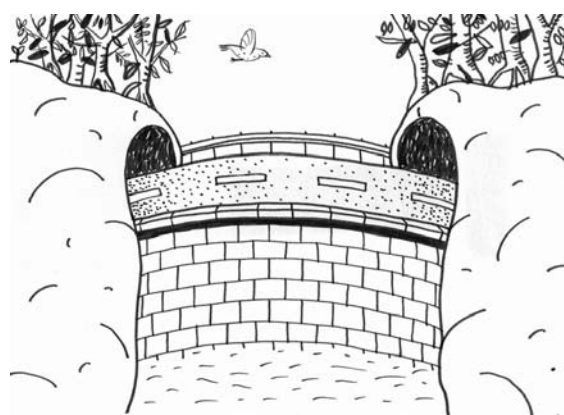
The secretariat has continued to work with the **UN Environment Programme** in the Caspian Sea region, assisting in the development of a draft protocol on transboundary EIA, and helping with training courses in Baku (4-5 April) and in Gorgan, Islamic Republic of Iran (11-12 July).

The secretariat has also continued to work with the **EBRD** (European Bank for Reconstruction and Development), another partner in the Caspian Sea. Their attention has now turned to the Black Sea, and they will make a joint presentation to an expert group under the **Black Sea Commission** in Istanbul, 8-9 September 2005.

At the invitation of the 'Trans-national civil participation: Strategies of the Espoo & Aarhus Conventions' project, which aims to improve communication and cooperation between authorities in **Austria** and the **Czech Republic**, the secretariat also contributed to a meeting in Mistelbach (Austria), 14 April 2005.

Building effective public participation in transboundary EIA

by Arinda Maria Cadariu, Environmental Experts Association (drawing by Ion Anghel)



The Environmental Experts Association in Romania and the Foundation Institute for Ecological Modernization in Bulgaria are together implementing the project 'Building effective public participation in transboundary Environmental Impact Assessment', financed by the Canadian International Development Agency through its Governance Support Programme for Romania and Bulgaria. The project target groups in both countries are: environmental NGOs, central and local governmental authorities, local communities, and mass-media representatives.

The project aim is to improve environmental protection along the Danube River through transboundary cooperation between Romania and Bulgaria. The main activities to be implemented by the one-year project are:

- Development of a guidebook and a web page to promote practical methods and tools for implementing the Espoo

- Convention, focussing on public participation in Romania and Bulgaria;
- Organization of training sessions, to increase knowledge of the practical application of the Espoo Convention among NGOs and the local public administration, in the transboundary regions along the Danube River between Romania and Bulgaria;
 - Setting-up an informal network of NGOs and local authorities to facilitate: (a) the exchange of environmental information and knowledge; and (b) the coordination of efforts in solving environmental protection issues in the Romanian-Bulgarian transboundary region.

Additional information may be found at <http://eea.ngo.ro>.

Posters & Documents

Please contact the secretariat if you need copies of the Convention's information poster, or the poster describing implementation of the Convention around the Caspian Sea. Both posters are available in English and Russian. Reports on the meetings described above may be found on the Convention website.

Final UPDATE?

This is **the last issue of UPDATE** for some time, as funding is no longer available to provide extra secretariat support for the Convention. We wish to thank the various contributors to the five issues of UPDATE, and to thank the NGO **EcoGlobe**, which again translated the previous edition into Russian.

Upcoming events

26-30 September 2005	IAIA special thematic meeting 'International experience & perspectives in SEA', Prague
20-21 October 2005	Workshop on subregional cooperation around the Baltic Sea, Stockholm
3-4 November 2005	Workshop on subregional cooperation in South-East Europe, Sofia (tentative)
14-15 November 2005	8 th Meeting of the Implementation Committee, Geneva
3-5 April 2006	9 th Meeting of the Working Group on EIA, Geneva
23-26 May 2006	IAIA annual conference 'Power, poverty and sustainability', Stavanger (Norway)



For a more complete and up to date listing of events, visit the Convention website

NOT AN OFFICIAL RECORD.

This EIA/SEA UPDATE provides informal information on the: Espoo Convention on Environmental Impact Assessment in a Transboundary Context, and Kiev Protocol on Strategic Environmental Assessment.



Your news and views would be very welcome.

United Nations Economic Commission for Europe
Environment and Human Settlements Division
Palais des Nations, 1211 Geneva 10, Switzerland

Phone: + 41 22 917 2446 / Fax: + 41 22 907 0107 / email: eia.conv@unece.org

www.unece.org/env/eia