

EIA/SEA UPDATE e-Newsletter no. 1 – August 2007

Welcome to the first issue of EIA/SEA UPDATE e-newsletter - this is the first e-newsletter providing informal information on the Convention on Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) in a Transboundary Context (Espoo, 1991) and its Protocol on Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA). UPDATE is not an official record, but instead provides a less formal means of letting you know what is happening with the Espoo Convention and its Protocol. In particular, this edition provides information on the outcomes of the May 2007 meeting of the Convention's Working Group on EIA (<http://www.unece.org/env/eia/workinggroup.htm>). You can find out more about the Convention and Protocol at, <http://www.unece.org/env/eia>.

This UPDATE follows on from the six previous "PDF file" newsletters, presenting activities that implement the workplan, adopted by the 3rd meeting of the Parties to the Espoo Convention, and leading up to the 4th meeting of the Parties, which will be held in Bucharest on 20-21 May 2008. Previous newsletters are available in English and Russian at <http://www.unece.org/env/eia/newsletters.html>. This e-newsletter allows you to go direct from your e-mail to the news items that interest you.

Ratifications (since September 2006) (<http://www.unece.org/env/eia/ratification.htm>)

Luxembourg became the seventh Party to the 2nd amendment on 4 May 2007

The Czech Republic became the ninth Party to the 1st amendment and sixth Party to the 2nd amendment on 18 April 2007

Germany became the fifth Party to the 2nd amendment and the sixth Party to the Protocol on 22 February 2007

Bulgaria became the eighth Party to the 1st amendment, fourth Party to the 2nd amendment and fifth Party to the Protocol on 25 January 2007

Romania became the seventh Party to the 1st amendment to the Convention on 16 November 2006 On 23 October 2006

Montenegro succeeded to signature of the Protocol on 23 October 2006

Austria became the sixth Party to the 1st amendment, and the third Party to the second amendment, on 14 September 2006

The May 2007 meeting of the Working Group on EIA agreed that it was unlikely that the Protocol would enter into force before the 4th meeting of the Parties. The Working Group also agreed that the 3rd meeting of the Signatories would not be held until final preparations were being made for the 1st meeting of the Parties to the Convention serving as the Meeting of the Parties to the Protocol.

"Environment for Europe" Ministerial Conference

(<http://www.unece.org/env/efe/wgso/Belgrade/welcome.html>)

The Sixth Ministerial Conference "Environment for Europe" will be held in Belgrade, on 10-12 October 2007. The Conference is expected to consider the implementation of the UNECE multilateral environmental agreements (document ECE/BELGRADE.CONF/2007/12) and, under the item on capacity-building and while considering progress and perspectives in implementing the Environment Strategy for EECCA countries (Eastern Europe, Caucasus and Central Asia), may welcome an initiative on SEA (document ECE/BELGRADE.CONF/2007/18). There will also be side-events related to the Convention and its Protocol:

- Side event: Future directions after ten years of implementation of the Espoo Convention, 10 October, 1:00-2:30 pm, Amphitheatre, Sava Centre
- Closed meeting (by invitation only): Discussion on the Work Programme for implementation of the proposed Belgrade SEA Initiative, 11 October, 1:00-2:30 pm, Baltic Room, Hotel Continental
- Side event: Implementation of the Protocol on Strategic Environmental Assessment: from Kiev to Belgrade and beyond, 12 October, 8:30-10:00 am, Room 3/0, Sava Centre

Danube-Black Sea Canal

At the request of Romania, an inquiry commission was established in January 2005 to advise on the likely environmental impact of the proposed Danube-Black Sea Deep Water Navigation Canal in the Ukrainian Sector of the Danube Delta ('Bystroe Canal project'). In July 2006 the Inquiry Commission presented its unanimous opinion that the project was likely to have a significant adverse transboundary impact (<http://www.unece.org/env/eia/inquiry.htm>). The Implementation Committee is now considering a January 2007 submission by Romania having concerns about Ukraine's compliance with its obligations under the Convention, with respect to the Bystroe Canal Project and in the light of the opinion of the Inquiry Commission on the environmental impact of the project (http://www.unece.org/env/eia/implementation_committee.htm).

Implementation of and compliance with the Convention

(<http://www.unece.org/env/eia/implementation.htm>)

To date, 36 of the 40 States Parties to the Convention have completed questionnaires providing national reports on their implementation of the Convention. The secretariat has used these to prepare a draft second review of implementation, which will be attached to a draft decision (for possible adoption by the Meeting of the Parties) on the review of implementation being prepared by the Bureau. The May 2007 meeting of the Working Group on EIA agreed that the Bureau also prepare a draft decision on strengthening the inquiry procedure, in light of experience with the first inquiry procedure (ECE/MP.EIA/WG.1/2007/5). The Implementation Committee, besides considering the submission by Romania regarding the Bystroe Canal project, has:

- Started to help a Party as a result of examining the first review of implementation (a "Committee initiative")
- Presented a draft decision on the review of compliance, and draft operating rules, to the Working Group on EIA
- Begun drafting its report to the 4th meeting of the Parties to the Convention

Exchange of good practices (<http://www.unece.org/env/eia/activityEIAexchange.html>)

The May 2007 meeting of the Working Group on EIA included a workshop for the exchange of good practices in transboundary EIA methodologies, held by Tajikistan in cooperation with Kyrgyzstan. The delegate from Tajikistan presented a case study involving Afghanistan, emphasizing: (a) the inclusion of diverse stakeholders in consultation processes; and (b) public participation from the early stages through to implementation. Professor Terwindt, chair of the Inquiry Commission, made a presentation of methodologies applied by the Commission and by the specialists who supported its work, emphasizing the difference between abiotic and biotic evaluations and that expert judgement can lead to acceptable evaluation of impacts. The Bureau is preparing a draft decision on the exchange of good practices.

Subregional cooperation (<http://www.unece.org/env/eia/activityEIAsubregion.html>)

A meeting for the Baltic Sea subregion was held in Copenhagen on 8 November 2006. The planned meeting for the Mediterranean Sea subregion, to be held in Morocco, has been further delayed but information on the meeting will be posted on the Convention's website once available. The Bureau is preparing a draft decision on subregional cooperation. As a result of subregional cooperation in South-East Europe, a multilateral agreement among the countries of South-Eastern Europe for implementation of the Convention (ECE/MP.EIA/WG.1/2007/10, forthcoming) is to be signed in Bucharest on the occasion of the 4th meeting of the Parties. The concerned countries need urgently: to confirm their wish to be included in the agreement; to indicate whether they anticipate signature in Bucharest; and to begin their national procedures accordingly.

Capacity-building in EECCA (<http://www.unece.org/env/eia/activityEIAbuilding.html>)

A training workshop on EIA, including the practical application of the Convention, was held in Dushanbe from 19 to 21 February 2007 with the support of Switzerland and in partnership with the Regional Environmental Centre for Central Asia (CAREC) and the secretariat. Further training workshops are planned within a Swiss-funded programme of EIA capacity-building in the countries of Central Asia. A transboundary EIA pilot project in Kyrgyzstan,

involving Kazakhstan as an affected Party, is continuing. Workshops for transboundary EIA capacity-building in Eastern Europe and Caucasus are planned (see meetings schedule below). Draft Guidelines on EIA in a Transboundary Context for Central Asian Countries (ECE/MP.EIA/WG.1/2007/6) are available at <http://www.unece.org/env/eia/workinggroup.htm>; the guidelines will be attached to a draft decision on capacity-building in EECCA being prepared by the Bureau.

Resource Manual to support application of the Protocol on SEA

(http://www.unece.org/env/eia/sea_manual/)

Following a period of open consultation, the UNECE Secretariat and the REC (Regional Environmental Centre for Central & Eastern Europe) have issued a 'draft final' Resource Manual to Support Application of the SEA Protocol, with permission from the small editorial group established by the Meeting of the Signatories to the Protocol. The Resource Manual is available in English and in Russian and as an interactive website in English. Following another period of open consultation, the authors and the small editorial group continue development of a part of the Manual addressing health under the Protocol.

Institutional and procedural activities under the Protocol on SEA

The May 2007 meeting of the Working Group on EIA thanked the small group (comprising Germany, the Netherlands and the United Kingdom) and the Chair of the Implementation Committee for their work on this activity, which had resulted in a consolidated informal paper, including in annex draft decisions for the Meeting of the Parties and for the Meeting of the Parties to the Convention serving as the Meeting of the Parties to the Protocol. The paper will be attached to the report of the meeting (ECE/MP.EIA/WG.1/2007/2, forthcoming), to be available at <http://www.unece.org/env/eia/workinggroup.htm>.

Preparations for the 4th meeting of the Parties to the Convention

(<http://www.unece.org/env/eia/bucharest.htm>)

The Bureau will present a draft provisional agenda for the meeting to the next meeting of the Working Group on EIA. The Bureau is also preparing a draft decision on adoption of a workplan for the period up to the 5th meeting of the Parties. Nominations will be required for officers (Bureau members) and for four members of Implementation Committee for that period.

Budget and financial arrangements (<http://www.unece.org/env/eia/budget.htm>)

At the request of the Parties, the Secretariat has provided to the Bureau, and copied to the Parties, a series of detailed biannual financial reports. All contributions pledged at the 3rd meeting of the Parties have now been received, but governments are requested to continue to send in contributions. 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 EECCA. The Bureau is preparing a draft decision on the budget and financial arrangements. The secretariat's report on the budget and financial arrangements in the period since the third meeting of Parties, to be appended to the draft decision, will provide the same information as presented in the biannual financial reports.

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. We can also provide copies of the published Espoo guidance documents. Reports on the meetings described above may be found on the Convention website.

Upcoming events (2007) (<http://www.unece.org/env/eia/meetings.htm>)

- autumn, Workshop on subregional cooperation around the Mediterranean Sea, Morocco
- autumn, Training workshop on (transboundary) EIA, Kyrgyzstan
- 17-19 September, Workshop for transboundary EIA capacity-building in the Caucasus, Armenia

- 10-12 October, 'Environment for Europe' Ministerial Conference, Belgrade
- 22-24 October, Workshop on Kazakhstan-Kyrgyzstan pilot project for capacity-building in EECCA region, Kazakhstan
- 30 October - 1 November, 13th Meeting of the Implementation Committee, Geneva
- early November, Workshop for transboundary EIA capacity-building in Eastern Europe, Ukraine
- 20 November, Bureau meeting, Geneva
- 21-23 November, 11th Meeting of the Working Group on EIA, Geneva
- 3-4 December, Workshop on public participation in strategic decision-making (Aarhus Convention), Sofia

Your news and views would be very welcome

If you wish to contribute an article or news to UPDATE, please let us know – we will be as flexible as possible regarding deadlines.

The previous edition of UPDATE was translated into Russian courtesy of the NGO EcoGlobe – our thanks to them once again.

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