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**EU4Environment**  
Green Economy in Eastern Partner Countries

**Second Sub-regional Workshop on the Practical Application of Strategic  
Environmental Assessment and Transboundary Environmental Impact  
Assessment (Eastern Europe and the Caucasus)**

Virtual event, 29 June 2022

**Workshop Report**

Action implemented by:



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## 1. Background

Within the framework of the European Union-funded EU4Environment programme (2019 – 2023), the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) is assisting Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Republic of Moldova and Ukraine in comprehensive capacity-building and institution building on strategic environmental assessment (SEA) and transboundary environmental impact assessment (EIA) and in finalizing legal reforms in this area. The EU4Environment follows the European Union's EaP GREEN programme<sup>1</sup> (2013–2018) with the aim to reinforce and sustain the results achieved in the countries so far by ensuring that their newly established legislation on SEA and EIA is complemented with secondary regulations, fully aligned with the UNECE Convention on Environmental Impact Assessment in a Transboundary Context (Espoo Convention)<sup>2</sup>, its Protocol on Strategic Environmental Assessment (Protocol on SEA)<sup>3</sup>, the relevant European Union's directives and systematically applied by the countries. This assistance is also expected to improve environmental governance by enhancing transparency of decision-making, cross-sectoral cooperation, public participation and stakeholder consultation, and to promote transboundary and regional cooperation in assessing environmental impacts.<sup>4</sup>

Two sub-regional events with a focus on SEA and transboundary EIA had been planned to be organized by UNECE under EU4Environment in 2020 and 2022. The 2020 subregional workshop was built on the results, progress and lessons learnt by the countries in the development of their SEA and EIA systems in line with the Protocol on SEA, Espoo Convention, and the European Union's relevant directives – the Directive on SEA<sup>5</sup> and the Directive on EIA<sup>6</sup> (see the details at <https://unece.org/info/events/event/352709>).

As the second of the two sub-regional workshops, the event reflected the developments and achievements in terms of the countries' SEA and EIA systems since the first sub-regional workshop and provided an opportunity to discuss existing challenges related to SEA and EIA practice in the beneficiary countries.

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<sup>1</sup> See [https://www.unece.org/env/eia/about/eap\\_green.html](https://www.unece.org/env/eia/about/eap_green.html)

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.unece.org/env/eia/eia.html>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.unece.org/environmental-policy/conventions/environmental-assessment/about-us/protocol-on-sea/enveiasea-protocol/about-the-sea-protocol.html>

<sup>4</sup> More information about the EU4Environment can be found at <https://www.unece.org/environmental-policy/conventions/environmental-assessment/about-us/protocol-on-sea/eu4environment.html>

<sup>5</sup> Directive 2001/42/EC on the assessment of the effects of certain plans and programmes on the environment, <https://ec.europa.eu/environment/eia/sea-legalcontext.htm>

<sup>6</sup> Directive 2011/92/EU on the assessment of the effects of certain public and private projects on the environment, <https://ec.europa.eu/environment/eia/eia-legalcontext.htm>

## 2. Workshop objectives and design

The workshop aimed to achieve following objectives:

- facilitate information exchange and experience sharing on SEA and transboundary EIA among the beneficiary countries and with the EU/UNECE countries;
- inform the participants about EU's Global Gateway strategy;
- discuss the topics of interest / issues identified by the beneficiary countries for the workshop and provide examples of international good practices in SEA and transboundary EIA.

The workshop resulted in a better understanding by the participants of the approaches and methods to be used in SEA and transboundary EIA to effectively apply environmental assessment to specific types of plans and programmes and to analyse the likely impacts on specific environmental aspects and issues. Additionally, the workshop contributed to a more effective implementation of pilot SEA projects in the beneficiary countries where such projects have already started or are being launched.

The workshop was organized as a virtual event (through Zoom) with simultaneous interpretation (English and Russian). The event was facilitated by the team of international consultants to UNECE (Mr. Ben Cave, Dr. Thomas Fischer, Dr. Maia Gachechiladze-Bozhesku, Mr. Michal Musil and Mr. Martin Smutny) with contributions from the UNECE secretariat to the Espoo Convention and its Protocol on SEA (Ms. Tea Aulavuo, Mr. Leonid Kalashnyk and Ms. Elena Kashina).

Altogether 87 participants<sup>7</sup> from the beneficiary countries participated in the workshop (see the list of participants in Annex 1). Most of the participants represented central environmental authorities (i.e. ministries responsible for environmental issues) and other government agencies of the five beneficiary countries<sup>8</sup>. Furthermore, representatives of environmental NGOs as well as experts and consultants participated in the workshop. The participants were selected based on the nominations by the Ministries of Environment in the beneficiary countries.

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<sup>7</sup> The total number of the participants, including representatives of the EU, UNECE, international consultants and interpreters, was 98 with 62 of female participants.

<sup>8</sup> In line with the Council Conclusions of 12 October 2020 and in light of the Council Conclusions of February 2022, the EU has stopped engaging with Belarusian authorities and continues to engage with the Belarusian civil society.



*Picture 1: Workshop participants from the Environmental Assessment Department, National Environmental Agency, Georgia*

The first session provided room for the countries' presentations outlining the achievements and challenges faced when implementing EIAs and SEAs, followed by the second session dedicated to the SEA pilots.

The case example of good SEA and EIA practice from the EU countries, with a major focus on spatial planning and industrial development and EIA on sustainable infrastructure, including in the context of the European Union's Global Gateway strategy, respectively, represented a core of the third and fourth sessions, combined with theoretical background and the group discussions.

The fifth session was devoted to the issues and topics of interest identified by the beneficiary countries, which had been collected by UNECE prior to the event through a survey asking the following questions:

- What are the major developments or achievements in the area of SEA and EIA (with a focus on transboundary aspects of EIA) in your country since the first sub-regional workshop on SEA and transboundary EIA with funding from EU4Environment in October 2020?
- Please, indicate major challenges, if any, with relevance to SEA and EIA that your country has faced since October 2020.
- What are the topics of your interest in relation to SEA and transboundary EIA that you would like to learn more about at the Second Sub-regional Workshop? Please, name up to 3 topics and be as specific as possible.
- Please, indicate specific and concrete questions your country may have as regards the assessment of health and the involvement of health sector in SEA.

Based on the feedback by the countries, the following issues were selected to be addressed at the event:

- Health in Strategic Environmental Assessment
- Financial aspects of SEA and EIA
- Activities not included in Appendix I of the Espoo Convention and screening
- Effective public participation
- Accreditation for EIA and SEA
- Monitoring and post-project analysis

The agenda of the event can be found in Annex 2. An introduction and discussion of health in SEA, as one of the topics of special interest in Session 5 above, was facilitated by Dr. Thomas Fischer and Mr. Ben Cave, consultants to UNECE. The report from this session is provided in Annex 3.

Presentations from the workshop, as well as other information can be found at <https://unece.org/environmental-policy/events/second-sub-regional-workshop-practical-application-strategic>.

### 3. Summary of the discussions and outcomes

#### *Opening session:*

In his opening speech, **Mr. Nicholas Cendrowicz**, Deputy Head of Unit, Directorate-General for Neighbourhood and Enlargement Negotiations, European Commission, welcomed all participants and highlighted the EU approach to environmentally and socially sustainable investments and introduced the concept of the Global Gateway Strategy<sup>9</sup>. The principle of integrating the environmental concerns in the planning and in the projects is a cornerstone of the EU Green Deal, aiming to support smart investments while respecting the highest environmental and social standards in line with the EU democratic values and international norms and standards. This principle has been translated in the EU legislation, in particular, through the SEA and EIA Directives, where the EIA Directive represents one of the oldest EU legal acts. Since its adoption almost 35 years ago the Directive has been contributing to the integrational of the environmental consideration at the project level. Moreover, EU financing under a number of the programmes and plans must respect the climate as well as has to comply with 'do no significant harm' principle (DNSH). The Global Gateway Strategy is a benchmark for the EU investments in a sustainable way and for building more resilient connections with the world to tackle the global most oppressing challenges ranging from climate change through environmental protection to improving health security, competitiveness and global supply chains. The aim of the strategy is to mobilize 300 billion EUR for investments between 2021 and 2027 to underpin the global recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic. Besides the EU interests, the strategy's implementation will take into account the needs of the partner countries.

Mr. Cendrowicz also stressed that the implementation of the new Eastern Partnership framework had been initiated before Russia's unprecedented and unjustified invasion of Ukraine, and due to the 'new reality' after the invasion, this cooperation framework requires certain adjustments. However, the Eastern Partnership framework still remains relevant, and it is expected to play an important role in Ukraine's recovery after the war. Also, the EU's commitments under the Economic and Investment Plan for the Eastern Partnership, which aims to raise approx. 2,3 billion EUR and leverage around 17 billion EUR in the public and private funds – with around 50% to be allocated for the green investments, is important in the regional cooperation to stimulate jobs and growth, connectivity and the green and digital transition, thus directly contributing to the objectives of the Global Gateway Strategy. Speeding up a green transition has to be one of the responses to the Russian aggression in Ukraine, which has forced millions of Ukrainians to leave their homes, and due to which the world faces an energy and food crisis. Increasing Ukraine's environmental performance, reducing its energy intensity and increasing energy stability – as a part of the green transition – is going to help to build Ukraine's resilience and contribute to the country's path to the EU.

In concluding, Mr. Cendrowicz wished a successful and productive meeting.

**Ms. Tea Aulavuo**, Secretary to the Espoo Convention and its Protocol on SEA, UNECE, noted that UNECE since many years delivers a wide range of technical assistance and capacity-building activities to support the beneficiary countries in Eastern Europe and the Caucasus in aligning their national legislation with the Espoo Convention, its Protocol on SEA and the corresponding EU Directives, and in building capacities for their effective implementation and systematic application. This assistance

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<sup>9</sup> [https://ec.europa.eu/info/strategy/priorities-2019-2024/stronger-europe-world/global-gateway\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/info/strategy/priorities-2019-2024/stronger-europe-world/global-gateway_en)

continues also to support remaining accessions to these two treaties by those participants' countries which are not yet parties to the Espoo Convention and/or the Protocol on SEA. She underlined that although the countries had made significant achievements over the years, in particular in terms of the new national legislation, capacity building is a gradual process. The UNECE secretariat highly appreciates extension of the EU support (EU4Environment) until December 2023, which also allows catching up with Covid pandemic-related implementation delays. She further noted that the workshop would introduce good practice examples from other Parties to the Convention and the Protocol and would advise on the specific interests of the participants.

Ms. Aulavuo highlighted that post-COVID-19 economic recovery efforts make systematic and effective environmental assessment more necessary than ever. If environmental and health concerns are not properly addressed, the recovery will risk undermining the foundations for sustainable development and jeopardize efforts towards carbon neutral policy. The Espoo Convention, its Protocol on SEA, and the European Union's EIA and SEA Directives provide robust legal and institutional frameworks and procedures which will help countries in their work towards green recovery and they also support achieving the sustainable development goals and climate commitments.

Ms. Aulavuo went on to point out that SEA and EIA are also expected to play a key role in Ukraine's post-war recovery. In this regard, the SEA, in particular, will be essential to ensuring the sustainability of the recovery early on in planning process.

Ms. Aulavuo briefly outlined the agenda of the workshop and highlighted the topic to be addressed in session 4 i.e. the need for greening the infrastructure and related role of SEA and EIA as it related to one of the themes of the IX Environment for Europe Ministerial Conference (Nicosia, Cyprus, October 2022). Session 5, among other issues, intended to address the topic of health in SEA, which had been of interest to the beneficiary countries for many years. Therefore, the participation of health authorities representatives in the workshop was highly appreciated.

Ms. Aulavuo thanked the European Commission for its continuous support and wished all a productive meeting.

**Mr. Leonid Kalashnyk**, EU4Environment Project Manager at UNECE, thanked the beneficiary countries for providing valuable inputs to the survey regarding the topics to be addressed during the workshop.

### ***Session 1: Progress and challenges since the last sub-regional workshop: country presentations and discussion***

Each country was invited to present the major developments and achievements in SEA and EIA since the first sub-regional workshop organized with funding from the EU through the EU4Environment (October 2020) as well as identifying existing challenges and priorities for future development of SEA and EIA in that country.

**The Republic of Moldova**<sup>10</sup> informed the audience that draft amended SEA and EIA laws were being discussed in Parliament as the sub-regional workshop was taking place. The process of amending the

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<sup>10</sup> In session 1, a modification of the alphabetical order of the countries was made following a request raised by the Republic of Moldova.



laws was initiated in 2021 with the aim to fully transpose the requirements of the EU SEA and EIA Directives and the Espoo Convention and its Protocol on SEA. The State Secretary of the Ministry of Environment briefly described the main milestones in adopting the current legal frameworks for SEA and EIA, as well as mentioning the existing guidance documents for SEA and EIA designed to help implement the EIA and SEA procedures. Since the reorganisation of the government bodies in August 2021, the Ministry of Environment has been responsible for developing the national legal framework on SEA and EIA, and for coordinating the transboundary SEA and EIA procedures, and the SEA procedures at the national level. The Environmental Agency is responsible for coordinating the EIA procedures and SEA procedures at the local level.

Through the draft amended SEA and EIA laws, public participation and consultations as well as transboundary procedures had been clarified. Furthermore, ecological expertise had been excluded from the national system to be fully replaced by EIA. Discussions on the draft amended SEA and EIA laws in the respective committees of the Parliament were expected to take two weeks before the draft amended laws were to be submitted for adoption.

Draft guidelines on quality control in SEA and transboundary EIA had been developed, representing very important elements of the SEA and EIA practice. An awareness-raising workshop on the practical application of SEA was organized in April 2021, and the Romanian version of the video on SEA became available in August 2021 and was uploaded on the websites of the Ministry of Environment and the Environmental Agency. It was discussed with the Academy of Public Administration regarding developing and launching the EIA and SEA courses for the participants from central and local government authorities. A needs assessment was carried out among academic institutions regarding the possibility of integrating SEA and EIA topics in their curricula.

The following main existing challenges were mentioned:

- Limited capacities of the environmental authorities to elaborate SEA and EIA reports;
- Low capacities of government authorities to coordinate SEA and EIA procedures and to carry out quality control;
- Late initiation of SEA and EIA procedures by planning agencies and project developers, respectively;
- Short period for validation of the environmental permit;
- Lack of general awareness on SEA and EIA;
- Low quality of the SEA and EIA reports submitted for evaluation;
- Likely impacts on biodiversity often insufficiently addressed.

Future priorities include:

- Adopting recent draft amendments to the law on SEA and the law on EIA ;
- Developing relevant secondary legislation;
- Adopting guidelines on the quality control in SEA and EIA;
- Organizing a workshop on quality control in SEA and transboundary EIA;
- Preparing guidelines on biodiversity impact assessment;
- Establishing a certification system for individual SEA and EIA experts as well as for companies/consultancies;

**Armenia** noted that the national legislation on environmental assessment – following recommendations of the international experts to UNECE accomplished with EU funding through the EaP GREEN programme – was revised in 2017 – 2018 in order to introduce SEA in a more comprehensive manner compared to the existing law, to better stipulate procedural aspects regarding EIA, and to clearly distinguish between the EIA and SEA procedures. However, updated draft legislation (i.e. draft amended Law on EIA and Environmental Expertise) had not yet been adopted for various reasons including government changes. The revisions and corrections to the draft amended law on EIA and Environmental Expertise were still ongoing. Therefore, the practice still followed the old law which was still in force. State ecological expertise was carried out as a part of the environmental assessment system. Additionally, the number of SEAs was growing – a total of 108 SEAs were conducted in 2020 – 2021 (101 of which related to land-use/spatial development municipal plans, and the rest to agriculture and water management sectors). It was noted that this positive trend represented a growing demand for (the currently insufficient) capacities of the Ecological Expertise Department at the Ministry of Environment. This is the only government body responsible for coordinating SEA procedures, and there is a need for further capacity building for the government experts.

It was further remarked that transboundary consultations cannot be performed between the countries, Parties to the Espoo Convention, which do not have diplomatic relations. Although this issue had already been discussed, a solution had yet to be identified.

**Azerbaijan** presented that the Law on EIA was adopted in June 2018, followed by the adoption of several pieces of secondary legislation in 2019 – 2020 including regulations related to control under SEA and EIA; expert commission for implementing state ecological expertise; implementation of state and public ecological expertise. A draft regulation for conducting EIA, including transboundary EIA, and a draft regulation for conducting SEA had been prepared and submitted to the Cabinet of Ministers (after lengthy inter-ministerial discussion) for approval, which was expected to materialize soon. According to the legislation, the SEA has to be ensured by planning authorities, while the assessment itself is carried out by experts contracted by a planning authority. The SEA report has to be submitted to the Ministry of Ecology and Natural Resources, namely to its State Ecological Expertise Agency.

Reportedly, practical experience with SEA is growing in the country, as the SEA is legally required, and the SEA had been applied for 5 – 6 masterplans and regional reconstruction plans in the last two years. An experts database was recently established, and the Ministry of Ecology and Natural Resources started receiving applications for SEA/EIA expert related certification (which should apply to the private sectors i.e. consultants). The first exams were expected to be organized shortly. Conditions for certifying an expert include successfully passing an exam and an interview, proving his/her knowledge of the methods and approaches to be used in the SEA and EIA, and having previous experience with environmental assessment.

The challenges faced by Azerbaijan include:

- Insufficient capacities of the State Ecological Expertise Agency (there are only a few experts employed, who also need further expert-level capacity building);
- The awareness on SEA among planning authorities is very low, which is the reason for limited SEA application;

- Funding mechanism for SEA is unclear: the Law stipulates that the budget for SEA has to be specified through an agreement between a planning authority and SEA experts. However, there is no indication of approximate costs in the legislation, and therefore it is difficult for the planning authorities to allocate a necessary budget;
- The quality of the SEA reports is low, which relates to a limited awareness of the planning authorities on SEA as well as to the limited knowledge of the experts to carry out SEA.

**Georgia** informed the participants that its Environmental Assessment Code, which is in line with the EU-Georgia Association Agreement i.e. as it relates to the EU SEA and EIA Directives as well as with the Espoo Convention and its Protocol on SEA, was adopted in 2017 and entered into force in 2018. The following main achievements had been made since the last sub-regional workshop:

- Experience with SEA and EIA procedures was gained;
- EIA is applied for the sectors and types of the projects, which had not been previously stipulated in the legislation prior to the adoption of the Code, e.g. agriculture, urban planning, mining;
- SEA practice is growing, the Ministry of Environmental Protection and Agriculture has experience with screening, scoping, and issuing final SEA decisions;

Stemming from the growing practice, some amendments were made in the Environmental Assessment Code, namely adding mining activities to its Annex I, and the validity of EIA scoping opinions was extended from 2 to 3 years. The SEA and EIA public portal has been established and is in a testing mode, expected to be fully operational as of 2023.

The Environmental Assessment Department, which is responsible for coordinating the SEA and EIA procedures and for preparing the SEA and EIA decisions, was moved from the Ministry of Environmental Protection and Agriculture to the National Environmental Agency. This move is considered an institutional challenge as there is a high rate of staff fluctuation. Therefore, there is a need for further capacity building, including establishing a permanent training scheme.

A low quality of the SEA and EIA reports (e.g. missing baseline information, mitigation measures not fully elaborated), which are often sent back to an investor or to a planning authority as the reports are insufficient for elaborating the SEA and EIA decisions, represents another challenge. It is expected that the recent updates of the national SEA and EIA Guidelines, being finalized with the assistance from experts to UNECE and with EU funding through the EU4Environment programme, will help enhance the quality of the SEA and EIA reports.

**Ukraine** pointed out that the country ratified the Espoo Convention in 1999, and its Protocol on SEA in 2016. Ukraine's Association Agreement with the EU was signed in 2017 and the Cabinet of Ministers approved an action plan for its implementation in 2018. The agreement and action plan included the transposition of the EU SEA and EIA Directives into the national legal framework, which materialized through adopting the Law on EIA in 2017 and the Law on SEA in 2018, respectively. To fully implement these legal acts, the Cabinet of Ministers and the Ministry of Environmental Protection and Natural Resources adopted relevant by-laws and guidelines.

A public electronic register on EIA has been launched, and approx. 9,000 cases have been recorded in the register so far. Five transboundary EIA consultations were successfully completed, one related to the construction of power units no. 3 and no. 4 of Khmelnytskyi Nuclear Power Plant. The Ministry

of Environmental Protection and Natural Resources received more than 2,300 applications for SEA since 2017 (mainly, applications to initiate the SEA procedures from the various planning authorities, including for land-use and urban planning documents and/or their amendments, which represent approx. 80% of the applications). A decision as to whether the SEA should be carried out for a specific plan or programme belongs within the remit of a planning authority, which has to follow legal provisions.

Ukraine further noted that the current challenge is mainly posed by the aggression of the Russian Federation. Reportedly, this caused damages to the health of people and the environment, including large-scale degradation of soil, biodiversity, forests and other natural resources. It led to the humanitarian crisis and a substantial deterioration of the socio-economic situation and migration of millions of Ukrainian inhabitants. However, activities in the field of environmental protection and assessment still continued, including post-war recovery planning. This envisaged, inter alia, amending the SEA and EIA legislation regarding the timescales for the SEA and EIA procedures, modernisation of the EIA register, development of the SEA register, and other activities regarding the transparency of the SEA and EIA procedures and public participation in them.

### ***Session 2: Making SEA pilots more effective: current status of the beneficiary countries' pilots and tips for success***

The session was opened by Dr. Maia Gachechiladze-Bozhesku by an introductory presentation outlining main pre-conditions for a successful SEA pilot. References were made to the *UNECE Resource Manual to Support Application of the Protocol on Strategic Environmental Assessment* (2012)<sup>11</sup> and to the *Application of the Protocol on Strategic Environmental Assessment: Manual for Trainers* (2018)<sup>12</sup>, as well as to the IAIA's *Strategic Environmental Assessment: Performance Criteria* (2002)<sup>13</sup> as the key sources of details regarding effective application of SEA. Following main preconditions for a successful SEA pilot were mentioned:

- The SEA pilot is initiated jointly with a body responsible for developing a plan or a programme that is subject to SEA;
- A plan or a programme that is subject to the SEA pilot should be in an early stage of development;
- Key SEA stages as defined by the SEA Protocol and national legislation should be completed;
- The SEA pilot should be integrated in the strategic planning process and adapted to the process logic;
- The pilot SEA:
  - Is focused on key environmental and health issues;
  - Assesses a reasonable set of alternatives;
  - Employs suitable methods.

It was also explained that any pilot SEA is primarily a capacity-building and awareness-raising process for all participants involved.

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<sup>11</sup> <https://unece.org/resource-manual-sea>

<sup>12</sup> <https://unece.org/info/Environment-Policy/Environmental-assessment/pub/21624>

<sup>13</sup> <https://iaia.org/uploads/pdf/sp1.pdf>

The introductory presentation was followed by brief interventions by the countries on the status of the pilot SEA and further planning.

**Armenia** explained that the SEA pilot is being carried out for a micro-regional spatial development plan covering a province (Gegharkunik-2) where Lake Sevan is located, which elaborates all possible economic activities. The Urban Development Committee of Armenia coordinates the preparation of the plan, other relevant government agencies and bodies are involved. The agriculture sector is developed in that province and it is also an area attractive for tourists. The lake is therefore prone to eutrophication as a result of the nutrients coming from the various pollution sources. Thus, a protection of the entire basin is essential to protecting the lake. Currently, data collection is ongoing to map out the current situation in the area. The SEA will evaluate the likely impacts of the draft plan on the environment including in regards of Lake Sevan. The Ministry intends to carry out the SEA pilot in parallel with development of Gegharkunik-2 and to organize public participation in accordance with the national legislation.

**Azerbaijan** mentioned that – similarly to the other countries – the SEA for urban planning documents represents the most frequent SEA application in Azerbaijan. It was further noted that the Ministry of Ecology and Natural Resources had already informed the State Committee for Urban Planning and Architecture (SCUPA) that the SEA pilot was to be carried out for an urban planning document. Discussions about an urban planning document to be selected for SEA pilot started already in early 2021. Finally, in late spring 2022, it was agreed that the SEA pilot would be conducted for a draft master plan of Ganja City, the country's second largest city with extensive economic development. The preparation of the draft master plan is in progress, and the SEA should be launched soon to follow further planning steps. The international experience with SEA application should be utilized in the SEA pilot as Azerbaijan's national experience in this area is still very limited.

**Georgia** decided – upon consultations with the Ministry of Infrastructure and Regional Development – that the SEA pilot would be carried out for Gurjaani Municipality Spatial Plan. The application of SEA to urban planning documents is the most frequent in Georgia. A kick-off meeting for the SEA pilot and a training on SEA for national experts were organized in March 2022 to which representatives of the National Environmental Agency, Gurjaani Municipality, Ministry of Infrastructure and Regional Development, and health authorities were invited. As of the time of the workshop, the Ministry of Infrastructure and Regional Development was in the process of selecting a consultancy company to prepare the concept and draft of the spatial plan.

**The Republic of Moldova** noted that consultations with major stakeholders including the Ministry of Economy were conducted regarding the selection of a draft plan/programme for the SEA pilot.

A programme on industries development has been preselected for the pilot SEA. Industrial development is very important for Moldova's economy as a part of its post-COVID-19 economic recovery. The programme is expected to outline mid-term development (3-5 years) and should be in line with the National Development Strategy of Moldova 2030 elaborating, inter alia, the development of industrial parks and economic zones, as well as addressing the greening of SMEs.

The programme exists as an early draft concept, which seems to be the right time to start with SEA activities. UNECE recently shared draft ToRs for the SEA experts for the pilot. Further steps with regard to the pilot are expected in summer 2022.

The Ministry of Environment is currently developing the Environmental Strategy 2030 including a section on the green economy and industry. Further to that, a preparation of a new programme on green economy is expected to start soon with the support by other implementing partners under the EU4Environment programme.

The SEA pilot should contribute to greening the country's industrial development, and a wide participatory approach should be followed in order to make the SEA pilot a showcase for further awareness raising on SEA in the Republic of Moldova.

**Ukraine<sup>14</sup>** planned to carry out the pilot SEA for the draft Hydrogen Strategy. This decision was based on consultations with the Ministry of Environment and the Ministry of Energy in the end of 2021. The process of the strategy development started in early 2022. However, the war affected its further progress. As of the time of the workshop, the UNECE was holding consultations with Ukraine on how to proceed with the SEA of the draft strategy. In early 2021, with its own funding, UNECE provided technical assistance to Ukraine through the SEA scoping exercise for the draft Hydrogen Roadmap the Ministry of Energy developed. It was considered as an analytical document short of formal requirements for SEA providing a basis for the hydrogen development planning (i.e. the Strategy). The SEA scoping report was prepared for the draft Roadmap and an online workshop was organized to present both the draft Roadmap and the draft Scoping Report. Thus, the SEA pilot was well placed to utilize the data, information and the conclusions from that previous scoping exercise should Ukraine reconfirm the applicability of the SEA for the draft Hydrogen Strategy.

### ***Session 3: EU experience of SEA in spatial planning and industrial development***

Mr. Michal Musil opened his presentation by explaining the specifics of SEA for spatial/land-use plans providing that:

- Spatial planning often has a rigorous formal process, therefore SEA process must conform without compromising its standards (e.g. public consultations);
- Extensive environmental analyses are often conducted already as a part of the planning (i.e. SEA follows up and verifies its accuracy);
- SEA relies on spatial analysis (in contrast with SEAs for sectoral plans/policies);
- Comparison of spatial alternatives is essential;
- Focus of SEA has to be on defining conditions for acceptable land-use for different designated land categories and areas;
- Updates of existing plans are frequently investor-driven, thus there may be information available on the specific projects;
- SEA can efficiently identify limits for location of new projects and so will prevent future problematic EIAs.

Although relatively extensive environmental analyses are often performed within the spatial planning process, still certain environmental issues without a clear spatial dimension tend to be neglected, as the spatial planning usually takes into account only formal spatial limits (regulations). Also,

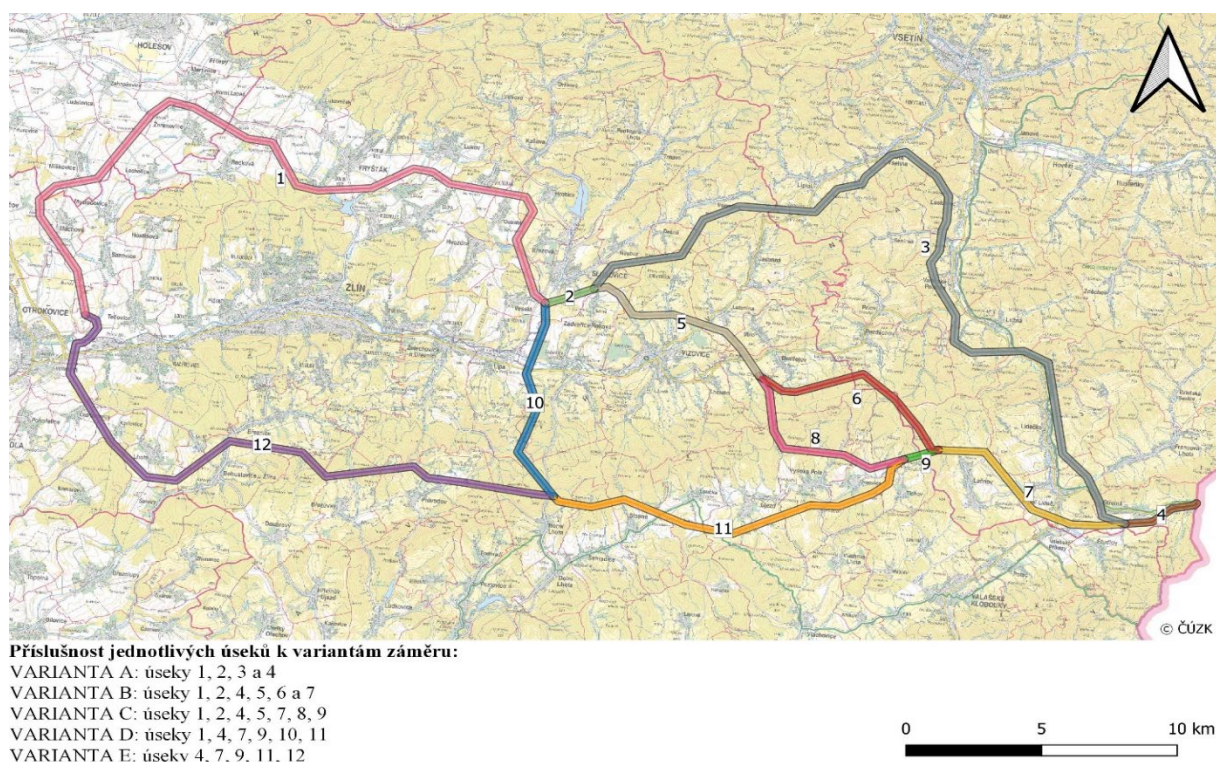
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<sup>14</sup> The situation regarding the SEA pilot in Ukraine was presented by Mr. Leonid Kalashnyk, EU4Environment Project Manager, UNECE, based on the request of Ukraine.

environmental data are often outdated/not reflecting reality (e.g. where the biodiversity hot-spots really are) and the specific expertise within the team preparing the spatial plan may not be available. These challenges should be reflected in SEA, so that as a result, the spatial plans can properly consider environmental and health issues.

It was further noted that the SEA for spatial plans should address cumulative effects, which typically include land uptake, multiple pollution sources or fragmentation of biotopes. Furthermore, an importance of climate change-related issues, in particular adaptation to the climate change, was underlined.

An example of the SEA for the Spatial Plan of Zlínský region (Czech Republic) and the study of alternatives for the 400kV power line was provided to illustrate the analysis and comparison of the spatial options.



*Picture 2: Alternatives of the proposed 400kV power line*

The next case of the SEA of the Operational Program Just Transition of the Czech Republic presented an approach to the assessment of the industrial planning as the Operational Program elaborated a number of specific industrial priorities including developing new, green and innovative industries such as:

- Local renewable energy sources and related infrastructure
- Development of lithium-based value chain
- Hydrogen infrastructure
- Digital infrastructure

The SEA applied a two-tier approach i.e. examination of the proposed policy measures and then specific investments, and facilitated the discussion of environmental costs and benefits, when e.g. proposed lithium mining would result in the significant adverse local direct impacts, while potential

upstream benefits can be expected (use of lithium for the solar panels production and thus supporting renewable energy). In order to enhance likely positive effects, the SEA generated policy recommendation to focus on the whole value chain (to maximize economic benefits for a 'fixed' environmental cost) and to coordinate lithium mining with a batteries producing factory (to be located in the Czech Republic).

#### ***Session 4: Linkages between SEA for spatial plans and subsequent EIA for related investments with a focus on sustainable infrastructure***

The presentation of Mr. Martin Smutny was introduced by reiterating the specifics of SEA for the spatial plans and explaining a risk of overlaps and duplications with EIAs to be carried out for the specific projects. Although some environmental assessment systems enable joint process (e.g. that in the Netherlands), there is a need to carry out both SEA and EIA in many countries and the EIA usually cannot be initiated before the change of the spatial plan is approved (including the SEA for its changes, if required). Therefore, both substance-related and procedural aspects have to be considered in the design of SEA and EIA to ensure that both processes are effective and with minimum duplications. The SEA for the spatial plan and its updates should:

- Include certain detailed analyses to ensure the significant negative impacts of the specific project can be avoided or mitigated;
- Initiate field surveys to be continued until EIA;
- Suggest which dedicated analyses should be carried out in EIA;
- Analyse and compare alternative locations and recommend location(s) without significant impacts;
- Indicate potential disagreement of the local community with the proposed project and thus create room for discussions on compensations etc.

Following the introduction, two case examples were presented – environmental assessment of the renewable energy projects: wind power installation (Kobyla nad Vidnavkou, Czech Republic) and solar installation (Vitkov, Czech Republic). Both examples described what types of environmental and health analyses can be performed in the SEA for the updates of the spatial plans to accommodate renewable energy projects, and how SEA can support effective application of EIA which is required for both projects – the fact that the main impacts were consulted and mitigated in SEA can be considered as the key benefit.



After the presentation, Dr. Thomas Fisher pointed out that generally, the best practice would be to clearly allocate the tasks for the SEA and for the EIA, so that duplications can be avoided.

As mentioned above, a total of six topics were identified based on the feedback provided by the countries in the survey. Each topic was introduced by a dedicated presentation followed by the QA session.

- **Health in Strategic Environmental Assessment** (see Annex 3 for a dedicated report)
- **Financial aspects of SEA and EIA:** It was presented that both SEA and EIA require two types of finances i.e. (i) finances needed to keep the entire national system operational (salaries of relevant government officials, costs needed for SEA/EIA databases, preparing methodologies, organizing consultations, etc.), and (ii) budgets to carry out individual SEA and EIA. Sources for individual SEAs and EIAs obviously differ (public funds, private funds, international financial institutions, and donors). Although there is no precise methodology on how to calculate the costs, it is case-specific, certain principles can be applied when estimating the costs of individual SEA or EIA. Main aspects to consider when estimating costs of SEA and EIA include:

- Complexity of the plan, programme or project
- Sensitivity of the environment/population in the likely affected area
- Length of the planning process/preparation of the project design
- Key environmental and health issues to be likely affected
- Studies, analyses, surveys to be carried out
- Consultations to be organized

The costs estimate can be based on a number of working days needed for:

- Studies, analyses, surveys to be carried out
  - Preparation of the screening, scoping, SEA/EIA reports
  - Organizing consultations
  - Coordination and management of SEA and EIA processes (communication with the client, coordination of the experts, etc.)
  - Other costs: travel (surveys, local consultations), room rental (public meetings), lab analyses (e.g. soil and water quality), field measurement (actual noise levels, air quality), printing, translation etc.
- **Activities not included in Appendix I of the Espoo Convention and screening:** The presentation described possible screening options for the projects not listed in Appendix I of the Espoo Convention i.e. setting statutory thresholds and criteria (with the example of the Czech EIA law stipulating the screening and scoping for the projects below threshold criteria, if located in a protected area), or case-by-case basis consideration by the competent authority. Reference was also made to the UK EIA Guidelines, which provide that *‘However, it should not be presumed that developments above the indicative thresholds should always be subject to assessment, or those falling below these thresholds could never give rise to significant effects, especially where the development is in an environmentally sensitive location. Each development will need to be considered on its merits.’* It was further mentioned that the EIA-related requirements in the case of modifying the operational conditions after the issuance of Environmental Decision depend on national permitting procedures. In some countries, a compliance check is required before final permit is awarded to address potential changes in the project design materializing since the EIA process conclusions.
  - **Effective public participation:** The information sources regarding the principles, techniques and recommendations for effective public participation as well as the documents outlining the alternative methods for public participation, information disclosure & engagement applied during the Covid-19 pandemic were provided at the beginning of the presentation. The question on the validity of the public hearing was elaborated explaining that there are no strict regulations on this matter in most of the countries (however, often looser requirements are given on public hearings in SEA, while stricter for those in EIA). It is generally accepted that completing the minimum legal requirements on public disclosure, notifications, and consultations will provide the public with the required opportunities to participate and influence. Examples of legal requirements from Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan were shared, explaining that each option has its pros and cons. It was pointed out in the ensuing discussion that another aspect which matters in the EIA is the proportion of the likely

affected people and other stakeholders participating in a public hearing, when in some cases the meeting can be ‘hijacked’ by person(s) which will not be affected by the project.

- **Accreditation for EIA and SEA:** It was underlined that the primary purpose of SEA/EIA accreditation is to ensure good SEA and EIA practice. However, many countries with a good SEA/EIA practice do not have any accreditation/licensing system, while the SEA/EIA practice in the countries with accreditation/licensing systems (for individuals – e.g. Czech Republic, Slovakia, or companies – e.g. Croatia) cannot be considered as better compared to the countries without such systems. It was also noted that Poland cancelled such system as the costs outweighed likely benefits. The examples of approaches to the quality control in SEA and EIA across the EU countries were given, with the conclusion suggesting that the practice indicates that simple and ‘easy’ procedures are more flexible and facilitate adjustments of SEA/EIA process depending on the context (e.g. the Netherlands). At the same time more demanding quality control procedures (e.g. the Czech Republic or Croatia) tend to focus attention on procedural aspects instead of substantive purposes. Furthermore, a national political climate and the willingness of planning agencies/project developers to integrate SEA/EIA outcomes have a more significant effect on the practice than complex quality control systems, as the quality control should be seen as a mechanism to support consideration of the SEA/EIA conclusions in decision-making. It was pointed out that in principle, there is no need to evaluate the quality of experts/companies. It is the quality of the outputs (SEA/EIA reports, effectivity of consultations, consideration of SEA/EIA recommendations in the decision-making, etc.) that matters, while the SEA/EIA accreditation by itself cannot just ensure good SEA/EIA practice.
- **Monitoring and post-project analysis:** The presentation started with outlining the post-assessment activities (environmental assessment follow-up) and requirements on the monitoring in SEA and the post-project analysis in EIA, including in a transboundary context, as stipulated by the Espoo Convention, Protocol on SEA and the EU SEA and EIA Directives. The key tasks and activities include:
  - Monitor the delivery of the environmental conditions set out in the authorization/approval of the activity
  - Review the environmental implications of any changes that are required;
  - Monitor the actual effects of project activities on the environment and the community;
  - Verify compliance with regulatory requirements and applicable standards or criteria;
  - Take action to reduce or rectify any unanticipated adverse impacts;
  - Adjust the monitoring plan, project specifications and related schedules as necessary;
  - Evaluate the effectiveness of the mitigation measures; and
  - Verify past predictions to provide feedback to improve EIA/SEA practice in a transboundary context in the future.

The case examples of the post-project analysis were of the Lubrza Wind Farm in Poland and SEA monitoring for the Midlands Waste Management Plans.

***Session 5: Summary of the event, next steps and closing remarks***

Mr. Leonid Kalashnyk, UNECE informed the participants that all presentations of the workshop - in English and Russian – were made available on an event webpage of the UNECE website. He further pointed out that the workshop facilitated better information exchange on SEA and EIA between the beneficiary countries and provided examples of good practice, mainly from the EU countries. The participants took note of the EU presentation on the Global Gateway strategy. Furthermore, the event provided an opportunity to share the updates on the pilot SEAs in the beneficiary countries as the most important capacity-building activity related to SEA. It helped discuss recommendations for effective implementation of the SEA pilots, including case examples presented on the SEA application for the spatial plans. Mr. Kalashnyk referred to the importance of addressing health in SEA identified as an important issue of special interest to the beneficiary countries and discussed in Session 5.

It is further expected that the workshop together with follow-up national activities will support the efforts of the countries, which are not yet the parties to the Espoo Convention and/or its Protocol on SEA, to accede to the treaties. He noted that if the situation allows, UNECE will consider the possibility of organizing another sub-regional event would be considered in 2023, and the beneficiary countries would then be informed accordingly. In concluding, Mr. Kalashnyk thanked the EU for its continued support through the EU4Environment programme, along with the words of gratitude to all the consultants to UNECE for facilitating the event, to interpreters for their work, and to all participants for their active engagement throughout the workshop.

Ms. Tea Aulavuo thanked all the participants underlining a tailor-made agenda of the workshop reflecting the topics and aspects raised by the countries. She mentioned the high quality of the presentations by the consultants facilitating the event. She further emphasized the importance of the SEA pilots, as a flagship capacity-building activity under the EU4Environment programme. She invited the beneficiary countries to take full advantage of the SEA pilots using the tips and tricks presented during the workshop (e.g. launching the SEA together with the plan or programme preparation, involving a wide range of stakeholders, and disseminating the results as part of awareness-raising activities).

## **5. Evaluation**

The electronic questionnaire was circulated to the participants the day after the workshop. The participants were asked to evaluate (on a five-point scale) six aspects below as to give a mark. The evaluation results were as follows:

- Format of the workshop: 4.47
- Timing of the workshop: 4.59
- Performance of the experts facilitating and presenting in the workshop: 4.71
- Quality of presentations: 4.71
- Quality of discussions: 4.41
- General organization: 4.82
- Global mark: 4.62

## 6. Conclusions

Discussed in several workshop sessions along with recommendations for maximising their effectiveness, the SEA pilot projects – relating to spatial planning, renewable energy and industrial development – represent a key element of capacity-building by UNECE with EU funding through the EU4Environment with a view to supporting the beneficiary countries in Eastern Europe and the Caucasus in the hands-on application of SEA and demonstrating benefits of SEA in different sectors.

The event contributed towards introducing the Economic and Investment Plan (EIP) for the Eastern Partnership and the “Global Gateway”, a new European strategy to boost smart, clean and secure links in digital, energy and transport sectors and to strengthen health, education and research systems across the world.

Throughout the workshop, a specific emphasis was on addressing the topics of special interest in EIA and SEA identified by the countries prior the event, including health in SEA. The lessons learned through the previous sub-regional event, which was organized as a virtual meeting in October 2020, were reflected in the current workshop design: particularly the presentations were made shorter and room for questions and answers was more frequently provided.

Considering the feedback of the participants during the event along with the results of the evaluation, the workshop can be considered as successfully implemented and having contributed to further development of the SEA and EIA systems in the beneficiary countries.

## Annex 1: List of participants

### Second Subregional Workshop on the Practical Application of Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) and Transboundary Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA)

29 June 2022

#### LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

Total number of participants: 98

Female participants: 62

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## Annex 2: Workshop agenda

### Second Subregional Workshop on the Practical Application of Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) and Transboundary Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA)

29 June 2022

#### AGENDA

Time (CET)	Item
07:50 – 08:00	Connection testing (10 min)
08:00 – 08:10	<b>Opening</b>  <i>Mr. Nicholas Cendrowicz, Deputy Head of Unit, Directorate-General for Neighbourhood and Enlargement Negotiations, European Commission</i>  <i>Ms. Tea Aulavuo, Secretary to the Espoo Convention and its Protocol on SEA, UNECE</i>
08:10 – 09:45	<b>Session 1: Taking stock of progress and challenges</b> <i>15 min per country (10 min for presentation and 5 min for Q&amp;A) and concluding discussion (15 min)</i>  <i>Facilitated by Ms. Maia Gachechiladze-Bozhesku and Mr. Martin Smutny, consultants to UNECE, and Mr. Leonid Kalashnyk, EU4Environment Project Manager at UNECE</i>
09:45 – 10:00	<b>Break</b>
10:00 – 10:45	<b>Session 2: Making pilot SEAs more effective</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Introductory presentation on main pre-conditions for a successful SEA (Ms. Maia Gachechiladze-Bozhesku, 10 min)</i></li> <li>• <i>Brief interventions by the countries on the status of the pilot SEA and further planning and Q&amp;A (5 – 10 min per country)</i></li> </ul> <i>Facilitated by Ms. Maia Gachechiladze-Bozhesku, Mr. Martin Smutny and Mr. Michal Musil, consultants to UNECE</i>
10:45 – 11:15	<b>Session 3: EU experience of SEA in spatial planning and industrial development</b> <i>Presentation by Mr. Michal Musil, consultant to UNECE, and Q&amp;A</i>
11:15 – 12:00	<b>Session 4: Linkages between SEA for spatial plans and subsequent EIA for related investments with a focus on sustainable infrastructure, including in the context of Global Gateway strategy</b>  <i>Presentation by Mr. Martin Smutny, consultant to UNECE, and Q&amp;A</i>
12:00 – 12:30	<b>Break</b>
12:30 – 14:30	<b>Session 5: Topics of special interest in SEA and EIA identified by the countries</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Health in Strategic Environmental Assessment</i></li> </ul> <i>Presentation by Dr. Thomas Fischer and Mr. Ben Cave, consultants to UNECE, and Q&amp;A</i>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Financial aspects of SEA and EIA</i></li> <li>• <i>Activities not included in Appendix I of the Espoo Convention and screening</i></li> <li>• <i>Effective public participation</i></li> <li>• <i>Accreditation for EIA and SEA</i></li> <li>• <i>Monitoring and post-project analysis</i></li> </ul> <p><i>Facilitated by Mr. Martin Smutny, Ms. Maia Gachechiladze-Bozhesku and Mr. Michal Musil, consultants to UNECE</i></p>
<b>14:30 – 15:00</b>	<p><b>Session 6: Summary of the event, next steps and closing remarks</b></p> <p><i>Mr. Leonid Kalashnyk, UNECE</i></p>

## **Annex 3: Report from Session 5 on Health in SEA**

### **Second Subregional Workshop on the Practical Application of Strategic Environmental Assessment and Transboundary Environmental Impact Assessment**

#### **Session 5: Topics of special interest in SEA and EIA identified by the countries**

##### **- Health in Strategic Environmental Assessment**

Report annex prepared by Thomas B Fischer and Ben Cave

Five countries in Eastern Europe and the Caucasus (Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, the Republic of Moldova and Ukraine) have been beneficiaries of the Subregional Workshop organized by UNECE with the funding from the EU through the EU4Environment Programme and have participated in the discussion of health in strategic environmental assessment in Session 5 of the workshop.

#### **I. Introduction**

Health in strategic environmental assessment was identified as one of the topics of special interest by countries in Eastern Europe and the Caucasus, the beneficiaries of the subregional workshop organized by UNECE with the funding from the EU through the EU4Environment.

The session, dedicated to this topic, opened with a presentation from two consultants to UNECE, Thomas B Fischer and Ben Cave. It set out how the UNECE Protocol on Strategic Environmental Assessment (the Protocol) to the Convention on Environmental Impact Assessment in a Transboundary Context (Espoo Convention) referred to human health and ways in which this can be met through strategic environmental assessment.

The presentation also described case studies of human health being addressed in strategic environmental assessment and environmental impact assessment. These case studies were taken from a 2022 report prepared for the World Health Organization (WHO).<sup>15</sup>

The second half of the session addressed specific questions on the topic that the beneficiary countries had posed via the UNECE secretariat to the Espoo Convention and its Protocol on SEA, in advance of the workshop. These questions were covered in the presentation and then further discussed in more detail during the session.

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<sup>15</sup> World Health Organization Regional Office for Europe 2022. Learning from practice. Case studies of health in strategic environmental assessment and environmental impact assessment across the European Region of the World Health Organization. Available at: <https://apps.who.int/iris/handle/10665/353810>

The questions, responses from the presenters and any resulting discussions are subsequently provided in section V below. The presentation by the two consultants is available at the UNECE website,<sup>16</sup> together with the other presentations made at the workshop.

## **II. Human health in the Protocol on Strategic Environmental Assessment**

The Protocol to the Espoo Convention refers throughout to human health.

According to its article 1, the objective of the Protocol is to provide for a high level of protection of the environment, including health, by:

- a. Ensuring that environmental, including health, considerations are thoroughly taken into account in the development of plans and programmes;
- b. Contributing to the consideration of environmental, including health, concerns in the preparation of policies and legislation;
- c. Establishing clear, transparent and effective procedures for strategic environmental assessment;
- d. Providing for public participation in strategic environmental assessment;
- e. Integrating by these means environmental, including health, concerns into measures and instruments designed to further sustainable development.

There are two principal sources of guidance for the consideration of human health under the Protocol. These are Annex A1.1 of the 2012 Resource Manual<sup>17</sup> and guidance developed by consultants, in 2020, in consultation with ECE, the World Health Organization (WHO) and the European Investment Bank (EIB), with funding from EIB.<sup>18</sup> This is currently at draft stage and is expected to be finalized for consideration of the Meeting of the Parties to the Protocol in 2023.

## **III. Good practice recommendations**

Good practice recommendations for human health in strategic environmental assessment that are suggested below draw from a broader range of sources, including documents and definitions of the World Health Organization. They are not legally binding for Parties to the Protocol nor endorsed by the Meeting of the Parties to the Protocol, but describe, and promote, the effective and proportionate assessment of health by environment and health authorities in strategic environmental assessment. The good practice recommendations can be summarised as follows:

- Consider using the World Health Organization definition of health, as appropriate, on a voluntary basis;
- Aim at a good health alignment between environmental topics and human health;
- Consider bio-physical environmental and, as appropriate, associated economic and community / social determinants of health;

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<sup>16</sup> <https://unece.org/info/Environmental-Policy/Environmental-Impact-Assessment/events/367411>

<sup>17</sup> United Nations publication, ECE/MP.EIA/17, available at [www.unece.org/fileadmin/DAM/env/documents/2011/eia/ece.mp.eia.17.e.pdf](http://www.unece.org/fileadmin/DAM/env/documents/2011/eia/ece.mp.eia.17.e.pdf).

<sup>18</sup> Draft guidance on assessing health impacts in strategic environmental assessment. Geneva: United Nations Economic Commission for Europe. 2020. [https://www.unece.org/fileadmin/DAM/env/eia/documents/WG.9\\_2020/Final\\_documents/2004508E.pdf](https://www.unece.org/fileadmin/DAM/env/eia/documents/WG.9_2020/Final_documents/2004508E.pdf).



- Use assessment questions based on health objectives;
- Be clear about trade-offs between environmental topics and human health; and
- Build public health capacity and inter-sectoral working for human health in strategic environmental assessment.

According to its article 1, the objective of the Protocol is to provide for *a high level of protection of the environment, including health*.

Public health has different components. These are health protection, health promotion, disease prevention and health services.

- **Health protection** consists of policies and activities based on legislative or other means designed to promote healthier environments, within which healthy choices are easier to make.<sup>19</sup>

Surveillance systems for population health and well-being typically cover communicable diseases, environmental hazards and basic demographic and health status data. Health protection makes use of this intelligence to develop services that protect health from communicable diseases and environmental risks and hazards. In 2012, WHO Europe called for the surveillance of inequalities, the wider determinants of health and health promotion to be strengthened.<sup>20</sup>

- **Health promotion** is the process of enabling people to increase control over, and to improve, their health.<sup>21</sup>

It focusses on population health and well-being by addressing inequalities and social and environmental determinants.

- **Disease prevention** covers measures to prevent the occurrence of disease, such as risk factor reduction, and to arrest its progress and reduce its consequences once established. There are three levels of prevention: primary - improving the overall health of the population; secondary - improving early detection of illness; and tertiary - improving treatment and recovery. Each has an important role to play. Upstream approaches, e.g. primary prevention, tend to be cheaper and more efficient, and entail lower morbidity and mortality rates.
- **Health services** include health promotion, disease prevention and diagnostic, treatment and care services.

These aspects can theoretically be addressed in isolation, but it is apparent that there is a great deal of interdependence.

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<sup>19</sup> Foldspang A, Birt et al. ASPHER's European List of Core Competences for the Public Health Professional. 5th Edition (preliminary). Brussels, Belgium: Association of Schools of Public Health in the European Region (ASPHER). 2018. [www.aspher.org/download/199/04-06-2018\\_aspher\\_s\\_european\\_list\\_of\\_core\\_competences\\_for\\_the\\_public\\_health\\_professional.pdf](http://www.aspher.org/download/199/04-06-2018_aspher_s_european_list_of_core_competences_for_the_public_health_professional.pdf)

<sup>20</sup> World Health Organization Regional Office for Europe. Review of public health capacities and services in the European Region. Copenhagen. 2012. [https://www.euro.who.int/\\_\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0010/172729/Review-of-public-health-capacities-and-services-in-the-European-Region.pdf](https://www.euro.who.int/__data/assets/pdf_file/0010/172729/Review-of-public-health-capacities-and-services-in-the-European-Region.pdf)

<sup>21</sup> World Health Organization. Ottawa Charter for Health Promotion. 1986. [www.who.int/healthpromotion/conferences/previous/ottawa/en/](http://www.who.int/healthpromotion/conferences/previous/ottawa/en/)

For these, and other, concepts relevant to human health and environmental assessment please see the reference paper prepared by the International Association for Impact Assessment and the European Public Health Association.<sup>22</sup>

With regards to, environment, including health, the Protocol's art.7 and annex IV require the inclusion into the environmental report of the relevant:

- baseline and its likely evolution;
- characteristics, problems and objectives;
- measures to prevent, reduce or mitigate any significant adverse effects;
- monitoring measures; and
- likely significant transboundary effects.

The human health baseline can typically be developed using existing data. Identifying the characteristics, problems and objectives from a human health perspective will assist in deciding whether there are likely significant effects. If there are likely significant effects, then it is appropriate to develop measures to prevent, reduce or mitigate the adverse effects and also to monitor these measures. The same logic applies to likely significant transboundary effects.

There are a number of questions that guide the consideration of health. These aim at identifying the option that is best in the long-term, and that is without short-term detriment, in terms of:

- Creating (bio-physical) environmental conditions that support good health in people
- Supporting people to lead healthy lifestyles
- Narrowing health inequalities
- Creating safe and cohesive communities
- Increasing socio-economic conditions for good health
- Enabling people to access good quality health care

Article 11 (2) of the Protocol requires that, when reaching a decision on a plan or programme, a statement be provided, summarizing how environmental, including health, considerations have been taken into account, including the consultation responses from environmental and health authorities and the public.

Public participation (art. 8) should be early, timely and effective. Furthermore, consultation should take place with environmental and health authorities (art. 9) regarding (as appropriate):

- Health protection, health promotion, disease prevention and health services
- Health information systems
- Social participation and health communication
- Preparedness for public health emergencies
- Governance

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<sup>22</sup> Human health: ensuring a high level of protection. A reference paper on addressing Human Health in Environmental Impact Assessment as per EU Directive 2011/92/EU amended by 2014/52/EU. Fargo: International Association for Impact Assessment and European Public Health Association. 2020. <https://www.iaia.org/reference-and-guidance-documents.php>. Executive summary available in Slovakian and Spanish at <https://www.iaia.org/translated-documents.php>

- Research.

#### IV. Current practice

In 2020, the World Health Organization Regional Office for Europe conducted a review of the way in which health is currently considered in both, SEA and EIA.<sup>15</sup>

This systematically conducted review looked at 333 SEA and EIA cases in the WHO European Region. It shows that about 20% of assessments go beyond a narrow, biophysical interpretation of health. Around half of those consider wider determinants when defining health, and another half consider wider determinants of health in the assessment.

During the workshop two examples from this review were presented:

- (a) Strategic Environmental Assessment of Põlva municipality master plan in Estonia – 2017
- (b) Environmental Impact Assessment of E60 Highway in Georgia – 2019

#### A. Strategic Environmental Assessment of Põlva municipality master plan – 2017 (Estonia)

Table 1. SEA Estonia case study summary

<b>Title of assessment</b>	Strategic Environmental Assessment of Põlva municipality master plan
<b>Country/region</b>	Estonia
<b>Administrative level</b>	Municipal
<b>Assessment level</b>	Plan
<b>Sector</b>	Urban development
<b>Assessment done by</b>	A private sector consultancy
<b>Main health determinants discussed</b>	Radon, air quality, noise, climate change, walking and cycling, social aspects of the green network, recreation and healthy lifestyles
<b>Signatory to Protocol on SEA</b>	21 May 2003
<b>Ratification of Protocol on SEA</b>	12 April 2010
<b>EU ratification of Protocol on SEA</b>	12 November 2008
<b>Protocol on SEA in force</b>	11 July 2010
<b>EU SEA Directive implementation</b>	21 July 2004

This is a case study of a local spatial-plan SEA for the municipality of Põlva in south-eastern Estonia, published in 2017. Põlva municipality is located in the central part of Põlva county. At the time of the assessment Põlva municipality had a population of around 9,400 in an area of 234 km<sup>2</sup>; since the assessment there have been municipality mergers. The SEA process was started in 2015, one year after the municipal plan process had been initiated. The underlying master plan was prepared on the basis of previously prepared national, county and local

planning documents. The SEA was prepared by a consultancy and supervised by the Southern Region of the Environmental Board.

Human health is covered in a dedicated section on “human health and property”. This has subsections on “radon risk”, “companies with potentially hazardous activities”, “impacts of industrial activities and heating on air quality”, “impact of traffic on air quality”, “impact of industrial activities on noise”, “road noise”, “noise in future planning” and “impact of climate change”.

The headings imply a biophysical focus but behavioural elements and well-being are covered too, in particular in the traffic-related sections, where a desire to reduce car traffic is associated with alternatives that support healthy lifestyles (walking and cycling).

Furthermore, the section on climate change establishes an associated potential increase in problems with population health.

Human health is also mentioned when indirect effects are discussed, such as with regards to the planning of recreational areas that promote outdoor activities. In this context, when referring to the Põlva County Plan 2030, it is also stated that “the [further] development of a green network in the vicinity of urban settlements as recreational areas requires [the consideration of] ecological aspects, but also [needs to] take into account the social aspects of the green network and create [associated] opportunities (e.g. health trails taking into account the needs of different population groups)”. The Health Board Authority is listed as one of the interested parties of the master plan. Views from that authority were actively sought during the SEA process.

The SEA comes with a number of recommendations for future development applications (marked as “mitigation measures”). Most of these are directly relevant for health – for example, noise and emissions and the green network, and associated with that recreation and healthy lifestyles.

## **B. Environmental Impact Assessment of E60 Highway – 2019 (Georgia)**

Table 2. EIA Georgia case study summary

<b>Title of assessment</b>	E60 Highway
<b>Country/region</b>	Georgia
<b>Administrative level</b>	Municipal
<b>Assessment level</b>	Project
<b>Sector</b>	Transport
<b>Assessment done by</b>	A private sector consultancy
<b>Main health determinants discussed</b>	Air quality, noise, occupational health and safety, worker–community interactions, in-migration, lifestyles and behaviours, health-care resources, community severance, road safety, emergency response times and economic benefits
<b>EU EIA Directive implementation</b>	Not applicable because Georgia is not an EU member state. EIA is required by Georgia’s Environmental Assessment Code (aligned with the EU EIA and SEA Directives, UNECE Protocol on

	SEA and the Espoo Convention) as well as the Safeguard Policy Statement of the Asian Development Bank (ADB).
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This EIA from October 2019 concerns construction of a 14.7 km section of the E-60 highway located in Imereti region, central Georgia. The assessment was financed by the ADB.

Georgia's East–West Highway is an integral part of one of the corridors connecting central Asia with Europe and east Asia. The project is to address one of the bottle-neck sections of this highway.

The EIA was prepared by consultants for the Roads Department of the Ministry of Regional Development and Infrastructure of Georgia (MRDI) and for the ADB.

The EIA was intended to inform the Roads Department in relation to ensuring compliance with Georgian legislation and with the environmental and social requirements of the ADB.

The requirement for the EIA arises from Georgia's Environmental Assessment Code (2017) and the lending criteria of the ADB Safeguard Policy Statement (2009). The extent to which health authorities were consulted as part of the EIA is unclear. There is reference to the Ministry of Labour, Health and Social Affairs (MoLHSA), which is represented in a Trilateral Commission of Social Partnership together with the Ministry of Justice and Ministry of Education and Sport. The role MoLHSA has played in relation to the health elements of the EIA is unclear. The Trilateral Commission's role appears to relate mainly to labour safety.

The coverage of human health is integrated within the EIA, rather than as a standalone report. A wider determinants of health approach is evident in the scope of the assessment.

The assessment of health is presented within a number of sections, but is focused in a section entitled "Community health and safety". This sits alongside a section on "Workers' rights and occupational health and safety" and within a broader section on "Social and cultural aspects".

In addition to biophysical assessments of health within the discussion of air quality and noise, the assessment also explores worker–community interactions and in-migration to the area.

The assessment considers how increased incomes in the local community may change lifestyles and behaviours, including risk taking in relation to drugs, alcohol and prostitution. These effects are traced through to potential increased pressure on health-care resources. Social tensions and potential conflict between the local population and an influx of skilled workers to the area is also noted. Other topics discussed include community severance and road safety. Occupational health and safety is assessed in terms of workers' rights, injury risk, labour abuse, and work and living conditions.

Populations assessed encompass local communities (including those with low skills and low income), workers (in relation to occupational health), and schools and children (in relation to road safety).

Mitigation is set out in terms of management or action plans by topic. This includes the requirement for the contractor to provide on-site accommodation and medical facilities for the construction workforce and develop an environmental, health and safety method statement. Monthly community meetings would be held as a forum for locals to discuss specific issues

and a grievance redress mechanism would be provided. Workers would be provided with an occupational health promotion programme. Coordination is also required with local public health officials regarding the use of hospitals and other community facilities.

The EIA conclusions note the health benefits of the road improvements, including reduced dust levels, faster emergency response times and an improved pedestrian environment. The economic benefits of more than 600 direct employment opportunities for approximately 30 months are also highlighted in relation to social and cultural aspects and occupational health. Indirect, or induced, impacts of the project are also discussed including the potential for commercial, industrial and residential development along the improved road section and how this could place stress on social services including hospitals.

On the basis of the mitigation proposed, the construction stage impacts to community health and safety were assessed to be “minor”. The operational phases were assessed as “beneficial” for community health and safety, particularly in terms of segregation of traffic and pedestrians and benefits to urban areas.

The case study demonstrates an EIA of a transport infrastructure project, in a non-EU member state, that uses a definition of health which is consistent with the WHO constitution.

## **V. Dialogue with countries in Eastern Europe and the Caucasus**

Four of the participating countries from Eastern Europe and the Caucasus (Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia and the Republic of Moldova) submitted written questions in advance of the workshop. These were discussed at the workshop. The questions, the responses from the presenters and any resulting discussions are reproduced below. Some of the original wording of the questions has been edited for this report. At all times, the sense of the original question has been preserved.

### ***Question from Armenia:***

*‘What internationally recognized regulatory documents are used for the assessment of health and the involvement of health authorities in SEA?’*

### ***Response:***

Each time that the term ‘environmental’ is used in the UNECE Protocol on Strategic Environmental Assessment, the term ‘health’ is included. Furthermore, the European Directive 2001/42/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 27 June 2001 on the assessment of the effects of certain plans and programmes on the environment (i.e. the SEA Directive), when listing aspects for which the likely significant effects on the environment are to be assessed also mentions ‘human health’ (Annex 1).

The UNECE issued guidance on human health in SEA in 2012<sup>17</sup> and draft guidance in 2021.<sup>18</sup>

The World Health Organization review<sup>15</sup>, cited above, shows practice for addressing health in EIA and SEA across the World Health Organization European Region and provides context for the current question. The World Health Organization has been active on this topic since at least 2004 and has issued documents that support the consideration of human health in SEA. Two examples are provided below.

- In 2009, the World Health Organization responded to the 2004 Budapest Declaration on Environment and Health<sup>23</sup> with a meeting on Health and Strategic Environmental Assessment. The report of this meeting called for taking “significant health effects into account in the assessment of strategic proposals”.<sup>24</sup>
- In 2014, the World Health Organization looked at health in different types of impact assessment, including SEA.<sup>25</sup>

The World Health Organization continues to examine ways in which actors outside the health sector can contribute to improving and protecting health and to reducing inequalities in health.

Finally, SEA text- and handbooks are available that provide instructions for how to apply SEA. There are dedicated chapters on the consideration of health in both the 2010 and the 2021 versions of the ‘*Handbook on SEA*’.<sup>26</sup>

### **Question from Azerbaijan:**

*‘Health and Environmental authorities have different legislation at the national level in most countries in the region, including in Azerbaijan. They have responsibilities under established domestic legal frameworks and it is difficult to gather them together under SEA activity and provide a single SEA conclusion. For example, in Azerbaijan, an SEA report is issued by the Environmental Authority. Health is the domain of the Sanitary Epidemiological Service of the Ministry of Health of Azerbaijan. The process and the reporting are different to, and conducted separately from, those of the Environmental Authority. Health Authorities typically do not engage in SEA report revision or become engaged in the process as it is the Ministry of Ecology and Natural Resources that provide conclusions both for environment and human health. Therefore, comments on health for environmental documents are general in nature and not specific as required.*

*How have these challenges been solved in countries that have good, or best, SEA practice and that have a long SEA legacy? How is the domestic environmental and health legal system responsive to these aspects?’*

### **Response:**

This question requires us to consider the context within which specific SEA regimes/requirements operate. Many EU member states have constitutional divisions of

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<sup>23</sup> Ministerial Conference on Environment and Health (4th : 2004 : Budapest, Hungary) & World Health Organization. Regional Office for Europe. (2004). Declaration: fourth Ministerial Conference on Environment and Health, Budapest, Hungary, 23-25 June 2004. Copenhagen: WHO Regional Office for Europe. <https://apps.who.int/iris/handle/10665/107577>

<sup>24</sup> World Health Organization Regional Office for Europe. Health and Strategic Environmental Assessment. Denmark; 2010. [https://www.euro.who.int/\\_\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0006/112749/E93878.pdf](https://www.euro.who.int/__data/assets/pdf_file/0006/112749/E93878.pdf)

<sup>25</sup> World Health Organization (2014) Health in Impact Assessments – Opportunities not to be Missed; <http://www.euro.who.int/en/health-topics/environment-and-health/health-impact-assessment/publications/2014/health-in-impact-assessments-opportunities-not-to-be-missed>

<sup>26</sup> Sadler B, Dusik J, Fischer TB, et al. editors. Handbook of Strategic Environmental Assessment. London, Washington DC: Earthscan; 2010. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781849775434> and Fischer T, B., González A, editors. Handbook on Strategic Environmental Assessment. Cheltenham, UK: Edward Elgar Publishing; 2021. <https://www.elgaronline.com/view/edcoll/9781789909920/9781789909920.xml>

responsibilities. Whilst these usually focus on different administrative levels, there are also responsibility divisions between sectors that may be associated with different levels of administration. This can lead to, for example, a Health Authority being reluctant to get involved in SEA processes. It can also lead to the responsible Environmental Authority, which may consider SEA to be its sole responsibility, being reluctant to seek advice from a Health Authority. In order to address these barriers, administrative reform may be necessary, aiming at a 'duty' to co-operate.

Other important reasons for a low level of engagement of Health Authorities in environmental assessment procedures include a lack of capacity: Health Authorities are consistently under great pressure to deliver core health services, and this makes contribution to a process such as SEA, and other preventative strategies, challenging. This is exacerbated when the SEA process does not allocate resources for public health staff to contribute. Knowledge of the SEA process is also important: public health teams have excellent knowledge of population health and the importance of environmental factors but may lack knowledge of SEA. In this case, professional development activities are required.

With regards to EU best practice, Spain can be named, where in the region of Andalucía, health impact assessment (HIA) is a formal requirement.<sup>27</sup> This formal requirement has led to the development of guidance for HIA and EIA in Andalucía.<sup>28</sup> Health authorities engage with SEA by conducting an HIA in parallel. Catalunya provides an example of close collaboration between a research institute, that has expertise in health impact assessment, and wider society. The Generalitat de Catalunya works with the national government and with philanthropic foundations to support the Barcelona Institute for Global Health (ISGlobal)<sup>29</sup> and to draw on the research expertise.

Outside the EU, in Wales, the Wales Health Impact Assessment Support Unit (WHIASU) supports HIA across Wales.<sup>30</sup> Dedicated staff in the support unit are engaged in writing guidance and providing training. This contributes to bringing health considerations into both, SEA and project environmental impact assessment (EIA). WHIASU has developed guidelines and other resources for HIA.<sup>31</sup>

Finally, some countries implement a 'health in all policies' (HiAP) approach. In the EU, this includes Finland and France. It also includes the UK, outside of the EU. In these countries, HIA is given a role in implementing the HiAP approach. As a consequence, there is also a greater

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<sup>27</sup> Decreto 169/2014, de 9 de diciembre, por el que se establece el procedimiento de la Evaluación del Impacto en la Salud de la Comunidad Autónoma de Andalucía. [Decree 169/2014 for the procedure on HIA in Andalusia]. 2014. [www.juntadeandalucia.es/boja/2014/243/2](http://www.juntadeandalucia.es/boja/2014/243/2) BOJA, No. 243

<sup>28</sup> Rodríguez Rasero FJ, et al. Manual para la evaluación de impacto en salud de proyectos sometidos a instrumentos de prevención y control ambiental en Andalucía [Guideline for HIA of projects subject to EIA regulation]. Andalusian Regional Ministry of Health. 2015. [www.juntadeandalucia.es/export/drupalida/manual\\_preencion\\_control\\_ambiental02.pdf](http://www.juntadeandalucia.es/export/drupalida/manual_preencion_control_ambiental02.pdf)

<sup>29</sup> <https://www.isglobal.org/> and, for the history of IS Global, see <https://www.isglobal.org/en/nuestra-historia>

<sup>30</sup> <https://phwhhocc.co.uk/whiasu/>

<sup>31</sup> WHIASU. Health Impact Assessment: a practical guide. Cardiff, Wales: Wales Health Impact Assessment Support Unit. 2012. <http://www.wales.nhs.uk/sites3/Documents/522/Whiasu%20Guidance%20Report%20%28Welsh%29%20WEB.pdf> [CY] & [https://whiasu.publichealthnetwork.cymru/files/1415/0710/5107/HIA\\_Tool\\_Kit\\_V2\\_WEB.pdf](https://whiasu.publichealthnetwork.cymru/files/1415/0710/5107/HIA_Tool_Kit_V2_WEB.pdf) [EN]



inclination to engage with SEA, not just when HIA is applied, but also with regards to an enhanced consideration of health in SEA.

### **Questions from Georgia**

*‘Which methodologies are used during SEA in different countries in order to assess the impact of the activities presented in the strategic document (activities defined in the Annexes of the EA Code) on human health.’*

### **Response:**

The choice of suitable methodologies depends on a range of contextual aspects. Importantly, methodologies used can be country specific and follow associated specific requirements. Also, there may be particular assessment traditions that come with the application of particular methodologies. As health impact assessment (HIA) tends to be a non-statutory application in most countries, is often applied based on what is called a ‘rapid’, checklist-based approach, with the results of such exercises feeding into SEA. The choice of suitable methodologies also depends on the sector of application, for example, spatial / land use, transport, energy and waste. Furthermore, the decision tier plays a key role for selecting suitable methods. i.e. whether it is a policy, plan or programme an SEA is applied to. Finally, the administrative level (e.g. national, regional, local) can have an impact on the choice of methodology.

Within that wider context, the choice of a suitable methodology depends on whether SEA is used to proactively lead/steer strategic actions or whether it is applied in a more reactive manner. Keeping the specific contextual aspects in mind, typical methods include e.g. those that are of a descriptive nature (indicator-based, checklists [e.g. health hazards based], impact matrices), those that are of an analytical nature (scenario analyses, cause-effect diagrams, overlay maps, multi-criteria analyses, modelling – including forecasting and backcasting, analogues / case comparisons, trend analyses, qualitative and quantitative risk assessments, use of Driving Force, Pressure, State, Exposure, Effect, Action frameworks) as well as those that are that are involvements (consultation) based (visioning exercises, workshops and expert surveys, collective expert judgements, surveys of health risk assessments). The institutional capacity to deliver suitable methodologies effectively depends on the skills, resources and time available.

The UNECE guidance documents<sup>17,18</sup> elaborate on this and methodological aspects of SEA are addressed in the Handbooks on Strategic Environmental Assessment.<sup>26</sup>

*‘What formal and informal types of coordination exist between Health and Environmental authorities during SEA decision-making process - existing practices in EU countries.’*

Formal types of co-ordination are found in regions where there are statutory requirements for HIA that also embraces plans and programmes to which SEA is applied, for example and as noted above, the formal requirements in Andalucía, in Spain;<sup>27</sup> or where a public health organization is in place to support the application of HIA, for example the Wales Health Impact Assessment Support Unit, in the United Kingdom.<sup>30</sup> IS Global,<sup>29</sup> in Barcelona provides another example of close collaboration between a research institute, that has expertise in health impact assessment, and a regional Government.

Less formal types tend to operate in countries that advocate a Health in All Policies approach, for example France, Finland and the UK. These linkages tend to be weak in countries with no institutional mechanism for supporting co-ordination between environmental and health authorities.

### ***Questions from the Republic of Moldova***

Currently, there is only '*passive involvement of the health sector in the SEA procedure*'. Furthermore, there is '*no understanding [of] the connection between health-environment and long-term impact*'; and finally, there is a '*lack of specialist[s] to think broadly beyond the limit of health knowledge*'.

### ***Response:***

These questions are similar in nature to those asked by Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia. With regards to a more active involvement of the health sector, some institutional changes could be considered with regards to making public health consultation an expectation. The other two questions relate to a need to capacity building for developing a better understanding of the linkages between health and the environment. Furthermore, tailor-made guidance is likely to help overcoming some of the current problems, in particular with regards to methodological issues.

### ***Comment from Ukraine***

Ukraine commented that more than 1,300 SEAs were prepared in Ukraine every year. Some workshop participants expressed at that number, which was considered high. The ensuing discussion revealed substantial differences in the way SEA was implemented in different countries.

One important reason for a high number of SEAs in any single country is a low threshold for when SEA is required. For example, this may be with regards to small scale building, neighbourhood and master plans. In some countries a master plan for a relatively small project such as a block of buildings would fall under project EIA requirements. However, in others, there may be requirements to conduct SEA even at that level. Germany was mentioned in this context where the number of SEAs is also very high due to the requirement to assess small scale legally binding building plans with SEA.<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> Geissler, G.; Rehhausen, A.; Fischer, T. B. & Hanusch, M. 2019. Effectiveness of strategic environmental assessment in Germany? Meta-review of SEA research in the light of effectiveness dimensions. *Impact Assessment and Project Appraisal*, 37(3+4): 219-232  
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