



Policy Instruments for Chinese Sustainable Future:
Environmental Policy Integration and
Strategic Environmental Assessment
for the Energy and Transport Sectors

An Action under the
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CHINA-EPI-SEA Paper No. 14_EN/CN

European Experience with SEA

Addendum on Organizational / Institutional Set up

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Project outline

Policy Instruments for Chinese Sustainable Future focuses on the integration of the environment into transport and energy planning in China, both at the policy level and in terms of concrete measures for the two administrative levels of provinces and municipalities. The implementation of this project will help to build transportation and energy-use systems that are environmentally sound and capable of achieving sustainable development in China. As part of the Asia Pro Eco II Programme the project contributes to the programme's main themes for China: energy savings, improved air quality and reduced emissions of GHGs.

At the heart of this project are two closely related mechanisms that are central to the EU efforts to promote sustainability: Environmental Policy Integration (EPI) and Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA).

The action targets the inadequate reflection on environmental policy objectives and the weakness of the environment as a cross-sectoral priority and the need for information and knowledge of technical/practical solutions that can lead to immediate improvements in the development of sectoral plans. The 30 months Action consists of four work packages and multiple activities.

For further information please look at:

http://www.epi-in-china.com/project_information/summary.html

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List of abbreviations

CHINA-EPI-SEA	EC Asia Pro Eco II Programme project name
CEE	Central and Eastern Europe (a region in Europe, part of which recently joined European Union)
EC	European Commission, administrative body of European Union
EU	European Union
IPPC	Integrated Pollution Prevention and Control (EC Directive)
ODPM	Office of the Deputy Prime Minister, the UK (UK Government)
PP	plan or programme
SEA	strategic environmental assessment
SEA Directive	European Directive 2001/42/EC "on the assessment of the effects of certain plans and programmes on the environment"
SEE	South Eastern Europe
ToR	Terms of Reference
UK	United Kingdom
WP	work package

Introduction

This is an Addendum to the report prepared for the European Commission Asia Pro Eco II Programme project on “Policy Instruments for Chinese Sustainable Future: Environmental Policy Integration and Strategic Environmental Assessment for the Energy and Transport Sectors” (hereinafter CHINA-EPI-SEA). The Addendum is within *Work Package II – Sharing Expertise: European experiences with Environmental Policy Integration and Strategic Environmental Assessment in the transport and energy sector* as well as more specifically the *Work Package II.2 – Research of European experiences with Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) (WP II.2)*.

The objective of WP II.2 was to analyse European experiences of SEA, in the transport and energy sectors to transfer experiences to the Chinese context. The first report was produced in Spring 2007 and has been updated and released in December 2007. During further work and discussion with the Chinese project partners, an Addendum on institutional arrangements, quality control and capacity development issues was requested. Thus the report aims to:

- provide an overview of the institutional arrangements for implementing SEA in the European Union and other European countries;
- provide the context for the discussion on institutional arrangements in China during the next workshop (June 2009); and
- deepen the understanding about the institutional needs for successful implementation of SEA in China.

For the purpose of the Addendum, literature review was undertaken (including web search), which was focused on the organisational setting of European institutions linked with SEA implementation and capacity development. Relevant articles are noted in footnotes for addition to the project website (<http://www.sea-in-china.com/>). The literature review was complemented by experience and knowledge of the CHINA-EPI-SEA project team. Additionally, findings and discussions on SEA organisational arrangements presented at international conferences attended by the project team were used¹.

The Addendum contains the following sections:

- Institutional arrangements on implementation of SEA systems in Europe;
- Capacity development arrangements (national and international) in Europe;
- European quality control systems (pros and cons);
- Conclusions;
- References.

An overview of the institutional arrangements for SEA in European Union and other European countries, such as coordination mechanisms, procedural responsibilities and quality control tools is provided. A discussion of the pros and cons of European quality control systems is also provided and complemented by observations and recommendations.

¹ EASY-ECO Conference “Governance by Evaluation: Institutional Capacities and Learning for Sustainable Development”, March, 2008, Vienna, Austria, <http://www.sustainability.eu/easy/?k=conferences&s=vienna> and Annual IAIA Conference “Growth, Conservation and Responsibility” June 2007, Seoul, South. Korea <http://www.iaia.org/modx/index.php?id=242>

1. Institutional arrangements on Implementation of SEA Systems in Europe

Institutional and management systems for SEA vary across Europe reflecting different political and administrative systems. European Union (hereinafter EU) encompasses Parliamentary (the UK) or Constitutional (Spain) monarchies to Parliamentary (majority of EU) or Presidential (France) republics. Several EU Member countries were centrally planned economies until the end of 1980's such as the Baltic States and countries in Central and Eastern Europe.

This section discusses the roles of governmental bodies in the SEA process at national and sub-national levels, and institutional arrangements for SEA related consultations in Europe. SEA consultations under European legislation (EC SEA Directive) are focused on public authorities, the general public and stakeholders affected by impacts beyond the jurisdiction of the country (trans-boundary impacts).

1.1. *Relevant Definitions*

European and national regulations implementing SEA, along with guidelines, use different terms to define organisations involved in the SEA processes. Thus the following definitions are provided:

Responsible authorities – European SEA Directive does not name directly the public authorities responsible for setting SEA laws, regulations and guidance on the national level. Instead, the Directive requires national governments to designate such authorities. A list of national responsible authorities with contact names of all EU Member States is available on the EC webpage².

The core functions of responsible authorities (Ministries or Departments) are:

- Issuing SEA regulations and laws (approved or endorsed by the Parliaments or Governments) and coordinate with the European Union legislation (i.e. EC SEA Directive);
- Supervision of the implementation of SEA regulations and laws;
- Carrying out (quality, effectiveness) reviews of SEA implementation and SEA³ reports;
- Providing input to improvements of the regulations mentioned above ;
- Reporting on implementation issues to the Governments and the EC.

Plan making authorities – the authorities in charge of the plan making process are responsible for applying the SEA regulations dealing with screening, scoping, consultations, and preparing the SEA Report as well as use of the information in making decisions over the plan or programme. In the literature they are also called development authorities⁴.

² <http://ec.europa.eu/environment/eia/contacts3.htm>

³ Based on the EC SEA Directive, the report prepared as a result of the SEA process is called an Environmental Report, but for the purpose of this document it is called an SEA report. EU countries call the report prepared as a result of the SEA process in their chosen manner.

⁴ EC, DG ENV>: <http://ec.europa.eu/environment/eia/sea-guidelines/handbook.htm>

A Plan making authority can be any governmental or administrative institution or private body acting on behalf of the plan making authority. Plan making authorities may be ministries (including the Ministries of Environment⁵), regional bodies or local government bodies, or other bodies in the case of regional and local plans and programmes.

Relevant authorities – the authorities that are to be consulted with during the SEA process, “which, by reason of their specific environmental responsibilities, are likely to be concerned by the environmental effects of implementing plans and programmes” (SEA Directive, Art.6, §3). In the United Kingdom, these bodies are called “designated environmental consultation bodies”. In other countries, such as Romania, relevant authorities can be any authorities, which may have interest in the plan or programme (PP).

1.2. Process of Elaboration of Environmental (SEA) Report

1.2.1. Screening for SEA

In general, but not universally, responsible authorities are responsible for screening (e.g. in CEE, majority of new EU member countries). In some instances screening is undertaken by the plan making authority “self-screening” as in the UK. Even then, the responsible authority has to consult with other relevant authorities and obtain views on the screening proposal as set out in a screening report. Such practice exists, for example, in Scotland, where relevant authorities (designated environmental consultation bodies) have been established by national law⁶ (see box 1). They provide opinion on the screening report which is prepared by the responsible authority.

1.2.2. Scoping and overall SEA Process

Preparation of SEA reports is the responsibility of a plan making authority; however the actual task of drafting the reports may be undertaken by private sector organisations.

The EC SEA Directive does not define which institutions can or cannot prepare the SEA reports allowing different arrangements within the EU. Pros and cons of internal or external approaches to preparation of SEA report are presented in the table below.

Responsibility for the quality and timing of the SEA report rests with the plan making authority. Ultimately its quality may be subject to legal challenge.

⁵ There can be issues associated with the separation of functions particularly between a plan making and consultation role.

⁶ <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/Environment/14587>, see toolkit and guidance

Table 1: Advantages and disadvantages of approaches to preparing an SEA report

Advantages	Disadvantages
<i>Team preparing the plan (the plan making experts)</i>	
Enables the SEA to become a fully integrated part of the plan-making process; raises awareness in the team; ensures working knowledge of plan content.	May be unable to predict the sustainability impacts of the plan objectively; may not have the knowledge to assess all impacts.
<i>Person(s) outside the team e.g. consultants</i>	
The plan and its impacts may be viewed more objectively.	May not have full working knowledge of plan; more difficult to integrate the appraisal into the plan-making process.
<i>One person</i>	
Consistent approach and assumptions made in predicting impacts.	May be lacking knowledge in some areas and therefore not be comprehensive. There is also the risk of personal bias.
<i>Team of people (the external experts preparing SEA)</i>	
Allows discussion and therefore may have more comprehensive predictions. A more balanced, consensus view can be reached.	May lead to inconsistencies in judgements; will take longer due to need for extra discussion time.

Source: PAS, 2007

1.3. Consultations

EC SEA Directive distinguishes 3 types of consultees and consultation processes within SEA: consultation with relevant authorities and the public (Art 6, EC SEA Directive) and transboundary consultations (Art. 7 EC SEA Directive).

1.3.1. Consultations with relevant authorities within SEA

Responsible authorities (see Chapter 1.1. on “Relevant Definitions”) take part in the consultation and advise the planning authority (or a contracted company) who to consult, if the SEA legislation does not specify the relevant authorities (e.g. in CEE).

In Europe, it is common that relevant authorities are determined either in the SEA Terms of Reference (hereinafter ToR) in consultation with the responsible authority or are set by the responsible authority on a case by case basis. Such case by case determination of relevant authorities is a practice in Romania, where a Governmental SEA Working Group is created by an official invitation for each SEA process (Government of Romania (2004) Decision No.1076/8.07.2004). In the UK, policy guidance for plan making authorities specifies the authorities and organisations to be consulted throughout the plan-making process (PAS, 2007).

Several countries have consultation requirements that go beyond EC SEA Directive. For example, in the UK consultation is required at several stages through the plans or programmes elaboration (as with spatial planning): key issues and objectives; developing alternatives, consultation on the preferred alternatives, proposed approach in light of the SEA (PAS, 2007).

Responsible authorities on environmental issues in the UK are provided in the ODPM Guidance (2005) (see Box 1). This example demonstrates that requirements for consultations can be very explicit and focused and they can assure that key governmental authorities are consulted during the SEA process.

Box 1: Relevant environmental bodies in the UK (from ODPM 2005)

- England: Countryside Agency, English Nature⁷, English Heritage, and the Environment Agency
- Northern Ireland: Department of the Environment
- Scotland: Historic Scotland, Scottish Natural Heritage, and the Scottish Environment Protection Agency
- Wales: Cadw (Welsh Historic Monuments), Countryside Council for Wales, and the Environment Agency Wales

To ensure that consultations with authorities are carried out effectively and do not overburden programme making, the plan making authorities may request the experts that carry out the SEA to carry out scoping consultations on their behalf (GRDP, 2006). In this case, the SEA experts may add outcomes of various scoping consultations to the SEA Report. GRDP SEA Handbook (GRDP, 2006) emphasises that “this type of arrangement ensures the transparency of an iterative scoping”, the process which is cyclical and may take place more than once during the SEA process.

1.3.2. Public Consultations in SEA

EC SEA Directive requires that the draft SEA report must be made available to the public before the approval of the plan (Art. 6, §1). The public must be “given an early and effective opportunity within appropriate time frames to express their opinion on the draft plan or programme and the accompanying SEA report before the adoption of the plan or programme or its submission to the legislative procedure” (Art. 6, §2). Opinions expressed by the public “should be taken into account during the preparation of the plan or programme and before its adoption or submission to the legislative procedure” (Art. 8).

The responsibility for public consultations lies with the plan making authorities. The requirement for public consultations and the scope of consultations are either included in the SEA ToR or organised by the plan making authorities themselves (e.g. in Bulgaria and Romania).

Public consultation procedures in EU countries are to comply with the UNECE Aarhus Convention on Access to Information, Public Participation in Decision-making and Access to Justice in Environmental Matters⁸. This Convention sets the minimum requirement for the public consultation that were incorporated into the SEA Directive (see above Art. 6, §2).

The EC SEA Directive requires public consultations at least when the EA report is prepared (Art.6 §1), but before “the adoption of the plan or programme or its submission to the legislative procedure”. SEA consultations do not replace or cancel the consultations on the development of the plan or programme. Consultations for SEA report and the plan or programme can be undertaken concurrently. Such

⁷ Now combined as Natural England

⁸ <http://www.unece.org/env/pp/treatytext.htm>

arrangements are common in western European countries, e.g. in the UK and the Netherlands.

The UK Transport Analysis Guidance (DfT, 2004) point out that “it may also be useful to involve the public more proactively in the SEA alongside the plan consultations” or enable the consultation at other stages of the SEA process by “consulting the public [...] as part of the assessment process” (ODPM, 2005), e.g. scoping or discussing alternatives. The UK Transport Analysis Guidance also says that “consultation will be more effective, if it covers all aspects of the plan rather than being restricted to those elements associated with the SEA Directive.”

Other countries do not always follow this practice, such as in Central and Eastern European (CEE) countries (e.g. in Lithuania, Romania). The SEA process in CEE often start later than the plan or programme making activities and therefore consultations, which could be used for both SEA and planning, are performed sequentially rather than concurrently (CEEWEB, 2006 and REC/UNEP, 2007).

1.3.3. Transboundary Consultations in SEA

Where a plan or programme is identified as having significant environmental impacts on neighbouring states then transboundary consultations are required under EC SEA Directive (Art. 7, Transboundary consultations) as well as in the UNECE SEA Protocol (Art. 10). The Directive or the Protocol does not prescribe the procedure for transboundary consultation. European countries have developed consultation arrangements, which often are coordinated with neighbouring countries through bilateral and multilateral framework or case by case agreements⁹.

The key institutions in such consultations are the Ministries of the Environment and Ministries of Foreign Affairs. The procedures for transboundary consultations are prescribed by the national SEA regulations and laws and often detailed in bilateral agreements between neighbouring countries. Countries like Germany¹⁰ or the countries of South Eastern European (SEE) countries (Miazga *et al*, 2004) have such agreements in place with majority of their neighbours. The bilateral and multilateral agreements define timeframes and the roles of stakeholders in the transboundary consultation process. Examples of bilateral and multilateral transboundary EIA/SEA agreements are available on the UNECE website <http://www.unece.org/env/eia/agreements.html>.

As pointed out in the Art.7, §2, the authorities responsible for the consultations in the affected country must consult both relevant authorities and the public “in the Member State likely to be significantly affected” and to provide “an opportunity to forward their opinion within a reasonable time-frame”.

⁹ **More on SEA bilateral coordination in UNECE “Guidance on Sub-regional Cooperation”** http://www.unece.org/env/eia/subregional_coop.htm

¹⁰ <http://www.umweltbundesamt.de/umweltrecht-e/uvp.htm>

2. Development of SEA Capacity in Europe

This section describes the institutional arrangements for the development of SEA skills and training across Europe. It also presents networking possibilities for environmental experts interested in SEA to exchange SEA concepts and share experience. A short list of university level SEA courses is provided as an illustration.

2.1. SEA in European educational institutions

SEA as a subject is taught at many national and international universities in the EU. Mostly it is a subject within courses for Bachelor or Master Degrees. National universities offer SEA courses mostly in national languages as part of environmental or planning degrees. Box 2 demonstrates a few examples of such educational institutions and links to internet pages leading to information on the courses and research programmes.

During recent years, some SEA learning resources (manuals, guidance, training materials and courses) have been made available on the Internet. The resource provided by the Open United Nations University is an on-line training course in English language prepared by leading international (including European) experts. Links to this and other relevant on-line SEA resources are provided in Box 3.

Box 2: Examples of universities offering SEA courses and research programmes in Europe	
UK institutions (sample)	
School of Environment and Development, the University of Manchester	http://www.sed.manchester.ac.uk/postgraduate/taught/courses/modules/courselist.html?department=17
Oxford Brookes University, the School of the Built Environment	http://www.brookes.ac.uk/schools/be/planning/shortcourses/ Oxford Brookes University – Oxford Institute for Sustainable Development - Impacts Assessment Unit - Spatial Planning Unit
London Imperial College	http://www3.imperial.ac.uk/cpd/courses/subject/environmental/sea
University of East Anglia	http://www1.uea.ac.uk/cm/2.423/2.702/2.704/2.733/2.949/2.957/1.3442
International and national universities (sample)	
Central European University (CEU), the Department of Environmental Sciences and Policy (Hungary)	http://www.ceu.hu
Biotehniška fakulteta, Univerza v Ljubljani (Slovenia)	http://www.bf.uni-lj.si/
University for Civil Engineering (Slovenia)	http://www.fg.uni-mb.si/podrocje.aspx?id=1923
SEA research programmes and institutions (sample)	
SEA-MiSt - Tools for Environmental Assessment in Strategic Decision Making (Sweden)	http://www.sea-mist.se/
Interdisciplinary Research in Environmental Assessment and Management (InteREAM) (UK)	http://www.uea.ac.uk/env/inteream/
Stockholm Environment Institute (SEI)	http://www.sei.se/policy/SEA.pdf

The on-line SEA resources offer information on SEA development worldwide.

Box 3: Sample of on-line SEA resources (both SEA training and relevant information)	
Open United Nations University on line SEA training	http://sea.unu.edu/about.html
Centre for Sustainability at TRL (UK)	http://www.sea-info.net/ ;
CEU (Hungary)	Environmental Assessment in Countries in Transition ;
EC SEA guidelines and references	http://ec.europa.eu/environment/eia/sea-support.htm
IAIA	http://www.iaia.org/modx/index.php?id=76
Netherlands Commission for Environmental Assessment	http://www.eia.nl/default.asp
REC (Hungary)	http://www.rec.org/EnvironmentalAssessment
UN/ECE SEA Protocol Resources manual	http://www.unece.org/env/eia/sea_manual/welcome.html
World Bank	http://go.worldbank.org/3EXUIWL190

2.2. EU level and national efforts to raise SEA capacity

There are a diverse range of SEA capacity development institutions available in Europe, which play important role in developing SEA practice and expertise. Their efforts to raise capacity of SEA are expressed through guidance and training activities, such as:

- Regional and National (framework) training projects (see Miazga, 2004, see more on <http://www.rec.org/REC/Programs/EnvironmentalAssessment/International-Projects.html>);
- European Commission's and national SEA guidance documents, advice notes and manuals (EC (2004), see more on <http://ec.europa.eu/environment/eia/sea-support.htm>);
- Capacity development projects (training courses and pilots) supported by international institutions such as gtz (gtz *et al.* (2007), the REC (<http://www.rec.org/REC/Programs/EnvironmentalAssessment/National-Activities.html>), Sida, etc.;
- Efforts of international institutions such as UNECE and OECD through SEA manuals (http://www.unece.org/env/eia/sea_manual/welcome.html) and guidance (OECD, 2006).

A comprehensive list of European national capacity development references has been put together by ENEA – the European Network of Environmental Authorities, Capacity Building Working group¹¹.

In additional to the guidance documents, some European countries established independent national bodies (centres, commissions) to review SEA quality and to enable capacity development for SEA. The most renowned body for SEA quality control is NCEA¹² - the Netherlands Commission for Environmental Assessment, which, by request, reviews the quality of EIA and SEA reports and provides advisory services on Environmental Assessment. Another is NORDREGIO¹³ - the Nordic

¹¹ http://ec.europa.eu/environment/integration/pdf/anthology_enea.pdf

¹² <http://www.eia.nl/>

¹³ <http://www.nordregio.se/>

Centre for Spatial Development, which was established by the Nordic Council of Ministers. NORDREGIO is responsible for the development and communication of relevant knowledge to authorities within regional development and planning in the Nordic countries. The Centre seeks to integrate regional development policy and physical planning with the aim of promoting long-term development. It offers continuing education courses for administrators and planners including courses on SEA.

2.3. Participation in European and international EA expert networks

This part presents information on international and regional environmental assessment networks, which contribute to capacity development of the SEA experts in Europe. Besides national bodies playing a part in SEA capacity development, European and global environmental assessment (hereinafter EA) expert networks and institutions play significant role in increasing the understanding and effectiveness of SEA. The following organisations are described:

- Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment
- The Nordic Environmental Assessment Network
- International Association for Impact Assessment
- EA expert network for South Eastern Europe

2.3.1 Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment

The Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment (IEMA¹⁴) is based in the UK. It is a non-profit organisation, aiming to achieve best practice standards in environmental management, auditing and assessment and offers national and international services and networking possibilities too. IEMA offers individual or corporate memberships. Individual memberships are open to people at different stages in their careers and from a variety of professional backgrounds. Corporate membership of the IEMA demonstrates an organisations commitment to improving environmental management practices. IEMA enables corporate members to improve their environmental performance and their practice in deploying environmental management tools.

The Centre for Environmental Assessment and Management (CEAM) within IEMA can provide an independent review of the quality of specific SEA reports on request (both for EIA and SEA). However the opinion expressed in these reviews are independent and do not provide legal opinion regarding the fulfilment or breach of the requirements established by the law.

2.3.2 The Nordic EA Network

Nordic countries, both EU Member States (Denmark, Finland and Sweden) and the countries belonging to the European Economic Area (Iceland and Norway) have their own EIA and SEA systems but are involved in collaborative discussion through the Nordic EA Network (NORDREGIO, Undated). Launched in 1999 the Network aims to support research and development of EIA and SEA to enhance an understanding of the links between sustainable development and regional development planning/programming. The network is hosted by the Nordic Centre for Spatial Development

¹⁴ <http://www.iema.net>

(NORDREGIO), which developed from an ad hoc group for EIA under the Nordic Council of Ministers (a forum for cooperation between the Governments of Scandinavian countries). Originally financed by the Nordic Council of Ministers, the EA Network now survives on a mix of funds.

The EA network provides a forum to exchange ideas and experience through seminars, conferences and by supporting research studies in the field of environmental assessment and sustainable development (Ibid). The network disseminates information about EIA, SEA and regional development via NORDREGIO website¹⁵, European Journal of Spatial Development, Journal of NORDREGIO reports, working papers and electronic papers (Ibid).

2.3.3 IAIA and it's branches and affiliates in Europe

Many SEA experts in Europe take part in the activities of the International Association of Impact Assessment (IAIA). IAIA provides the possibilities to network through its annual conferences and an opportunity to develop SEA capacity through a range of courses alongside its annual events. IAIA has developed a code of ethics which summarizes the core qualities of EA practitioners (see Box 4) and commits new members to the values of the network.

Box 4: IAIA code of ethics

1. The member shall carry out his or her professional activities, as far as possible, in accordance with emerging principles of sustainable development and the highest standards of environmental protection.
2. The member shall at all times place the integrity of the natural environment and the health, safety and welfare of the human community above any commitment to sectoral or private interests.
3. The member shall ensure the incorporation of environmental protection and social or socioeconomic impact considerations from the earliest stages of project design or policy development.
4. The member shall not conduct professional activities in a manner involving dishonesty, fraud, deceit, misrepresentation or bias.
5. The member shall not advertise or present the member's services in a manner that may bring discredit to the profession

Source: <http://www.iaia.org/>

Active participation of European SEA experts in IAIA led to the establishment of a regional IAIA branch for Ireland-UK¹⁶ in 2005. The Branch issues Newsletter 'Impact Assessment Matters', which brings together news from the Branch, items relevant to impact assessment in Ireland and the UK, announcements of future events, as well as queries for members to respond to.

Additionally to IAIA expert network, there are national EIA and SEA expert networks in Europe or organisations and associations of environmental experts, which have interest in environmental assessment, such as the Portuguese Association for Impact Assessment¹⁷, German Association for the Assessment of Environmental Impacts¹⁸ and Romanian Environmental Experts Association¹⁹.

¹⁵ <http://www.nordregio.se/>

¹⁶ <http://www.iaia.org/modx/index.php?id=354>

¹⁷ <http://www.apai.org.pt/>

¹⁸ <http://www.uvp.de/welcome.html>

¹⁹ http://eea.ngo.ro/index_en.htm

2.3.4 Independent sub-regional EA expert network for South Eastern Europe

The South Eastern European (hereinafter SEE) EA expert network started from a series of capacity development workshops funded by the Swedish International Development Agency (Sida) between 1998 and 2006 for EA experts from SEE. In 2007, the participating experts decided to establish the Impact Assessment expert network called SEE Impact Assessment Association (SEIA) and is to launch a website.

Above mentioned SEA capacity development approaches address the needs of the European SEA stakeholders. They demonstrates the range of actors involved in SEA capacity development, a mix of capacity development tools and platforms available in Europe and could serve as a source for SEA capacity development systems' design in China.

3. European SEA quality control systems (pros and cons)

SEA quality is judged by the compliance with the SEA regulation. Recently the issue of SEA effectiveness has been raised by SEA stakeholders and decision makers in Europe (Therivel, 2004). The “effectiveness” of SEA is defined by the ability of SEA to make a difference to the decision making and improve the quality of the plan or programme. This section examines how SEA quality is controlled and how effectiveness of SEA is being assessed.

In Europe, the selection of each or a combination of quality assurance means depend on the historic development of EIA and SEA systems and governmental structures. Many European SEA quality control systems copy EIA quality review systems or are closely linked to them. Regardless of their objective to improve the environment, EIA and SEA are distinct and different processes. The key differences between EIA and SEA are presented in the table below, which helps to understand that SEA quality control system needs a different quality control approach from EIA quality control system.

Table 2: Key differences between EIA and SEA

EIA	SEA
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • For specific projects (usually private sector); • Focuses on significant impacts and links with Integrated Pollution Prevention Control (IPPC, EC, 1996) and permitting; • EIA is often prepared after the project is formulated or <i>ex post</i> (mainly project planning in CEE) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Done for plans and programmes almost exclusively prepared by public authorities; • Examines strategic impacts (e.g. relationship with environmental objectives of plans and programmes); • SEA should be parallel to the planning process and <i>ex ante</i> to the decision making on the plan or programme.

SEA quality is controlled by variety of means through Europe with the core forms of quality assurance described in the chapter as follows:

- Independent Quality Review Institutions (such as centres and commissions);
- Certification systems and expert databases;
- SEA registries (Lithuania, Estonia, the Czech Republic);
- Quality check lists;
- Public consultation process.

3.1. *Independent Quality Review Institutions*

Across Europe EIA centres or commissions provide advise and quality review EIAs and SEAs. The key roles such institutions can carry out are:

- An arbiter in the case of disputes over SEA, deciding on the screening outcomes;
- Audit the quality of environmental implementation and SEA reports;
- Review the implementation of legislation and amendments where necessary;
- Provide guidance and advice.

Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment in the UK was discussed in the previous chapter and can provide expert advice on national and international SEAs.

The Netherlands Commission for EIA, (see Table 3) offers internationally acknowledged and independent expertise in SEA. This Commission is independent from the decision making body (the Ministry of the Housing, Physical Planning and the Environment), although is funded by the Dutch government.

Examples of European SEA (EIA) centres providing study, research and consultancy services is provide in the table below.

Table 3: Selected list of SEA (EIA) centres in Europe

Name	Internet site
Austrian Institute for the Development of Environmental Assessment (An !dea)	http://www.anidea.at
Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment (IEMA)	http://www.iema.net
The Impact Assessment Research Centre (IARC) at the University of Manchester	http://www.sed.manchester.ac.uk/research/iarc/
The Netherlands Commission for EIA (Commissie MER)	http://www.eia.nl
NORDREGIO (Nordic Centre for Spatial Development)	http://www.nordregio.se/
Norwegian Institute for Urban and Regional Research Centre for Planning and EIA	http://www.nibr.no/content/view/full/86
The Slovenian Foundation for Sustainable Development	n/a
Stockholm Environment Institute (Sweden)	http://www.sei.se/index.php
Swedish EIA Centre	http://mkb.slu.se/
VASitalia.it study & research centre (Italy)	http://www.vasitalia.it/

The above institutions often have useful resources on their websites which are helpful when designing SEA processes and seeking SEA examples. Some centres provide research on EIA and SEA application and directly influence the decision on SEA and EIA report quality, while others provide just an advice.

3.2. Certification Systems and Expert Databases

Certification for SEA in many EU countries is an extension of EIA certification system. Some countries offer joint EIA and SEA or single EIA certification, which is applicable to SEA (e.g. the Czech Republic, Romania and Bulgaria). In some cases SEA certification is covered by a wider certification such as Environmental Management Certification offered by IEMA or can be a sub-system of certification of environmental professionals.

In the Czech Republic there is a combined SEA/EIA certification system, which was linked with an expert online database. The database provides access to the experts needed to conduct SEAs.

Certification for SEA is one of the means to increase human capacity and skills. In order to be effective, certification of SEA experts should be combined with periodic training, workshops and other capacity-development activities, otherwise it does not stimulate SEA capacity development.

3.3. SEA Registries

By registries we mean a government Internet site of SEA information, including notices of commencement of an environmental assessment and/ or publicly accessible PP and SEA report files for each assessment. These sites would contain all SEA related records, reports and consultation comments.

Some European countries provide online access to EIA and SEA information and reports, for example the Czech Republic administered by the Czech Ministry of the Environment (http://www.env.cz/AIS/web.nsf/pages/systemy_EIA). Latvia has a system of registering EIA (which may extend to SEA) and the Netherlands are developing a searchable database. The Portuguese Instituto do Ambiente presently hold electronic registers of project EIA. Such practices are not limited to Europe, but already exists in Asia, e.g. in Hong Kong (<http://www.epd.gov.hk/eia/register/index.htm>).

An SEA registry could enable access to SEA Reports thus contributing to (discussed by McLauchlan and João (2005)):

- greater transparency, promoting public access to information (requirement of the Aarhus Convention);
- access to information about planning and development by governmental authorities;
- support links between SEA and other forms of statutory and non-statutory assessment such as EIA or Health Impact Assessment;
- can enable tiering and use of information in subsequent SEAs as better links with other assessment and planning processes;
- improving delivery of public services through the Internet;
- greater awareness and tracing of cumulative impacts;
- improve the quality of SEA reports through providing and highlighting examples of SEA, etc;
- enhanced opportunities for data sharing and consequently cost reduction (information access does not require printing and posting costs).

A drawback of SEA registries is the need for a dedicated institution and continuous resources to maintain the system.

3.4. SEA quality check lists

A simple tool to review the quality of SEA report is a check list. A checklist based on EC EIA quality check list has been developed in Ireland (ERM, 2003). The check lists can be used to internally check the progress of the SEA process, to ensure that the correct outputs are being generated, to internally review the quality of the SEA Report prior to its public release and, to evaluate the quality of the SEA Report after its publication.

The UK government also issued Quality Assurance checklist together with Sustainability Appraisal Guidance (ODPM, 2005), which is attached as Attachment 1.

3.5. Public consultation process as SEA quality control tool

Public consultations and how they are organized are described in the section 1.2. Here the focus is on the public consultation process as a tool to assure quality of SEA. Public consultations are a tool to increase quality of SEA and planning, since

they can contribute additional knowledge to the final planning and assessment products and can provide for transparency.

EC SEA Directive requires that prepared SEA report is made available to the public (Art. 6) and the public must also be consulted on the draft plans and on the environmental assessment. OECD Guidelines says “Public engagement is critical. A policy reform or programme will be far more effective when the values, views, opinions and knowledge of the public are reflected in the decision-making process (OECD, 2006).” The guidance also emphasises that public participation helps to ensure effectiveness of SEA.

Feedback after public consultations on the taking comments into account by SEA team as well as decision makers should be ensured. Information on how public comments have been taken into account is one of the requirements of the EC SEA Directive (Atr.9 1 (b)).

4. Conclusions and Recommendations

The Addendum provided a brief overview and key references to the selection of tools, institutional arrangements and systems relevant to SEA process. It did not aim to provide for an exhaustive study of European institutional structures related to SEA. Clarification of statements made can be requested from the project team.

This Addendum to the European experience in SEA report (TRL, 2007) is focused on the institutional arrangements for three core aspects of SEA processes: overall implementation of SEA (Chapters 1.2, 1.3 and 1.4), SEA capacity development (Chapter 2) and quality control tools and systems (Chapter 3). The conclusions are based on the project teams experience in SEA for each of the above mentioned aspects and where possible, referenced with documentation available on the internet.

European SEA institutional arrangements are described in European (EU) legislation and in the national laws and regulations. They define the responsible institutions for the key elements for the SEA process (SEA Directive) and detail SEA implementation procedures (national level).

Institutional arrangements on implementation of SEA systems in Europe

The following points can be made:

- SEA regulations and procedures should reflect the institutional arrangements for plan making for the specific sectors of economy and the relevant authorities. They also should take account of the timing and type of consultations for the plan or programme.
- The roles of institutions at key stages of SEA process should be identified. The flexibility is needed to customise SEA application to the diversity of plans and programmes and changing needs of stakeholders.
- Joint consultations for a draft PP and draft SEA are desirable to minimise the burden on consultees and lead to a more efficient planning process.

SEA capacity development arrangements in Europe

Effective SEA capacity development directly influences successful implementation of SEA and the integration of environmental and sustainability concerns into decision making and planning.

Many arrangements are used across Europe to aid SEA capacity development such as educational programmes at university level, capacity development guidelines and workshops as well as SEA expert networking possibilities. A wide range of capacity development tools is used to motivate experts and to enable professional growth to ensure SEA capacity development in Europe.

SEA capacity development resources and guidance provide a means for developing expert and institutional capacities. Many European SEA resources are free and provide information on SEA development worldwide.

European SEA quality control systems

The aim of European SEA quality control is to ensure that the regulations and procedures are followed as well as the process reaches its core objectives, which are to ensure high degree of environmental protection and to provide integration of environmental considerations into plan or programme making.

There are several SEA quality control systems in place in Europe, some of which are applied discretionary such as independent quality review institutions, SEA expert certification system, SEA registries, public consultation processes and quality checklists.

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