

SEA Protocol Initial Capacity Development in Selected Countries of the Former Soviet Union

Executive summary

This paper summarises the key lessons that emerged from the initial capacity development for the implementation of the Protocol on Strategic Environmental Assessment to the UNECE Convention on EIA in a Transboundary Context — known as the “SEA Protocol” — in Armenia, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine.

This capacity development initiative was implemented in 2003-2006 by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the Regional Environmental Center for Central and Eastern Europe (REC) and through the related activities of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE). Part of the initiative has been implemented under the framework of the Environment and Security Initiative, originally established by the UNDP, United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE). It highlighted some quite fundamental challenges and opportunities that lay ahead for the establishment of effective national SEA systems in these former Soviet Union countries. The priority issues of concern are:

- *limited capacity of the responsible national environmental authorities to work on the SEA Protocol’s transposition and preparation of the methodological guidance;*
- *limited experience with strategic environmental assessment that would provide examples of effective procedures and analytical approaches, which would meet the requirements of the SEA Protocol; and*
- *limited openness of the planning system, which poses obstacles for carrying out assessment and consulting relevant authorities and the public during the elaboration of plans and programmes.*

1] Introduction

The former Soviet Union countries in Eastern Europe, Caucasus and Central Asia (EECCA) have operated environmental assessment systems since gaining their independence in the early 1990s. These systems were inherited from the Soviet Union but are currently regulated by specific national legislation introduced at various times during the past 15 years.

Environmental assessment is required for projects but also plans, programmes and most other decisions that may have significant environmental impacts. These systems are largely based on the “state environmental review”¹ (SER) mechanism formally established in the Soviet Union in the second half of the 1980s.²

SER is a legacy of the centrally planned economies. Its prototypes served as coordination mechanisms in the highly centralised and standardised system of economic planning.³

SER is required for all plans and programmes prepared by state authorities. Over the last 15 years, the SER systems in EECCA evolved along somewhat varying paths in different countries. Most importantly, they incorporated elements of international good practice in environmental impact assessment (EIA), such as screening and public participation. These changes, however, mostly affected procedures for project-level activities. SER provisions remain generally similar across the EECCA region which justifies common approaches to their analysis and reform.

While the practice of “strategic” SER in the EECCA region has not been studied in detail, detailed reviews of these systems become important as these countries move towards ratification of or accession to the SEA Protocol. Four EECCA countries (Armenia, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine) signed the SEA Protocol and plan to ratify it within the course of the next four years. Some other EECCA states (e.g. Belarus) are now considering possible accession to the SEA Protocol.

¹ “Ekologicheskaya ekspertiza” is also translated as “ecological expertise,” or “environmental expert review.”

² Cherp, A. (2001). “EA legislation and practice in Central and Eastern Europe and the former USSR: A comparative analysis,” *Environmental Impact Assessment Review*. 21(4): 335-361.

³ In the absence of market mechanisms coordinating various economic decisions, the USSR used administrative coordination mechanisms in which decisions of different ministries would be reviewed by special “expert committees” (*ekspertizas*) to ensure their consistency with other

decisions. The most important permanent expert committees were affiliated with the State Planning Committee, the State Construction Committee and to a considerable number of other ministries. Altogether, there were about 900 such committees, each responsible for the appraisal of specific types of planning documentation, ranging from regional development programmes to individual construction and modification projects. No project, plan or programme could proceed without the authorisation (“the positive conclusion”) of the appropriate expert committee. [from Cherp and Lee (1997), “Evolution of SER and OVOS in the Soviet Union and Russia (1985-1996),” *EIA Review*. 17: 177-204.

Table 1: Key features of the SEA Protocol and SER/OVOS systems⁴

	SEA PROCESS AS DEFINED BY THE UNECE SEA PROTOCOL	SER/OVOS SYSTEMS IN EECCA
Overall purpose and key actors	<p>The environmental effects of proposed plans and programmes are assessed in order to ensure that environment, including health, is taken into account in their elaboration.</p> <p>Key tasks (assessment, documentation, disclosure) are performed by the proponent. Environmental and health authorities and the public concerned need to be consulted during the process.</p>	<p>Environmental acceptability of proposed activities is determined in order to stop “unacceptable” activities from occurring.</p> <p>SERs are conducted by state environmental authorities or committees appointed by them. Proponents submit materials for SER (including OVOS for project-level activities).</p> <p>The public plays a limited but growing role.</p>
What plans and programmes are covered?	<p>SEA is required for formally initiated or amended plans/programmes on national, regional or local levels that set the framework for future projects and are likely to have significant environmental effects.</p>	<p>SER is required for the majority of proposed plans and programmes. In practice, SER is undertaken only for a limited amount of plans and programmes.</p> <p>OVOS is only required for selected project-level activities.</p>
Scope of the assessment and resulting report	<p>Minimal requirements for the contents of the assessment are defined. A detailed scope of assessment needs to be determined in consultation with environmental and health authorities.</p>	<p>SER and OVOS for plans and programmes are not regulated in detail. No generally applicable requirements for the contents of the assessment are defined. No consultations with environmental and health authorities are required in order to determine the scope of the assessment.</p>
Consultations with the relevant environmental authorities and the public	<p>A draft plan/programme and the SEA report have to be made available to relevant environmental and health authorities as well as to members of the public, who need to be given an early, timely and effective opportunity to express their opinions.</p>	<p>A proposed plan or programme normally has to be “coordinated” with relevant (including environmental and health) authorities. This coordination does not require preparation of an environmental assessment report.</p> <p>SER resolutions are normally public documents, but public availability of the plan/programme itself and its environmental assessment (if such exists) is not required.</p>
Decision making	<p>The adopted plan/programme needs to take due account of the environmental report and comments obtained. The authority that adopted the plan or programme has to explain how environmental considerations have been integrated into it, how the comments received from the public and the authorities have been considered and why the plan or programme was adopted in the light of other reasonable alternatives. The adopted plan or programme and this justification must be made publicly available.</p>	<p>Environmental concerns should be considered in the SER resolution, which can be “negative” (which means that the proposal cannot proceed), “positive” or “positive with conditions.”</p> <p>In practice, negative SER resolutions are rarely issued in relation to plans and programmes.</p> <p>There is no explicit requirement to take findings of the environmental assessment into account in any other decision-making process.</p>
Post SEA monitoring	<p>Significant environmental effects have to be monitored in order to identify unforeseen adverse effects and to be able to undertake appropriate remedial action. Monitoring results have to be made available to the authorities and to the public.</p>	<p>Not regulated</p>

⁴ Please see the explanation in the section “SER/OVOS systems.”

When transposing the requirements of the SEA Protocol, EECCA countries will need to pay thorough attention to the existing systems for environmental assessment of plans and programmes. This is necessary to both bridge the difference between SER systems and the protocol's requirements, and, at the same time, to root the emerging SEA systems in the existing institutions to ensure their smooth functioning. A comparison of the SEA Protocol and the SER systems in relation to their overall purpose, the role of key actors, and specific procedural requirements are summarised in Table 1 and described in the next chapter.

2] Comparing the SEA Protocol with environmental assessment systems in EECCA countries

Purpose and key actors in both assessment regimes

Usual rationale

SEA systems generally aim to establish an analytical and participatory approach that integrates environmental considerations into policies, plans and programmes and evaluates the inter-linkages with economic and social considerations.⁵ SEA requirements may be either carried out through separate procedures or — more desirably — may be integrated into the elaboration of plans or programmes in order to ensure that they better integrate environmental considerations.

SEA Protocol

In its five-fold objective, the SEA Protocol aims to ensure that environmental (including health) considerations are thoroughly taken into account in the development of plans and programmes. It establishes a strategic environmental assessment procedure, which is defined as “the evaluation of the likely environmental, including health, effects, which comprises the determination of the scope of an environmental report and its preparation, the carrying-out of public participation and consultations, and the taking into account of the environmental report and the results of the public participation and consultations in a plan or programme.”⁶

Since the protocol recognises that the SEA should have an important role in the actual preparation and adoption of plans and programmes,⁷ it is expected that the main bulk of its requirements will be performed by the proponent of these plans and programmes.

SER/OVOS systems

The general purpose of the state environmental review (SER) is to verify the environmental acceptability of a proposed activity, which in practice often means checking compliance with norms and standards in order to identify and ban “environmentally harmful” activities. Such use of SER is influenced by its legacy as an instrument of centralised and technocratic planning. This approach may sometimes work at the project level, but is largely unacceptable when dealing with plans and programmes that do not result in clear “black or white” impacts, but must rather be judged based on the totality of their (often uncertain) environmental implications as weighed against social and economic effects. On the other hand, documentation and disclosure of information, which are central to the SEA Protocol, only play a marginal role in the SER system.

In most EECCA countries, the SER legislation includes requirements for the proponents to submit “materials concerning the assessment of impacts on the environment” to the SER body. On the project level, these “materials” are often known by their Russian acronym of OVOS⁸ and are generally similar to EIA reports, though they are more standardised, often incorporated in technical project documentation and not always publicly accessible. At the level of plans and programmes, the term OVOS is rarely used and the content of “environmental assessment materials” is either not defined in detail, not prepared (e.g. in Ukraine) or is mechanically extended from project-level requirements. International experience suggests that project-level environmental assessment methods can rarely be extended to plans and programmes. Therefore, “strategic OVOS” requirements, where they exist, are seldom implemented in practice. Thus, SER of plans and programmes largely rely on whatever environment-related information is contained in the planning documentation (which is primarily determined by planning regulations and administrative practice).

Figure 1 outlines the typical contents of and key players in OVOS and SER in EECCA countries.

SER/OVOS procedures are — due to their use as regulatory instruments — dominated by environmental authorities that not only direct the SER process, but may also review OVOS materials, assess project documentation and issue mandatory decisions. Again, this approach may be suitable for some project level activities, but is inappropriate for plans and programmes where ministries of environment have a limited mandate to influence planning processes of other sectoral or regional authorities.

Determining whether a plan or programme requires assessment (screening)

Usual rationale

Effective SEA systems require a determination of whether a plan or programme is likely to have significant environmental effects and thus should be subjected to assessment (i.e. screening). The screening can be carried out through a variety of approaches: some SEA systems taxatively list types of plans

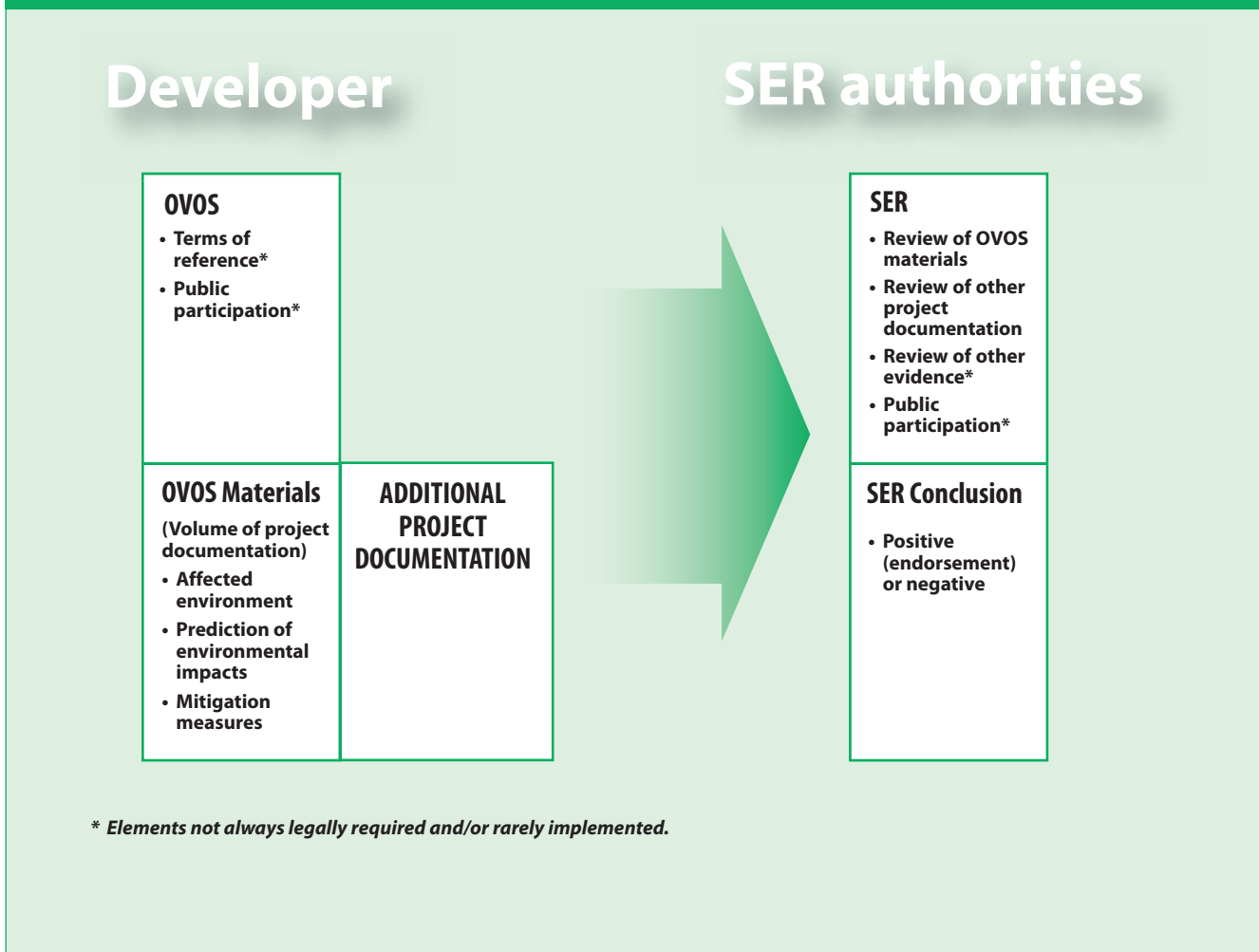
⁵ OECD/DAC (2006), *Good Practice Guidance on Strategic Environmental Assessment*, draft January 2006.

⁶ Article 2, paragraph 5 of the SEA Protocol.

⁷ Preamble of the SEA Protocol.

⁸ *Otsenka vozdeystviya na okruzhayushchuyu sredu* (“assessment of the impacts on the environment”).

Figure 1: Typical simplified content of and relationship between OVOS and SER in an EECCA country



and programmes that always require SEA, other SEA regimes define criteria to determine whether a plan or programme is likely to have significant environmental effects, and some SEA arrangements use a combination of both approaches.

SEA Protocol

The SEA Protocol applies to plans and programmes (and optionally policies and legislation) that are prepared and/or adopted by public authorities on the basis of legislative, regulatory or administrative requirements. The SEA Protocol is not limited to any administrative level — it applies to newly proposed plans and programmes and their amendments at national, regional or local levels.

Out of these plans and programmes, SEA is required only for those that set the framework for future projects that will require EIA and are prepared for agriculture, forestry, fisheries, energy, industry, mining, transport, regional development, waste management, water management, telecommunications, tourism or land use. In addition, SEA is required for plans and programmes which set the framework for future projects and are likely to have significant environmental effects in accordance with the criteria defined by the protocol.

The SEA Protocol requires compulsory consultations with environmental and health authorities when determining whether SEA is required for a certain plan or programme. Such consultations can take place either during case-by-case screening or when the government prepares a list of plans and programmes that require SEA.

Any decision on whether SEA is required for a certain plan or programme has to be made available to the public in a timely manner, either by public notice or by other appropriate means, such as electronic media.

SER/OVOS systems

State environmental review is legally required for the majority of plans and programmes formally prepared and/or adopted by public authorities. It is estimated that there are thousands of project SERs annually conducted in larger EECCA countries (e.g. Ukraine, Belarus) and hundreds in smaller ones (Moldova, Georgia). The majority of these are for project-level activities, but a small number (a few dozen) may be for sectoral programmes or spatial plans (such as urban master plans). Exact statistics on SERs of plans and programmes are hard to come by.

Box 1: Key issues to consider when assessing the plan/programme and compiling the assessment report under the SEA Protocol (Annex IV of the Protocol)

- The contents and main objectives of the plan or programme and its link with other plans or programmes.
- The relevant aspects of the current state of the environment, including health, and the likely evolution thereof should the plan or programme not be implemented.
- The characteristics of the environment, including health, in areas likely to be significantly affected.
- The environmental, including health, problems which are relevant to the plan or programme.
- The environmental, including health, objectives established at international, national and other levels which are relevant to the plan or programme, and the ways in which these objectives and other environmental, including health, considerations have been taken into account during its preparation.
- The likely significant environmental, including health, effects.
- Measures to prevent, reduce or mitigate any significant adverse effects on the environment, including health, which may result from the implementation of the plan or programme.
- An outline of the reasons for selecting the alternatives dealt with and a description of how the assessment was undertaken, including difficulties encountered in providing the information to be included, such as technical deficiencies or lack of knowledge.
- Measures envisaged for monitoring environmental, including health, effects of the implementation of the plan or programme.
- The likely significant transboundary environmental, including health, effects.
- A non-technical summary of the information provided.

Scope of the assessment and resulting report

Usual rationale

Effective SEA systems require early identification of issues that should be addressed in the assessment and determination of the scope of the assessment report. This stage (called scoping) plays a key role since it assures that the assessment focuses on information that really matters and does not waste time on irrelevant analyses. Effective SEA systems require assessment to be undertaken during the elaboration of the respective plan or programme and require consideration of its conclusions in the plan or programme elaboration. An assessment report then documents the outcomes of the assessment and facilitates consultations on the plan or programme with relevant stakeholders (see following section).

SEA Protocol

The SEA Protocol offers a comprehensive list of environmental issues that should be considered during the environmental assessment of a plan or programme (see Box 1). At the same time, it clearly stipulates that the assessment report needs to contain information that may reasonably be required, taking into account the current knowledge and methods of assessment; the contents and the level of detail of the plan or programme and its stage in the decision-making process; the interests of the public; and the information needs of the decision-making body.

The protocol requires compulsory consultations with environmental and health authorities during the scoping in order to

ensure that the scope of the assessment and of the resulting report is properly determined. It also encourages, through its non-binding provisions, participation of the public.

SER/OVOS systems

SER legislation does not normally contain any scoping provisions. In practice, developers often consult SER bodies informally prior to submitting documentation in order to clarify legal or administrative requirements concerning environmental assessment materials.

In relation to OVOS, i.e. primarily for project-level activities, some EECCA countries have recently introduced scoping provisions. For example, in Belarus the developer has to prepare OVOS terms of reference (ToR) which cover the major impacts and alternatives to be investigated, the plan for consultation and public participation as well as some other issues. These terms have to be endorsed by SER authorities before the EIA process proceeds. Some other EECCA countries (e.g. Moldova) do not have explicit scoping requirements. It should be noted that even when scoping requirements exist they relate only to project-level activities and the extent of their practical implementation has not been analysed.

A typical OVOS report is prepared without scoping, based on the standard content specified by sectoral or general instructions. This is often adequate for small or medium-size projects, but may not always work for plans and programmes. Typical OVOS reports concentrate on sources of environmental impacts and pay less, if any, attention to environmental objectives, baselines or alternatives, thereby deviating from the SEA Protocol requirements (see Box 1).

Consultations with the relevant environmental authorities and the public

Usual rationale

All sound SEA systems recognise the importance of early and effective participation by relevant authorities and the public. Such consultations do not only enhance good governance but also enable SEA to effectively utilise knowledge available from authorities and the public. Such consultations do not have to be conducted through a separate procedure — indeed, they are most effective when they enhance already established consultation arrangements in the planning or programming processes.

SEA Protocol

The SEA Protocol requires that the public concerned and the relevant environmental/health authorities be given an early, timely and effective opportunity to express their opinions on the draft plan or programme, and on the assessment report. If it appears that the plan or programme may have significant transboundary effects (on another party to the protocol), or if a potentially “affected party” so requests, the concerned public and the authorities of the affected party must have the opportunity to express their opinions as well.

SER/OVOS systems

The SER procedure, inherited from the non-transparent and technocratic Soviet planning system, has often been criticised for its lack of adequate public participation provisions. Formal public consultations were not mandatory and the only document accessible to the public was the SER resolution (in some systems not even that).

A specific feature of SER/OVOS systems was the provision for public environmental review (PER), a parallel environmental review process which could be organised by a citizens’ group. The PER initiators had mandatory access to OVOS and project or planning documentation, and a PER resolution had to be considered during a state environmental review. However, a public environmental review could only proceed if initiated by a registered NGO and endorsed by authorities. Also, since PER is a voluntary arrangement, very few have been organised and effective.

In recent years, especially following the ratification of the Aarhus and Espoo conventions, several formal public participation requirements have been introduced in EECCA, most notably requirements for mandatory public consultations and for public disclosure of EIA reports. For example, public hearings are required for certain types of activities in Belarus, and the draft EIA report should be present at such hearings. However, as with any other recently introduced EA requirements, the extent of their practical implementation remains unclear.

Decision making

Usual rationale

Almost all SEA systems require explicit consideration of the outcomes of the SEA process in the decision making on the plan or programme. Such a requirement can be arranged either through direct use of the SEA outcomes in the actual plan or programme elaboration or through formal consideration of SEA outcomes in the final decision making on the plan or programme.

SEA Protocol

The SEA Protocol requires the adopted plan/programme to take due account of the environmental report and the opinions expressed by the public concerned and the relevant environmental and health authorities.

Once the plan or programme has been adopted, the decision maker has to summarise how the environmental, including health, considerations have been integrated into it, how the comments received from the public and the authorities have been considered and why the plan or programme is being adopted in the light of other reasonable alternatives. The adopted plan or programme, the decision and the justification must be made publicly available.

SER/OVOS systems

In EECCA countries the findings of environmental assessments are normally used only in one type of decision making, namely, the issuing of an SER resolution. This resolution can be “negative” (which means that the proposal cannot go ahead), “positive” or “positive with conditions.” In practice negative SER resolutions are rarely issued in relation to plans and programmes. SER resolutions are normally available to the public, but there is no clearly regulated mechanism by which these could be adjusted or changed in response to public concerns.

There have been significant discussions on the adequacy of SER resolutions to deal with plans and programmes prepared by other ministries. The most sensible alternative would be to use SEA findings not only for issuing SER resolutions, but also within other decision-making processes.

Monitoring

Usual rationale

The last important requirement of all effective SEA systems calls for monitoring the actual environmental impacts during implementation of the respective plan or programme and for management of any unforeseen adverse impacts. Though there is a lively debate in the SEA community on whether observed environmental changes can be easily attributed to a particular plan or programme, it is clear that attainment of any environment-related objectives and a target is impossible without effective monitoring.

SEA Protocol

The SEA Protocol requires monitoring of significant environmental, including health, effects in order to identify unforeseen adverse effects and to be able to undertake appropriate remedial actions. Results of such monitoring need to be made available to the authorities and to the public.

SER/OVOS systems

In most EECCA countries there are systems of environmental monitoring, but these are rarely explicitly linked to environmental assessments. Many SER systems incorporate procedures for environmental inspections by which competent environmental authorities determine whether economic activities are undertaken in line with SER resolutions. Conditions imposed by SER also often incorporate monitoring requirements. This is, however, a project-level practice and has to be adjusted to suit the specifics of plans and programmes.

3] Capacity development approach for the SEA Protocol

Capacity development framework

UNDP and the REC followed an overall capacity development approach, which is outlined in Table 2. A detailed explanation of this overall framework can be found in the *Resource Manual to Support Application of the UNECE Protocol on Strategic Environmental Assessment*,⁹ which is being developed under the work plan of the Third Meeting of the Parties to the Espoo Convention on EIA in a Transboundary Context (for details, see Decision III/9 of the meeting).

Initial capacity needs assessment

In 2004, national SEA experts carried out an initial capacity needs assessment for the UNECE SEA Protocol during the first stage of the project in five countries: Armenia, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine. The experts had to consult with the key SEA-relevant stakeholders and collect information that would eventually lead to an understanding of the specific country needs for the introduction of and capacity development for implementation of the requirements of the SEA Protocol. The key information resources were the country focal points for the UNECE Espoo Convention and the SEA Protocol in the ministries of the environment, as well as representatives of the relevant health authorities, major environmental NGOs, the scientific community, and others.

The needs assessment addressed the following:

- identification of plans and programmes that will require SEA under the SEA Protocol (i.e. listing all formally initiated plans and programmes in key sectors and describing their frequency);
- analysis of current environmental assessment provisions for plans and programmes (i.e. a description of applicable SER/OVOS provisions, comments on the current practices in their actual application and an outline of expected future changes in these systems);
- priority issues for the effective implementation of the UNECE SEA Protocol (i.e. determining priorities for adequate implementation of main procedural and substantive requirements of the SEA Protocol in the country);
- key stakeholders in SEA reforms (i.e. identification of key institutions responsible for the SEA process, mapping of main stakeholders that promote the SEA/EIA reforms and review of their networking facilities);
- past, ongoing and planned initiatives to build SEA capacity in the country (i.e. overview of formal governmental initiatives, relevant donor assistance programmes, NGO-driven programmes and any university curricula on SEA and EIA); and
- recommendations for the most effective focus of the new SEA capacity development initiatives (i.e. priority interventions that most effectively develop capacity for the implementation of the SEA Protocol and build on the existing initiatives in the country. The menu of options included pilot SEA initiatives, assistance with legal reforms, development of national guidelines, development of training material and training of trainers, promotional campaign or any other capacity development means deemed appropriate).

Information on the review framework and on the outcomes of these initial assessments can be found in the relevant project report.¹⁰

Pilot initiatives

The initial capacity needs assessment determined small pilot initiatives (within the range USD 15,000-20,000) to develop capacity for future implementation of the SEA Protocol.

Armenia and Belarus opted for pilot SEAs on real plans or programmes that were being elaborated in the country. The approach and methodology for these SEAs were designed following the model terms of reference prepared by the REC and UNDP. Georgia, Ukraine and Moldova decided to elaborate national training manuals that explain the requirements of the SEA Protocol and outline the general opportunities for implementation within the current national planning and assessment systems. Country specific outlines of the manuals have been drafted by national teams of experts on the basis of the draft *Resource Manual to Support Application of the UNECE Protocol on Strategic*

⁹ UNECE and REC (2006), *Resource Manual to Support Application of the UNECE Protocol on Strategic Environmental Assessment*, Chapter B1: Capacity development framework for the SEA Protocol, draft May 2006.

¹⁰ Dusik J., Jurkeviciute A., and Martonakova H. (2004) *Regional Overview of the Capacity Building Needs Assessment for the UNECE SEA Protocol*, Project report, UNDP, REC.

Table 2: Capacity development framework for the SEA Protocol

	SYSTEM CAPACITY	INSTITUTIONAL CAPACITY	HUMAN CAPACITY
Key elements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Frameworks within which institutions and individuals operate 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ability of an organisation to effectively operate within the given system 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Skills and expertise of individuals and their motivation
Objectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop overall legislative and regulatory frameworks • Improve inter-institutional coordination • Create “enabling environments” for the development of the entire system 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop organisational performance and functioning capabilities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adjust attitudes towards SEA • Develop skills • Support long-term motivation and commitment
Specific interventions (non-exhaustive list)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Legislative, policy and regulatory reforms • Practical guidelines to assist interaction between key players in the SEA process • Effectiveness reviews of the entire system • Monitoring 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Institutional audits • Internal management guidelines • Improved working conditions (e.g. tools and means of communication) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Training (initial awareness raising and development of basic skills) • Professional development (on-job training and acquisition of advanced know-how) • Professional certification • Develop networks
Cross-cutting interventions (non-exhaustive list)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Awareness raising about benefits of good practice • Platforms for regular professional debate and policy dialogue between the key stakeholders (i.e. professional networks or regular conferences to review and discuss states of practice) • Pilot projects that test proposed changes in legislation or guidance, are implemented as part of inter-institutional learning and involve local experts through on-job training • Award schemes that identify and appreciate best practices • Centres of excellence 		

Source: Adapted from Jurkeviciute and Dusik (2004), *Capacity Development for EIA/SEA Reforms*, unpublished material, REC Environmental Assessment Team.

Environmental Assessment, which was being elaborated by the UNECE and the REC.

To conduct the pilot initiatives, national SEA teams comprised of experts in environmental assessment, planning and public participation were formed in 2004/2005. The teams identified and consulted the key stakeholders, including national authorities in charge of the protocol implementation, national health authorities, planning authorities and relevant think-tanks. In addition, advisory groups of concerned governmental and non-governmental representatives and international experts were formed to guide and supervise pilot initiatives.

The outcomes of these pilot initiatives were discussed during the conference *International Experience and Perspectives in SEA* organised by the International Association of Impact Assessment and the REC in Prague in September 2005. All pilot initiatives concluded with national workshops in the beginning of 2006 by presenting the outcomes of the pilots.

Capacity development strategies

In 2005 the initial capacity needs assessments for the implementation of the SEA Protocol were updated within the preparation of the national strategies for implementation of the UNECE SEA Protocol. These strategies are currently being developed under the work plan of the Third Meeting of the Parties to the Espoo Convention on EIA in a Transboundary Context (for details, see Decision III/9 of the meeting) for Armenia, Belarus, Moldova and Ukraine. Georgia had its own strategy prepared in a technical assistance project of the Netherlands.

The strategies reflected lessons learned within the pilot initiatives and refined capacity development needs and corresponding interventions. They have been developed in close cooperation with the relevant ministries so that they can be used by the respective countries as their official work plans for the implementation of the Protocol requirements to the Meeting of Signatories to the SEA Protocol in 2006. They will be posted on the UNECE website.

4] Summary of pilot initiatives in the project countries

Pilot SEA for Yerevan master plan, Armenia

Summary of key reforms in national SEA system

SEA in Armenia is partially regulated by the Law on Environmental Impact Review (1995), which, besides the environmental impact assessment (EIA) of projects, requires EIA of "concepts." The latter specifically includes "proposals, programmes, complex designs and master plans" as well as "documentation on regional planning and design of complex use of natural resources." Procedures set forth for assessing these documents are vague, and public participation requirements are less rigorous than those for EIA of project documents. In practice, very few strategic documents become subject to environmental assessment, while methodologies of assessment replicate those used for EIA.

The initial capacity needs assessment for the implementation of the SEA Protocol identified the following priority issues:

- adoption of relevant legal acts with clearer formulation of SEA scope, process, procedures and responsibilities;
- clarification of practices of public participation;
- development of methodologies and guidelines for screening, scoping, environmental and economic assessment, environmental review and monitoring of impacts of strategic documents;
- implementation of SEA pilot initiatives and capacity development for SEA of plans, programmes, policies and legislation in different sectors; and
- establishment of a National Centre for Capacity Building in Environmental Assessment.

Introduction to the SEA pilot

Based on the discussion with the national authorities and relevant stakeholders, the Yerevan City Master Plan was selected as the most suitable planning document for the pilot activity. The purpose of the SEA was to test and demonstrate opportunities for practical application of the SEA Protocol, considering the protocol requirement on public participation and stakeholder deliberation and to provide recommendations for environmental optimising and modifications of the Yerevan City Master Plan.

A pilot SEA was carried out for the Master Plan of Yerevan City for 2006-2020, a document that maps the main directions of development of the capital of Armenia to adapt social, environmental and economic challenges of the market economy.

Analytical approach used in SEA

In accordance with a specific methodology, the SEA was launched upon completion of the Concept Paper of the Master Plan in March 2005. The SEA methodology included a

review of the environmental issues in the plan and an indicator-based assessment of potential impacts of its main directions, with reference to selected environmental objectives for the city.

The environmental issues that were assessed include atmospheric pollution; water resource use and pollution; soil contamination; landscapes, green areas and forests; waste management; physical impacts and human health. Alternatives studied included the main directions proposed by the plan and the "do-nothing" alternative. An SEA study was carried out using expert judgments with contributions from experts representing stakeholder institutions and the public.

Consultations with environmental authorities and the public

Stakeholder consultations included relevant ministries and other government institutions, academia, research and design institutes, neighbourhood communities and NGOs. They were informed through invitations, official notifications in print media and electronic networks, and involved two levels of discussions: in the scoping of SEA and the review of the draft SEA report along with the master plan.

As a result of the SEA, certain aspects of the plan were modified following consultations with the SEA team and with other stakeholders. The aspects included rationalisation of the system of green areas, treatment of rainwater, measures to reduce air pollution and other environmental issues.

The SEA report was used in the process of state environmental review of the Yerevan Master Plan, which endorsed the Master Plan.

Results and lessons learned

It was helpful that key experts involved in the elaboration of the master plan were included in the SEA team. The SEA team and the planning team were in regular communication. The following is recommended for the future: SEA should begin in the initial stage of the development of respective strategic documents. It is useful to agree on mechanisms for collaboration between the planners and SEA experts and on procedures for their joint interaction with external stakeholders and the public.

It was suggested that future SEAs should be conducted by or at least led by the proponent.

Pilot SEA for the National Programme for Tourism Development for Belarus

Summary of key reforms in national SEA system

Though SEA as a systematic process does not exist in Belarus, some elements of SEA are present in the legal basis and in practice. The Law on State Environmental Expert Review (1993, amended in 2000) stipulates that state environmental expert review (SEER) is mandatory for concepts and programmes for sectoral, land-use and urban development, natural resources use and protection. Plans for spatial development undergo SEER on a regular basis. The Ministry of Natural Resources and Environmental Protection is responsible for conducting SEER of plans and programmes submitted by other ministries.

Environmental examination of strategic initiatives in Belarus is not a regular and routine practice. There are no national regulations and guidelines on SEA. There is also limited stakeholder awareness about the benefits of SEA. Even the professional community lacks knowledge and expertise in the field of environmental assessment of strategic initiatives. Poor public participation in environmental assessment adds to these deficiencies.

The introduction of SEA in Belarus requires building national capacity in this field. The initial capacity needs assessment revealed the following priority issues in SEA methodology:

- the application of environmental objectives in SEA;
- analysis of possible substantial environmental impacts; and
- consultations with environment protection and health authorities.

The following areas were also identified as problematic and requiring help in developing national capacity in terms of the SEA process:

- organisation of public consultations in the SEA process;
- identification of the scope of SEA; and
- arranging transboundary consultations.

Introduction to the SEA pilot

The National Programme for Tourism Development in Belarus for 2006-2010 has been chosen as an object of the pilot SEA. The developer of the programme was the Ministry of Sport and Tourism of Belarus. The programme defines the objectives and directions for tourism development in Belarus. It also sets the timeframe and describes the means for achieving the stated goals and objectives, as well as the responsible institutions. The programme covers the whole country and is planned for five years (2006-2010). The main interventions proposed were the development of an institutional basis — including amendments to the existing legal framework and financial arrangements — development of infrastructure for national tourism, and marketing of the Belarusian tourism product.

The pilot SEA pursued two main objectives: to test and demonstrate opportunities for practical application of the SEA Protocol in Belarus taking into account its public participation and consultations requirements, and to provide a recommendation for environmental optimisation and modifications of a national programme chosen as the subject of the pilot SEA. It can be stated that the pilot assessment was carried out *ex ante*, since the results of the assessment were submitted to the planning team during the process of the programme's development.

Analytical approach used in SEA

Specific objectives were identified in the following environmental fields: air pollution, water pollution and management, waste management, conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity, sustainable land management and public health aiming at sustainable use or protection of specific natural resources and public health. The assessment of the programme was focused on the process of programme implementation and how it would affect the identified aspects of the environment and public health. A few loca-

tion alternatives have been proposed in addition to the impact assessment of the implementation of the programme as a whole.

The assessment was based on expert judgment. The assessment results were submitted to the planning team throughout the process of programme development on a regular basis. A meeting between the SEA team and the planning was held to discuss the SEA findings.

Consultations with environmental authorities and public

To discuss the findings of the pilot SEA, consultations were organised with the environmental authorities, the key Belarusian ministries that will be involved in the process of implementation of the tourism development programme, and with the public. The consultations were held at the stage of first draft SEA report. The first draft SEA report and the assessed draft programme were disseminated to the representatives of the consulted stakeholders well beforehand to allow them to get acquainted with the materials. Three roundtables with the respective stakeholders to discuss the first draft SEA report were held. Additionally, after a roundtable with representatives from the general public and environmental NGOs, a special report was prepared describing which of the public comments and suggestions were accepted and which were rejected and why. This report was delivered to the parties that had provided comments or suggestions.

Results and lessons learned

The pilot assessment raised the awareness of programme developers of the benefits of SEA. Though the developer has not accepted a number of proposed changes by the SEA team, some of them have been reflected in the final version of the programme. SEA, for instance, resulted in the inclusion of the new efficient use of the natural resources among the objectives of the programme; or in an exemption of one of the main natural reserves (Berezinsky Biospherical Reserve) from future intensive development of national and international tourism due to very likely adverse significant impact on environment.

The general analytical approach employed in this pilot assessment was appropriate and can be used in future SEA in Belarus. It seems useful to include a specialist on an SEA team in the field the programme is developed for. Since the SEA assessment of the programme should examine its compliance with the existing national legal framework and the main national strategic initiatives for environmental protection, it is wise to involve a professional lawyer.

Recommendations for programme optimisation should be presented in an easy and understandable manner to the programme developer. It is useful at the beginning of the SEA process to consult the developer on how they prefer recommendations to be organised and presented — very general or very detailed recommendations and comments including suggested wording, and changed or deleted text.

Public and environmental NGOs have shown little interest in participating in consultations on the SEA findings. This lack of interest can be attributed to the issue of SEA itself (the "strategic" issues appeared to be not very attractive to the public) and to low awareness of the general public and

environmental NGOs in Belarus of the SEA benefits and how the general public and environmental NGOs can effectively participate in the SEA process. An intensive awareness raising campaign of the SEA benefits that targets the general public and environmental NGOs should be conducted. Additionally, decision makers and SEA professionals should be educated in terms of the benefits of public involvement in the SEA process.

The pilot revealed a further need to train in-country experts in management of the SEA process.

SEA manual for Georgia

Summary of key reforms in national SEA system

The Georgian Law on Standard Acts requires legislative or executive bodies to obtain the approval of concerned state bodies prior to adopting or approving documents such as laws, plans, programmes, projects and other strategic documents, the implementation of which falls under the interests of various state authorities. Therefore, this process envisages preliminary assessment of the documents (i.e. an element of SEA).

At the same time the Law on Environmental Permits requires assessing infrastructural plans, projects and programmes that are specified in the law and require an environmental permit prior to adoption or approval by legislative or executive bodies. These strategic decisions, in other words, need to undergo OVOS and SER procedures. Yet, there were no cases of carrying out environmental assessment procedures for such documents and they are being approved without the issuing of an environmental permit.

There are attempts to revive the strategic planning in Georgia, but most of the donor driven strategic planning processes still need to be proven influential and effective. The notable exception to this rule was the development of PRSP for Georgia, which offered opportunities for solid public participation and involvement and turned out to be a successful planning exercise. Another area that shows some signs of recovery is urban planning. Consultation practice is weak, since usually even other relevant governmental stakeholders are not involved. In the overall context the manual of SEA and its application in the planning processes was a much welcome initiative.

An introductory, capacity needs assessment identified the following priorities:

- the need to support legal reforms (e.g. preparing a new draft law on the introduction of the SEA Protocol);
- development of guidelines with suggestions for an SEA approach, recommendations on methodology, etc.; and
- elaboration of tutorial materials/methodologies and training of the instructors.

Purpose of the manual and involvement of its intended users

The manual covers both methodological suggestions and guidelines, and introduces SEA and tutorial materials for

future SEA trainers. Its primary target group consists of relevant and interested ministries, but it can also be used by other stakeholders such as public and business organisations, associations, and research and educational institutions.

Two stakeholder awareness raising and consultation workshops on the manual took place in Georgia in June and December 2005. Numerous suggestions have been provided by participants, as well as requests for specific information and explanations on, for example, the terms of plans and programmes and how they are interpreted in the protocol. A request was made to add Georgian examples of public information and participation options and specifics of the country, among others. In general, stakeholders asked for a short, readable and attractive manual with many practical examples. It is envisioned to organise training for the representatives of the target group using the available version of the manual to better adjust the document to the needs and concerns of the target groups.

Content and form of the manual

The introduction of the manual familiarises the reader with SEA, its relationship to the planning process and its benefits. Chapter 2, "Strategic Environmental Assessment Procedure," summarises the SEA procedure and requirements set out in the SEA Protocol. Chapter 3, "Methodology of Strategic Environmental Assessment," presents principles for selecting suitable methods; describes existing SEA methodology, selection of the relevant environmental issues and objectives, identification of indicators, assessment of the current baseline, and development of alternatives; analysis of expected impacts and principles of presentation of information in the SEA report. It also explains the reasons behind public participation, typology and examples of public participation methods. Chapter 4, "Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes in Georgia," covers the planning and assessment history in Georgia, summarises relevant national legislation and existing practices, and suggests changes in the assessment system.

Results and lessons learned

The manual is conceived as a living document that is open for updates if the interest, needs and resources arise. The adaptation and updating of the manual should be considered once a legislative framework exists in the field. Previous experience with instruments similar to OVOS/SER has to be examined and used in the elaboration of the document.

SEA manual for Moldova

Summary of key reforms in national SEA system

Moldova does not have complete legal provisions that regulate the SEA procedure. In the Law on Environmental Evaluation and Environmental Impact Assessment No. 851 of May 29, 1996 (last amended in 2003), Article 6 (2) states that "the state environmental evaluation is mandatory for "new projects, programmes, plans, diagrams, strategies and concepts." The law also provides that "The OVOS procedure — upon decision of the central agency for natural resources and environment protection — is mandatory for documents of strategic nature on development of the national economy, and projects and activities depending on the expected level of

environmental impact,” in Article 16 (2). However, the law does not specify procedures and mechanisms for elaboration of OVOS documentation and environmental impact statements for documents of strategic nature.

Government Regulation No. 72 on The Public Participation in Decision Making Process Regarding Issues of Environment Protection, of January 25, 2000 in chapter IV, paragraph 17 states that the “participatory approach is mandatory in decision-making process regarding national projects and programmes of social and economic development, which involve use of natural resources and have significant impact on environment.”

An initial capacity needs assessment identified the following key priority activities for Moldova:

- comprehensive case study; development of training materials; workshops and training; training manuals adapted to the national systems; and existing expertise in SEA;
- development of national guidelines specifying the SEA approach, recommendations, methods which can be applied, etc.; and
- a pilot initiative: supporting an SEA in preparing a country development plan.

Purpose of the manual and involvement of its intended users

Developing a manual is the first step in informing and familiarising the planners and stakeholders with SEA. It should also create a foundation for developing this instrument in Moldova. The manual is aimed at helping planners to initiate SEA on both the local and national levels. In reality, the materials offer guidance rather than a manual per se, suggesting awareness raising activities and explaining the linkages between the planning process and the SEA process. It offers examples (bringing it close to the training) as well as explaining differences between EIA and SEA.

The country specific manual contains a description of why implementing the SEA Protocol provisions is needed for sustainable development in Moldova. The purpose of the manual is to support and strengthen the capacity of Moldavian institutions in the development and implementation of national and regional programmes according to the provisions of the SEA Protocol.

The manual is intended for expert groups dealing with the development of national and regional plans and programmes, different levels of central and local authorities responsible for the implementation of developed national and regional programmes and plans, NGOs, public institutions involved in implementation of national and regional plans and programmes, as well as the scientific community and students.

The envisaged users were invited to participate in several regional meetings which focused specifically on the applicability of SEA to integrated river basin management planning.

Content and form of the manual

The manual is structured in five chapters. Chapter 1 contains an introduction to SEA to familiarise the reader with the def-

inition, objectives and benefits of SEA. Chapter 2, “Introduction to the SEA Protocol,” highlights the key substantial and procedural obligations arising from the protocol. Chapter 3, “SEA and Planning Process,” describes the various approaches to undertaking SEA in relation to the planning process and highlights pros and cons of separate partially and fully integrated SEA into the planning procedures. Chapter 4, “Public Consultation and Participation,” describes the procedures and methods for effective and early public participation in SEA. Chapter 5, “SEA Tools and Methods,” presents the basic tools that may be used to conduct SEA in Moldova.

The final version in Romanian will be posted on the websites of REC Moldova and the Ministry of the Environment, and will be distributed on up to 70 CD-ROMs.

Results and lessons learned

A country with no experience in SEA needs to be closely monitored and guided by international experts, in order to ensure that a correct approach is taken to the elaboration of the manual and a better understanding of the SEA Protocol’s provisions. It is imperative to involve national experts with good knowledge of these provisions, the national environmental assessment system and other relevant issues in the elaboration of the national manual.

The level of collaboration with the responsible authority (i.e. the Ministry of the Environment), is of high importance to ensure further development of the national SEA capacity, but involving other stakeholders is also important to ensure transparency, a participatory approach in the project for developing policies, as well as the competencies and capacity of the authority.

It is important to pay great attention to translating the nature of the SEA Protocol, its benefits, and the way it can influence the environmental assessment system to the decision makers, so that they understand and find a place for SEA in the national legislative and regulatory system, as well as to the national environmental assessment experts, so that they appreciate how it differs from the OVOS or SER procedures.

SEA manual for Ukraine

Summary of key reforms in national SEA system

An initial national capacity needs assessment has shown that there is a certain legislative and methodological basis for SEA implementation in Ukraine. According to the Law on State Ecological Review (SER), SER is required for proposed laws and regulation acts, pre-project studies, projects, changes in technologies, new materials, substances and productions of thereof, which can lead to an infringement of environmental norms and negative impact on environment. The law governing master plans for urban territories contains a requirement to describe environmental considerations in a separate chapter of the plan and to take them into account.

The SEA Protocol should apply also to the state programmes and prognoses of socio-economic development.

Purpose of the manual and involvement of its intended users

The manual demonstrates the benefits of SEA implementation, shows the place and potential role of SEA in Ukrainian planning and assessment framework, and provides an outline and directions for further information gathering on the main SEA procedures and instruments. As much as possible, the manual is based on existing national practice methods and approaches.

The national manual is a source book for environmental officials, planners and local authority representatives, who will be the responsible professionals for on-the-ground SEA Protocol implementation. Since SEA literature in Ukrainian is quite limited, the manual will also have the elements targeted for the researchers, students and NGOs.

Three consultation meetings/round tables on the manual took place in Kharkiv, Kyiv and Lviv in 2005. Representatives of the municipal authorities, political parties, officials from the Ministry of Environment and the Ministry of Emergency Situations, NGOs, and research institutions were present and expressed their interest in receiving further information on and participating in the process of SEA capacity building in Ukraine. It was underlined during the consultations that the manual has to be based on the national environmental assessment practice, with introduction of good international practice elements.

Content and form of the manual

The SEA capacity building manual consists of seven chapters. Chapter 1 introduces SEA and provides general information on SEA international development, Ukraine's obligations and existing practice. Chapter 2 deals with SEA Protocol implementation in the context of policy, programmes, plans and legislation development. It identifies SEA's place and potential role in the national planning and prognosis context, and demonstrates the benefits of SEA implementation. Chapter 3, "The Basic Elements of the SEA Protocol Implementation," outlines the SEA steps and procedures, while Chapter 4, "Public Participation in SEA," discusses the national practice regarding public participation in environmental decision making in the context of SEA implementations. The manual gives an overview of the SEA methods and tools in Chapter 5, where Ukrainian experience in using some environmental assessment, planning and managerial instruments is provided. Chapter 6, "SEA Process Management," gives brief guidance on best practice in SEA process management. The final part of the manual summarises the educational potential for SEA in Ukraine. The manual is supplemented by annexes with relevant national and international documents and some case studies.

The manual will be in Ukrainian with annotations in English to each module. It will be printed and distributed to the target institutions in hard copies (in Ukrainian), posted on the site of the Ministry of Environmental Protection (in English and Ukrainian) and produced on CD-ROMs for distribution at the final workshop only.

Results and lessons learned

Although the institutional framework (such as legislative and regulative) is important for in-county SEA development, much more could be achieved if capacity development is based as much as possible on already existing national prac-

tice and international obligations. A two-pronged approach could be recommended for capacity development for transitional countries: top-down analysis and, where necessary, developing a legislative and regulative framework; and, at the same time, bottom-up education for professionals, awareness raising and good practice dissemination.

5] Lessons learned

General lessons

Despite the legal obligation to conduct an environmental assessment of plans and programmes, it has proven challenging to align the SER/OVOS system with internationally accepted SEA principles. As a consequence, there is virtually no clear, practically applicable guidance on how to implement SEA in the EECCA region. The guidance that exists often mechanically extends project-level OVOS requirements to strategic activities which has often led to negative experiences and discouraged more extensive practical application of SEA. The resulting lack of practical experience prevents the development of useful SEA guidance, thus completing the vicious circle of low capacity for SEA (see Figure 2 on page 14).

Results of capacity development initiatives supported by UNDP and the REC

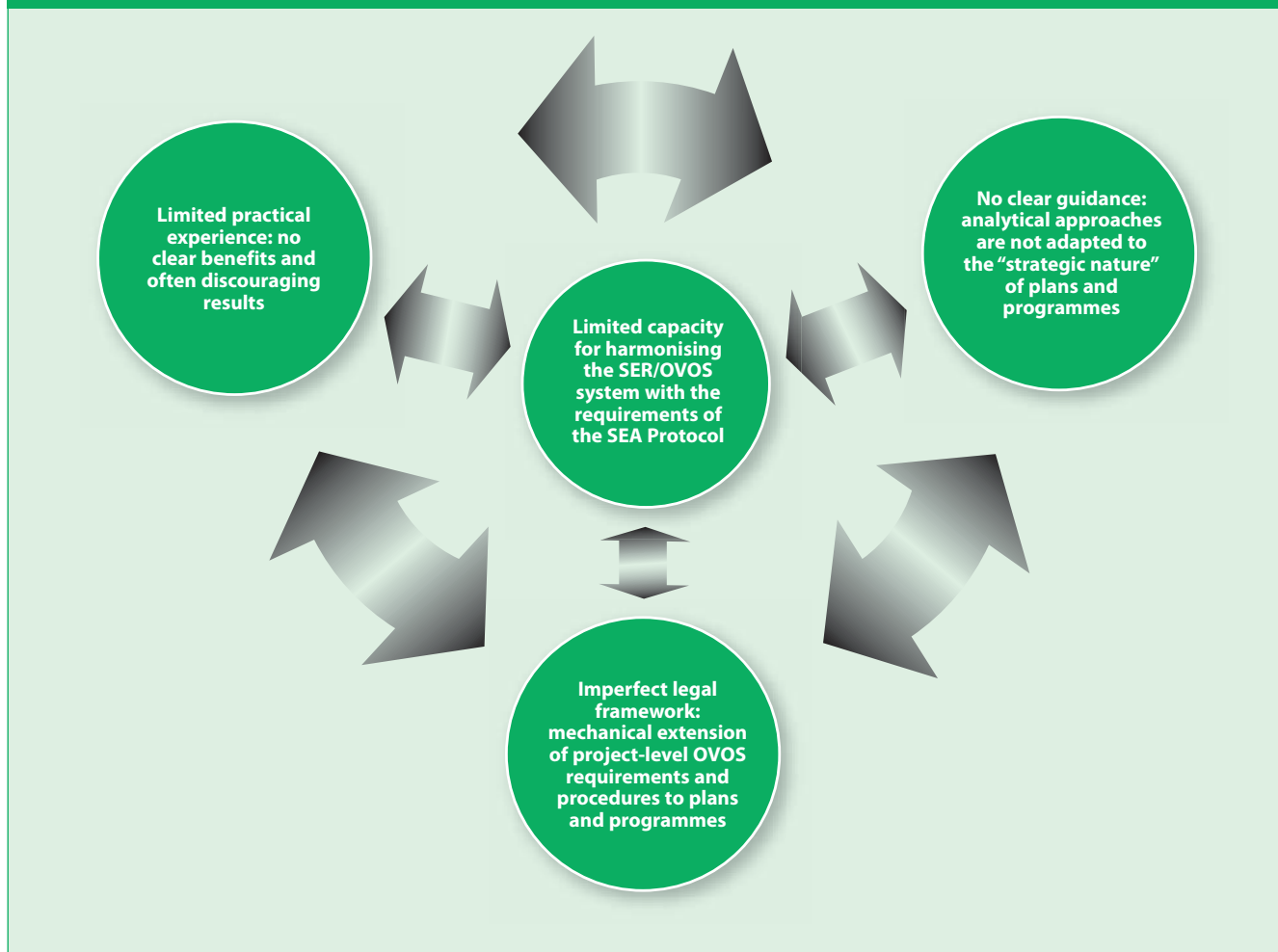
As indicated in the SEA capacity development framework outlined in Table 2, one isolated initiative is unlikely to raise the capacities in a country or a region significantly. Projects such as those presented in this Bulletin should be perceived as start-up initiatives for a longer-term preparation of the EECCA countries to ratify or accede to the UNECE SEA Protocol.

The most significant outcome of UNDP and REC initiatives was raised awareness of national stakeholders about SEA and its benefits. Indeed, there was a strong perception in the region that the SER/OVOS process does not need major reform. Before the project, even environmental professionals questioned the added value of SEA to current assessment practices in their countries.

The project enabled a number of stakeholders to participate in the pilot SEA initiatives and training sessions, discuss SEA through roundtables and informal discussions, and to obtain basic information about SEA (e.g. in some countries the outcomes of the project were even broadcast by the mass media).

The development of the national SEA capacity development manuals was treated more as an awareness raising campaign and capacity development activity for those that were directly involved in the preparation of the material and invited to the consultations, rather than the elaboration of comprehensive manuals to aid in applying SEA. The national experts had great difficulty in adapting the conceptual approach to SEA because of a lack of testing in the respective countries. The aim and character of the first national

Figure 2: “Vicious circle” of capacity development for the introduction of SEA into OVOS/SER systems



manuals were therefore revisited and modified. As a result, these manuals were the first national materials explaining and interpreting the SEA Protocol requirements, thus contributing to the overall awareness and understanding of SEA benefits and concept.

The pilot SEA initiative proved to be a more important and efficient means for capacity development than the elaboration of manuals. They exposed and introduced innovative approaches to assessment in planning, based on the SEA Protocol requirements. Indeed, they had a maximum impact by being pioneers in the application of the SEA Protocol requirements in the countries. Perhaps their most important impact was their ability to raise interest among programme developers in learning about SEA. At the beginning of the pilots (e.g. in Belarus) programme developers did not even want to discuss new assessment tools. Because of the project, they started to participate in the discussion about the introduction of SEA into planning systems. Moving from denying SEA to thinking about possible ways of upgrading national environmental assessment systems represents a significant step forward.

Lastly, the UNDP and REC initiative confirmed that the real developments of SEA systems in the respective countries needs to be closely linked to the emergence of networks of

academics, professionals and officials who could collectively identify with the success of environmental assessment, elaborate domestically suitable approaches to this instrument, popularise it in various sectors and jointly lobby for its reforms. In this respect, a key result of this initiative has been the emergence of such SEA networks and the initiation of national dialogues on policies to promote SEA. Moreover, through various regional activities the national networks started to interact with each other. This interaction is, at the moment, very nascent, but should definitely be supported in the future.

Future steps

It is evident that the audiences in EECCA are still far from fully understanding the requirements and implications of the SEA Protocol, and there is a need for continued external support and capacity development initiatives.

The initiative supported by the UNDP and the REC identified the priority needs for developing national SEA capacities. These include, in particular, the need to train national experts in SEA process management through practical pilot or demonstration initiatives. Experience from similar initiatives carried out by the REC in six Central and Eastern European countries demonstrated that such on-the-job training

can be very effective when combined with seminars where participants in the SEA pilots discuss their acquired experience, disseminate their insights and thus contribute to the development of the entire system.

The UNDP and REC initiative raised the interest of the Meeting of the Signatories to the UNECE Protocol in supporting SEA capacity development in the selected EEECA countries. As a result, official capacity development strategies for the implementation of the SEA Protocol were drafted in spring 2006 under the workplan of the Espoo Convention. These strategies, whose elaboration has been facilitated by the REC, UNDP and UNECE, propose long-term and mid-term strategies and suggest key short-term interventions that are summarised in Table 3.

In addition to the above-mentioned national strategies, the draft strategy for implementation of the UNECE SEA Protocol in the selected EECCA countries elaborated by the REC, UNDP and UNECE also proposes a regional component to facilitate the sharing of lessons learned. Schemes proposed for consideration include creating and building a "regional SEA community of practice" by means of organising regional workshops, conferences and training on SEA for the EECCA countries, creating e-networks and issuing an e-mail

newsletter on SEA in EECCA, and operating a website in Russian and English. It is proposed that such regional networking, if supported, is closely linked to international professional networks for impact assessment such as International Association of Impact Assessment (IAIA).¹¹ Such steps could eliminate the current isolation of EIA and SEA practitioners in EECCA from their colleagues in other parts of the world and could provide a lasting stimulus to advance environmental assessment practices in EECCA.

The proposals contained in the national strategies and a regional package of SEA initiatives will be presented during the upcoming Meeting of Signatories to the SEA Protocol. The countries will commit themselves to continuing capacity development activities for the SEA Protocol and will invite donors to support them in this goal.

The national capacity development manuals and the pilot SEA reports will be available at www.undp.org/europeandcis and www.rec.org. The national and regional capacity-development strategies will be available at www.unece.org/env/eia/activities.html.

Table 3: Proposed national initiatives for implementation of the SEA Protocol in selected EECCA countries

Types of initiatives	ARMENIA	BELARUS	MOLDOVA	UKRAINE
Elaboration or modification of national regulations and laws on SEA	Development and legal adoption of SEA guidelines; Development of by-laws and regulations supporting implementation of the Law on State Environmental Review	—	Approximation of the national legislation with the requirements of the UNECE SEA Protocol and EC SEA Directive	Development of a legislative and regulatory basis for SEA implementation
Undertaking pilot SEAs	Implementation of pilot SEA projects	—	—	SEA demonstration project
Training and networking	—	Enhancing the national professional capacity for SEA Improving the national system capacity and the capacity of organisations for SEA application	Training of the national experts regarding SEA	SEA expert network development
Awareness raising in SEA	—	Raising stakeholder awareness of SEA benefits	Awareness raising campaign on the SEA Protocol	—

¹¹ See www.iaia.org

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