

# Strategic Environmental Assessment and “Governance for Sustainability”



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# From the Environmental Impact Assessment to Strategic Environmental Assessment

- Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) refers to isolated public and private projects, which have significant effects on the environment. (Directive 85/337/EEC)
- Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) refers to the integration of the environment into strategic decision-making (plans and programmes) in all sectors (Directive 2001/42/EEC)

# Key objective of SEA

- Not simply to raise the environmental issues in the development of sectoral programmes but to evaluate policy making processes, institutions, mechanisms and tools within all governance arenas towards sustainable development.
- The new Directive 2001/42/EEC, reflects the political agreement of the member states of EU to achieve integration at the most strategic levels of policy making.

# Problems and Conflicts

- Lack of complementarities and synergies between sectoral policies (especially regional policy and environmental policy).
- Lack of participation of citizens in policy making decisions.
- Reduction of consultation process in bureaucratic formal procedures.
- Ad hoc mechanisms of environmental assessment of projects based mainly on tools of natural resource/ environmental management (EIA).
- Ad hoc specific legal provisions for environmental protection and legislation without integrating them in other policy processes.
- Different problems according to the existing institutional and policy structures in each country.

# Strategic Environmental Assessment

- Optimal integration strategy, based on two main disciplines (natural resource management, and policy political science) and geared towards governance for sustainability.

- “Environmental assessment is an important tool for integrating environmental considerations into the preparation and adoption of certain plans and programmes which are likely to have significant effects on the environment in the Member States, because it ensures that such effects of implementing plans and programmes are taken into account during their preparation and before their adoption.”  
(Directive 2001/42/EEC)
- Principle of subsidiarity (Community lays down a minimum environmental assessment framework  
Member States: set out the details)

- “In order to contribute to more transparent decision making and with the aim of ensuring that the information supplied for the assessment is comprehensive and reliable, it is necessary to provide that authorities with relevant environmental responsibilities and the public are to be consulted during the assessment of plans and programmes, and that appropriate time frames are set, allowing sufficient time for consultations, including the expression of opinion.” (Directive 2001/42/EEC)
- Dependence on the different government and governance structures of each country (screening)

- “The environmental report and the opinions expressed by the relevant authorities and the public, as well as results of any transboundary consultation, should be taken into account during the preparation of the plan or programme and before its adoption or submission to the legislative procedure.”  
(Directive 2001/42/EEC)

# EU Cohesion Policy (2007-2013) and SEA

- EU Cohesion Policy draws around 1/3 of the EU budget
- Effectiveness of EU Cohesion Policy depends on the integration of environmental concerns within plans and programmes
- 2007-2013 Programme period: SEA as a tool to strengthen the programming process, though public consultation on strategic environmental assessment.
- (e.g. Handbook on SEA for Cohesion Policy, 2006)

# Strategic Environmental Assessment serves multiple aims towards Governance for Sustainability:

## 1. Enhancement of new forms of governance

- SEA creates links between different levels of policy and planning hierarchies, and reinforces co-ordination and synergies.
- Enhancement of participation of different stakeholders in the consultation procedures (ex ante, decision making, implementation)
- SEA increases political legitimation, accountability and transparency.

## 2. Enhancement of new types of knowledge and innovation

- Through the participation of new actors, new types of knowledge emerge:
  - Steering knowledge
  - Expert knowledge
  - “local” knowledge } “reflective” knowledge
- SEA plays a critical role in raising environmental awareness (as an active educational and training scheme)

### 3. SEA serves as a dynamic tool for strategic policy making promoting sustainability.

#### a. Integration

- Changing attitudes and culture within hierarchical systems of government, overcoming compartmentalization, fragmentation, sectoralisation towards integration at the most strategic levels of decision-making
- Enhance communication processes and networking as an engine for transforming hierarchical structures, top-down decision-making and legalistic traditions.

#### b. Effectiveness & Legitimation

- Auditing, monitoring and quality control increase effectiveness (and not vs) guaranteeing transparency and participation of wider public and stakeholders increasing legitimacy.

#### c. Sustainability Appraisal

- No substitution for SEA-Sustainability Appraisal but complementarity

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*Thank you for your attention*