



HUSZPO

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Introduction to SEA -- past, present and future

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Barry Sadler: Introduction to SEA - past, present and future

Introduction

- Review key events in SEA development in the EU and internationally
- Take stock of the status of implementation of SEA Directive
- Consider future directions and prospects for SEA in the age of the Anthropocene



Is SEA practice on the right track in a world of tipping points?

Background

Recalling why SEA is important

- mainstreams the environment in decision-making across all sectors and levels
- helps strengthen and streamline EIA
- identifies environmental problems at their source rather than addressing symptoms
- early warning of cumulative effects
- greater opportunity to deliver sustainability agenda

Main phases in SEA evolution

- *Formative stage* (1970 - 1990) -- legal and policy precedents established but limited application (USA)
- *Initial take up and diversification* (1990 - 2001) – SEA introduced in other countries, both separately from and as part of EIA
- *Formalization and proliferation* (2001 onward) – SEA Directive and SEA Protocol; major regimes with standardised' process; broader family of SEA-types tools; various names, typologies, brands and linkages

SEA Directive

- *Negotiation* – framework law; long in the making; minimum EIA-based procedure
- *Transposition* – variable speed; delayed in most countries; 15 infringement procedures, 5 ECJ rulings; laws now in place for all MS, but many conformity and consistency issues
- *Application* – record varies widely across MS; EC evaluation of initial experience indicates many issues; gaps in scope and substance of the Directive; inadequacies of SEA practice

Areas of insufficiency in EC SEA practice

- Evaluation of cumulative impacts
- Consideration of substantive aspects (scoping)
- Analysis of alternatives and scenarios
- Review of quality review of SEA reports
- Explanation of uncertainties and other difficulties
- Monitoring of significant effects
- Public consultation

Taking on New Challenges and Opportunities

- SEA has progressively taken on new directions and areas;
- Now taking on bigger picture issues of environmental sustainability (albeit slowly)
- Work on SEA in biodiversity under UN Convention
- Use of SEA to address climate change adaptation and disaster risk reduction (World Bank/OECD)
- Consideration of ecosystem services in SEA (MEA is a major driver)
- Now forging links to resilience and vulnerability assessment

Future Directions -- from SEA to ESA?

- Establish framework of objectives, criteria and indicators to frame the limits of acceptable change
- Evaluate significant impacts against bottom line of environmental safeguards
- Use the precautionary principle commensurate with levels of risk and uncertainty
- Use polluter pays principle to compensate for residual loss and damage to critical natural capital

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End or beginning?



***The world is changing fast:
How should SEA change in response?***