



HUSZPO

HRVATSKA UDRUGA STRUČNJAKA ZAŠTITE PRIRODE I OKOLIŠA

PRVA REGIONALNA KONFERENCIJA O PROCJENI UTJECAJA NA OKOLIŠ
FIRST REGIONAL CONFERENCE ON ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT
Zadar, Croatia • rujan/september 18-21, 2013.

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THE USE AND EFFECTIVENESS OF SEA IN SLOVENIA

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Introduction

- In 1970s Slovenia was one of the leading states in the field of assessment of impacts on environment.
- Full swing was a result of studies of alternatives and assessment of impacts on the environment concerning several infrastructure projects in late 90-ties.
- Implementation of SEA Directive in 2004 in many ways changed the procedures of the preparation of plans, whose implementation may have a significant impact on the environment, though a comprehensive assessment of actual effectiveness was not yet available.
- Purpose of the project "The Use and Effectiveness of Strategic Environmental Assessment" is to obtain an estimate of what Slovenia has achieved so far regarding the implementation of SEA, how the SEA process has contributed to the goals of environmental protection and what were the efficiency, costs and benefits of its practicing. In addition, a methodology for integration of health impact assessment into formal SEA was developed.
- A research project was commissioned by the Slovenian Research Agency, Ministry of Environment and Spatial Planning and Ministry of Health and prepared by the University of Ljubljana, Biotechnical Faculty, Department of Landscape Architecture, Jozef Stefan Institute and Aquarius ekološki inženiring d.o.o. The lead authors are Alenka Cof, Branko Kontić, Aleš Mlakar, Bojanka Štern, Lea Trnovšek and Martin Žerdin.

Method

- Project addresses two aspects of strategic assessment - substantive efficiency and procedural effectiveness of SEA.
- SEA is considered efficient if:
 - Information gained within the process of strategic assessment contribute to decision making;
 - Predictions of impacts are accurate;
 - Proposed mitigation measures contribute to achieving the objectives of environmental protection and sustainable development.
- SEA is considered effective if the administrative procedure meets the basic premise of strategic assessment:
 - Selection of environmentally (the most) acceptable alternative;
 - Improvement of assessed policies, programs and plans, especially in terms of the objectives of environmental protection and sustainable development.
- The efficiency of SEA is primarily measured at the level of the environmental report author, as well as at the level of environmental report itself. The effectiveness of SEA is primarily measured at the level of the maker of a policy, program or plan and on a policy, program or plan (here and after PPP) itself.

Method

- As a groundwork for analysis the criteria system of substantive efficiency and procedural effectiveness of SEA was prepared. For the purpose of making an analysis using indicators, a system of subsidiary questions was formed, which allowed the unique analysis of survey and representative environmental reports. The quality of the starting points of strategic assessment and the degree of efficiency/effectiveness is assessed by four-point scale:
 - E: Exemplary;
 - S: Satisfactory;
 - D: Defective;
 - I: Inappropriate.
- The criteria were used in several methods for analyzing the use and effectiveness of SEA:
 - the opinion poll among representative participants in SEA process;
 - the review of representative environmental reports;
 - and, the series of interviews and workshops with the participants in SEA process.

Evaluation of practice

- Analysis has shown a wide range of variation in practice. SEA in some cases exceeds a verification procedure and becomes an optimization activity, which aims to plan a modification/change in the way that causes the least impact on the environment. On the other hand, the practice is associated with misunderstanding of the purpose of SEA, with a number of conflict situations, including procedural complications resulting in extended time and costs, inability to implement legitimate developmental interests and environmentally appropriate solutions. However, both substantive efficiency and procedural effectiveness of SEA were found as satisfying to deficient.

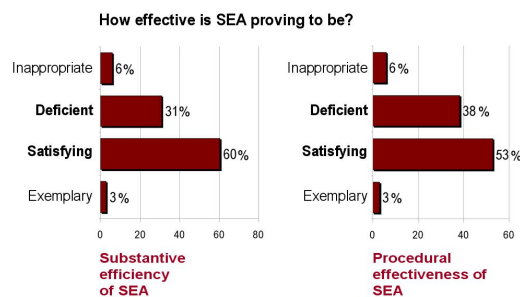


FIGURE 1. Answers to the question: "How effective is SEA proving to be?"

Evaluation of practice

- One of the main questions was "What is the difference or impact that SEA introduction has made?" The main findings were:
 - False starting-point:
 - Negligent of the existent good practice, SEA turned out as a verification procedure and not optimization activity;
 - Increased workload, time and cost consumption:
 - Obligation of preparing contents which are time consuming, needless and not strategic, state description orientated assessment, requirement for new data gathering (habitat mapping, archaeological surveys etc.);
 - Significant time consumption.
 - Positive influence on decision making:
 - More frequent rejection of environmentally less acceptable alternatives and harmful solutions;
 - More orderly and transparent presentation of environmental impacts on decision makers and public;
 - Better control over PPP on municipality level.
 - More improvements of PPP:
 - Increased substantive and technical improvements of PPP;
 - Increased mitigation measures that have to be done.

Recommendations for improving the process of SEA

- SEA should deal with real strategic level: with policies and alternatives on hierarchically higher levels.
- SEA should be a part of PPP preparation process: an optimization activity, which aims to plan modification/change in the way which causes the least impact on the environment, incorporated in the very beginning of PPP preparation.

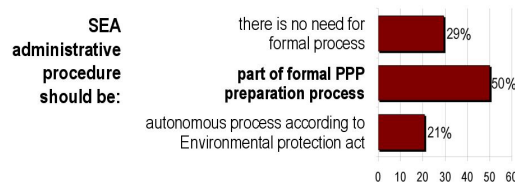


FIGURE 2. Answers to the question "SEA administrative procedure should be:"

Recommendations for improving the process of SEA

- SEA should be a comprehensive process, dealing with impacts on society, economy and environment.

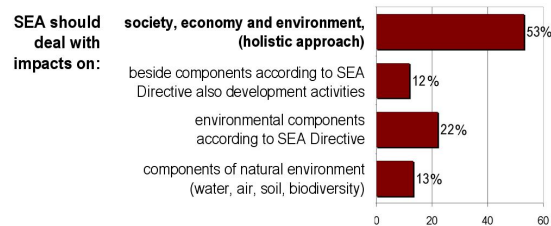


FIGURE 3. Answers to the question "SEA should deal with impacts on:"

- Legal framework should be changed, and main suggestion are:
 - Abolition of SEA as autonomous procedure according to Environmental protection act, full integration of strategic assessment in a PPP formal procedure;
 - Separation of EIA and SEA screening process;
 - Obligatory execution of scooping, stakeholder confrontations, reviews;
 - Rationalization of reports - comprehensive study of alternatives should be regarded as environmental report;
 - Final decision of PPP environmental acceptability should not be made by singular ministries but by independent competent board.

Recommendations for improving the process of SEA

- Project approach, education and good practice stimulation and integrity of SEA process stakeholders should be stimulated.

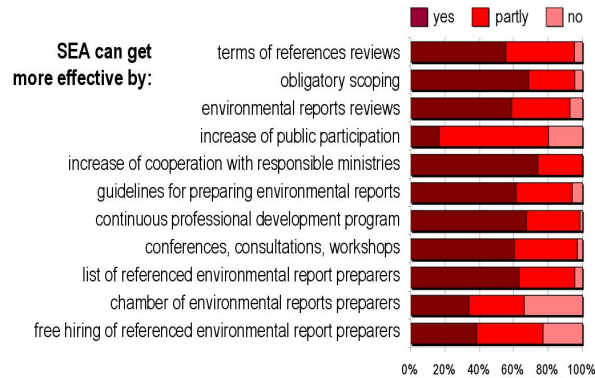


FIGURE 4. Answer to the question "SEA can get more effective by:"

Conclusion

- Project "The Use and Effectiveness of Strategic Environmental Assessment" unfortunately shows that SEA in Slovenia is not used in a proper way and consecutively is not sufficiently effective.
- Suggested references are aimed at the modification of strategic assessment to optimization task, whose intention is the improvement of policy, program or plan in a manner that will cause as the lowest possible impacts on environment. Prudent identification and assessment of right needs and early and creative search for and selection of comprehensive and at the same time environmentally best possible solutions, is a basis for efficient settling of incremental conflicts of interests in environment and material implementation of bonds of sustainable development.
- Suggested optimization/rationalization of procedures and reports means a contribution to abolition of administrative barriers and to a more efficient/quicker placing of development projects, and eventually to larger economic efficiency of investments.