

CONCLUSIONS OF THE FIRST REGIONAL CONFERENCE ON ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT,  
ZADAR 18<sup>TH</sup> – 21<sup>ST</sup> SEPTEMBER 2013

*ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT*

- It is necessary to educate the stakeholders and explain the purpose and mandate of EIA procedures,
- The public should be involved as soon as possible, with benefits for investors and their obligations according to the Aarhus Convention in mind,
- Competent Ministry, according to the European Commission practice, should periodically analyse the effectiveness of EIA procedures, assess EIA Studies' quality, analyse EIA expert advisory committees' work quality and uniformity and evaluate procedure transparency,
- For complex projects, scoping should be done in an early phase in order to fully determine the content of an EIA Study and its scope,
- Preparation of EIA guidelines for different project types should be continued with, application of these guideline should be monitored and they updated regularly,
- Special attention should be given to cumulative impacts with existing and planned projects and suitable methods for their assessment developed,
- Indicators for monitoring the condition of environment components should be developed,
- It is necessary to develop publically accessible databases that will contain data from proscribed/conducted environmental monitoring,
- Special attention should be given to project impacts on human health,
- Project impacts on climate change should be assessed.

*STRATEGIC IMPACT ASSESSMENT FOR STRATEGIES, PLANS AND PROGRAMS ON THE ENVIRONMENT*

- It is necessary to educate stakeholders and explain the purpose and mandate of SEA procedures as part of document preparation,
- Attempts of avoiding the obligation of conducting a SEA should be thwarted,
- The communication between stakeholders should be bettered,
- The public should be included as soon as possible in the procedure,
- It is necessary to ensure high-quality and comprehensive drafts of documents for which SEA is being done, early in the SEA preparation,
- Clear criteria and procedures for determining overruling public interest and compensatory measures for plans/programs should be set,
- Publically accessible databases should be developed and their unrestricted use ensured,
- It is necessary to develop environmental and nature state indicators to be used in SEAs,
- During a SEA procedure three sustainable development aspects should be considered: economy, social aspect and environmental and nature protection,
- Tools for multi criteria assessment should be improved,
- Operational programs are key program documents for utilization of EU funds in the area of competitiveness and cohesion involving environmental protection sector. This is why leading international and local experts should be included in SEA preparation and procedure, as well as best techniques and models applied.

## NATURA 2000

- In order to successfully and fully implement the N2000 program implementation mechanisms should be developed with much care, particularly guideline and instruction preparation and ensuring data availability,
- In the next phase of the N2000 program it is necessary to improve implementation mechanisms, which are harmonized with the Habitat Directive, in order to make the assessment procedure shorter and cheaper; this entails improving the quality of Appropriate Assessment Studies, application of adequate mitigation measures, monitoring the application and the effects from the mitigation measures – guided by the best experiences from the EU member states and by the Court of Justice of the European Union verdicts.
- Only selecting areas based on scientific and expert criteria can ensure that during the Bio-geographical seminars the European Commission would evaluate the areas as adequate.
- Financing N2000 is a complex task since there is no single fund for this purpose at the EU level and the funds have to be secured within the Cohesion Policy frame (ERDF and Cohesion Fund), the Joint Agricultural Policy (European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development - EAFRD), the Common Fisheries Policy (European Maritime and Fisheries Fund - EMFF) and from the LIFE program. Even though financing opportunities are quite substantial and cover all key segments of species and habitat preservation, it is important to define models for continuous financing of all N2000 implementation needs including the strengthening of institutional capacities, particularly on the regional level.
- Since the N2000 affects local inhabitants, it is necessary to analyse the impacts of N2000 measures on their lives and area development and assistance models should be developed.
- Applying SEAs and incorporating their findings into spatial plans is the surest way of avoiding conflicts that arise from individual projects and their impact on N2000 areas.

## PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

- Public misunderstands the procedure purpose,
- Stakeholders responsibilities surpass those prescribed by the legal framework → social responsibility,
- It is the investors' responsibility to start the communication and give more information to the media and the public as early as possible in the project development,
- There is a tendency to avoid responsibility and blame other stakeholders in the procedure,
- Sustainable development teaches an integrated approach (environmental and nature protection + social benefit + economic development) based on the responsibility to the greater good,
- Stakeholders' responsibilities are not defined clearly enough,
- There is a lack of responsibility of the civil sector,
- More attention should be given to the competent Ministry's work with NGOs and the public,
- It is necessary that the competent Ministry educates the general public,
- The role of the civil society organizations is to involve the public in environmental protection procedures,
- All stakeholders must communicate in a democratic and civilized fashion.

## ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AND PROJECT FINANCING

- Ex-ante conditionalities for the new financial perspective present also transposition of SEA and EIA directives and their proper implementation. For this challenge effective administration capacities are needed and highly educated experts to prepare SEA and EIA reports, as well as effective public participation.
- The standards of European banks and the European Commissions are the same and so only well prepared projects, which are prepared as the whole (no "salami slicing"), and based on operational programmes assessed in the SEA process, could be supported.

- So for the active fund using the SEAs for National Operational programmes as well as appropriate assessment according to Art. 6 of Habitats Directive have to be finalised.
- The important task is also streamlining and coordination of the procedures as presented of Jaspers and support of positive practice in strategic planning and project preparation.
- For the environmental projects financing on waters, Water management plans and SEA should be prepared and then EIA on project level, at least the screening phase.
- For the environmental projects on waste treatment, Operational programmes and SEA should be prepared and EIA on project level.
- SEA in early stage of programming could improve the public trust with transparency of taking their comments into account and could also help to avoid the effect "not in my backyard".


#### GENERAL

- The passing and application of regulations regarding practitioner licencing should be expedited,
- Criteria should be set for appointing experts into EIA/SEA expert advisory committees,
- Public should be informed as soon as possible,
- All stakeholders should be educated on the purpose of the procedures, as well as stakeholders' roles and responsibilities.



Marta Brkić

President of Organizing committee



prof.dr.sc. Nenad Mikulić

President of Scientific committee