

PRACTICAL EXPERIENCE OF THE APPLICATION OF THE STRATEGIC ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT IN THE REPUBLIC OF BELARUS

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Practical experience of the application of the Strategic Environmental Assessment is shown. The legislative base of the Republic of Belarus on SEA is analyzed. The main benefits of including the SEA tool in the process of adoption of strategic documents are highlighted.

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The Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) is widely used for designation of a systematic decision support process, aiming to ensure that environmental aspects are considered effectively in policy, plan and programme making. In international practice, SEA is considered to be an effective tool contributing to sustainable development.

The application of SEA and its integration in the procedure of strategic decision-making is mandatory for the countries that have ratified The UNECE Protocol on Strategic Environmental Assessment to the Convention on Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) in a Transboundary Context (Kiev Protocol on SEA). In the Kiev Protocol on SEA the objects of SEA are specified, implementation guidelines for SEA are defined and some international requirements for the use of the SEA tool are revealed. In the Republic of Belarus, several projects within the framework of pilot projects with use of the SEA tool have been realized. In particular, Strategic Environmental Assessment of the 2006–2010 National Tourism Development Programme of the Republic of Belarus; National Programme of the Inland and Sea Transportation Development of the Republic of Belarus for the period of the 2011–2015; Scheme of the complex territorial organization of Myadel district have been implemented.

In January 2017 the Law of the Republic of Belarus from 7/18/2016 N 399-Z On the State Environmental Assessment, Strategic Environmental Assessment and Environmental Impact Assessment came into force. For the first time in the Republic of Belarus, the SEA procedure along with environmental impact assessment and the state environmental assessment has been defined at the legislative level. Under this Law, regulations have been prepared specifying the procedure of Strategic Environmental Assessment. These regulations include a list of required documents which should be subject to the SEA procedure in our country: 1) the drafts of programmes containing the provisions that govern the relations in the field of environmental protection and rational use of natural resources (including waste management, the subsurface use sphere), agriculture, industry, transport, energy, tourism and also the projects providing modification and (or) additions in them; 2) town-planning projects, except for master plans of urban-type settlements and rural settlements and also the projects providing modification and (or) additions in them.

Besides, methodological recommendations pursued under the guidance the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environmental Protection of the Republic of Belarus, give detailed consideration of the individual stages of the development and adoption of strategic documents and the corresponding steps of SEA, which can be included at each stage. The main benefits of the application of the SEA tool in the process of the adoption of strategic documents can be represented in the following points that have been learnt from the experience in the expert group in Belarus:

- The importance of an integrated approach in consideration of social and economic and environmental issues which experts in SEA offer in addition to setting out the objectives and purposes of the considered document;
- The analysis of normative legal documents for the maximum compliance of the developed strategic document to sustainable development goals is carried out;
- The work of the expert group on SEA gives the chance to improve the estimated document by including not only economic but also social and environmental aspects.
- The information obtained as a result of the application of SEA has to be considered when updating the strategic document.