

► European ECO Forum
SEA Excellence Centers:

NGO “Black Sea Women’s Club”, *Ukraine*



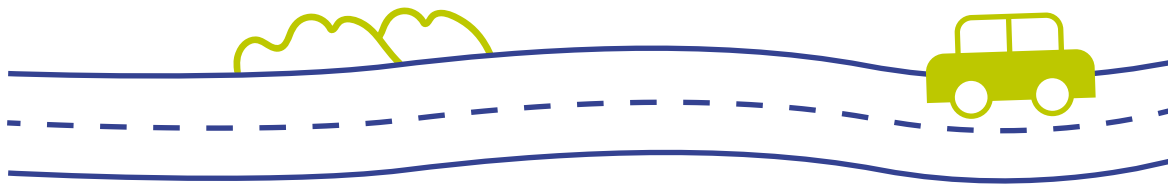
In 2021 with the support of Resource & Analysis Center “Society and Environment” we prepared an environmental report in the course of pilot SEA. For the preparation of this report we have created an SEA working group with 5 experts having broad expertise in relevant areas — architect and urban developer, economist, complex planning of protected areas, sustainable development of territories and SDGs, water resource management and much more.

SEA in Ukraine

Since October 12, 2018, a new procedure of strategic environmental assessment started in Ukraine. Its details are set by the Law of Ukraine “On strategic environmental assessment”. As a result of proper SEA, the right for safe environment is ensured. Because of SEA the public got real tools to influence decision-making process relating to the environment.

Significant potential for public actions lies within land planning decision-making processes. All land planning documentation, including text and graphics (complex spatial planning, master plans of settlements, detailed land plan) are subject to SEA under both SEA law and the urban development law.

Odessa city approves approximately 4–5 detailed land plans each year. This is accompanied by the same number of SEA notifications and SEA reports. Unfortunately, the city community is almost silent and does not participate in these procedures. The main reason is low awareness and capacity to use public participation opportunities offered by SEA.



Main challenges and findings

At the beginning, the most challenging task for our working group was how to do scoping and learn overall methodology for SEA. But our working group received support and expert advice from NGOs and experts who already had experience with SEA.

During our SEA work we became confident that the composition of the SEA working group is one of the most important factors for the success of SEA. We were lucky to have a “green” architect focused on green solutions. The green architect was involved into SEA group and worked on “alternative solutions” section of the SEA report for the detailed land plan. The architect was open to cooperation with city’s community and is ready to cooperate with us and city’s community in the future.

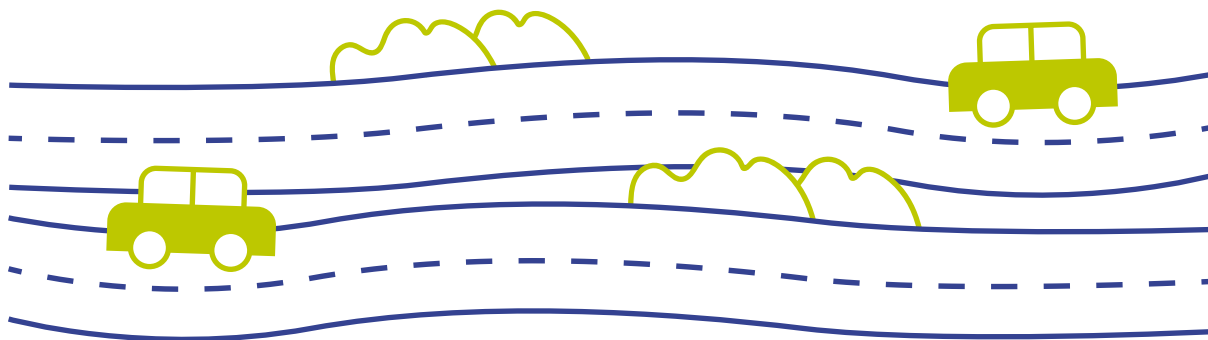
Our SEA experience shows, and our working group members learnt that lesson, that not all local experts are open to cooperation, in particular when SEA object (plan or program) is of interest to influential investors which have ties with city authorities. For example, our working group was not able to involve experts from Ukrainian Research Institute of Transport Medicine, which has significant scientific data regarding the territory where the detailed spatial plan was developed. These experts refused to cooperate as soon as they learnt the plan involves construction of roads and buildings of interest to influential investors and local authorities.

Another challenge for and lesson learnt by our working group was the fact that often experts or information we needed do not exist. For example, we were not able to find in Odessa region or Ukraine an expert on ways to develop sustainable mobility. Yet, our team learnt invaluable experience during our SEA work.

The working group organized meetings with local residents in a neighborhood located on the territory covered by the detailed land use plan. Our working group came to the conclusion that such conversations are very useful and give insights into local environmental and health problems at affected territories.

During our SEA work we came to conclusion that the main environmental problem of the territory, affected by the plan, is extremely high air and soil pollution of the territory and recreational zones caused by automobile transport from existing and planned roads within certain streets.

Our analysis of the current environmental situation and measures envisaged by the detailed land use plan led to other important conclusions: negative impact on underground waters, protected areas and habitats degradation for some bird species.



Our group received immense experience by realising that SEA is the most open and transparent procedure in Ukrainian legislation while local authorities sometimes develop wrong practice by neglecting public opinion and ignoring evident links between state of the environment and measures planned.

Recommendations

The SEA procedure implies cooperation, active engagement of the public and stakeholders at all stages of the SEA. This is the only way to understand how a draft plan can impact people's lives and mitigate negative environmental impacts. This is why the SEA gives the public not only the access to relevant information about city environmental problems, but also a possibility to participate in environmental decision-making. The value of the SEA is that the public gets the possibility to participate in decision-making related to environmental issues and overall territorial development.

Our working group, based on its experience, can recommend to NGOs having relevant expertise need to find opportunities to organize seminars, trainings, webinars for wide public. Such events should offer information and explanations about the SEA procedural requirements during planning decisions at all levels and by local self-governance bodies. The goal is to activate the public and show it how to be heard in the development of long-term plans for the development of the country, regions, cities and settlements in order to help protect the right of every person, current and future generations to live in an environment favorable for a healthy life of people.

Our SEA working group also recommends that civil society organizations create informal networks or mailing lists of civil society organizations and experts interested in exchanging information on the sites where SEA is implemented, interesting SEA practices and opportunities to increase influence on the strategic planning process in order to exchange practices and experience in using the potential for such influence through the implementation of SEA procedures.

The SEA does not end at the stage of adoption of the state planning document. Since documents subject to SEA are long-term documents, the consequences of their adoption manifest themselves as they are implemented. Therefore, a very important stage of SEA is monitoring, which makes it possible to notice the onset of certain negative consequences and timely amend the relevant state planning document after its approval.

The SEA working group noted the fact that SEA of detailed plans of different territories is regularly planned and, accordingly, carried out in the city of Odessa. To organize monitoring of the detailed plans of different territories approved in the city of Odessa, our working group recommends that the Odessa City Council create a Committee for the management, implementation and monitoring of the implementation of detailed land use plans in the city of Odessa. The Committee should include representatives of local government bodies, the public, business and other interested parties. The same recommendation will be correct for other cities and settlements that carry out territorial planning.

About organisation

The Black Sea Women's Club is a non-governmental organization that unites women leaders of public organizations, activists, experts, women leaders of local governments around the idea of preserving the environment. We are focused on the ideas of sustainable development of the Black Sea region and are fighting for energy efficiency, combating climate change, clean air for all, sustainable transport development, protection of water resources and aquatic ecosystems.

Web-site: <https://bswc.org.ua>



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This project is funded by the German Federal Environment Ministry's Advisory Assistance Programme (AAP) for environmental protection in the countries of Central and Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia and other countries neighbouring the European Union. It is supervised by the German Environment Agency (UBA). The responsibility for the content of this publication lies with the authors.

