

Instruments of Environmental Protection in the Republic of Croatia - Strategic Environmental Impact Assessment of Plans and Programs

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Generally, the question of development for each area or development policy is how we develop and build, and during that procedure, how we preserve the existing biodiversity, flora and fauna, cultural heritage, air and water quality, and the landscape.

In recognition of the EU acquis in the field of environmental protection, Croatia has assumed the obligation to implement a Strategic Environmental Impact Assessment of Plans and Programs. Social benefit from Strategic Environmental Impact Assessment, as a practical way of special monitoring and assessing the impact of development activities on the environment, has proved to be very useful. It provides a possibility for the plans and programs makers to develop ideas that could be assessed while creating a document, enabling them to change the concepts and provide alternative proposals, which has not been a practice so far.

The new Decree on Strategic Environmental Assessment of the impact of plans and programmes in Croatia prescribes the development of Strategic Environmental Impact Assessment, which introduces the environmental criteria in the processes of physical planning and development of sectoral strategies these processes have not been engaged in to such extent so far. This procedure brings the importance of environmental criteria and environmental sustainability plans and programs come into the focus while the entire social dialogue about the importance of environment in development becomes clear and meaningful.

Keywords: environment, environmental sustainability, strategic environmental impact assessment, EU legislation, legislation in Croatia.

1. Introduction

The integration of environmental issues into development policy is regulated at several levels in the European Union. The EC Treaty from Nice de-

finied the commitment to integrate the requirements of environmental protection in the definition of policies and activities of the European Community.¹ Practical fulfilment of the requirements is periodically assessed at the European top meetings (Cardiff 1998, Helsinki 1999 and Goteborg 2001). The integration problems of environmental impact of sectoral policies are further highlighted in the proposed 6th Ac-

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tion Program of Environmental Protection (Environmental Action Program) of the European Community² and in the proposed Strategy for Sustainable Development of the European Union.³ In 1972 the European Community had adopted its first five-year Action Program on Environmental Protection (1973-1977) which for the first time, established, the principles and priorities guidelines for the development of European policy in the future. The first conference of the United Nations in the field of environment was convened in the same year.

The negotiations on the Directive of the European Parliament and European Council on environmental effects of certain plans and programs on environment ended in March 2001.⁴ This Directive is the basic legislation which regulates issues of Strategic Environmental Impact Assessment in the EU and it is relevant for the countries which have requested access to the EU. The assessment of the effects of concepts on ecological stability of the territory in addition to Article 6 requires 92/43/EHS Council Directive on the Conservation of Natural Habitats and Wild Fauna and Flora (directives on habitats) as well as the assessment of impacts of all development concepts that can have serious impact on certain protected habitat.

Environmental Impact Assessment is also required under the EU action structural funds.⁵ In 1998 the General Directorate for Environment (DG Environment) of the European Commission made The Manual for Environmental Impact Assessment Plans for Regional Development and the EU Structural Funds, which provide further instructions for strategic assessments of environmental impacts.

2. Horizontal Legislation in the Field of Environmental Protection in the EU

Horizontal legislation in the field of environmental protection in the EU consists of directives which regulate the environment and other related areas. By its very nature, these directives are more procedural than technical. They prescribe the procedures and mechanisms aiming to integrate the care on environment particularly related to the land use and management of natural resources, that were decided on both by public and private sectors.

Horizontal EU legislation consists of:

- Directive 2003/4/EZ of the European Parliament and the Council of 28 January 2003 on access to public information about the environment that abolishes the Council Directive 90/313/EK,

- Directive 2003/35/EZ of the European Parliament and the Council of 26 May 2003 which ensures public participation in relation to the development of certain environmental plans and programs, which is amended in relation to public participation and access to justice Council Directive 85/337/EEZ and 96/61/EK,
- Directive 2004/35/EZ of the European Parliament and the Council of 21 April 2004 on the responsibility for the environment in terms of prevention and dealing with damage to the environment,
- Directive 2001/42/EZ of the European Parliament and the Council of 27 June 2001 on the impact assessment of certain plans and programs on the environment,
- Council Directive 85/337/EEZ of 27 June 1985 on the impact assessment of certain public and private projects on the environment,
- Council Directive 91/692/EEZ which standardises and rationalises the reports on the implementation of certain directives related to the environment, and
- Council Regulation (EEC) no. 1210/90 of 7 May 1990 on the establishment of the European Environmental Agency and the European Environmental Information and Observation Network.

Directive 85/337/EEZ EIA

Directive on Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) prescribes the implementation of environmental assessment prior to the approval of public and private projects that might have significant impact on environment. EIA is mandatory for all projects listed in Schedule I of the Directive. Projects listed in Appendix II must use the criteria listed in Annex III which determines whether it is necessary to estimate the impact on the environment. Member states may decide which projects in Annex II shall be subject to Directive on Environmental Impact Assessment. The Directive on Environmental Impact Assessment further prescribes the inclusion of direct and indirect effects of a project on people, flora and fauna, soil, water, climate and landscape, material goods and cultural heritage and the interaction between the aforementioned factors.

Directive 97/11/EZ supplements the mentioned Directive and allows member states to establish a unique process that integrates the assessment of environmental impacts, and the system of permits in accordance with IPPC and EIA directives. It also expands the actions of public participation in other environmental directives in accordance with the issued permits, including: Framework directive on waste (75/442/EEZ); batteries and accumulators (91/157/EEZ); nitrate (91/676/EEZ); dangerous waste (91/689/EEZ); packing and packing waste (94/62/EZ); on air quality (96/62/EEZ), and waste landfills (99/31/EZ).

After signing the Aarhus Convention in 1998, the EU has adopted Directive 2003/35/EZ which is complemented by the Directive on Environmental Impact Assessment. The aim of this Directive is to make provisions for public participation in the Directive on Environmental Impact Assessment in accordance with the Aarhus Convention on access to public information, on public participation in decision-making and access to justice in the area of environmental protection.

Directive 2003/4/EZ on Access to Public Information Related to Environment

This Directive is implemented in the scope of the Convention on access to information, public participation in decision-making and access to justice in the environment (Aarhus). Its aim is to ensure freedom of access and dissemination of information of the bodies of public authorities. Definitions of "public authority" and "information on environment" have been expanded and more clearly defined. Information, in principle, should be available within one month from the date of submission of the request. The Directive also defines exemptions under which information can be withheld from the public. The right to an appeal in case of refusing to provide information should be legally available. The Directive also states the types of information (general information about the state of environment) which must be released regularly.

Directive 2003/35/EZ on Public Participation in Development Plans and Programs Related to Environment

This Directive is the main instrument of harmonization of legislation of the Community with the provisions of Aarhus Convention in the part which applies to public participation. The Directive specifies the provisions of public participation in licensing procedures at national level under the legislation on the Directive on Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) and integrated measures to prevent and control pollution and to set rules on access to justice. It also contains rules on public participation in the preparation of a number of plans and programs on environment on the basis of the directives on waste, air pollution and protection of water from pollution caused by nitrates.

Directive 2004/35/EZ on Liability to Environment

The aim of this directive is to make the operators, whose activities cause environmental damage, financially responsible for remediation and damages. In addition, the Directive considers that the operators, whose actions have caused immediate risk of

environmental damage, are obliged to take measures for the prevention of damage. The Directive provides two separate and complementary regimes of responsibility. The first regime applies to operators who are professionally engaged in risky or potentially risky activities. These activities include industrial and agricultural activities that have the necessary permits in accordance with the IPPC directive 96/61/EZ, waste management activities, release of pollutants into water or air, production, storage, the use and release of hazardous chemicals, transportation, and the use and release of genetically modified organisms (GMOs). These activities are listed in Annex III of the Directive. According to this regime, in most cases the operator can be held accountable with no evidence of errors (the so-called "strict" liability).

The second regime of liability applies to all professional activities, including those not mentioned in Annex III, but the operator is held responsible only if there is evidence of error or negligence, and if the operator has caused damage to species and natural habitats protected at the EU level on the basis of the Directive from 1992 on habitats and from 1979 on birds, and the waters covered by the Framework Directive on Water from 2000 (or any water resource in EU), as well as soil pollution that threatens human health. It also includes the damage caused to protected species, natural habitats, water and soil (when the latter is significantly risky and causing damage to human health), if this happens during the limited use of GMOs, including their transportation, or during the deliberate release into the environment including their placing on the market.

The Directive allows pollutants to call on a reasonable defence, for example, if the event of environmental damage was caused by higher force (like a storm or armed conflict). The member states may decide to exempt operators who have challenged ecological damage if they demonstrate that the damage occurred by activities or programs directly permitted by competent bodies and also if they can prove that this was not done by their error or negligence. Furthermore, the member states may allow the exclusion of liability if operators demonstrate that their activities or emissions were not considered likely to cause environmental damage according to the scientific and technical knowledge at the time when the emissions were released or activities were taking place.

2.1. Directive 2001/42/EZ on Environmental Impact Assessment

Directive 2001/42/EZ prescribes the inclusion of environmental protection in the processes of making plans and programs. Its aim is to promote a high

level of environmental protection and contribute to its integration in the preparation and adoption of plans and programs, with the objective of promoting sustainable development.

The process regulated by this Directive is also known as Strategic environmental impact assessment and differs from the process of environmental assessment insofar as the strategic assessment is of the wider scope and is directed at decision-making process in the context of developing plans and programs by public authorities.

Subject to certain exceptions, strategic environmental impact assessment must be conducted for all plans and programs that relate to agriculture, forestry, fisheries, energy, industry, transport, water management, waste management, telecommunications, tourism, adopting of cities and counties, or land use, which make up the framework for future approval for further development of projects listed in Contributions I and II of EIA Directive, or those that are likely to have an impact on habitats (Directive 92/43/EZ). The criteria listed in Appendix II must be used either at an individual basis (case by case), and/or defining types of plans and programs to determine which other plans and programs should be subject to a Strategic Environmental Impact Assessment. The assessment needs to be made during the preparation of the plan or program before its adoption, or it should be put in legal proceedings. The Directive further establishes the types of information which must be available to the public. Also, during the Strategic Environmental Impact Assessment the Directive must take care of possible cross-border impact of the above-mentioned plans and programs.

Directive 2001/42/EC prescribes the chapters of Strategic environmental impact assessment and its coverage:

1. The main objectives of environmental reports and correlation with other relevant documents and programs,
2. The current state of selected locations of environment and development of sites without the implementation of plans and programs,
3. Characteristics of the environment at the sites, which will probably reach the significant adverse effects on the environment due to the implementation of planned activities envisaged by the plans or programs,
4. The existing environmental problems relevant to a plan or program, including those relevant to any area of environmental importance, as the significant category according to directives 79/409/EEC and 92/43/EEC,

5. The relationship of environmental protection goals with the goals of the relevant international documents,
6. Significant effects on environment with the aspects: biodiversity, population, human health, fauna, flora, soil, water, air, climate factors, the total built area, cultural heritage (including architectural one), landscape and the interrelationship between the above mentioned dimensions,
7. Proposal of measures for reducing or eliminating anticipated harmful environmental impacts,
8. Problems in the process of ensuring input data to create Strategic environmental impact assessment,
9. Monitoring – measures to monitor and verify previously envisaged measures, and
10. Non-technical summary.

3. Strategic Environmental Impact Assessment in Croatian Environmental Policy

Strategic Environmental Impact Assessment is a process which estimates significant environmental impacts that may arise from the implementation of a plan or program. According to Environmental Protection Act (Official Gazette 110/07) in the Republic of Croatia environmental assessment is required to be carried out for plans and programs, excluding the changes and/or amendments issued at national or county (regional) level in the areas of: agriculture, forestry, fisheries, energy, industry, mining, transportation, telecommunications, tourism, waste management and water management, physical plan of a county and the physical plan of the City of Zagreb, excluding the changes and/or amendments.

* It is required to make changes and/or amendments to the previously mentioned plans and programs in accordance with Environmental Protection Act and to carry out the procedure to decide on the need for the implementation of a strategic assessment. Evaluation process is conducted in a manner regulated by Environmental Protection Act and the pertinent Decree (Official Gazette 64/08).

* Strategic assessment is not subject to: plans and programs that serve exclusively for the needs of national defence and/or civil protection, and those that apply to emergency plans, as well as the protection and rescue, financial and budgetary plans and programs.

* Strategic Environmental Impact Assessment of Plans and Programs at the state level, is carried out by the Ministry or the ministry responsible for the area a plan or program is relevant for.

* Strategic Environmental Impact Assessment of Plans and Programs at the county (regional) level is conducted by a competent administrative author-

ity in the county or the City of Zagreb, in cooperation with the competent administrative departments in the county or city, depending on the area the plan or program is relevant for.

* The process of the assessment of the need for a strategic assessment of changes and/or amendments to the plan or program conducted by bodies responsible for implementing the strategic assessment, in cooperation with the Ministry in cases where the procedure is not voted by the Ministry.

* Process the assessment of the need for a strategic assessment of changes and/or amendments to the plan or program is implemented by the body responsible for implementing the strategic assessment.

* Development of the Strategic Environmental Impact Assessment of Plans and Programs has been introduced as a mandatory document by the Environmental Protection Act since 2007.

* For plans and programs of environmental protection at national, regional or local level strategic assessment is not obligatory.

The Decree on the Strategic Environmental Impact Assessment of Plans and Programs (OG 64/08) was made based on Environmental Protection Act and it determines the ways of implementing Strategic environmental impact assessment, which includes the process of making strategic studies, compulsory content in the process, deadlines in the process, prescribed content of the report, methods of environmental monitoring and checking the implementation of environmental protection measures. The Decree also establishes the manner of implementation and evaluation process on the need for strategic assessment and the method of individual tests and criteria for determining significant environmental impacts in cases of changes and/or additions to the plan or program that have significant impact on environment.

3.1. Relevant Institutions for the Implementation of Strategic Environmental Impact Assessment in the Republic of Croatia

The decision to initiate the process of strategic assessment is made by the Minister or the head of a central body which is responsible for drafting plans and programs at national level, or the county head/Mayor of the City of Zagreb if it is a program at county (regional) level.

Strategic Environmental Impact Assessment of Plans and Programs at national level is carried out by the ministry responsible for the area for which the plan or program is relevant. Strategic Environmental Impact Assessment of Plans and Programs at county (regional) level is conducted by a competent

administrative authority in the county or the City of Zagreb, in cooperation with the competent administrative departments in the county or city, depending on the area for which the plan or program is relevant.

Process assessment of the need for a strategic assessment of changes and/or amendments to the plan or program at national level is carried out by the ministry responsible for the area the plan or program is relevant for. At the county level it is conducted by the administrative body in cooperation with the general committee, depending on the area for which the plan or program is relevant.

3.2. Principles of Effective Strategic Environmental Impact Assessment

The principles of strategic environmental impact assessment process are: timeliness, integration in the creation of development plans and programs and provision of comments by the public. The principles for effective strategic assessment of environmental impacts are:

* Defining the scope of the Strategic environmental impact assessment based on EIA requirements and problems the plan or program is facing,

* Conducting the Strategic environmental impact assessment simultaneously with creating a curriculum,

* Defining the professional team and its mandate in the Strategic environmental impact assessment in the framework of the planning process,

* Ensuring access to information and public participation opportunities,

* Ensuring the control of implementation of the Strategic environmental impact assessment process, and

* Using the information obtained by the Strategic environmental impact assessment process for further developing or updating a program or a plan submitted for appraisal.

Strategic environmental impact assessment should be implemented simultaneously with the plan and program because its use in this way is maximized, while a plan or a program can be continuously improved, and possible subsequent conflicts can be prevented. Properly connected Strategic environmental impact assessment is very important because it enables:

* Continuous analysis of basic development documents and updating views on environmental protection, which should be taken into account in the drafts of the working version,

* The continued submission of proposals for optimizing the environment of individual alternatives,

* Minimize time requirements for making the Strategic environmental impact assessment documentation, and

* Minimize losses and workloads which arise from poor planning and coordinating of the Strategic environmental impact assessment process.

The rates for all dimensions and indicators defined in the text are symbolic for the purpose of graphic view of the current situation and estimated

Table 1: Potential environmental dimensions and ecological indicators for Strategic environmental impact assessment

DIMENSIONS	INDICATORS
Biological	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Damage or degradation of protected areas and diversity ecological networks on the mainland • Damage or degradation of protected areas and ecological networks for water/sea
Population	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The impact on the population living in contaminated environment: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Because of contaminated water - Because of polluted soil - Because of polluted air
Human health	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • People affected by noise • The impact on possible illnesses because of environmental pollution: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The impact of water pollution on health • The impact of soil pollution on health • The impact of air pollution on health
Fauna	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Threats to endangered species – mainland • Threats to endangered species – water/sea
Flora	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Threat to endangered species – mainland • Threats to endangered species – water/sea
Soil	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Degradation of land resources or “occupancy” of land resources
Water/Sea	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The quality of surface water • The quality of underground water • The quality of the sea, particularly the coastal area
Air	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Air pollution
Climatic factors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Emissions of greenhouse gases (especially CO₂)
Total material constructed space	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The existing constructed space • Planned construction of buildings
Cultural heritage	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The sacred heritage exposed to (bad) influence • Other cultural and historical heritage exposed to (bad) influence (including abandoned houses in the city centre)
Landscape	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The visual, aesthetic impact, sensitive landscapes and the area exposed to (bad) influence

changes of space/environment. The condition of the environment is defined through the interpretation of individual letters/rates as:

A – very significantly harmful impact on environment

B – significantly harmful impact on environment

C – harmful impact on environment

U – the impact cannot be estimated (because of high level of data uncertainty)

P – positive impact on environment

N – no effect on environment

(-) – dimensions not identified at the site

Rates for all locations and all dimensions are provided for two alternatives:

- a) the current situation ("does nothing" alternative),
- b) the anticipated activities of the draft plan or program.

4. Possible Problems in the Process

4.1. Documents to which the Strategic Environmental Impact Assessment Applies

The implementation of environmental assessment of national strategies, plans and programs has not been an obligation in Croatia so far, but this will have to change according to European legislation and practice. Environmental assessment was only elaborated for individual projects and/or procedures in environment. Consequently, in the framework of the CARDS 2003, a project called "Strategic environmental impact assessment (SEIA)", a pilot project of strategic environmental assessment of General urban plan of the City of Šibenik (the only city that was nominated), was made. This pilot project has pointed out to many problems because it is a brand new instrument lacking the acquired knowledge and experience. Furthermore, there is also the problem of the lack of necessary documents, such as reports on environmental condition, conflicts of interest, detailed treatment, etc.

On the other hand, in the process of harmonization of national legislation with the *acquis communautaire* of the EU, a review of regional plans should become obligatory with respect to environmental protection thus putting an end to the destruction of nature and valuable parts of the environment, which is the result of today's way of regional planning. The intensity of environmental use must be tailored according to the protection requirements.

Currently, Energy Strategy of Republic of Croatia is being prepared. The environmental assessment of the Energy Strategy must be implemented in accordance with the Decree on Environmental Impact of strategic plan and program taking into account the specifics of the sector, goals (means of implementation) and the specifics of the impact on the environment.

The EU thinks that the application of Strategic environmental impact assessment should be extended to Environmental Management Plans for the protection of cities. In some EU countries it is applied to regional development strategies, i.e. in the Czech Republic where there is the obligation and the methodology for Strategic environmental impact as-

essment strategies for regional development at all levels.

4.2. Organization of Input Data to Develop Strategic Environmental Impact Assessment

In the process of making Strategic environmental impact assessment the data are collected intensively, in order to avoid that necessary information for this report is forgotten, in accordance with the methodology. This approach requires a lot of time and efforts in communication with a series of relevant institutions at national and regional (county) level. The biggest drawback of input data is generally in connection with ecological and environmentally relevant documents, reports on the state of the environment at national and regional levels, and application of environmental protection of a county, the City of Zagreb and big towns. According to legal requirements, the report is done every four years and it requires cooperation and communication between the expert team and the developers of plan or program, for which the documents being made.

4.3. Strategic Environmental Impact Assessment Needs to be Implemented Simultaneously with the Development of a Plan and Program

Strategic environmental impact assessment plans and programs provide information about potential environmental impacts and the possibilities of its optimization with respect to the environment. This information can be presented to the proponent of the curriculum in all key phases of designing a plan or program – from the beginning of its development to the submission of the opinion to the relevant institution. Therefore, the development of Strategic environmental impact assessment must be an interactive process that provides the following information to the proponent of the plan or program:

- * Assessment of the quality of description and assessment of development trends in environment connected with the development of the area,
- * Assessment of the inclusion of environmental protection goals in the strategic goals of the area,
- * Assessment of strategic decisions of subject area with the environmental protection goals and with area restrictions,
- * Environmental impact assessment of specific activities and projects,
- * Assessment of the monitoring system for the implementation of the plan or proposal and measures to ensure implementation without damage to the environment.

4.4. Strategic Environmental Impact Assessment Team Should Have Clearly Defined Position and Mandate in the Framework of the Planning Process

The starting point for effective Strategic environmental impact assessment is to clearly define the position of the professional team participating in the framework of a plan or program. Also it should be reviewed by the public. The basic rules when selecting a professional team to develop Strategic environmental impact assessment and define its position are:

* *Selection of appropriate Strategic environmental impact assessment team.* Based on experience, build a team composed of various environmental experts and representatives of all interested groups.

* *Participation of Strategic environmental impact assessment team in drafting a plan or program.* The author of a plan or program is ultimately responsible for using or rejecting the recommendations provided by this Strategic environmental impact assessment (rejected recommendations must be justified). All significant comments of Strategic environmental impact assessment team not taken into consideration when creating a plan or program must be an integral part of Strategic environmental impact assessment documents.

* *Ensuring information flow.* The continuous participation of Strategic environmental impact assessment team in the creation of a plan or program facilitates the access to information and arguments used during the preparation of the plan or program. At the same time, participation of Strategic environmental impact assessment team provides a continuous transfer and comment ascertain from Strategic environmental impact assessment process.

4.5. The Proponent of Plan or Program for which Strategic Environmental Impact Assessment is Made must have Appropriate Access to Information and Opportunities for Public Participation

Access to information, public participation in decision-making and access to justice in environmental matters is regulated in the EU legislation by the Directive on the right to access information 2003/4/EC and by the Directive on public participation 2003/35/EC. Legal basis for ensuring access to information and public participation in the Republic of Croatia include: the Act on the Freedom of Information (OG 172/03), the Environmental Protection Act

(OG 110/07) and the Regulation on the assessment of impact on the environment (OG 64/08)⁶, the Decree on Strategic Environmental Impact Assessment of Plans and Programs (OG 64/08) and the Regulation on informing the public and interested public and participating in environmental protection issues (OG 64/2008).

The public participation in the Strategic environmental impact assessment cannot be separated from its participation in drafting of a plan or program. Because of procedural and practical reasons, there is a system of communicating the public in the framework of a plan, as well as its assessment from the standpoint of its impact on environment. This system should provide:

* Public access to information in accordance with the Act on the Freedom of Information (OG 172/03),

* Active information in accordance with the framework requirements of the Aarhus Convention,⁷ and

* Consultation with the citizens and information on how the public comments and observations were treated.

5. Environmental Assessment Steps

Strategic environmental impact assessment is carried out during the drafting of the proposal of a plan or program, and before its final proposal is sent for approval, as prescribed by Law and this Regulation. This represents a significant difference compared to the current legislative procedure in the development of, for example, Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA), which evaluates potential negative impacts on the environment only in the phase of project documentation.

Additional differences between Strategic environmental impact assessment and Environmental Impact Assessment are that Strategic environmental impact assessment does not have legislative power, but it is an advisory tool that assists the makers of physical-planning documentation in securing the required level of environmental protection and contributes to solving the integration and environmental issues and problems in the preparation and the process of adopting physical planning documents.

Procedural step	The usual steps of the planning process	Relevant Strategic environmental impact assessment steps	Communication with the public
No. 1	The decision about how to make a plan or program	Strategic environmental impact assessment decision on the plan or program	Information on the initiation of making a plan or program and its Strategic environmental impact assessment
No. 2	Appointing a team for planning and start of the work	Appointing the Strategic environmental impact assessment team, the decision on the scope of Strategic environmental impact assessment	Introductory seminar for the public
No. 3	Analysis of previous developments in the relevant area	Assessment of the relevant problems of environmental impact analysis in the framework of previous developments in the area	Publication and expression of comments
No. 4	Proposal of strategic goals of the plan or the relevant area	Setting goals and environmental assessment of their integration into the proposed strategic goals of area	Publication and detailed consultation with the public
No. 5	Proposal of measures for the relevant area	Assessment of the environmental implications of proposed measures	Publication and expression of comments on suggestions
No. 6	Proposal of special activities in the relevant area	Environmental impact assessment of specific activities, if they are proposed	Publication and expression of comments on suggestions
No. 7	Proposal of the implementation of the plan or program and monitoring of its actual effects	Assessment of the proposed system, the implementation of the plan or program and monitoring its actual effects	Publication and expression of comments on suggestions
No. 8	Making the final draft of the plan or program	Creating Strategic environmental impact assessment documentation	The official release and negotiations on the draft plan or program and Strategic environmental impact assessment documentation
No. 9	Submission of carefully made documents to the proponent of the plan or program	Submission of Strategic environmental impact assessment documentation to the proponent of plan or program	Storage and availability of the final draft of the plan or program and Strategic environmental impact assessment documentation
No. 10	Implementation of the plan or program and monitoring its actual effects	Monitoring actual impact of the plan or program on the environment	Announcement of the implementation of the actual impact assessment plan or program and possible discussion about them

6. Conclusion

Strategic environmental impact assessment provides a proposal for general and concrete measures to reduce harmful impacts on the environment for individual development programs and plans. General measures refer to the respect of legally established procedures of regional planning, timely elaboration of studies of the impact on the environment and the inclusion of landscape planning in urban planning according to the fact that Croatia has adopted the Convention on European Landscapes. Specific or concrete measures are proposed in details for certain dimensions, such as conservation of biodiversity.

Furthermore, Strategic environmental impact assessment gives the measures and activities for "monitoring" the situation on the ground which overview the changes occurring in the environment. The most common reason for this is insufficient knowledge of the current situation, lack of the necessary prior documentation, the lack of legislative framework, as well as lack or absence of databases, which

would provide the necessary knowledge to define the indicators and enable the selection of sites for monitoring.

Strategic assessment provides a flexible system of public participation on the basis of general principles established by the Aarhus Convention. Due to its sufficiently flexible and applicable to various types of strategic decisions. Contracting parties have the ability to actively bring public issues to facilitate social dialogue. Practical application of such a flexible system of public participation requires appropriate quality of information, strategic environmental impact assessment documentation and significant participation to facilitate an interactive process.

To ensure good quality of Strategic environmental impact assessment a quality and satisfactory report and correct application of Strategic environmental impact assessment process is required (through the appropriate participation of relevant environmental institutions).

NOTES

1 Treaty establishing the European Community, Official Journal C 325 of 24 December 2002, Article 6.

2 The Sixth Environmental Action European Community Program 2001-2010, COM(2001)31.

3 The strategy of sustainable development of the European Union, COM(2001)264.

4 Joint text of the European Parliament no. C5-0118-2001.

5 Council regulation (EC)1260/1999 EU structural funds, Article 41.

6 The entry into force of the Regulation stopped valid Law on Environmental Impact Assessment (OG 59/00, 136/04 and 85/06).

7 Provisions of the Aarhus Convention, the public is ensured to obtain complete, accurate and updated information regarding the state of the environment.

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