



Project title: Organisation of capacity-building activities to support the implementation of the UNECE Protocol on SEA in Armenia (Phase III: SEA Pilot)

SEA of Strategic Development Plan, Road Map and Long Term Investment Plan for the Solid Waste Management Sector in Armenia – summary of the regional consultations on the SEA scoping report

The new initiative on pilot application of Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) to the “Strategic Development Plan, Road Map and Long Term Investment Plan for the Solid Waste Management Sector in Armenia” (the Road Map) has been undertaken by the Ministry of Nature Protection in cooperation with the UNECE and the Regional environmental center for Caucasus Armenia National Office (REC Caucasus) with the financial support of the EU funded Programme ‘Greening Economies in Eastern Neighborhood’ (EaP GREEN).¹

What is SEA

Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) is an efficient tool to integrate environmental and health considerations into plans, programmes as well as to policies and legislation alongside with the economic and social considerations. More specifically, SEA is an instrument to:

- Inform the decision-making through a robust assessment of the likely environmental and health consequences,;
- Enable consultations with governmental agencies as well as public in the preparation of plans, programmes and policies;
- Ensure that the results of assessment and debate are taken into account during decision-making and implementation.

The Road Map sets the framework for future management of solid waste in Armenia, stipulating priorities and objectives for solid waste management, including setting up five regional landfills in Shirak, Lori, Kotayk, Yerevan and Syunik regions, and a six transfer stations, and a number of collection and recycling points. The Ministry of Territorial Administration and Development is the governmental agency responsible for preparation of the Road Map. Although the Road Map itself aims to address environmental problems, it could potentially also negatively affect the state of environment and human health (e.g. water and soil pollution in case of location of the landfills in sensitive areas, disturbance of the local population by odors

from waste processing and others). SEA allows to identify and assess these likely adverse effects, propose alternatives and develop recommendations to minimize the negative effects and maximize environmental and social benefits resulting from the implementation of the Road Map.

The overall aim of a SEA pilot project is to build capacities in application of SEA procedures at national level, raise awareness of SEA benefits among various national stakeholders, and provide recommendations for the improvement of the Road Map.

¹ The EaP GREEN programme is funded by the European Union and other donors, and is jointly implemented by the four partner organisations: OECD, UNEP, UNECE and UNIDO. Further information available at http://www.unece.org/env/eia/about/eap_green.html

As a first phase of the project the national SEA team conducted initial analysis of environmental and health aspects related to the waste management. This initial stage of SEA resulted in the scoping report which identifies the key environmental and health issues, which may be affected by the Road Map implementation, and thus need to be further addressed in next SEA steps. The key issue include e.g. illegal disposal of solid waste increasing risks of soil and water contamination, air emissions pollution resulting from waste collection and transportation, use of space for the landfills and the collection points and their impacts on the neighboring communities, biodiversity and cultural heritage.

In order to ensure that the SEA properly addresses concerns of the local communities of Armenia, local governments, civil society, experts and general public were invited to provide comments and to the SEA scoping report.

SEA public hearings meetings/consultations were carried out in selected five regions of Armenia where the landfills are proposed to be located:

1. Kotayk Region, Hrazdan City, Municipality of Kotayk /Aarhus Centre of Hrazdan – 5 August, 2016
2. Lori Region, Vanadzor City, Municipality of Lori /Conference Hall – 9 August, 2016
3. Shirak Region, Gyumri City, Municipality of Gyumri /Conference Hall – 11 August, 2016
4. Syunik Region, Kapan City, Municipality of Syunik /Conference Hall – 16 August, 2016
5. Yerevan City, City Hall – 19 August, 2016

The participants of the public hearings were invited to express their concerns regarding the Road Map's proposals on the waste management principles and schemes as well as provide suggestions on how to more efficiently address these concerns.

In preparation to the public hearings, the dates and the venues were officially announced in accordance to the national law on ‘‘Environmental Impact Assessment and Expertise’’. To coordinate efforts with the local governments and ensure their involvements in the SEA consultation process, the official announcement for the public hearings were officially sent to the local authorities. The Scoping Report on SEA was made available for the public and other stakeholders through the website of the REC Caucasus <http://rec-caucasus.am/sea-scoping-report-2016/> (English version), <http://rec-caucasus.am/new-initiative-on-strategic-environmental-assessment-for-solid-waste-management-sector-in-armenia-hy/?lang=hy> (Armenian version).

As a result of the public hearings a number of comments and suggestions were obtained from the representatives of the public authorities, civil society, Aarhus centers, experts, local government and other interested stakeholders. The inputs received will be considered when drafting the SEA report, which shall provide further details on the likely environmental and health effects, and formulate measure to avoid or mitigate this effects. The draft SEA report together with the Road Map will be also open for consultation with relevant stakeholders, and thus there will be further opportunities for public to express the view (next round of the public meetings will be organized tentatively in December 2016).