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International conference
„Environmental Assessments and the European Green Deal“
Vodice, Croatia

14-17 September, 2022

Call for submission of abstracts

The conference is organized by Croatian Association of Experts in Nature and Environmental protection (HUSZPO), endorsed by the International Association for Impact Assessment (IAIA), in partnership with the Association of Environmental Impact Assessment Consultants (SKOS, Poland) and the Secretariat of UNECE (United Nations Economic Commission for Europe) Espoo Convention, under the auspices of the Ministry of Economy and Sustainable Development of the Republic of Croatia and Ministry of Regional Development and EU Funds of the Republic of Croatia. It will be held as the first pan-European conference on Environmental Assessments as the successor of the four regional South-East European conferences on Environmental Impact Assessment held in 2013, 2015, 2017, 2019.

The organizers are hereby inviting submission of abstracts for presentations at the Conference. Presentations shall focus on the conference theme and address one of the thematic clusters and subthemes listed below. The subthemes indicated below mark particular interest areas, but they are not exhaustive and presentations addressing other issues under any of the thematic cluster are also welcome.

Abstracts shall be written in English, not exceeding 1500 characters, indicating the thematic cluster/subtheme of the proposed paper, and consisting of a short description of the content of the contribution and up to five main keywords.



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Thematic Clusters and Subthemes

I. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT (EIA)

1. Approaches to screening and scoping
2. EIA & Green Deal
3. Public Participation
4. Relationship between EIA and development consent and decision-making, Appropriate Assessment and climate proofing
5. EIA Procedure efficiency and quality control
6. Connection between EIA and Environmental and Health Risk Assessment
7. Climate change
8. Cumulative impacts
9. EIA and Transboundary consultations
10. Environmental protection measures
11. Environmental monitoring
12. Judicial practice

Possible thematic challenges

- How to optimally fit EIA into the Green Deal framework, especially in terms of screening and scoping?
- How can we effectively consider in EIA the „Do Not Significant Harm“ principle and the new EU taxonomy for sustainable activities defined by the Regulation (EU) 2020/852?
- How to improve relationships between EIA, decision-making and development consent?
- What is the connection between EIA and Appropriate Assessment, ensuring good water status, social and heritage impact assessment, etc.?
- How EIA reflects on environmental and integrated permit?
- What are the links between EIA and climate proofing?
- How to improve public participation, procedure efficiency and quality control in EIA? How to reliably assess cumulative impacts in terms of Environmental and Health Risk Assessment?
- How to make transboundary consultations more efficient?
- What are the cutting edge solutions of environmental protection measures and monitoring?
- What can we learn for the future from judicial practice?



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II. Strategic Environmental Assessment

1. Approaches to screening and scoping
2. SEA & Green Deal
3. Public participation
4. Relationship between SEA and strategic decision-making, Appropriate Assessment and climate proofing
5. Conclusion of the SEA procedure
6. Connection between SEA and Environmental and Health Risk Assessment
7. SEA and Social Impact Assessment
8. SEA and physical planning
9. SEA and transboundary consultations
10. Cumulative effects
11. Judicial practice

Possible thematic challenges

- Are we undertaking SEA for key plans and programmes? Are we missing any critical decision-making fields in the SEA application?
- How do we best approach SEA for minor modifications of plans/programmes and SEA for plans and programmes regarding use of small areas at local level and minor modifications to plans and programmes?
- Are we effectively linking the inter-related SEA processes and streamlining them based on the Article 4.3 and Article 5.3 of the SEA Directive?
- Are we focusing SEAs on key concerns related to environmental sustainability of proposed plans and programmes that matter in decision-making and public debates? What can be improved?
- How can we best consider Green Deal aspirations for climate neutrality, climate resilience and circular economy in SEAs?
- How can we effectively consider “Do Not Significant Harm” principle and the new EU taxonomy for sustainable activities defined by the Regulation (EU) 2020/852 in SEA?
- What are the key challenges and typical shortcomings in our current assessments of cumulative effects? What approaches work well?
- How to ensure impartiality and quality in the SEA conclusions?
- Who has the overall responsibility for the SEA procedure: planning authority (i.e. authority responsible for the preparation of the plan/programme) or environmental authority?
- What is the role of the planning authority in screening, scoping, public participation, consultation with other authorities, taking into account the results of SEA and in monitoring etc)?



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- What is the role of the authorities having “*specific environmental responsibilities*” in screening, scoping, public participation, consultation with other authorities, in taking into account the results of SEA in the plan/programme and in monitoring?
- Are there any other bodies (independent commissions etc.) taking part in screening, scoping, public participation, consultation with other authorities, in taking into account the results of SEA in the plan/programme, and in monitoring?
- Is there only one or more authorities having “*specific environmental responsibilities*” involved in SEA procedure? If only one - which agency or body performs usually the role of the “*environmental authority*”?
- Which authority is responsible for the preparation of the “*environmental report*” provided for by art. 5 of the SEA Directive?
- What is the legal form (binding or non-binding) of consultations with authorities having “*specific environmental responsibilities*” in screening (art.3.6), in scoping (art.5.4) and in expressing “*their opinion on the draft plan or programme and the accompanying environmental report*” (art.6.2)?
- Is there any specific document serving as the “*conclusions*” derived from the SEA process and documenting due account taken of the results of SEA (art.8)? Who prepares it? What is its legal status?
- If there is a separation of roles among the “*planning*” and the “*environmental*” agencies, what happens in case of a disagreement between them as to the conclusions (or conditions) derived from the SEA or about the way in which the proposed plan should be amended accordingly?
- Is it possible that the role of the “*planning authority*” and that of the “*environmental authority*” coincide in the same body or agency?



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III. APPROPRIATE ASSESSMENT

1. Conservation Objectives
2. Appropriate Assessment and its relation to EIA Directive
3. Application to projects not listed under Annex I and II of EIA Directive- mechanism for screening such activities
4. Procedures
5. Scope of assessment of biodiversity, geodiversity and landscape diversity
6. Admissibility of projects found to have adverse effects
7. Concept of Overriding Public Interest
8. Approach to alternatives
9. Ecological Network and Economy
10. Appropriate assessment at courts: judicial practice

Possible thematic challenges

- Can we improve the site-specific conservation objectives to make them clearer but also more feasible at the same time?
- Which type of projects represent the biggest challenge in appropriate assessment procedures and why?
- What approaches are used in assessments of impacts when restoration of habitats/habitats for the species is part of the Site-specific conservation objectives (SSCO)?
- What approaches are used in assessments of cumulative effects? How is availability of data affecting the assessments?
- How to strengthen the linkages between SEA and Appropriate Assessments under the Habitat and Birds directives? How to effectively undertake such assessment for plans and programmes that lack details on proposed projects? What is clearly too much or too little to expect from such assessments?
- How often is the instrument of „*Imperative reasons of overriding public interest*“ (IROPI) utilised and is it contributing to the Habitats/Birds Directive objectives? What are the approaches to HD 6.3 appropriate assessments with transboundary impacts?
- How are prescribed mitigation measures controlled and their effectiveness monitored? What are the approaches to mitigation measures modification when needed and how often is adaptive management approach used?
- Can (and how can) the development of Green Infrastructure help achieve NATURA2000 conservation objectives?
- To what extent can compensatory measures replace the avoidance or sufficient mitigation of direct impact on conservation objectives?



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IV. CLIMATE PROOFING

1. New European Commission Technical guidance on the climate proofing of infrastructure in the period 2021-2027 and its connection to EIA and SEA
2. Climate data availability and quality
3. Uncertainty and no-regret option
4. Climate resilience and neutrality of projects

Possible thematic challenges

- How can we get quality data for the relevant climate change scenarios? What are the experiences with the use of local meteorological and climate measurements and models?
- How is climate change interacting with other issues assessed in the EIA and SEA (e.g. biodiversity objectives, water management objectives)?
- How do we approach uncertainty and promote no-regret or low-regret options that work sufficiently well during the future climate variability? What can we learn from natural and industrial hazard assessment and safety analyses?
- What are the challenges in choosing appropriate methodology for assessment of climate change impact on projects, plans and strategies? What are the similarities and differences between climate resilience proofing and consideration of climate change in EIA and SEA processes? What are the opportunities for coordinated processes?
- What are good practice examples in calculating GHG emissions (e.g. consideration of direct and indirect emissions and defining correct scope of such calculations, considering relative/absolute emissions, approaches based on life-cycle analyses etc.)? What practical approaches that could be used for neutrality proofing based on the recent European Commission technical guidance on the climate proofing of infrastructure in the period 2021-2027?
- How to approach carbon neutrality proofing of interventions that generally tend to increase GHG emissions – e.g. transport infrastructure, proposals for the utilisation of natural gas, etc.
- Should EIA processes disclose the predicted external costs of carbon emissions associated with the proposed developments?
- What are the main opportunities for an effective coordination of SEA with the forthcoming climate resilience proofing and climate neutrality proofing of EU-funded projects (based on the recent European Commission technical guidance on the climate proofing of infrastructure in the period 2021-2027)?



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V. SUSTAINABLE AND INCLUSIVE GROWTH

1. Green infrastructure
2. Ecosystem services
3. Circular economy
4. Sustainability proofing

Possible thematic challenges

- Can (and how) the development of Green Infrastructure help achieve NATURA2000 conservation objectives?
- How can Environmental Assessments best contribute to the realization of „Do Not Significant Harm“ principle?
- How to include the best possible evaluation of Ecosystem Services in SEA and EIA?
- Should Environmental Assessments be the key site-specific instruments of European Green Deal and direct economic development toward the Circular Economy especially regarding their roles in project financing from EU funds?
- How to adapt assessments/analysis to challenges arising from new and emerging EU requirements? What are the approaches in impact assessments for RRP (*Recovery and Resilience Plan*) projects that have been licenced (but not implemented) before EU Green Deal and DNSH („Do Not Significant Harm“) requirements?

The Conference is open for presentations addressing the above issues from various points of view and for participants with various background. Presentations providing results of comparative studies or multidisciplinary research, including results of sociological surveys related to practical implementation of environmental assessments are particularly welcome.