

EIA Training Resource Manual for South Eastern Europe

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*Elaborated within the REReP 1.4 project
EIA Capacity-Building in South Eastern Europe*

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THE REGIONAL ENVIRONMENTAL CENTER
for Central and Eastern Europe



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Introduction

This manual is based on the training framework contained in the UNEP EIA Training Resource Manual, which was published in 1996 and revised in 2002. The UNEP Manual comprises a generic “tool kit for EIA capacity development” in developing and transitional countries that can be customised to meet the special needs of a particular region or country.

In this case, the focus is on SEE countries involved in the Stabilisation and Association process (SAP). The manual is designed for specific application in Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, FYR Macedonia and Serbia and Montenegro, including Kosovo (territory under UN interim administration). It has been prepared to strengthen the EIA capabilities of a number of target groups. These include EIA-competent authorities, environmental inspectorates, developers, environmental consultancies, non-governmental organisations and other interested institutions and individuals.

The manual can be used as a basis for organising regional and national capacity-building programmes. It provides relevant materials that have been developed with advice and input from EIA administrators and other key stakeholder groups in the countries concerned. These materials can be easily adapted to the needs of specific countries and used in national workshops and training activities for various stakeholders. Thus various parts of the manual can be further modified to the needs of the audience, the nature of the event, the level of EIA development and other factors.

Overall Context of the Project

The Stabilisation and Association Process

The Stabilisation and Association Process (SAP) is a policy framework to support the efforts of five countries of South Eastern Europe (SEE) toward eventual entry into the European Union. It is an opening strategy for Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, FYR Macedonia, Serbia and Montenegro, including Kosovo (territory under UN interim administration) to become familiarised with European values, principles and standards. This process is similar to the accession process now nearing completion in Central and Eastern Europe.

The 2003 edition of the European Commission's Annual Report on the Stabilisation and Association

Process for South Eastern Europe indicates that the above countries continue to make gradual progress in reforms that will pave the way to closer integration with Europe. However, shortcomings and slow progress in the reform process are evident in many sectors, and implementation is poor in all countries. Further transition, development and European integration will require the genuine political will and commitment of the countries themselves.

The Regional Environmental Reconstruction Programme for SEE (REReP)

Recent conflict and political instability has left SEE with a particular legacy of environmental problems that require strong regional collaboration. REReP was established in response to this challenge. Because of its political neutrality, this programme provides a unique platform for building trust and confidence to address trans-boundary environmental issues.

Ministers of Environment from Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, FYR Macedonia and Romania endorsed REReP in March 2000 within the framework of the Stability Pact for SEE. Thus environmental problems were taken into account from the very beginning of the overall reconstruction process. The ministers also agreed on the “List of Immediate Project Priorities for the Implementation of REReP.” Serbia and Montenegro joined REReP following the political changes in 2001.

The REReP mechanism was reviewed and adjusted in September 2001 to ensure a link between environmental reconstruction and the Stabilisation and Association Process in SEE. Thus the REReP process in SEE combined SAP objectives for fostering lasting peace, prosperity and stability in the region with harmonisation of environmental policies, institutions and standards in SEE countries with those of the EU. A complementary link to the EU accession process in candidate countries was established through the participation of Bulgaria and Romania.

The implementation of priority REReP projects was supported by the European Commission and the governments of the Czech Republic, Denmark, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, Norway, Switzerland and the United States.

The Capacity-Building Project for Environmental Assessment in SEE

REReP's regional project titled "Capacity Building for Environmental Assessment in SEE" (hereinafter REReP 1.4) was implemented in Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, FYR Macedonia, Serbia and Montenegro, including Kosovo (territory under UN interim administration). Croatia also participated in the regional activities offered through the project, but focused all national activities on strategic environmental assessment. The entire project was carried out in the period from August 2001 to August 2003 and was financed by the European Commission (See: http://europa.eu.int/comm/europeaid/projects/index_en.htm) through its Obnova and Phare Programmes.

Initiation of REReP 1.4 was correlated with the beginning of major reforms of institutional and legal systems for EIA in SEE countries (see the "Current Reforms" section for details). While reforms vary in details, their common feature is the serious attention given to several international points of reference for the development of EIA systems in the region. The immediate priority of all project countries is to achieve full compliance with the EC EIA Directive. Their common long-term objective is to ratify or accede to the UNECE Espoo Convention and UNECE convention on Access to Information, Public Participation in Decision Making,

and Access to Justice in Environmental Matters (Aarhus Convention). Some elements of reforms (e.g. scoping) are partly influenced by EIA procedures of two major international lenders, the World Bank and EBRD.

Building on these developments, REReP 1.4 focused on training for the practical implementation of proposed EIA legal reforms. Specifically, the training resource manual focuses on the development of EIA process-management skills (e.g. EIA project management, conduct of screening, scoping or review) where skills were acknowledged to be relatively weak. For example, in a number of SEE countries, the decision-makers remarked that they would need more information and practical training on existing review systems of an EIA report. By contrast, knowledge of technical aspects of EIA (e.g. impact identification and mitigation) is much stronger in SEE countries.

The most important features of the entire project were the working exchanges and levels of cooperation among the participants from different countries. Representatives of national environmental authorities took part in all stages of project implementation from agenda setting to evaluation, and there was a considerable level of mutual assistance, support and cooperation among EIA trainers from various countries. This is the most impressive legacy of the project: it may also be the most enduring.