

European ECO Forum
SEA Excellence Centers:

Center for environmental and legal initiative “Globus”, *Kazakhstan*

In 2021 with the support by Resource & Analysis Center “Society and Environment” we have prepared an environmental report for the pilot strategic environmental assessment (SEA). For the purpose of the pilot SEA we selected a development program for one of the regions of Kazakhstan. For the preparation of the environmental report a group of three experts was created with rotation of some experts as the need came with new incoming data and information and/or search for new data sources for the oil drilling, environmental pollution, medical data in Atyrau oblast.

In Kazakhstan, a new Environmental Code was adopted on January 2, 2021. The code includes provisions, principles and requirements for strategic environmental assessment (SEA). It should be conducted in case proposed document may have negative effects on the environment with a view of analyzing such potential effects on the environment, their severity and likelihood, and the identification of measures for their mitigation or prevention. SEA procedure will be effective from 2024.

Main conclusions and recommendations

01 Difficulties in preparation of the report

The 2015 Law of Kazakhstan on “Access to information” guarantees that information is accessible, open and reliable. In addition, the Aarhus Convention (ratified by Kazakhstan in 2000) provides for a right to seek freely information and data of environmental monitoring. However, in practice it is hard to find necessary and recent data on environmental issues, especially in the context of human health, factors causing primary diseases of population of the region.

Due to the lack of systematic collection of information, the data published (in particular on environmental issues) are contradictory and unreliable. Conducting the SEA based on such data will lead to erroneous decisions, which will ultimately result in negative effects on the environmental and human health.

For these reasons the biggest difficulty for us was drafting report's section "The relevant aspects of the current state of the environment, including health", as well as detailed assessment of likely environmental and health effects due to implementation of the program.

In particular, it was difficult to assess links with diseases, including Tuberculosis: the researchers usually refer to social conditions as the main factor, not environmental causes. However, access to clean drinking water in the pilot regions remains a serious problem, as well as sewage water treatment and rising emissions.

Quite a lot of information is being collected in Kazakhstan and new electronic tools for its dissemination were introduced to make access to primary and other data. Kazhydromet state company started publishing such data in its periodic journals and show it on LED screens for immediate informing of the public about extreme emissions and access to general monitoring data. These electronic tools significantly helped us to find relevant information and get access to it.

As we know, the SEA for strategies, plans, concepts and programs require involvement of complex research groups consisting of recognized experts and analysts. In addition, SEA requires in-depth preparation process and professional knowledge. As we were progressing in our work, we realized lack of full understanding of tasks and, therefore, had to redraft environmental reports several times, amend our work program.

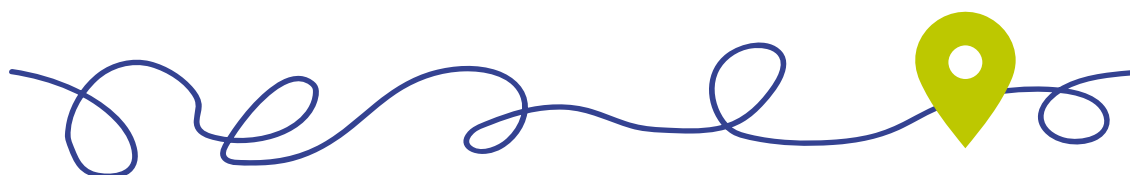
02 SEA will require additional resources

Sufficient time needs to be allocated for collecting environmental and health information, as well as for preparation of the environmental report itself.

Some information requested can only be provided for payment (e.g., Kazhydromet offers some of its data only for a fee). For this reason, a budget should be allocated for getting such data.

Preparing a good quality environmental report requires involvement of a group of professional experts, which also implies allocation of resources.

Further trainings and webinars on SEA are needed. Despite our skills, our group remains uncertain regarding some elements of the SEA practical implementation.



03 Public consultations:

- sufficient time must be given after the public notice to ensure that stakeholders can familiarize with the information and participate effectively;
- all relevant information should be publicly available;
- comments and proposals raised during public hearings must be taken into account;
- final text and explanations how comments/proposals were taken into account must be made public.

For public hearings to be effective and contribute to the decision-making on plan or program (an ultimately promote sustainable development of the region) citizens, NGOs and other groups, including opinion leaders, should actively participate in the public consultations on the environmental report, provide comments and proposals to improve draft program or plan.

About organisation

NGO Center for environmental and legal initiative “Globus” was founded in 1998, officially registered in 2001 with the Ministry of Justice of Kazakhstan. The mission of the Center is to conduct environmental educational programs to develop civic engagement in Atyrau region. We also carry out public environmental monitoring and public environmental impact assessment of oil projects in the Atyrau region and offshore oil operations in the water area of the North-Eastern Caspian. We are also experts in the implementation of strategic programs and projects in our region. We encourage everyone to be active everywhere and always create healthy environment.



Project partners:



Donor:



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.



Photo: USGS, Unsplash ©
Location: Tyuleniy Archipelago in the Caspian Sea, Kazakhstan