



EUROPEAN UNION
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CENTRAL EUROPE 2020:

Methodological note on the public consultation process for the Strategic Environmental assessment (SEA)

0. Preamble

The conduction of the Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) consultation process of the national environmental authorities and the public is an obligatory milestone foreseen in the road map for the preparation of the CENTRAL ERUOPE 2014-2020 Programme.

The consultation will be based on the draft OP and the draft environmental report (including non-technical summaries as indicated under § 1 and 3 in this document) which are subject to acceptance by the Steering Group (SG) during the 7th SG meeting to take place on Nov. 28-29, 2013 in Ljubljana.

The SEA consultation period has been defined for 6 weeks in the scoping report, which has been endorsed by the national environmental authorities (in May 2013) and has been approved by the SG.

It is to be noted that it is crucial to stick to the timing of the consultation as foreseen in the roadmap (mid-December 2013 to end-January 2014 for a duration of 6 weeks) in order not to delay the submission of the final OP to the EC (planned for the first half of March 2014). In this respect, and if required at national level, translations of documents into national languages should be limited to the possible extent, i.e. to the non-technical summaries of documents (see § 1. and 3. in this document).

Further information on the planned procedure and timing for the SEA is presented in the following chapter.

1. General principles on SEA public consultations

The SEA procedures as laid down in the SEA Directive 2001/42/EC (Article 6) foresee the consultation of the public and the environmental authorities on the programme's effects on the environment. In the context of the consultation process the draft Operational Programme (OP) and the draft Environmental Report have to be made available.

With regard to the SEA of European Territorial Cooperation Programmes, **the EC recommends to make available at least the non-technical summaries of both the draft environmental report and the OP in national languages** in order to ensure an appropriate public participation.

The Managing Authority (MA) should arrange for the distribution of the SEA documentation (draft environmental report along with the OP draft) to the Environmental Authorities concerned and to the public in the involved Member States. It is to be noted that the consultation of the environmental authorities and the public has to be carried out in the Member States according to the national requirements on the matter. The Member States participating in the programme are responsible to conduct the consultation process. According to the SEA Directive also the detailed arrangements for the information and consultation of the authorities and the public shall be determined by the Member States participating in the Programme.

2. SEA of the CENTRAL EUROPE Programme

Taking into account those provisions as well as opinions provided by the national environmental authorities (see § 4), the CENTRAL EUROPE Programme proposes to conduct the consultation procedure by applying the approach presented below, where the main steps of the SEA consultation process feeding into the CENTRAL EUROPE 2020 Programming road map are defined following the principles and terms laid down in section 2 of the SEA Scoping report:

- Until 09.12.2013: Translations of non-technical summaries of the draft OP and draft environmental report into national languages, if required for the national consultations;
- From week 50/2013 to week 3/2014: SEA consultation period (6 weeks):
 - o The consultation process will be facilitated at transnational level through an online platform set up by the MA/JTS and accessible via the CENTRAL EUROPE website. The platform will make available the required documents object of consultation in English language (draft OP version 3.2, draft environmental report and non-technical summaries of both documents) and will allow to collect comments/opinions from national environmental authorities and the public in a structured form, reflecting the programme priorities and specific objectives as defined in the draft OP in relation to the environmental issues described in the draft environmental report. Comments will be accepted only in English language.
 - o Member States might foresee links on their national websites to this online platform.
- Week 4-5/2014: collection of feedbacks received at national level and translation into English if necessary;
- First half of February 2014 (weeks 6-7/2014): The information gathered in the framework of the consultation with the environmental authorities and the public will be taken into account in the preparation of the programme by the MA/JTS (supported by the appointed SEA experts), by resuming and integrating feedbacks received into the final OP draft and final draft Environmental Report to be submitted to SG by mid February 2014;
- End of February 2014 (week 9/2014): 8th SG meeting - MS approval of OP and Environmental report;
- Early March 2014 (week 10/2014): Finalisation of OP and Environmental report according to SG inputs;
- Week 11/2014: Submission of approved OP with all annexes, Final Environmental report and Environmental Statement to the European Commission (EC).

3. Accomplishment with specific national requirements

- Steering Group (SG) members are to ensure the accomplishment of national specific requirements, if any (as presented in § 4t). This might include the implementation of the following tasks (not exhaustive list):
 - o Translations of the necessary documents into national language: following recommendations by EC, and as already mentioned, it is suggested to translate only the non-technical summaries of the draft OP and the draft Environmental report;
 - o Publication of translated documents at national level, e.g. on websites of the national Environmental authorities;
 - o Collection of comments at national level and their translation into English language (if not directly submitted through the transnational online platform). For facilitating the integration of comments into the overall consultation summary, the same structure applied

- in the online platform should be used for collecting additional national inputs. A template mirroring this structure, also to be translated, will be provided by the MA/JTS.
- Comments collected at national level should be translated in English and forwarded to the MA/JTS within 2 weeks after the closure of the consultation process (i.e. possibly by 3.2.2014).
 - In the case that specific national requirements impose a longer duration of the consultation period, **the extension of the national consultation should not go beyond 03.02.2014.** Additional comments collected in the extended period should be translated into English and forwarded to the MA/JTS within one week (i.e. possibly by 7.2.2014 as latest option).

4. National requirements on SEA

In preparation of the SEA of the CENTRAL EUROPE Programme, in October 2013 the MA/JTS inquired on possible specific national requirements on SEA consultation procedures. The table below summarises the feedback received from the national Environmental authorities concerning the use of national languages for documents being consulted as well as the duration of the consultation period. It is to be noted that this information was received in most cases as personal feedbacks lacking of reference to national legal requirements. Furthermore, some of the feedback received is diverging from the SEA scoping report, which has been endorsed by the same national environmental authorities and approved by the SG, in which it was specified that the duration of the consultation is of 6 weeks. It is also to be observed that a duration of only 4 weeks for consultations is being implemented for similar SEAs involving some central European Member States (for the Alpine Space Programme).

MS	Comments received by national Environmental authorities	
	Need for translation	Duration of consultation
AT	helpful to have a German translation at least of the non-technical summaries	due to Christmas holidays in the consultation period it should be extended to 8 weeks
CZ	Ministry for Regional Development will ensure the translation of relevant parts of documents (non-technical summaries)	Pursuant to national law, 8 weeks are needed after receiving the translated document to send national statement
DE	short versions of both documents are needed in German	by law consultation of 4 weeks needed, but crossing Christmas and New Year six weeks is a good proposal
HR	appreciates non-technical summaries in Croatian language	Agrees with comments of AT
HU	non-technical summaries of both documents in Hungarian needed	due to break (21.12.-6.1.) in the public administration in Hungary in the consultation period it should be extended to 8 weeks
IT	Documentation in national language needed	Agrees with comment of AT
PL	No comment received	No comment received
SK	appreciates non-technical summaries in Slovak language	Agrees with comment of AT
SI	No comment received	No comment received

The above considered, SG Members are recommended to check again specific national requirements, in order to ensure compliance with national legislation at the same time allowing an efficient conduction of the SEA consultation process.