

E1 Topic Session Report

E1 Professional and Institutional Capacity-Building for SEA	
<i>Session Leader(s)</i>	Maria Rosário Partidário, mp@fct.unl.pt Lee Wilson, lwa@lwasf.com
<i>Focus and approach</i>	<p>The purpose and overall focus of the session was on the capacities of SEA to impact decision-making, both in terms of principles and forms of improving the SEA capacity. Papers were presented that focused on successful stories in SEA capacity-building, followed by direct clarification questions. Workshop discussions were then inspired by the experiences presented in the paper and also by two keynote speakers that addressed each of the workshop discussion topics:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Principles for how to improve the capacity of SEA to impact decision-making - Professional and institutional forms of improving SEA capacities to impact decision-making <p>Papers presented at the session</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Environment Protection Agency's SEA Experience in Ireland – the first twelve months <i>Tadhg O'Mahony, Gerry Byrne - Environmental Protection Agency Ireland; Alison Donnelly EPA/ Trinity College Dublin</i> • Building Capacity for SEA Consultation Response. <i>Lucia Susani -Environment Agency, UK</i> • Sustainable Development and Strategic Environmental Assessment Capacity Building in Iran. <i>S.Ferdowsi (UNDP), A.H. Hakimian, S.M. Monavari, M. Partidario, H.F. Rad</i> <p>Invited keynote speeches</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Role and Impacts of the Audit Process within Strategic Environmental Assessment. <i>George Stuetz Canadian Commissioner Office for Environment and Sustainable Development</i> • Professional and Institutional Forms of Improving SEA Capacities ot Impact Decision –Making. <i>Linda Ghanime, UNDP</i> <p>Paper submitted but not presented, however introduced and briefed by chair of the session:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Professional and Institutional Capacity for Cultural Heritage in SEA. <i>Arlene Fleming, Ian Campbell.</i>

	<p>E1 was organized in three sessions. The first was dedicated to papers presentation followed by comments and questions. The second and third sessions were dedicated to workshop brainstorming discussions, kicked-off by keynote speeches on related issues.</p>
<i>Main trends and issues</i>	<p>Main trends, issues and developments</p> <p>Recognition of the fundamental role and importance of building capacity on SEA, particularly to enable effective impact on decision-making. Examples of capacity-building efforts are increasing, namely those driven by international development efforts, although public organizations also reveal internal efforts for increased capacity.</p> <p>Building professional and institutional capacity is taking place at national, organizational and individuals levels, envisaging national SEA systems, SEA-contexts and internal institutional frameworks.</p> <p>Key issues relate to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Levels (“tiers”) at which capacity-building is needed, and how they relate (national, organizational, individual) - SEA context (policy and planning practice, institutional set-up, openness of political system, collaborative and constructive relationships) - Intangible factors (e.g. trust, power relationships, willingness to share) - Tangible factors (e.g. resources availability, in-built knowledge)
<i>Profile of the status, quality and effectiveness of SEA</i>	<p>Existing experiences on building capacities for SEA illustrate forms (methods, initiatives) whereby such capacity can be improved, however context-specific these may be.</p> <p>Focus on environmental issues in some cases, others move from environmental to sustainability focus of SEA as a result of capacity-building efforts.</p> <p>The policy and planning culture, and the range and type of instruments (e.g. EIA, policy, plan, auditing) to which SEA relates influence the way SEA is used, and the efforts that must be made to improve professional and institutional capacities.</p> <p>There is lack of knowledge and experience in SEA. Insufficient capacities in leading institutions or lack of awareness in authorities. Need to learn for better SEA. Hard to judge on effectiveness of SEA.</p> <p>Education of decision-makers is needed.</p>
<i>Key findings and lessons</i>	<p>Main conclusions were driven by the two key questions raised for discussion, regarding principles and forms of improving the capacity of SEA to impact decisions:</p> <p>As principles:</p> <p>Principles for improving the capacity of SEA to impact decision making</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • strong leadership • building trust • institutional oversight (internal and external)

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • knowledge – sharing • SEA as a learning process and a platform for exchanged dialogue • transparency and accountability • results-orientated • early and continuous information to decision makers • simple and explicit in view of the audience • acknowledgement of the variation in the political economy • continuity of the SEA process and adaptability to planning changes <p>As forms of improvement:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • decision –maker brought on board and encouraged to engage in the SEA process from day 1 • set institutional systems to oversight process and implementation (internal and external) • sensitisation • mediation processes • training for plan-makers and decision-makers on SEA process and links with plan –making process • understanding of policy system • promote knowledge-sharing across professional individuals and institutions • consider “tiering” –levels of information for public/decision-makers/ level of decision-making • recognition of added value to plan/programme following SEA • ability/opportunity to impact/ influence decision-making process through the planning process • follow-up (evaluation and monitoring) for increased transparency and accountability • more systematically influence people and organisational systems • need for SEA to be totally integrated into decision-making system/process taking into account policy context
<i>Future directions</i>	<p>Move towards better understanding and clarification of the purpose of SEA, dismistifying the concept, making it more strategic and ensuring it is decision-focused and results-oriented, rather than process-oriented.</p> <p>Demonstrate the added-value of SEA to decision-making and ensure future capacity to enhance such value.</p> <p>Capacity-building through sharing knowledge, for example the role of websites and inherent links. Educate decision-makers</p> <p>Enhance the strategic role of SEA to impact decision-making.</p>