

# Conference theme and format

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Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) is applied in an increasing number of countries world-wide. This field has developed rapidly in the past decade and continues to diversify. International legal instruments are in place within the European Union and the UN Economic Commission for Europe region. New frameworks and areas of SEA practice are emerging, particularly within the lending and assistance activities of multilateral financial institutions and donor agencies. A number of developing countries have introduced SEA processes or informally use elements of this approach. More are expected to do so in the future.

The conference is being held to take stock of international experience with SEA. It will discuss all aspects of SEA development and review the status of the family of approaches, processes and tools that have evolved to date. For this purpose we have organized the conference into five main streams:

- A SEA legislation and policy** will review the institutional frameworks that are in place in different countries, regions and institutions and the experience gained in their implementation.
- B SEA practice in key sectors** will address developments and issues related to the use and application of SEA in agriculture, energy, transport, water and other sectors, focusing on lessons of good practice.
- C Linkages between SEA and other assessment or planning tools** will explore synergies and differences among the extended family of SEA instruments, looking for ways of strengthening their application as part of more integrated approaches to decision-making.
- D Cross-cutting issues in SEA practice** will address aspects and challenges of SEA that are common to all areas of application and bear directly on the quality and effectiveness of current practice.
- E Improving standards and building capacity for SEA** will consider the research, training and information and knowledge networks that can help to develop the standard of professional practice internationally.

Under each stream, a series of topics provides the focus of working sessions. The summaries that follow indicate the type of contributions and inputs that are sought by the session leaders. Position papers for each topic will be posted on the conference web page ([www.iaia.org](http://www.iaia.org) > Conference > SEA Prague Main Page) as they become available.

The Prague Conference is intended to be an interactive forum that will engage participants in framing the SEA agenda. Most sessions are expected to feature a combination of panel discussions and facilitated group work structured around the issues addressed in the position paper and informed by the other proposals submitted by participants. Some sessions may enable presentations of selected papers or case studies that *directly* address the issues and areas identified for the specific topic.

Contributions that cannot be included in sessions can be presented through posters. Referring participants to posters does not mean that the proposed inputs are of lesser quality. It indicates only that they cannot be accommodated into a session because of its specific format or because of the chosen focus of the discussion. Posters will provide contributions equally as important as the topic-related sessions and will be displayed for the entire length of the conference.

By taking this approach, we hope to both focus the work of the conference and encourage wider debate of the issues.

Please plan to join us in Prague. We look forward to welcoming you there.

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