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EU4Environment

Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Republic of Moldova, Ukraine

EU4Environment helps Azerbaijan align national environmental assessment legislation with international commitments

Baku, Geneva, 18 August 2020

The use of environmental assessments ensures the soundness and transparency of economic and territorial planning decisions. Environmental assessments prevent and mitigate damage to the environment and health from economic growth, benefitting people and nature.

Azerbaijan committed to apply environmental impact assessment (EIA), including in a transboundary context. These commitments arise from the Convention on Environmental Impact Assessment in a Transboundary Context (Espoo Convention) and are also reiterated in the EU-Azerbaijan Partnership and Cooperation Agreement. The framework law on EIA adopted by the country in 2018 also includes provisions on strategic environmental assessment (SEA) and will be complemented by secondary implementing legislation.

Speaking in the opening session, Ms. Simona Gatti, Minister Councillor, European Union Delegation to Azerbaijan noted : “EIA and SEA have proven their added value across the EU for many years – both in the national and transboundary context - by providing for overall higher quality plans and programs and projects with better public acceptance, lower negative environmental impact, less legal obstacles during implementation and better overall sustainability. The intense public participation in both processes is key to this success. I sincerely hope that this workshop will assist Azerbaijan to adopt legislation compliant with both concepts under the Espoo convention and its protocol on SEA soon, thereby securing a long term competitive advantage for the country.”

The European Union, in cooperation with UNECE, helps Azerbaijan align the draft secondary legislation with the international commitments. With this support, the government can address remaining gaps in the law vis-à-vis the Espoo Convention and harmonize its legal framework on environmental assessment with the international standards, in particular, the EU EIA and SEA Directives and the UNECE Protocol on SEA. This assistance is a part of the EU-funded regional programme, “European Union for Environment”(EU4Environment), launched in 2019. The programme aims at greening economies in the six Eastern Partnership countries (Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, the Republic of Moldova and Ukraine) based on EU funding of nearly 20 million euros.

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A virtual roundtable on the development of secondary legislation on EIA and SEA in Azerbaijan organized by UNECE and the Ministry of Ecology and Natural Resources of Azerbaijan on 18 August 2020 presented to different stakeholders the results of the draft secondary legislation review and recommendations regarding procedural schemes for implementing EIA and SEA. The roundtable brought together government agencies and environmental NGOs for discussing the new schemes for EIA and SEA laid out in the draft regulations and the rationale for their introduction. The event supported the finalization of the draft secondary legislation on EIA and SEA in line with the international standards.

EU4Environment Action, funded by the European Union, aims to support Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, the Republic of Moldova and Ukraine to preserve and better use their natural capital, increase people's environmental well-being, and grasp new development opportunities. With a budget of some EUR 20 million for all six countries, EU4Environment is carried out from 2019 to 2022 with implementation support by five international partners: OECD, UNIDO, UNEP, UNECE and the World Bank.

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