

CASE STUDY TITLE: Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) for the Viennese Waste Management Plan

SECTOR: Waste
COUNTRY: Austria

BACKGROUND

The Vienna Municipal Department 48 for Waste Management, the Vienna Municipal Department 22 for environmental protection and the Vienna Environment Counsel conducted a strategic environmental assessment (SEA) for the Viennese Waste Management Plan. It was the first waste-management related SEA in Austria. The goal and purpose of the SEA was to jointly find the best ecological and economic solution for the management of Vienna's waste until the year 2010. Fundamental questions concerning needs and technologies for the specific situation of the Viennese waste management should be answered. Environmental concerns should be taken into account equally as social and economic aspects during the preparation of the plan.

As a working basis for the SEA for the Viennese Waste Management Plan international examples of SEAs in the waste management sector and other Austrian SEAs were analysed and documented in this report before the Viennese SEA started. Thus methodological hints for conducting the SEA were gained. In this connection the Dutch and the Finnish waste management SEAs were of special interest.

After finishing the Viennese SEA process the SEA was evaluated using quality criteria and the experience was documented. The model of "SEA at the round table" was developed and tested in this process. Conclusions and recommendations for further SEAs were drawn from the gained experience.

The application of this new model was one of the special aspects of the SEA for the Viennese Waste Management Plan. "SEA at the round table" means, that the SEA was conducted as a team process, where members of the concerned authorities (including the environmental authorities), representatives of the public (the so called "qualified public") and the external experts participated on an equal basis in one team. As representatives of the public the Vienna Environment Council, who has launched the SEA, and several environmental NGOs took part in the process. The SEA team developed the Viennese Waste Management Plan together and was able to reach a consensus in most of the questions, The SEA team was responsible for every SEA and planning step during the whole process. This cooperative and participative approach should make sure, that the best solution for the management of Vienna's waste was found on the basis of a broad consensus, which considered the different interests. The common solution reached should be well supported by all participants and have the chance to get efficiently implemented.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

From the participants' comments and the author's point of view (the author was also responsible for the process management of the Viennese Waste Management SEA) some crucial conclusions and recommendations are drawn:

Conclusions and recommendations concerning the SEA process

- Sound conception of the SEA before starting it and efficient SEA management during the whole process by an (external) process manager, who is responsible for planning and organising the SEA process and for the methodological framework of the SEA

- Complete integration of planning process and SEA to a joint process, joint conception and conduction of both parts saves time and increases efficiency; therefore; start planning process and SEA at the same time
- Organisation of a SEA team consisting of members of the concerned authorities, representatives of the public and external experts, thus environmental aspects and different points of views can be brought into the process continuously
- Participative way of public participation during the whole process by representatives of environmental NGOs, interest groups or also politicians (“qualified public”), which means pro-active, responsible cooperation in the planning and SEA process
- Information for the broader public and politicians through homepages or public meetings
- Cooperation in the SEA team offers the chance to reach a jointly and broadly supported planning solution, which has been developed out of different views, and in which environmental aspects were taken into account equally; furthermore network effects, strengthening the basis of confidence and chances to implement the findings more quickly evolved conclusions and recommendations concerning SEA contents and SEA methodology
- Well documented, process tailored and step by step approach for scoping
- Specification of general environmental objectives to more precise environmental targets, tailored to the specific plan or programme
- Step by step approach for optimising alternatives
- Focusing the investigation of 15-20 relevant criteria or indicators
- When possible; widen the framework of investigation from merely environmental impacts to

socioeconomic effects (to get a complete basis for choosing the best alternative)

- Simple and transparent analyses of impacts (no complex models)
- Apply throughout the process a broad and not too detailed standard of investigation (wider approach, but less in depth); rather qualitative description of effects and consequences than detailed and quantitative analyses of single impacts

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