Objectives of plans and programmes and environmental protection objectives

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Objectives according to EU SEA Directive

- “objectives of the plan or programme” (annex I, article 5)
  - outline objectives of p/p in the environmental report
  - reasonable alternatives have to take account of these objectives

- “environmental protection objectives” (annex I)
  - provide information on objectives which are relevant for p/p
  - provide information how those objectives and any environmental considerations have been taken into account

- conclusion (problem?)
  - 2 different understandings of objectives
  - objectives of p/p are considered something different from environmental protection objectives
Objectives in practice

Objectives of plan or programme

Environmental protection objectives

Draft p/p

SEA

Approved p/p
Shortcomings

- alternatives assessment
  - alternatives depend strongly on objectives of p/p
  - no serious alternatives are discussed (any more)

- participation
  - public is involved on subjects they are not interested in
  - public is involved too late

- transparency
  - underlying objectives are usually not clear
  - objectives of p/p are not subject to discussion or questioned
Basic thesis:
Joining the objectives in a single process ensures better SEA (and planning).

• Thesis 1:
  There is no systematic difference between objectives of p/p and environmental protection objectives.

• Thesis 2:
  A transparent trade-off is better than a hypocritical “greening” of a plan or programme.

• Thesis 3:
  The integration achieves more environmental protection.
2 examples of SEA guidelines and manuals
Road planning in Vorarlberg

- new provincial road act
  - government needs to determine a road corridor before decreeing a provincial road
  - road corridor is plan according to EU SEA Directive

- great opportunity
  - SEA introduced at the same time with planning process
  - high level of “planning culture”
  - environmental protection as important provincial objective
Characteristics of SEA guideline

- “planning order” by responsible member of government
  - indispensable for triggering activities by planning department
  - clear information on objectives (which may be “environmental”)

- screening without a concrete plan
  - subject: “planning area”
  - question: are significant effects on planning area possible?

- assessment of 3-5 equal corridor alternatives
  - assessment of all relevant aspects
  - recommendation based on all outcomes of assessment

- full integration of technical and environmental report
Town planning in Lower Austria

- difficult preconditions
  - partly very small municipalities
  - lack of professional know how and funding
  - either dynamic suburban or peripheral regions

- based on ~ 10 years of SEA experience
  - partly poor quality of SEA
  - little understanding for SEA among decision makers and public
  - SEA very project-based and late in decision process

- aim of SEA manual
  - provide clear prescriptions for practitioners

Example 2 (Lower Austria): SEA manual for town planning
Characteristics of SEA manual

• no autonomous definition of objectives
  • objectives of p/p for town planning are defined by law
  • range of environmental protection objectives is always the same

• all-encompassing methodology
  • matrix including all possible thematic aspects
  • 3 main focuses → 6 fields of action → 12 thematic areas → 34 sub-aspects
  • methodology for each sub-aspect with 3 levels of depth

• full integration of technical and environmental report
Example 2 (Lower Austria):
SEA manual for town planning

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Datum: 4 April 2017
Conclusions and proposals

- fully include SEA in planning process
  - no distinction between objectives of p/p an environmental protection objectives (e. g. one single target system, CDFs etc.)
  - one unique technical and environmental report
  - open alternatives assessment

- advantages
  - more transparency of planning processes
  - more understanding for environmental concerns
  - more commitment of decision makers and the public
Further information

SEA in Vorarlberg and Lower Austria

www.vorarlberg.at/sup
www.raumordnung-noe.at

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