



## **Fruits of the conference**

**Heikki Kalle- Tallinn Forum, DGE Group, Estonian Environment  
Institute**

# Quantitative part

- 10 sessions, 3 TF debates, 3 keynote speakers, coffee chats, virtual drinks
- 87 registered participants+ technical support and couple unregistered guests
- Attendants from 21 countries: Sweden, Denmark, Belgium, Germany, UK, Ireland, Iceland, Estonia, Austria, Czech Republic, Poland, Macedonia, Bulgaria, Latvia, Italy, Malta, Spain, Portugal, Mexico, US, Australia
- Everybody has at least 20 new contacts with whom to stay in touch



## A. SEA's role in restructuring energy systems for tomorrow's energy landscape

- There was a “red thread” through the presentations regarding energy policy and energy transition. On one hand SEA appears not be used to its full potential, the scope is too narrow and comes to late in the process in energy policies and plans and often focuses on fulfilling minimum legal requirements. On the other hand, **voluntary initiatives** have been taken by local authorities and private companies to perform assessments that resemble SEA. A part of the challenge is that those **informal assessments differ** in quality, i.e. while some go beyond the requirements of the SEA-directive, others fall below and only cover part of the aspects to be addressed in a SEA.
- If I try to sum up to a few conclusions:
  - One size does not fit all! It is important that SEA requirements are flexible enough so that they can be adjusted **to local context**.
  - Certain guidance and framework need to be in place from higher levels to ensure the **quality** and that all aspect are addressed.
  - Resources at the local level differ greatly in terms of staff and knowledge, and **capacity building** at all levels is of central importance.
  - Important to emphasise SEA 's role as a tool for adopting more sustainable decisions and support **proactive dialogue** with different stakeholders.

## B. Health is disruptive – Will it be better integrated with SEA in a (post) COVID-19 world?

- SEA needs to consider health effects. Health and environment are inextricably linked. At screening and scoping environmental as well as socio-economic determinants of health should be considered.
- For an example of guidance for the consideration of both environmental and socio-economic determinants of health in SEA, see here: [https://www.unece.org/fileadmin/DAM/env/documents/2019/WG\\_8th\\_meeting/Advance\\_copy/Final\\_documents/1915379E.pdf](https://www.unece.org/fileadmin/DAM/env/documents/2019/WG_8th_meeting/Advance_copy/Final_documents/1915379E.pdf) (UNECE Draft guidance on assessing health impacts in strategic environmental assessment)
- If we assess determinants of health in separate assessments, we are running the risk of missing interlinkages.
- The World Health Organization has released a 'Manifesto for a healthy recovery from COVID-19', see here: <https://www.who.int/news-room/feature-stories/detail/who-manifesto-for-a-healthy-recovery-from-covid-19>
- The practice of HIA in spatial planning is growing and there are currently different ways in which HIA is integrated; see Research Report on Health Impact Assessment (HIA) Practice in Town Planning in England; <https://www.liverpool.ac.uk/media/livacuk/schoolofenvironmentalsciences/geography/research/environmentalassessmentandmanagementresearchcentre/ResearchReportHIAandIA.pdf>
- Further guidance on HIA in plan making is provided in: 'Wales Health Impact Assessment Support Unit (WHIASU) forthcoming (2020); HIA in Local Development Plans in Wales: A toolkit for practice, WHIASU, Cardiff'

# TF1 Ecosystem Services + SEA – a strong enough partnership to protect European biodiversity?

- Ecosystem services is widely promoted tool but not everybody accepts it because of (seemingly) anthropocentric approach and complexity
- In SEA it is however counterbalancing established species and habitat level protection with larger scale ecosystems understanding
- Ecosystem services is powerful tool demonstrating the magnitude in monetary terms how important ecosystem is for human wellbeing

## C. Strategic planning & climate change (the promotion of low carbon economies)

- Positive learning effects through the SEA to contribute to a low-/no carbon economy were already visible in the talks.
- While actually the policy and programme level creates the strongest options to discover systematic alternatives and consider mitigation targets along with other environmental objectives at an early stage, the talk and discussion showed a need to improve the communication and involvement in the decision making of SEA at that level.
- Tools such as CO<sub>2</sub>-calculators can enhance the transparency to a certain level and allow assessing scenarios but the SEA could particularly contribute to the planning processes through an integrative cross-sectoral view. In particular conflicting issues such as negative side-effects for biodiversity or health issues deserve more transparency about possible trade-offs.
- SEA could enhance further the cooperation and communication to tackle these complex issues and serve as a bridge between the different levels of planning.

## D. Caught in the crossfire - when government confuse plans for policies

- **Q1:** What is the advantage of applying a programmatic planning approach (over a project approach) that connects the individual dots of infrastructure and land-use project planning? Answer: Getting different administrations, authorities and stakeholders together - Leaving the silos of administrations and funding.
- **Q2:** Which is/could be the role of SEA in corridor planning for large infrastructure development that connects with land-use development and (cross)national transport? Answer: The role of SEA could be unifying objectives and identify interlinkages between transport planning. Facilitation of alternatives consideration.
- **Q3:** How could issues such as scoping, follow-up and tiering in SEA assist in the planning and development of a sustainable transport system? Answer: Need to discuss what should be discussed on different levels - creating linkages (tiering). Scoping at several levels. Creating (policy) consistency across the levels. Assuring goal achievement **(follow-up)**

## E. SEA as an arena for conflict resolution in land use planning

- The groups were asked to discuss what some of the conflicts are today affecting the SEA, what potential for conflict resolution exists and what could be done better, as well as what the participants/the participants' organisations could do themselves in order to act as change agents.
- The groups had a great amount to say, and answers to these questions touched upon:
  - -**education** of students requiring teaching critical thinking,
  - courses in SEA getting more attractive names and descriptions,
  - -the **language** and **communication** of SEA becoming more accessible,
  - -the lack of government **strategies** in place for land-use planning,
  - -what proper and meaningful **public consultation** and **participation** could look like,
  - - that SEA should not be primarily only a scientific process – but a **social process** with **scientific input**,
  - -the political aspect of SEA, and the rural vs. urban divide; and much much more.



## F. Bridging the parallel worlds of public and private sustainability strategies

- There are many ways corporate sustainability effort can be benefitted from cooperating with public sector sustainability efforts, both from strategic and operational perspective – planning and business plan development, building up partnerships, managing follow-up
- SEA is not always the tool facilitating strategic cooperation between municipalities and businesses, there are also considerable regional differences- in many times SEA principles are used not naming it as SEA (informal SEA)
- However, there is unlocked capacity in SEA in promoting cooperation between businesses and municipalities/state, both in formal but also informal SEA procedures.

## TF 2- Putting strategic back into SEA

- 1- 65% of session participants recognize SEA is not being strategic
- 2- In most countries SEA is being done as EIA, making incremental, minor changes to plans and programmes, however allowing transparency and informed consultation
- 3- SEA should lead to reflexion of plan-makers on how and why things are being done, bring new perspectives, make bigger and more strategic changes
- 4- SEA should be an opportunity to do more changes to “strategy”, be a frame for cross-sectoral linkages, discuss alternatives and institutional capacity

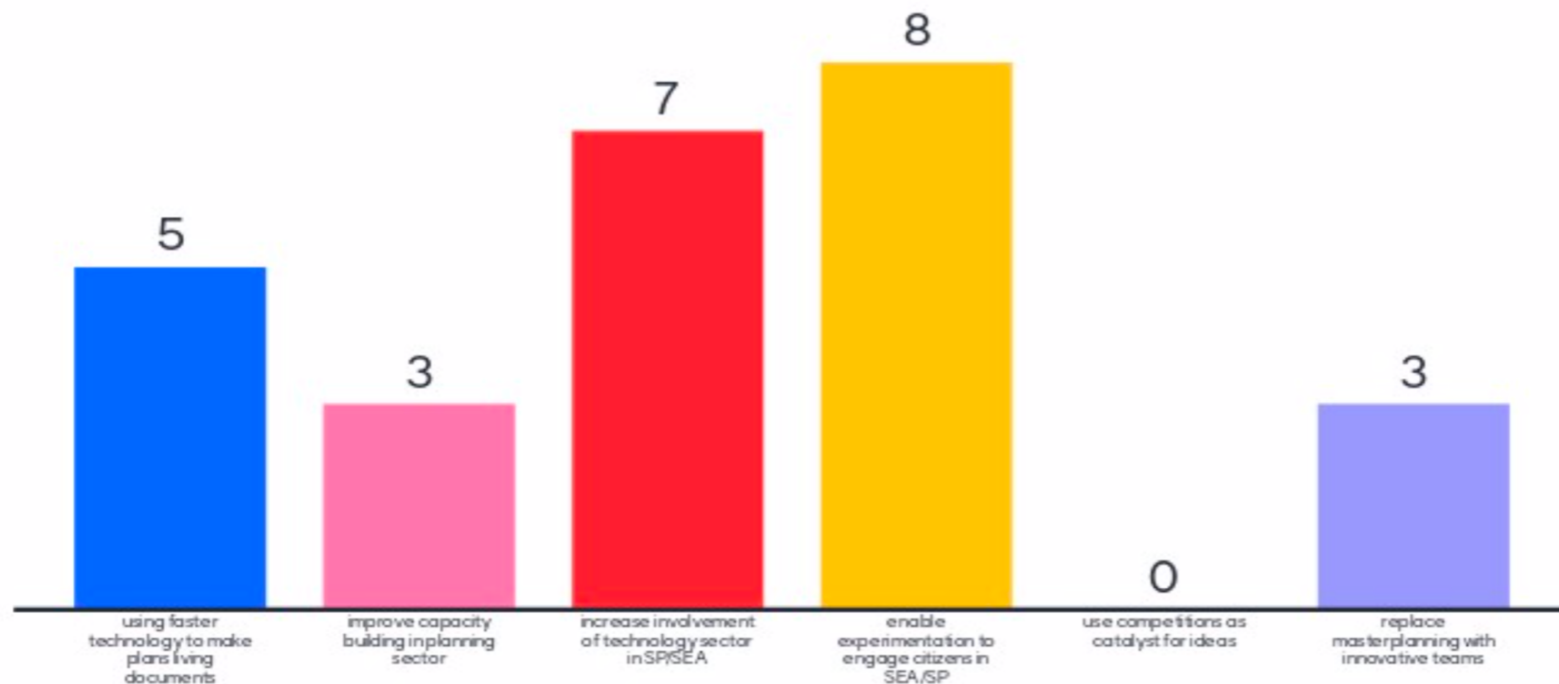
## G. Digital SEA, technical and social trends

- We agreed that SEA offers real opportunities to improve re-use of data and evidence, as well as increasing transparency and stakeholder and citizen engagement.
- We acknowledged that there are skills gaps, and capacity issues, but the profession needs to adapt and adopt new behaviours to move with the wider societal shift towards digitization.
- We see opportunities to gather robust evidence bases, and share this knowledge, nationally, and internationally to avoid reinventing the wheel each time, and learn from past projects, monitoring and research.
- Digital software and hardware offer additional tools, but the core function of SEA must not be lost, providing sound assessment and recommendations for making plans, programmes and policies more sustainable.

## H. Marine Spatial planning - a new domain for Strategic Planning & SEA

- SEA in MSP in the Baltic Sea area (based on Latvian, Estonian and Swedish examples and WWFs experiences) has been ambitious and quite effective in contextual and procedural terms.
- However pluralism can be strengthened and the strategic dimensions of SEA increased. Continued cooperation cross-borders, cross-sectors and cross-ministries/authorities, cross EU-directives (MSPD-MSFD) is needed to truly achieve the holistic knowledge based potential of MSP (including SEA) to contribute to sustainable use of our shared seas. To let SEA truly have a substantive and normative role in MSP. So no leaning back. Our journey towards even better SEAs has just begun...
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# I. Beyond Smart Cities X.0 – new roles for strategic planning



using faster technology to make plans living documents

improve capacity building in planning sector

increase involvement of technology sector in SP/SEA

enable experimentation to engage citizens in SEA/SP

use competitions as catalyst for ideas

replace master planning with innovative teams

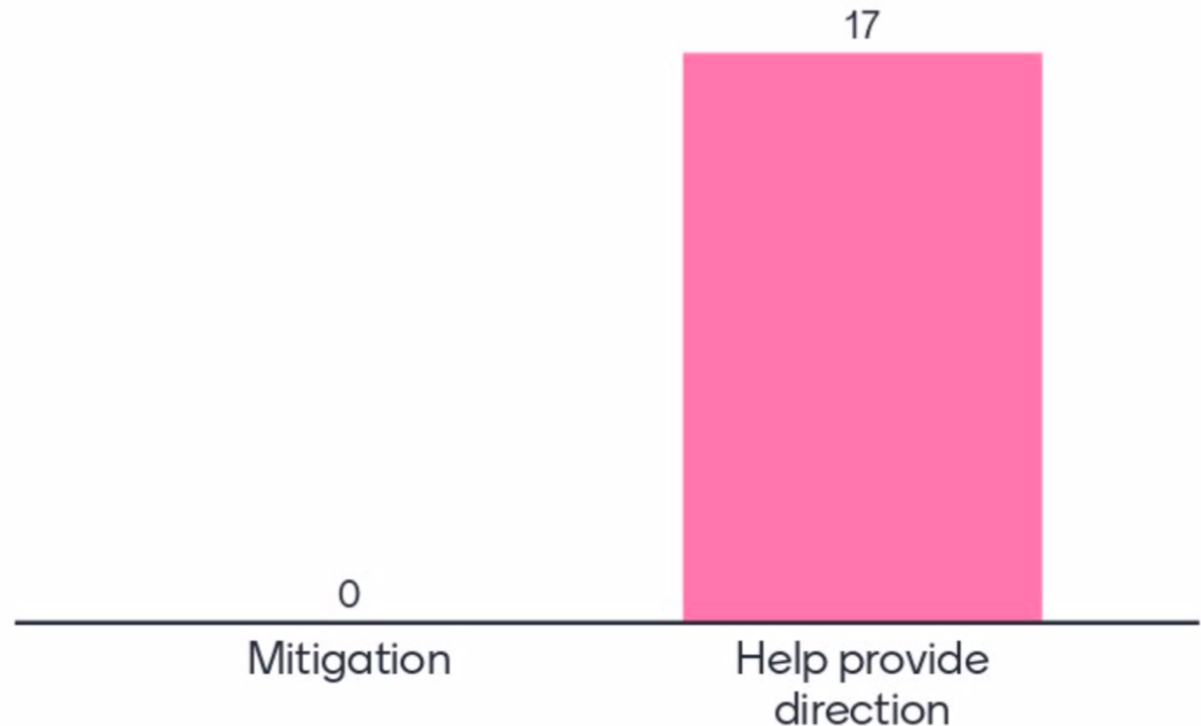
## I. Beyond Smart Cities X.0 – new roles for strategic planning

- SEA is a tool that can address some of the communication deficits on Smart City debates
- What intellectual and informational assets do citizens have that we can use SEA to draw out and bring to the debate
- In considering a conceptual ‘Smart City SEA’ the critical question is what do the citizens want (or have needs in) not what the city leaders want .

## J. SEA for Agriculture and Rural development strategies in the EU: a future challenge

- There is a strong focus now on environmental performance of EU agriculture, so a great potential window of opportunity for SEA to play a role
- - SEA practitioners need to be aware of the underlying drivers of food systems's dynamics and the new policy context to be able to make a difference

# Is SEA for mitigation or to help provide direction?





# WHAT ARE THE NEW STRATEGIC CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR AGRICULTURE AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT IN EUROPE?

In the rural economy (for example economic diversification, valorisation of traditional rural landscapes, bioeconomy, competitive advantages and new business opportunities in Europe farming)?

## Opportunities: Moving out of the cities

People are moving out of cities because of Covid. This change is usually temporary. Efforts need to be made to get people to stay.

### Opportunities

Services for local people

### Challenges

Fix population, ensure minimum services

## Encourage companies to move to rural area?

Estonia - internet connects are not strong enough in rural areas?

Would bring employee to rural areas and contribute to local economy.

May be more dependent on cars unlike in cities where there are public transport.

## Provide necessary services for people in rural areas

## Challenges

Protecting land for agricultural and food

## Valuable agricultural land

To keep for food production

## Opportunities: Multiple Land-Use

In smaller countries land is being used up by many other uses. Could have multiple uses for land. e.g. Grassland next to a river. If river floods the grassland could act as a flood defense.

To reach farms, tractors need roads but these can also be used by cycling.

# WHAT ARE THE NEW STRATEGIC CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR AGRICULTURE AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT IN EUROPE?

In rural-urban connections and synergies (for example to promote just and inclusive society with engagement of citizens, or valorisation of ecosystem services)?

Challenge: Overcome disbalance of energy use in cities (green electricity) leave footprint in rural landscape (where is the income for rural)

**Challenge: urban-rural divide re energy production vs agriculture production (land use conflicts)**

**Social cohesion - enabling recognition and attractivity of rural areas for living (people in cities may not even know what happens in rural areas)**

**Make agriculture a more sexy activity, how education is presented is outdated**

**COVID19 - lasting effects in rural areas (state prices increasing, second home)**

Young urbanists move to rural areas, but land is increasingly owned by non-farmers, rapid rising prices of land may pose a big challenge to agriculture development for only farming activities

**Ecosystem services - state policies change in Germany to increase opportunities for biodiversity based on community referendum**

**All of the country (eg Sweden) shall live**

# WHAT ARE THE NEW STRATEGIC CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR AGRICULTURE AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT IN EUROPE?

in healthy and sustainable EU food systems (for example in the protection, conservation and enhancement of the EU's natural capital and the health and well-being of citizens, in reducing pesticides and fertilizers, excess of nutrients in the environment impacting biodiversity and climate change, in improving organic farming, etc)?

**SEA should include a "Source to Sea"-perspective.**

this will be a challenge - to break through the established business as usual which is quite siloed, but is exciting

## **Potential Impacts on Water Quality and Quantity is a challenge**

challenges in linking to WFD objectives

Climate change effects

## **tension between extensification and intensification, food security**

land abandonment in extensive areas as a threat, not profitable; possibly not good for biodiversity either

## **challenges or hidden impacts, shifting to more vegetables has also neg. implications**

- e.g. effects of Quinoa in Peru etc.

## **SEA should have both a reactive and an proactive approach including an evaluation of the current CAP**

- evaluate have previous SEAs been making a difference

## **Transboundary issues**

- neighboring countries, catchment areas etc.
- extending beyond direct neighbors, "telecoupled impacts"
- discuss boundaries of SEA and assessments, participation

## **challenge: adopting ESS-approach in SEA for CAP Strategy Plans**

- ESS can be good tool, near-liberal use of concept; strong potential if used in right way
- mapping might be powerful
- shall use it with critical attitude

## TF 3- SEA and Sustainable Development Goals

- SDG-s could be the way to make SEA more strategic
- Brings value issue very early high up
- Shouldn't be used alone, used with combination of baseline led approach
- SDG-s should be made context specific
- Balancing of SDG-s is in some context important (not only climate but also others are important, Netherlands example)

# Qualitative part



- Role of SEA- complex tool for sustainability strategy, with potential still to be opened, expert as change agent
- Nature of SEA – strategic, flexible, communicative
- Integrated but conscious
- Formal procedure but also potential as informal method
- Learning, capacity building
- Embracing new domains, ideas, technologies
- Wider scope- SEA in the context of strategic planning and decisionmaking
- Discussion involved different parties- academics, consultants, decision-makers