

Bringing Espoo Convention to Citizens

This was the title of the project started on June 1st, 2018 by three organisations, namely European ECO Forum, Resource & Analysis Center "Society and Environment" (RACSE) and Oekobuero (Austria). The project primarily aimed at countries in Eastern Europe, Caucasus and Central Asia (EECCA). **The project objectives were** * To raise awareness of civil society organisations in EECCA about the developments under the Espoo Convention and its SEA Protocol and * To strengthen their capacity to act by enhancing exchange of best practices and advising them on obstacles they face.

The project was funded by the German Federal Environmental Ministry's Advisory Assistance Programme (AAP) for environmental protection in the countries of Central and Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia and other countries neighbouring the European Union. It is supervised by the German Environment Agency (UBA).

The project came to an end in December 2018 but we have agreed to continue some limited communication, including Newsflash.

The responsibility for the content of this Newsflash lies with the authors.



December 2019

- Espoo Convention Parties meet in Geneva
- Espoo Convention continues work on LTE guidance

Espoo Convention Parties meet in Geneva

On November 26-28, 2019, [8th meeting of the Working Group on EIA and SEA](#) took place in Geneva.

Financial issues were discussed first. The Secretariat of the Convention made a presentation describing serious challenges it faces to meet financial needs to properly operate the activities under the Convention. In particular, parties' pledges covered only 60% of the budgeted needed, financing barely one extra-budgetary staff person. This may put at risk the very operation of key convention's bodies, such as Implementation Committee. Also, parties bear unproportioned burden with only 3 parties providing 56% of all contributions. The parties agreed that financial scheme (future MOP decision) should provide for more predictable, sustainable & equitable extrabudgetary funding, and that all Parties should contribute.

Parties also welcomed the long-awaited ratification by Azerbaijan of both the Convention and relevant amendments.

Of course, compliance and implementation were among key issues on the agenda. The Working Group welcomed Committee's plan to prepare draft MOP decisions in March

2020 session – as informal documents – for comments before, during and after WG9 in June 2020 and to finalize them at its session in September.

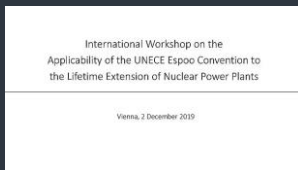
It also noted that Committee's work had been hindered by lateness/insufficient quality of responses from those countries concerned, and, in some cases, by refusal to respond and to cooperate.

The meeting also included a separate session on Health in SEA (Workshop on the assessment of health impacts and health sector involvement in strategic environmental assessment). Apart from exchange of good practices, the Working group commented the [draft guidance](#) on health in SEA. After heavy comments by the EU, it agreed on revision need to improve guidance's practical usefulness for authorities and SEA practitioners, by referring to Parties' practical implementation and by focusing on practical assessment methods & tools.

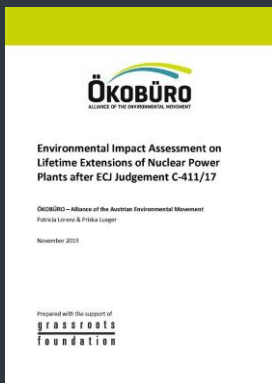
Next MOP will be hosted by Lithuania on December 8–11, 2020.



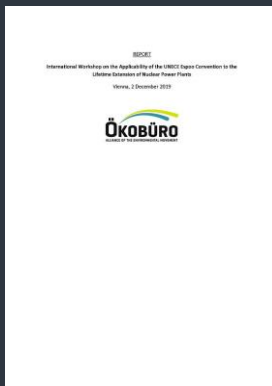
Informal presentation of the main decisions of 8th meeting of the WG on EIA and SEA



Opening remarks Stakeholders Workshop on December 2, 2019 in Vienna



Position Paper on LTE prepared by Ökobüro



Report from the Stakeholders Workshop on LTE prepared by Ökobüro

Espoo Convention continues work on LTE guidance

Espoo Convention ad hoc group continues its work on draft guidance on life time extensions (LTE) of nuclear power stations. The ad hoc group, led by the UK and Germany, is working on possible elements for the draft guidance on the applicability of the Espoo Convention (the Convention) to the lifetime extension of nuclear power plants (NPPs) based on the terms of reference adopted by the Working Group.

In particular, recent decision of the European Court of Justice (ECJ) on [Case C-411/17](#) now needs to be taken into account in the work of the ad hoc group. Though not interpreting the Espoo Convention, court's decision is relevant to the work on LTE under the Convention.

On December 2, 2019, the ad hoc group organized a meeting with stakeholders in Vienna (back to back with its own session). During the session various NGOs were present from Austria, Czech Republic, France, Hungary, Norway and Slovakia. The meeting was also attended by the Chair of the Aarhus Compliance Committee.

The participants discussed three core questions currently within focus of the ad hoc group:

- Is lifetime extension an activity or a major change to an activity?
- What qualifies as decision of a competent authority?
- When are significant adverse transboundary impacts likely?

For the purpose of the meeting, ÖKOBURO, an Austrian umbrella NGO, prepared a paper "[Environmental Impact Assessment on Lifetime Extensions of Nuclear Power Plants after ECJ Judgement C-411/17](#)". The paper was sent out to all participants by the Austrian Federal Ministry for Sustainability and Tourism hosting the meeting.



Image credit: Albert Schweitzer Hause - <http://www.albert-schweitzer-haus.at/>



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