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Environmental impact assessment process in the field of recreation in the V4 countries

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Abstract
The purpose of this article is to present issues related to the process of environmental impact assessment carried out for sport, recreation and tourist facilities in the V4 countries. The results represent data obtained during the survey carried out as a part of the international project "Assessment of the quality of the environment in the V4 Countries (AQE V4)" Standard Grant IVF 21210018 supported by the International Visegrad Fund partners from the V4 countries: Poland, Slovakia, the Czech Republic and Hungary. The analysis of the survey responses indicates that there are significant differences in the process of qualification of such objects for the EIA which also results in differences in the number of reports made and the methods used for evaluation. Among the V4 countries which have been analysed, Poland seems to be the most distinctive, as its regulations appear to be the most liberal.

Key words: assessment, environmental, impact, recreation, tourism

Introduction

The obligation to carry out an environmental impact assessment (further "EIA") is based on Article 2 of the Council Directive 85/337/EEC of 27 June 1985 on the assessment of the impact of certain public and private undertakings on the environment. The original Directive of 1985 and its three amendments were codified by the Directive 2011/92/EU of 13 December 2011 (further "EIA Directive"). The member states must take all necessary measures to ensure that undertakings which might have significant effects on the environment, because of their nature, size or location must obtain a development consent and an assessment of the environmental impact, made prior to obtaining the consent (Wytyczne, 2009).

The purpose of this article is to present issues related to the process of environmental impact assessment carried out for sport, recreation and tourist facilities in the V4 countries. The results represent data obtained during the survey carried out as a part of the international project "Assessment of the quality of the environment in the V4 Countries (AQE V4)" Standard Grant IVF 21210018 supported by the International Visegrad Fund partners from the V4 countries: Poland, Slovakia, the Czech Republic and Hungary. Selected responses of all the survey respondents and the respondents who indicated that they had been preparing a report on the environmental impact of a given undertaking (further "report") in the field of sport, recreation and tourist facilities (SRTF) in the following countries: Poland, Slovakia, Czech Republic and Hungary have been compared in this work.

The EIA process is regulated in each V4 country by the following acts:

- In Poland: Act of 3.10.2008 on the Provision of Information on the Environment and its Protection, Public Participation in the Environmental Protection and Environmental Impact Assessments (Journal of Laws No. 199, item 1227), the Act on the EIA; The Regulation of the Council of Ministers of 9.11.2010 on types of projects likely to have a significant impact on the environment (Journal of Laws No. 213, item 1397),
- In Slovakia: Law No. 24/2006 Coll. on environmental impact assessment,
- In the Czech Republic: Act No. 100/2001 Coll. on environmental impact assessment,
- In the Hungary: Government Decree No. 314/2005 (XII. 25.) on environmental impact assessment and the integrated environmental permit.

During the process of qualification, the undertakings which require assessment of the impact, the types of the undertakings for which EIA is mandatory – Group I (Annex I of the EIA Directive) and for which it may be required were identified Group II (Annex II of the EIA Directive). For the latter, it is necessary to carry out a diagnosis (screening), selection at the initial stage, whether the undertaking from the group II should be the subject to EIA. The screening is based on the individual study and / or checking the threshold values or criteria set by a given country (Wytyczne, 2009).

Undertakings in the field of SRTF were in all analysed countries qualified as the ones belonging to the Group II and divided into the same types. Differences appear in the screening of particular types, as the criteria used in each country vary and it results in other threshold values (Table 1).

Tab.1. List of undertakings which require screening when carrying out the process of EIA in the field of SRTF, together with the indication of threshold values in each V4 member country– simplified, column (A) - the threshold values, column (B) - the individual study (EIA Directive, Act of 3.10.2008, The Regulation of the Council of Ministers of 9.11.2010, Law No. 24/2006, Act No. 100/2001, Government Decree No. 314/2005 (XII. 25.)).

Undertakings	PL		SK		CZ		HU	
	(A)	(B)	(A)	(B)	(A)	(B)	(A)	(B)
Construction of recreational and hotel complexes and related facilities	with gross covered area not smaller than: a) 0.5 hectares in areas with nature protection zones and buffer zones of the protected areas, b) 2 ha in areas other than those mentioned in point a.		over 500 accom. places inside urban area and no limit outside urban area		an area >1 ha		over 500 accom. places or an area > 3 ha	x
Ports for water sports (including moles, storage premises, repair facilities etc)		X	to 100 places for vessels				over 1350 t load; over 1350 t and more with an equipment connected to the bank	
Recreational ports for yachts and small boats	for not less than 10 vessels, using the length of a coastline <20 m;			X		X	over 480 t of carried weight or 100 small boats (sport boats)	x
Downhill ski courses, cross-country ski courses, ski-lifts, ski-jumps, cable lines and other facilities		X		X		X		x
Permanent race tracks and testing tracks for motor vehicles				X				
Construction of sport, golf courses and related facilities		X	from 5000 m^2 to 2 000 m^2		an area >1 ha		18 holes or more for the whole golf areal (not for the minigolf)	
Theme parks		X		X	an area >5 000 m^2		over 5000 people or over 3 ha or over 300 parking places	x
Permanent camp sites and caravan sites	an area of land under development not smaller than 0.5 ha			X	over 50 accom. places			x

- **if the planned undertakings are located in protected areas, the screening stage has stricter thresholds values,**
- **if the planned undertakings are located in protected areas it is mandatory to prepare a report on the impact of the undertaking on the environment,**
- **if the planned undertakings are located in protected areas, then for the screening stage the threshold data do not apply.**

In Slovakia, EIA is mandatory for certain types of undertakings belonging to the Group II. For such projects as: recreation centres, hotels and ski centres it is required to carry out EIA if they are located in protected areas (Table 1). In Poland and the Czech Republic, screening is compulsory in such situation.

Also, threshold and exclusion criteria which allow not to carry out EIA have various characters and values (Table 1). For example, for the above mentioned hotels and holiday centres in Poland and the Czech Republic, the threshold value is the gross covered area equal to 2 ha and 1 ha, respectively, while in Slovakia it is the number of beds 500 and 50

depending on the type of the building. In Hungary is the limit over 500 beds or ana rea over 3 hectars.
Exceptions include enterprises located in Natura 2000 areas, where the screening process is always required.

Methodology
The first step was a joint preparation of the questionnaire by all partners involved in the project. The final version of the questionnaire consist of 20 questions: single and multiple choice answers and comments. The last two questions were dedicated to obtaining a respondents' answer or suggestion concerning improvement of the efficiency of the EIA process and comments, as well as suggestions on the problem. List of the potential respondents of the survey was based on available databases related to the EIA process in the project partners' countries. The online surveys have been implemented simultaneously in four countries from January to February 2013. About 200 potential respondents from each country were invited via e-mail to take part in e-survey and we have expected 50 responses. The invited respondents completed the questionnaire placed on the project website and the answers were anonymously sent to the e-mail addresses of the national coordinators of the project.

Results
Partial results present general information about the EIA process, similarities and differences in methods of implementation and understanding of the process in all V4 countries. The results show the comparison of answers to selected questions received from all respondents of the survey and the respondents who indicated that they had prepared a report on the impact of projects in the field of SRTF for the following countries: Poland (PL), Slovakia (SK), the Czech Republic (CZ) and Hungary (HU). Partial results were published in the conference proceeding (Gałaś S. et al., 2013 a)
On the basis of the survey results, a preliminary analysis of selected question has been carried out:

- In which sectors (of industry) do you have experience of EIA preparation? (Table 2);
- Which of the following stressors in the implementation of the EIA process do you specialize in? (Fig. 1);
- What procedures and methods do you use for identification and assessment of impacts? (Table 3).

The obtained responses (Table 2) show that in all countries, respondents most often (at the first five places) prepare EIA reports in the fields of infrastructure and also transport and telecommunication, then the further ones are: energy industry (in Poland and in Slovakia), sport, recreation and tourist facilities (in Slovakia, in the Czech Republic and in Hungary), water policy (in Hungary, in Poland and in Slovakia) and finally strategic impact assessment in the field of planning and strategic documents also appears among the top six places in the Czech Republic, in Slovakia and in Poland.
The field of SRTF analysed for the purpose of the paper in Slovakia and the Czech Republic was placed at the third and the second place respectively. In Hungary was the field of SRTF on the fourth place. However, in Poland, a report on the impact of undertakings in the field has not been often drawn up because only 8 of 50 respondents indicated that they had prepared such reports. In Slovakia – there were 17, in Hungary 11 and in the Czech Republic 27 respondents respectively. Such differences may result from an individual approach to the screening, threshold values and criteria excluding or triggering the need for EIA preparation in each country.
Reports on the impact in the field of military construction have been the least frequently prepared (0-3 selected response).

Tab.2. Respondents answers to the question: „In which sectors (of industry) do you have experience of EIA preparation?", starting from the highest to the lowest values, the colours mark the positions obtained by the field of SRTF.

item	PL	SK	CZ	HU
1.	Energy industry	Infrastructure	Infrastructure	Agricultural and forest production
2.	Infrastructure	Energy industry	Purpose-built facilities for sport, recreation and tourism	Water
3.	Water	Purpose-built facilities for sport, recreation and tourism	Transport and telecommunications	Infrastructure
4.	Transport and telecommunications	Water	Mining industry	Purpose-built facilities for sport, recreation and tourism
5.	Strategy documents	Transport and telecommunications	Planning documentation	Mining industry
6.	Planning documentation	Planning documentation	Mechanical and electrical engineering	Industry of building materials
7.	Other industries	Mechanical and electrical engineering	Other industries	Energy industry
8.	Food industry	Agricultural and forest production	Agricultural and forest production	Strategy documents
9.	Mining industry	Chemical, pharmaceutical and petrochemical industry	Chemical, pharmaceutical and petrochemical industry	Planning documentation
10.	Wood, pulp and paper industry	Other industries	Energy industry	Chemical, pharmaceutical and petrochemical industry
11.	Industry of building materials	Mining industry	Water	Wood, pulp and paper industry
12.	Chemical, pharmaceutical and petrochemical industry	Strategy documents	Strategy documents	Other industries
13.	Agricultural and forest production	Industry of building materials	Industry of building materials	Food industry
14.	Metallurgical industry	Wood, pulp and paper industry	Food industry	Transport and telecommunications
15.	Mechanical and electrical engineering	Metallurgical industry	Wood, pulp and paper industry	Metallurgical industry
16.	Purpose-built facilities for sport, recreation and tourism	Food industry	Metallurgical industry	Mechanical and electrical engineering
17.	Military construction	Military construction	Military construction	Military construction

On the basis of the results (Fig. 1A), similarities in response concerning types of emissions which the respondents specialise in when dealing with the EIA project, can be observed in all V4 countries. They include emission of pollution to air and water and waste production. In Poland, in Hungary and the Czech Republic, the least of the interviewees specialise in emission of radiation and other physical fields, in Slovakia land deformation and landscape changes are the least popular (Gałaś S. et al., 2013 b). The same situation can be observed in the analysis of the responses of those respondents only who were engaged in the field of SRTF in the Czech Republic, in Hungary and in Poland (Fig. 1B), apart from a small variation in Slovakia, where in that case, the answers related to generation of waste and air pollution have changed places.

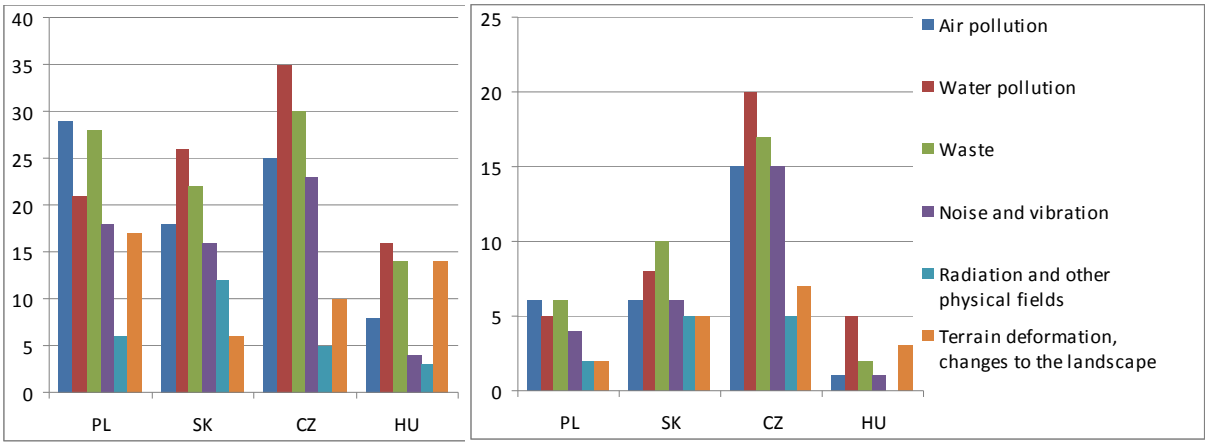

Fig.1. Respondent's answers to question: Which of the following stressors in the implementation of the EIA process do you specialize in? The comparison of answers to selected questions received from all respondents of the survey (1A) and the respondents who indicated the field of SRTF (1B).

Comparing the obtained responses of all respondents separately in each V4 member country (Table 3), certain varieties concerning the choice of the methods applied to identify and assess the impact of undertakings on the environment can be observed. In Poland, they are mainly: Forecasting methods, Environmental indicators, Multi-criteria assessment and Matrix. In Slovakia, the highest positions are occupied by the following methods: Methods Ad hoc, Matrix, Checklists and Mapping overlay. In the Czech Republic, the most widely used ones are: Environmental indicators, Multi-criteria assessment, Mapping overlay and Methods Ad hoc. In Hungary are the mostly used methods: Environmental indicators, Methods Ad hoc and Multicriteria assessment. Similar methods have been most often chosen in all V4 countries respectively by the authors of studies on sport, recreation and tourist facilities.

However, when analysing the responses it can be concluded that the Forecasting methods, which is so popular in Poland, is applied occasionally in Slovakia, in Hungary and the Czech Republic. And just the opposite, the Methods Ad hoc so frequently used in those countries are rarely used in Poland. The Method of Networks and system diagrams is the least frequently applied method in the EIA process in all of the analysed countries (2-8 of the selected response)

Conclusions

It is difficult to explain explicitly the differences in EIA procedures in the field of sport, recreation and tourist facilities in the analysed countries. Especially their small share among the studies carried out by the survey respondents in Poland is significantly different when compared to all other countries. Polish regulations cause that such objects less frequently than elsewhere are the subject to the EIA procedure. Such undertakings usually do not cause any threat to particular environmental resources. Hence, they are rarely negatively perceived by local communities which strongly react in case of other proposed investments, for example such as mining ones. Therefore, the authorities related to the environment more frequently, than in other cases, decide at the screening stage that it is not necessary to carry out the EIA procedure.

Tab.3. Respondent's answers to question: What procedures and methods do you use for identification and assessment of impacts? The comparison of answers to selected questions received from all respondents of the survey - column (A) and the respondents who indicated the field of SRTF - column (B), starting from the highest to the lowest values.

item	PL		SK		CZ		HU	
	(A)	(B)	(A)	(B)	(A)	(B)	(A)	(B)
1.	Forecasting methods	Matrix	Methods Ad hoc	Methods Ad hoc	Environmen. indicators	Environmen. indicators	Environmen. indicators	Environmen. indicators
2.	Environmen. indicators	Forecasting methods	Matrix	Matrix	Multicriteria assessment	Multicriteria assessment	Methods Ad hoc	Methods Ad hoc
3.	Multicriteria assessment	Environmen. indicators	Checklists	Mapping overlay	Mapping overlay	Mapping overlay	Multicriteria assessment	Multicriteria assessment
4.	Matrix	Multicriteria assessment	Mapping overlay	Checklists	Methods Ad hoc	Methods Ad hoc	Mapping overlay	Forecasting methods
5.	Mapping overlay	Checklists	Multicriteria assessment	Multicriteria assessment	Forecasting methods	Forecasting methods	Matrix	Mapping overlay
6.	Checklists	Mapping overlay	Environmen. indicators	Environmen. indicators	Checklists	Checklists	Forecasting methods	Matrix
7.	Methods Ad hoc	Networks	Forecasting methods	Forecasting methods	Matrix	Matrix	Checklists	Checklists
8.	Networks	Methods Ad hoc	Networks	Networks	Networks	Networks	Networks	Networks

However, such objects are often located in areas of high natural value. If the undertakings occur to be in the areas which are legally protected (national parks, nature reserves, Natura 2000, etc.), there are clear limitations and rules that should be respected in such cases. In Poland, recreation and tourism are often recommended as the direction of economic development to the local authorities. Tourist and recreational facilities are simply associated with easy economic benefit. Therefore, investment pressure in this field focused on valuable natural areas can be a serious threat to their values and integrity. The survey results may indicate a different approach to this issue in different countries.

The above conclusions should be considered preliminary. Comprehensive results of the survey will be compared in V4 countries and will be available on the project website: www.environ.agh.edu.pl and upcoming book after analysis, which main goal is to support the EIA in the V4 countries. The project will also include preparation of a lexicon of basic EIA terms in 5 languages.

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Wytyczne w zakresie postępowania w sprawie oceny oddziaływania na środowisko dla przedsięwzięć współfinansowanych z krajowych lub regionalnych programów operacyjnych, MRR, Warszawa, 2009.

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