Strategic Environmental Assessment of the

CENTRAL EUROPE 2020 Operational Programme

Non-technical summary of the draft environmental report

December 2013

Introduction

The Operational Programme CENTRAL EUROPE 2020 (OP CE 2020) is a European Territorial Cooperation programme. According to the SEA Directive EU/2001/42 a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) must be implemented as part of the programming procedure of the OP CE 2020. The SEA aims to assess the effects of the OP CE 2020 on the environment. In this draft environmental report the OP CE 2020 draft version 3.2 (November 2013) forms the basis for the assessment of possible effects on the environment resulting from the implementation of this programme.

Core contents of the OP CE 2020

The overall strategy of the Operational Programme CE 2020 is embedded in the superordinate objectives and strategies of the EU. Particularly relevant in this regard is the EU 2020 Strategy. Moreover, the CENTRAL EUROPE programme must be in line with the specifications set by the EU Common Strategic Framework for EU Cohesion Policy. In this context, the CENTRAL EUROPE 2020 Programme has specified the following four priority axes:

Priority axis 1: Cooperating on innovation to make CENTRAL EUROPE more competitive

Priority axis 2 : Cooperating on low carbon strategies in CENTRAL EUROPE

Priority axis 3: Cooperating on natural and cultural resources for sustainable growth in CENTRAL EUROPE

Priority axis 4: Cooperating on transport to better connect CENTRAL EUROPE

Current state of environment

In order to depict the current state of the environment within the programme area of CE 2020, the status quo of the defined environmental issues is considered. Regarding the current state of these environmental issues a different picture of the environment in the programme area emerges. The environmental issues such as “Water”, “Soil” or “Air and Climate” are exposed to various pressures (e.g. from transport or intensive agriculture) which have an adverse effect on these issues. The effects of climate change may, for instance, lead to a further increase in flood frequency and intensity which is already high compared to other territories in the EU. It can be positively highlighted that the number of NATURA 2000 sites within the programme area amounts to 11,347 sites which together represent 43.5 % of all NATURA 2000 sites in the EU. With regard to cultural and natural heritage as both are source of cultural and local identity as well as a driving force of regional development, it can be stated that the 100 heritage sites located within the CE 2020

programme area account for more than one quarter of all UNESCO sites within the EU (374). With view to energy resources, a positive development is also observable within the programme area as the share of renewable energy sources in gross final energy consumption has increased.

Methods of assessment

The methodological approach to assessing the environmental effects of the OP CE 2020 is supported by the identified guiding questions. These guiding questions are predominantly derived from environmental protection objectives which are based on different environmental policies existent at both the EU and international levels (e.g. UN-level). The possible environmental effects of the OP CE 2020 are considered for each environmental issue and cross-cutting theme. For the environmental assessment the most detailed level of programme information is used. Thus, the assessment of likely effects resulting from the OP CE 2020 is conducted at the level of the priority axes, their corresponding specific objectives and potential transnational actions.

Possible environmental effects of the OP CE 2020 Programme

The assessment at the programme level can only provide a general outline of possible environmental effects. This is due to the fact that more detailed information on the likely environmental effects will occur at the implementation phase of the projects. Moreover, due to the fact that the OP CE 2020 is an ETC programme it must be considered that its key focus is on the promotion of "soft factors" such as the building and increasing of capacities including exchange of knowledge and good practice between the participating Member States. **Thus, the possible environmental effects of the OP CE 2020 will primarily be of indirect nature**. Nevertheless, the promotion of "soft factors" forms the basis for further investment activities.

A short description of the main environmental effects on each priority axis identified within the environmental assessment:

Priority axis 1: Building and increasing capacities and know-how in the innovation sector will likely have no significant effect on the environment. Amongst other issues, however, the build-up of skills and competences in the field of eco-innovation as well of low-carbon solutions could affect almost all environmental issues in a positive way.

Priority axis 2: Building and increasing capacities for low carbon strategies in different fields such as improved energy efficiency in public infrastructure, strengthened use of renewable energy resources or enhanced low-carbon mobility will contribute to a reduction of emissions (CO_2, greenhouse gases) and thus to climate change mitigation. This has in particular a positive effect on the environmental issues "Air and Climate" but also for "Population and Human Health" and "Flora, Fauna and Biodiversity". With regard to the usage of renewable energy resources single possible negative effects could likely occur on the several environmental issues.

Priority axis 3: Building and increasing capacities for the improvement of the sustainable use of natural and cultural resources will likely have a possible effect on all environmental issues. The promotion of integrated (environmental) approaches with focus on sustainable use will likely contribute to a reduction of external pressures and usage conflicts and thus contributes to protect the natural and cultural resources.

Priority axis 4: Building and increasing capacities for the improvement of the transport system with focus on the promotion of regional public transport and multimodal environmentally-friendly freight solutions will likely have possible positive effects in particular on "Air and Climate" as well as an "Population and Human Health". Due to this focus possible environmental effects will likely not occur for most of the other environmental issues.

This figure provides an overview of the possible effects on the environmental issues resulting from the OP CE 2020.

	Environmental issues					
	Water	Soil	Air and Climate	Population and Human Health	Fauna, Flora and Bio-diversity	Cultural Heritage and Landscape
Priority axis 1: Cooperating on innovation to make CENTRAL EUROPE more competitive						
Specific objective 1.1 To improve sustainable linkages among actors of the central European innovation systems for strengthening regional innovation capacity	o	o	o	o	o	o
Specific objective 1.2 To improve knowledge and skills for advancing economic and social innovation in central European regions	o/+	o/+	o/+	o/+	o/+	o
Priority axis 2: Cooperating on low carbon strategies in CENTRAL EUROPE						
Specific objective 2.1 To develop and implement solutions for increasing energy efficiency and renewable energy usage in public infrastructure	o	o	+	o/+	o/+	o
Specific objective 2.2 To improve territorially based energy planning strategies and policies supporting climate change mitigation	o/-	o/+	+	o/+	o/+/-	o/-
Specific objective 2.3 To improve capacities for mobility planning in functional urban areas to lower CO2 emissions	o	o	+	o/+	o/+	o
Priority axis 3: Cooperating on natural and cultural resources for sustainable growth in CENTRAL EUROPE						
Specific objective 3.1 To improve integrated environmental management capacities for the protection and sustainable use of natural heritage and resources	+	+	+	o/+	+	+
Specific objective 3.2 To improve capacities for the sustainable use of cultural heritage and resources	o	o	o	o/+	o	+
Specific objective 3.3 To improve environmental management of functional urban areas to make them more liveable places	+	+	+	+	+	+
Priority axis 4: Cooperating on transport to better connect CENTRAL EUROPE						
Specific objective 4.1 To improve planning and coordination of regional passenger transport systems for better connections to national and European transport networks	o	o	+	o/+	o	o
Specific objective 4.2 To improve coordination among freight transport stakeholders for increasing multimodal environment-friendly freight solutions	o/-	o	+	o/+	o	o

Legend for the assessment	
+	Possible occurrence of positive environmental effects
-	Possible occurrence of negative environmental effects
+/-	Possible occurrence of both positive and negative environmental effects
o	Likely no significant environmental effects
/	Assessment is not possible due to the limited availability of information

Monitoring measures

According to Article 10 of the SEA Directive EU/2001/42, possible significant environmental effects of the implementation of the OP CE 2020, identified within the existing environmental assessment, are to be monitored in order to identify at an early stage unforeseen adverse effects and to be able to undertake appropriate remedial action. Thus, monitoring measures must form part of and be implemented within the OP CE 2020. At the programme level, the monitoring of environmental effects should be incorporated into the monitoring framework of the programme. At the project level within the quality assessment of the project proposals possible effects on the environment should be considered as a horizontal issue taking into consideration also the results of the environmental assessment within this SEA report. Furthermore, the project applicants should describe within the application forms which possible environmental effects the project will likely have. During the implementation of the projects monitoring measures should also be implemented.