



RESOURCE

Towards effective scoping in strategic environmental assessment

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Description / Abstract

The scoping phase in strategic environmental assessment (SEA) is considered a central issue for the effectiveness of the whole SEA process, enhancing decision-making. Understanding SEA should be context-specific and scoping is paramount for a robust SEA; the main goal of this research was to develop a framework for the evaluation of the procedural effectiveness of the scoping stage in a specific political and planning system context – Portugal. The framework developed comprises a set of 21 criteria divided into six broad themes and was applied to 20 Portuguese SEA scoping reports, through content analysis. Overall, it was found that mandatory issues in the Portuguese SEA context were met and the scoping reports used mainly national guidelines. However, issues of public participation are often discarded and there is no evidence that scoping starts early in the decision-making process, or if it is done concurrently. Nonetheless, the framework developed establishes best practice for the SEA scoping phase, needing to be adapted to the different political and planning system contexts in order to reflect legal and institutional specificities.

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