

ENPI CBC KARELIA –PROGRAMME

SUMMARY ABOUT THE STRATEGIC ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESMENT (SEA)

The purpose of strategic environmental assessment (SEA) is to ensure that environmental impacts are assessed and duly considered during the preparation and approval of authorities' plans and programmes. It focuses on the improvement of information availability and provides more opportunities for public participation in planning to promote more sustainable development. The aim is to guarantee that the environmental consequences of certain plans and programmes are identified and assessed during their preparation and before their adoption.

The process of environmental assessment was begun on January 2007. An announcement of the beginning of the process was then published on the local newspapers on both sides of the border as well as on the programme's website. On January an opening meeting was held with the programme area's environmental authorities and the guidelines were set for drafting the document. The assessment was drafted in parallel with the programme document giving the SEA an opportunity to effect on the content of the programme document. The public consultation was held between 24th October and 23rd November 2007. It was published on the local newspapers on both sides of the border, on the programme's website and on the websites of the regional councils of the programme area. During the public hearing it was noted that the SEA should be available also in Finnish. The document was translated and the time for giving comments of it prolonged. On public consultation the environmental assessment was commented by the regional environmental authorities as well as by the Ministry of the Environment of Finland. In addition to correcting some technical errors on basis of the statements for example the indicators were specified more clearly and the description of the local environmental programmes was added.

From the wide list of environmental policies, strategies and programmes the most relevant international and local ones are concerned. Also the state of environmental legislation and administration both in Finland and in Russia is shortly described.

Considering the state and future of the environment in the programme area there are challenges especially concerning waste management, water maintenance and the protection of the boundary waters. The loss of biodiversity is a serious concern to be taken into account.

At this stage of the programme development, the exact locations, nature and impacts of actions cannot be identified, as this depends on specific projects that will be implemented. On the programme document some sectors are introduced within the two priorities. The environmental assessment is based on the sectors mentioned on the programme document.

Impacts such as biodiversity, population, human health, fauna, flora, soil, water, air climatic factors, material assets and cultural heritage has been taken into account when appraising the programme elements. The effects include secondary, cumulative, synergistic, short, medium and long-term, permanent and temporary and positive and negative effects. On the grounds of the

assessment it can't be stated that certain sectors would be evidently better than the others. However, directing of the sector can influence a lot on environmental impacts, for example shall the energy sector concentrate on peat or bioenergy, and that should be taken into account in the programme implementation.

Sustainable development is a significant horizontal principle in the programme. The programme is not based on the Sustainable Development Strategy but the principles of the sustainable development have and will be taken into account in the programme and its implementation. Accordingly, the programme must convey a clear message that a positive environmental impact is a key element in the programme's strategy.

Monitoring of the environmental impacts in programme implementation is of vital importance and a progress report should be presented to the Monitoring Committee on annual basis.