

UNECE

Good Practice Recommendations on the Application of the Convention to Nuclear Energy-related Activities

**Convention on Environmental Impact Assessment
in a Transboundary Context (Espoo Convention)**



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Foreword

Energy — and the ever-growing demand for it — plays a crucial role in sustainable development, and assumes a prominent place in the 2030 Agenda. The growing energy needs call for the diversification of energy sources, including the exploration of renewable energy sources, and should be met in a way that addresses climate change and minimizes the impact on the environment and human health.

While reducing greenhouse gas emissions and the carbon footprint of the energy sector, nuclear energy-related activities can lead to significant transboundary and long-range adverse environmental impacts and may imply special challenges owing to national interests and public concern.

The 1991 Convention on Environmental Impact Assessment in a Transboundary Context (Espoo Convention) is a unique legal instrument establishing rules for domestic action and international cooperation for preventing, reducing and controlling significant adverse transboundary environmental impacts from proposed activities that include nuclear energy-related activities. The Protocol on Strategic Environmental Assessment to the Convention ensures similar objectives at the level of Government plans and programmes.

Parties to the Convention and stakeholders agree that it is essential for Governments to apply the Convention and its Protocol to nuclear energy-related activities in a consistent, cooperative and transparent manner, ensuring early, timely and effective consultations and public participation.

The present good practice recommendations were therefore developed to assist countries in achieving the consistent practical application of the Convention in the field of nuclear energy. They summarize the legal obligations under each of the procedural steps provided for by the Convention, together with the common approaches in their practical application. The aim of the recommendations is to facilitate the exchange of information and cooperation by sharing experiences and illustrating good practice.

I firmly believe in the benefits of preventive and precautionary approaches in the field of nuclear energy. I am equally convinced that decision-making on nuclear energy is best built on the transparent exchange of information and close cooperation among Parties and on the early and effective involvement of the public, in compliance with the Convention. I very much welcome the *Good Practice Recommendations on the Application of the Convention to Nuclear Energy-related Activities* as a tool to promote the application of the Convention and to further the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals, and I encourage Governments and stakeholders to make use of it.

Olga ALGAYEROVA
Executive Secretary

United Nations Economic Commission for Europe



Summary

The present *Good Practice Recommendations on the Application of the Convention to Nuclear Energy-related Activities* describe existing good practice regarding the application of transboundary environmental impact assessment procedures in the field of nuclear energy. Their aim is to assist countries in the consistent practical application of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (ECE) Convention on Environmental Impact Assessment in a Transboundary Context (Espoo Convention) in the field of nuclear energy by illustrating good practice and sharing experiences. They also aim at facilitating exchange of information.

The good practice recommendations build on information and responses to a survey provided by national experts on environmental impact assessment and focal points to the Espoo Convention, in most cases in consultation with national nuclear experts. The publication was prepared by consultants to the ECE secretariat under the supervision of an editorial group consisting of representatives of Parties and a non-governmental organization.¹ The preparation of the recommendations was requested by the Meeting of the Parties to the Convention (through decision VI/7),² and foreseen in the workplan for the implementation of the Convention and the Protocol for the period 2014–2017.³

The Working Group on Environmental Impact Assessment and Strategic Environmental Assessment agreed on draft good practice recommendations at its sixth meeting (Geneva, 7–10 November 2016) and requested the editorial group to include a selection of good practice examples provided by Parties, which were subsequently reviewed by the Bureau.

At its seventh session (Minsk, 13–16 June 2017), the Meeting of the Parties to the Convention endorsed the good practice recommendations through its decision VII/6 and recommended that the Parties take their contents into account when implementing and applying the Convention. Parties were also invited to distribute them to authorities and relevant stakeholders. The recommendations were also proposed to be used in the capacity-building activities included in the workplan.

The Meeting of the Parties requested the secretariat to arrange for the publication of the good practice recommendations, including in an annex practical examples provided by Parties on their application of the Convention to nuclear energy-related activities that had been made available in an informal document.⁴

1 The members of the editorial group represented Austria, Belarus, the European Commission, Finland, France, Germany, the Netherlands, Poland, Ukraine and the European ECO Forum.

2 See ECE/MPEIA/20/Add.1-ECE/MPEIA/SEA/4/Add.1.

3 See ECE/MPEIA/20/Add.3-ECE/MPEIA/SEA/4/Add.3, decisions VI/3–II/3, annex I.

4 See ECE/MPEIA/2017/INF.6, available from <http://www.unece.org/index.php?id=45098#/> (under the "Informal documents" tab).

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