



Recommendation of the Council on Environmental Assessment of Development Assistance Projects and Programmes

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Background Information

The Recommendation on Environmental Assessment of Development Assistance Projects and Programmes was adopted by the OECD Council on 20 June 1985 on the proposal of the Environment Committee (now called Environment Policy Committee) supported by the Development Assistance Committee. The Recommendation recommends that Adherents put in place environmental assessment for their development assistance projects. The Recommendation was abrogated on 26 June 2020.

THE COUNCIL,

HAVING REGARD to Article 5 b) of the Convention on the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development of 14 December 1960;

HAVING REGARD to the Recommendation of the Council of 8 May 1979, on the Assessment of Projects with Significant Impact on the Environment [C(79)116];

HAVING REGARD to the Declaration on Anticipatory Environmental Policies of 8 May 1979, adopted by the Environment Committee at Ministerial level;

RECALLING in particular paragraphs 1 and 10 thereof, in which Governments of OECD Member countries and Yugoslavia declared that "They will strive to ensure that environmental considerations are incorporated at an early stage of any decision in all economic and social sectors likely to have significant environmental consequences" and that "They will continue to co-operate to the greatest extent possible, ... with all countries, in particular developing countries in order to assist in preventing environmental deterioration";

CONSIDERING that many Member and non-member countries have accumulated over the years a growing body of experience in assessing environmental effects of projects in their countries;

MINDFUL of the need for Member countries to adopt a common set of principles when dealing with environmental issues and to bring support and assistance to the use of environmental assessment in developing countries;

RECOGNISING that, while developing countries have the responsibility for managing their own environment, Member country aid agencies should, when necessary, carry out environmental assessment and, in doing so, seek active participation of the host Government;

On the proposal of the Environment Committee supported by the Development Assistance Committee:

I. RECOMMENDS that Member Governments ensure that:

- a) Development assistance projects and programmes which, because of their nature, size and/or location, could significantly affect the environment, should be assessed at as early a stage as possible and to an appropriate degree from an environmental standpoint;
- b) When examining whether a specific development assistance project or programme should be subject to in-depth environmental assessment, Member country aid agencies should pay particular attention to those projects or programmes referred to in the Appendix, bearing in mind the particular legislative and socio-economic setting and environmental conditions in the host country;
- c) Where dangerous substances or processes are involved, they also continue to seek ways to promote the integration of the best techniques of prevention and protection and the best manufacturing processes in projects in which they and their industrial enterprises are involved.

II. INSTRUCTS the Environment Committee, in the light of practical experience of aid agencies in Member countries and in co-operation with the Development Assistance Committee, to prepare guidance on the types of procedures, processes, organisation and resources needed to facilitate the assessment of environmental effects of development assistance projects and programmes and to contribute to the early prevention and/or mitigation of potentially adverse environmental effects of certain aid projects or programmes.

APPENDIX

PROJECTS AND PROGRAMMES MOST IN NEED OF ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

1. Projects and programmes which are most in need of the environmental assessment can be identified on the basis of a number of criteria which aim at ascertaining whether the anticipated direct or indirect effects of a project or programme on the environment are likely to be significant.

2. When judging whether a specific project or programme may have a major effect on the environment, it is necessary to take into account, among other things, the ecological conditions in the area where it is planned to locate the project or programme. In-depth environmental assessment is always needed in certain very fragile environments (e.g. wetlands, mangrove swamps, coral reefs, tropical forests, semi-arid areas). When carrying out environmental assessment, issues which should be considered include effects on:

- a) Soils and soil conservation (erosion, salination, etc.);
- b) Areas subject to desertification;
- c) Tropical forests and vegetation cover;
- d) Water sources;
- e) Habitats of value to protection and conservation and/or sustainable use of fish and wildlife resources;
- f) Areas of unique interest (historical, archaeological, cultural, aesthetic, scientific);
- g) Areas of concentrations of population or industrial activities where further industrial development or urban expansion could create significant environmental problems (especially regarding air and water quality);
- h) Areas of particular social interest to specific vulnerable population groups (e.g. nomadic people or other people with traditional lifestyles).

3. Projects or programmes most in need of environmental assessment fall under the following headings:

- a) Substantial changes in renewable resource use (e.g. conversion of land to agricultural production, to forestry or to pasture land, rural development, timber production);
- b) Substantial changes in farming and fishing practices (e.g. introduction of new crops, large scale mechanization); use of chemicals in agriculture (e.g. pesticides, fertilizers);
- c) Exploitation of hydraulic resources (e.g. dams, irrigation and drainage projects, water and basin management, water supply);
- d) Infrastructure (e.g. roads, bridges, airports, harbours, transmission lines, pipelines, railways);
- e) Industrial activities (e.g. metallurgical plants, wood processing plants, chemical plants, power plants, cement plants, refinery and petrochemical plants, agro-industries);
- f) Extractive industries (e.g. mining, quarrying, extraction of peat, oil and gas);
- g) Waste management and disposal (e.g. sewerage systems and treatment plants, waste landfills, treatment plants for household waste and for hazardous waste).

4. The above list of projects or programmes is not in any order of importance and is not meant to imply that any particular project or programme type is necessarily more in need of environmental

assessment than another. In addition, the list is not meant to be exhaustive as there may be projects or programmes not mentioned above which may still have significant effects on the environment in certain areas. Although the presence of a project or programme on the above list does not imply that such a project or programme will necessarily have significant adverse effects on the environment and some indeed have positive environmental effects, experience has shown that there is often a need to take particular measures to eliminate or mitigate the adverse environmental consequences of such projects or programmes. Whether a project or programme should be subject to in-depth environmental assessment will therefore depend on an analysis of all the facts of the specific case.

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