Evaluation of Environmental Requirements Implementation in Lithuania

Executive summary

Basis of the Evaluation

In 2006, before the launch of implementation of 2007-2013 Operational Programmes financed from the EU Funds, the strategic assessment of the effects of these Programmes on the environment (SEA) mandatory under the SEA Directive and appropriate national legislation was carried out[1].

This year the Managing Authority has organized the interim evaluation of environmental requirements implementation, the need for which was predetermined by the fact that ex-ante strategic assessment of the effects of these Programmes on the environment (hereinafter referred to as SEA) was carried out at programme level, as in 2006 more detailed documents were not prepared yet (no measures/projects established). After the implementation process of the Operational Programmes gained pace, a need to conduct an interim evaluation of environmental requirements implementation emerged in order to identify:

- whether the findings of the SEA were valid by determining a similar environmental impact of the Operational Programmes;
- what are the indicators of the Operational Programmes to measure the impact of interventions on the environment;
- whether proper regulation of the environmental requirements was maintained.

The need for the aforementioned interim evaluation was also predetermined by the requirements of Article 10 of the SEA Directive.

For these reasons, the evaluation of environmental requirements implementation was carried out with the aim:

firstly, to perform an interim evaluation of environmental impact of 2007 – 2013 Operational Programmes at programme, priority, measure and project level; and

secondly, to assess the eligibility and efficiency of the environmental requirements implementation at programme, priority, measure and project level.

Evaluation Methodology

The criteria of relevance, compatibility, effectiveness/impact, efficiency and sustainability were applied in the evaluation of the environmental requirements implementation. The evaluation methodology used combined the following quantitative and qualitative research measures: a primary and secondary information analysis, multiple criteria environmental impact analysis, a survey, interview and case studies.

[1] SEA was obligatory for two Operational Programmes: Economic Growth Operational Programme and Cohesion Promotion Operational Programme

In the beginning of the evaluation, relevant and accessible primary and secondary sources of information related to the assessed object(s) were identified, important factual and contextual information associated with administration of the EU Structural Funds, implementation of the Operational Programmes, national and foreign environmental protection requirements, social, economic development and environmental change trends was gathered. The evaluation data was collected from the strategic documents, statistical sources, previously performed environmental assessments, project proposals, applications and their annexes, descriptions of the financing terms and conditions as well as other sources of information. In the course of the evaluation, the content, comparative and statistical analysis of primary and secondary information was performed.

In order to assess the Operational Programmes' impact on the environment at the project level, a multiple criteria analysis was performed by using Leopold matrix and the methodology approved by the European Environment Agency. 15 projects that were directly aimed at improving environmental conditions and 17 infrastructural projects were selected for the analysis. The results of the analysis were used for the environmental impact evaluation at measure, priority and programme level.

Project owners, institutions that administer EU Structural assistance and Regional Environmental Protection Departments filled the survey questionnaires and helped to gather the data about most common problems in the projects that are financed by the EU Structural Funds.

It should be noted that the respondents' opinion on how to avoid environmental problems and integrate environmental protection requirements into the EU Structural Funds' administration system was also asked.

Representatives of institutions that administer EU Structural assistance were interviewed in order to gather factual and contextual information about the enforcement of environmental requirements in implementing projects that are financed by the EU Structural Funds.

Case studies of Estonia and Ireland were performed in order to find out other EU countries' experience in complying with environmental requirements when planning and administering the EU Structural Funds. In addition, two projects that encountered environmental problems in the course of implementation processes were analyzed.

The selected evaluation methods helped to collect and analyze data, draw reasonable conclusions as well as recommendations.

Changes in Environmental Conditions

In order to complete the first task of the evaluation, i.e. assess the impact of the Operational Programmes on the environment, changes in environmental conditions in Lithuania since 2005 were assessed by analyzing the main indicators related to air, water, and waste. The evaluation of changes in the environmental condition was carried out in view of the areas analyzed during the SEA and the components defining them. The results showed that since 2005 the quality of the environment has improved.

The majority of indicators that describe the air condition has improved or remained unchanged: the amount of sulfur oxides decreased, the share of the renewable energy sources in total primary energy supply increased as well as the share of biofuel in the country's fuel for the transport market.

Allowable limits rate indication of the solid particles, nitrogen dioxide and ground-level ozone measurement performed by air quality research stations showed unchanged results. Although some indicators describing air quality have deteriorated – greenhouse gas emissions and total amount of environment polluting substances increased as well as amount of nitric oxide and solid particles in environment, they did not exceed the permitted levels.

The indicators describing water condition in many cases improved or remained unchanged – the level of waste water treatment substantially increased, pollution of concentrated pollution sources decreased, the surface water condition also improved. The share of good condition groundwater remained unchanged.

Constantly increasing municipal waste amount per capita since 2005, in 2009 decreased and reached the level of 2005, amount of production waste per capita was reduced, the amount of collected hazardous waste increased, collection of industrial waste decreased. It is likely that one of the main reasons for these changes was the fact that the country was facing the economic crisis.

The indicators related to landscape and biodiversity improved: the territories of forests and protected areas increased, more and more works related to restoration and management of protected areas were carried out, recultivation of the damaged areas also started.

Lithuania's Possibilities to Reach EU Average Values of Indicators

Lithuania's possibilities to reach average values of EU economic and social development, resources efficiency, environmental pollution indicators, not to exceed EU standards and to comply with other requirements by 2015 were evaluated after analyzing the changes of the environmental conditions in Lithuania.

The results of the evaluation showed that changes of most economic and social development, resource efficiency and environmental pollution indicators on average improve faster than those in EU countries, and by some indicators, such as cargo turnover, municipal waste per capita, the share of the renewable energy of total energy consumed, the condition in the country is better than the EU average. However, in spite of rapid improvement since 2005, many of Lithuania's indicators are much lower than the EU average. Although implementation of the Economic Growth Operational Programme (hereinafter – EGOP) and the Cohesion Promotion Operational Programme (hereinafter – CPOP) in full scope and on time would slightly reduce a gap between Lithuania's values and the EU average, opportunities to reach the EU average by 2015 are low due to large differences.

As compared with averages of the changes in the EU, economic and social development in Lithuania is in many cases faster: since 2005 in Lithuania GDP per capita, expenditure on research and development, labour productivity have been growing more rapidly, still, as the gap

between Lithuania's and the EU's social – economic development is too large, it is not likely to reach the averages soon.

In terms of the use of resources, Lithuania, in some respects, performs better than the EU on average: in Lithuania, the average share of renewable energy in total energy consumption is higher by 5 percentage points. It is projected that Lithuania will get closer to EU leaders in the field of the renewable resources usage because of recent spending and planned EU Structural assistance aimed at enhancing the usage of the renewable resources.

Despite the observed positive changes, Lithuania's chances to reach EU averages of environmental pollution indicators are low because of a large current gap and the lack of measures directly aimed at improvement of the environmental condition. The evaluation results showed that, for example, measures aimed at increasing the use of centralized wastewater collection and treatment will have a positive impact on the environmental quality but the indicators describing the environmental pollution in Lithuania will not reach the EU averages because the scope of financed works is not high enough.

Environmental Impact Evaluation

Environmental impact mid-term evaluation of the EGOP and CPOP was performed at project, measure, priority and programme level.

Environmental impact evaluation was based on the methodology approved by the European Environment Agency and Leopold matrix. During the environmental impact evaluation at project level, individual infrastructural projects, which could have had a negative impact on the environment and environmental projects directly aimed at the improvement of environmental conditions, were analyzed. Impact and possible changes, as a result of the projects' implementation and subsequent operation/ management were assessed according to the following environmental components:

- public health;
- geology and underground waters;
- soils and land surfaces;
- surface waters;
- atmospheric pollution;
- biodiversity;
- protected areas;
- landscape and cultural heritage.

Impact of the projects was assessed in this order:

- each selected project and related environmental documentation was evaluated;
- Leopold matrix was completed for each project (project's impact on every environmental component was assessed by applying impact significance criteria from 0 to 9);
- according to the impact on environmental component, it was measured whether the criteria would be positive or negative;
- the final results were calculated after evaluating the "weight coefficients".

The results acquired by using Leopold matrix showed that the impact of all projects on the environmental components was positive. The implementation of the environmental projects had greater impact on different environmental components than the infrastructural ones. The latter had greater positive impact only on the condition of air and landscape. In general, implementation of the projects financed by the EGOP and CPOP had the biggest positive impact on landscape and public health, also significantly contributed towards the improvement of surface waters' and atmospheric air. The results of the multi-criteria analysis showed that the implementation process of the analyzed projects, exclusively during the construction period, has an impact on three areas – increases noise and vibration levels, has a physical impact on soil and surface. Still, the occurring impact is a short- term/ temporary and insignificant.

The environmental impact evaluation of the EGOP and CPOP at measure, priority and programme level was based on the results acquired by evaluating the environmental impact caused by projects and taking into account the scope and implementation progress of the financed measures and priorities.

The environmental impact mid-term evaluation results of the measures and priorities directly depend on the state of implementation: the environmental impact of the measures and priorities implemented to a greater extent is greater. As during the evaluation the scope of implementation of the measures and priorities financed by Operational Programmes was relatively small (70% of the measures monitoring indicators' planned values have been reached by no more than 30% or completely unreached), their environmental impact was not yet significant and would gain strength in the future, after the full implementation of the planned activities.

The biggest possible environmental impact of the measures is expected after implementation of the CPOP priority's "Environment and sustainable development" measures which are aimed at improving the environment: this priority will have a strong positive impact on public health, contribute towards the reduction of atmospheric pollution, improvement of surface waters, the quality of soil, and also landscape and cultural heritage preservation. The evaluation results showed that the measures and priorities which funded the infrastructural projects would also have a positive or neutral impact on the environment.

To sum up, the results of the environmental impact interim evaluation proved the SEA conclusions that the environmental impact of all Operational Programmes' measures and priorities would be positive or, in some cases, neutral and reversed the conclusions of the negative environmental impact of some EGOP activities.

Environmental Problems

Environmental problems arising from the implementation of the EGOP and CPOP were determined and analyzed in order to find ways how to avoid and solve them by reducing a negative environmental impact. Problems emerging during the implementation of the environmental and infrastructural projects funded by the Operational Programmes were determined by surveying four groups of respondents who participated in the projects: the representatives of project owners (beneficiaries), representatives of institutions that administer EU structural assistance, representatives of project promoters (consultants) and representatives of

Regional Environmental Protection Departments. According to the survey results, most common problems related to the implementation of the projects arise from the required formal environmental procedures or preparation of the documentation. The problems in this area were identified by all survey groups. Other commonly encountered problems were related to the public opposition. Based on the survey results, most commonly, the environmental problems arose in implementing projects in the areas of infrastructure, transport and energy. Problems were identified in the documentation of the EIA together with the mitigation measures.

The survey also collected the data to identify which environmental problems are encountered in different phases of the projects: planning, implementation (constructions) and subsequent operation/ management.

According to the survey results, the main problems arose due procedures for environmental impact evaluation and "Natura 2000" significance setting. The main and most important reason – long timings of EIA procedures and non-compliance. The survey results showed that the current EES documentation and "Natura 2000" significance setting were the most common reason for the delay in implementation of the planned projects.

Most common environmental problems in construction stage are related to environmental components or public health. The main environmental problem which is encountered by all survey groups at this stage is related to the public opposition to activities. The greatest environmental problems when using infrastructure developed in the course of projects are also related to the public opposition to activities. The public opposition to the great extent is caused by the adverse effects such as odors or noise, which result from the activities.

In the course of the evaluation, the analyzed best practice examples proved that the public opposition is often caused by the lack of information. For example, development of the municipal and biodegradable waste management infrastructure in Telšiai District caused residents to complain to the Ministry of Environment of the Republic of Lithuania on the proposed conclusion that the environmental impact evaluation is not mandatory. In order to reduce the public opposition to the project, the representatives of Šiauliai Regional Environmental Protection Department, who are interested in environmental impact evaluation individuals, the organizer of the planned economic activity and the authors of the documentation, organized a meeting with the public. During the meeting the authors of the documentation explained the objectives of the planned economic activity, technological parameters, an impact of the planned economic activity, the impact mitigation measures and other information in detail as well as answered the questions proposed by the representatives of the public.

"Development of the water supply and wastewater management infrastructure in Šiauliai" project owners encountered a problem when residents did not connect to the centralized water supply and wastewater management system (not mandatory) and continued using the existing systems that often did not comply with the environmental requirements. Before starting work on the project, the project owners held meetings with residents and explained terms of the connection to the water supply and wastewater networks, the schedule of network construction, benefits of the project and provided various technical documentation. All the measures and

actions ensured 70% (which is much higher than the average) of new users access to drinking water supply and wastewater management infrastructure.

Good practice examples ensured that broader co-operation and information about activities spread at planning stage can help to avoid later conflicts and achieve the objectives.

Integration of Environmental Requirements

Lithuania, as well as any other EU member state, is committed to integrate EU directives into national legal framework. After the analysis of the Operational Programmes, it was determined that the objectives and regulations of the analyzed Operational Programmes are in compliance with Council Regulation (EC) 1083/2006:

- funded projects are aimed at sustainable development by ensuring environmental protection and improving its quality (CPOP objective – to promote positive synergies between economic and environmental growth);
- objectives of the funds according to sustainable development and Community's promoted target are to protect and improve environment (objective of the SEA – higher environmental quality in Lithuania);
- environmental protection and its improvement requirements must be integrated into operational programmes (one of the SEA priority's direction is environment and sustainable development. Its scope mainly includes tasks related to environmental components' improvement);
- ex-ante evaluation must be carried out for operational programmes according to law on environmental impact and strategic environmental evaluation (in 2006 the (ex-ante) Strategic Evaluation of Environmental Consequences of the Operational Programmes aimed at implementing the Lithuanian Strategy for the Use of European Union Structural Assistance for 2007-2013 was carried out).

Given the fact that the objectives and requirements of the Operational Programmes meet the requirements of Council Regulation (EC) No. 1083/2006, the environmental procedures and requirements are properly integrated into the EU Structural Funds management system at programme, measure and priority level.

In order to identify whether environmental procedures' integration into structural funds' management system is appropriate, main legislation of the EU structural funds management was analyzed as well as terms and conditions on the funding of projects under the environmental and infrastructural measures.

In the terms and conditions on the financing of projects under the measures of the EGOP the following is required to submit:

- findings of the responsible authorities concerning implications on procedures of the environmental impact evaluation and/or approvals that procedures are not mandatory;
- findings of the responsible authority concerning implications on "Natura 2000" significance setting or approval that activity does not require significance setting.

In the terms and conditions on the financing of projects under the measures of the CPOP the following is required:

- environmental impact evaluation procedure if project meets the list of the projects that require Environmental impact evaluation;
- implications on "Natura 2000" significance (in measures related to environmental protection when a project might impact areas of "Natura 2000").

After evaluation of the terms and conditions on the financing of projects under the environmental and infrastructural measures, it was determined that the legal requirements of the environmental procedures are properly integrated into these documents.

The Republic of Lithuania Law on the Environmental Impact Evaluation of the Economic Activity establishes the mandatory procedures. Their objective is to determine whether the planned activity of the project after evaluating its nature and impact on the environment is permissible in the selected location. Environmental procedures require identifying the need for environmental impact evaluation, environmental impact evaluation's procedures, and impact on Europe's ecological network "Natura 2000" areas. Evaluating the maintenance of the environmental requirements' compliance, it was identified that, at all stages of the project implementation, the maintenance of the compliance with the environmental requirements was effective and did not require additional measures.

In certain cases, the maintenance of compliance with the environmental requirements in project selection phase was not efficient due to the excess of the requirements specified in the descriptions of the projects' funding terms and conditions and the lack of the methodology for evaluation of projects' compliance with the environmental requirements. Firstly, the requirements for submitting documentation that verifies environmental procedures in some cases were excessive and formulated regardless the nature and specification of the planned projects' activities. Secondly, enforcement to submit documentation that justifies compliance with the environmental requirements differs (e.g., in some cases document is required from responsible institution, in others applicant's approval in written is sufficient) as well as methods used by the implementing institutions.

At project's implementation stage, according to the results of the research, compliance with environmental requirements was maintained efficiently. Maintenance was performed by responsible institutions in accordance with the legal requirements that determine procedures for construction activities. Projects' impact on environment was not monitored additionally at this stage by the institutions that administer EU Structural assistance, and actions were taken only when information about possible negative projects' environmental impact was received.

After projects' implementation, compliance with the environmental requirements was maintained efficiently and was performed by various responsible institutions, including the environmental ones. There is no need for broadening the functions of the implementing institutions at this stage.

Assessment of Monitoring System

During the evaluation, the relevance and sufficiency of the monitoring indicators used for assessing measures that were aimed at improving environmental conditions were analyzed. The attention was focused on those measures of the Operational Programmes which, according to the results of the environmental impact evaluation, had a significant positive impact on the environmental conditions.

The assessment of the monitoring system showed that the existing monitoring indicators are insufficient to perform environmental impact monitoring. The monitoring indicators that were sufficient to assess the direct impact on the environment comprise only a small part of all indicators. Fact monitoring indicators to track infrastructure developed during the project or documentation are broadly used. However, indicators that would help to identify a negative environmental impact were not used in the entire system. It was noticed that in some cases monitoring indicators did not supply information about the qualitative results of the project implementation and it was impossible to evaluate the environmental changes (impact) after the project's implementation. In some cases, monitoring indicators were not informative due to the environmental impact scale.

The efficiency of the projects' environmental impact monitoring can be improved by eliminating uninformative product's "turnover" indicators (e.g., monitoring indicators of the prepared documentation amount) and replacing them with evaluation indicators for direct environmental impact area. Newly determined indicators should be required to give the assessment of the projects' contribution to the country's environmental tasks and objectives. The existing monitoring indicators should be specified and oriented towards accumulation of the actual information for the environmental impact evaluation.

Maintenance of the Tasks for Environmental Field

During the evaluation national and EU tasks for different protection areas were reviewed, and the efficiency of their performance in implementing projects funded by the EU Structural Funds was evaluated. The measures and priorities related to the environmental protection directly contributed to realization of the environmental tasks. Their positive impact on the environment was undoubtedly significant; however, it was important to assess the efficiency of results – implementation of the environmental tasks.

Most of investments (61.8%) aimed at environmental protection were allocated to the infrastructure of the drinkable water supply and sludge management. 25.6% of all investments aimed at environmental protection were allocated to infrastructure of waste management and informing the public (respectively 0.9% and 0.6% of all investments aimed at environmental protection).

In the area of water supply and wastewater management, considering the current progress achieved and projected levels of the tasks, it was projected that the task to clean up 100% of all collected wastewater in order to comply with the requirements by 2015, would be fulfilled. It was likely that in most regions the task would be implemented, and by 2013 the sludge processing capabilities would be created and sludge disposal in landfills, sludge sites or other

containers would be stopped. Given the results and having determined the risks of the projects' implementation, it was likely that the task to provide services of wastewater management and water supply to 95% of each municipality's residents would not be implemented.

Evaluating the ratio of the implemented projects and achieved results, by 2011 the percentage of the funds used was lower than the percentage of the achieved indicator or result (implemented efficiently), all planned funding agreements were signed and 99% of water supply and wastewater management projected funds were allocated.

In the area of waste management, it was likely that by 2012 all landfills that did not comply with environmental protection and public health requirements would be closed and the planned task would be achieved. Development of biodegradable waste management infrastructure was suitable for the planned tasks' implementation for 2013 as well as for subsequent periods, including the requirement to dispose only treated waste, i.e. after sorting out not suitable for recycling or other use, until 2013. However, the date of the operation start in the year 2013 was evaluated as very risky. Due to low achievement of the indicators, the ratio of the implemented projects' funds and achieved results is equal to 0. By 2011 96% funding agreements for 80% planned funds for waste management were signed.

After assessing the current progress of the implemented projects in the protection areas of water bodies and current achievement related to water bodies' condition, it was likely that after implementing planned projects funded by the EU Structural Funds, 100% targeted value of surface water and groundwater condition would not be achieved to full scope by 2015. Considering the ratio of the achieved implemented projects' funds and the achieved result by 2011, the percentage of the used funds is lower than the achieved indicator or result (implemented efficiently).

Individual measures' activities of the EGOP and the CPOP directly and indirectly contributed to air quality improvement and climate change reduction. Taking into account the current amount of greenhouse gas emissions, it was likely that the tasks for 2012 and 2020 would be implemented. However, in order to achieve an additional target – to decrease the greenhouse gas level by 30% - additional measures to reduce greenhouse gas emissions levels were required as the scope of the current projects is not sufficient.

Evaluation of the values achieved by biodiversity and landscape protection in protected areas measures' results and monitoring indicators by 2011 showed that only two product monitoring indicators were achieved, none of the projects were fully implemented, hence implemented projects' funds and achieved result ratio is equal to 0.

Other EU Countries' Experience

In order to determine what are the environmental problems and how they are solved in other EU countries, the experience of two EU countries, Estonia and Ireland, was analyzed. The first choice was made because of similarities with Lithuania: environmental problems that were aimed to be solved, EU structural funds' scope allocated to environmental protection, experience in administering the EU Structural Funds and maintaining compliance with the environmental requirements. Ireland was chosen as a result of greater experience in implementing projects

financed by the EU Structural Funds and an opportunity to analyze previous investments during 2000-2006 related to environmental protection.

During the analysis of Estonia‘s experience in maintaining the environmental requirements, good experience examples were identified. The Law on Public Procurement was supplemented with the provisions that require the exercise of “green procurement“, hence during the implementation of the projects financed by the EU Structural Funds “green procurement“ was broadly executed. In addition, when projects’ selection was performed using the competition principles, additional points were added, i.e. an opportunity to obtain EU funding was increased. Estonia‘s experience in maintaining compliance with environmental requirements could be applied in Lithuania: during the implementation of the projects financed by the EU Structural Funds “green procurement“ could be executed more actively, as well as during the selection of the projects‘ the priority could be given to the projects that have more significant impact on the environment. More active execution of “green procurement“ would not only help to reduce negative aspects that arise as a result of projects‘ implementation, but also it would make the process less harmful to the environment. The supplementation of projects which would have greater positive impact on the environment with additional points would encourage project promoters to evaluate what impact their planned projects might have even in those cases when the planned result was not directly related to the improvement of environmental condition, and to look for measures that would increase the positive impact.

After analyzing the experience of Ireland in maintaining the environmental requirements, an example aimed at improvement of the monitoring indicators that had positive impact on programme‘s implementation monitoring efficiency was given. It showed how the number of product‘s indicators was reduced and additional impact evaluation indicators were included: during the 2000 - 2006 programming period the monitoring indicators of the economic and social infrastructure programmes‘ implementation were changed by withdrawal of old product “turnover“ indicators and including more indicators suitable for the measurement of the performed activities. Given the fact that the monitoring system of the Operational Programmes performed in Lithuania lacks impact assessment indicators, experience that proved in Ireland could be applied in Lithuania.

During the evaluation the analysis of the Cohesion fund financed projects that encountered environmental problems was performed. There was not a significant number of projects that came into public as a result of negative aspects: two projects (an international project “Via Baltica” which encountered environmental violation and waste landfill construction project in south east Estonia’s region which due to environmental protection problems was not executed) were analysed. The examples showed that it was significantly important to carry out a detailed analysis of national and EU legal framework, perform a detailed environmental evaluation and properly inform the public about the project activities as early as possible in the planning stage.

Recommendations

After the execution of the evaluation, strategic and technical recommendations were prepared.

Strategic recommendations are aimed at the 2014-2020 programming period. It was proposed that while preparing operational programmes directly related to the environmental improvement measures‘ formation, the requirements (EU and national) for individual environmental areas should be taken into account as well as more attention to the funding aimed at condition improvement of those areas where the risk not to achieve the set requirements was the greatest should be given. It was also recommended to include more environmental impact assessment indicators and to form monitoring indicators of the measures and projects aimed at environmental improvement to make it possible to evaluate the contribution of the operational programmes when executing tasks determined for Lithuania were in the area of environmental protection.

Technical recommendations were aimed at reduction of the administrative burden and more efficient information about planned projects and their environmental impact. It was recommended to simplify the requirements for the submission of the environmental documentation which are determined in the terms and conditions on the financing of projects under the measures of the operational programmes in order to reduce administrative burden for the applicants and various institutions that issue certificates. It was also recommended to pay more attention at public presentation of project (or entire measure) activities, expected results and positive impact on the living environment in the project planning stage: it would be beneficial, along with usual publicity measures, to organize meetings/discussions with the public.

Conclusions

The conducted evaluation of the environmental requirements implementation helped to determine not only the current impact of the implemented measures on various environmental components, but also to identify the areas on which impact would be strengthened in the upcoming programming periods. The benefit of the evaluation would especially occur when planning and allocating funding to future programmes, measures and projects. The evaluation also proved the importance and relevance of the SEA the execution of which is required for operational programmes. During the evaluation the main conclusions of the SEA were proved, hence it was proposed that the SEA helped to identify the impact of the implemented programmes on the environment. It was determined that indicators used in the SEA were relevant in order to conduct the environmental impact monitoring. During SEA the performed environmental condition evaluation was significant for the monitoring changes that resulted from the implementation of the operational programmes.