

NOVA SBE area of expertise "Sustainability"

Course "Sustainability Evaluation of Policies, Plans and Projects", 2024-2025 (by NOVA FCT)

Group assignment — Critical analysis of an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) of projects or a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) of policies, plans, and programs
(50% of the total evaluation)

Professors: Tomás B. Ramos (tabr@fct.unl.pt) & João Joanaz de Melo (jjm@fct.unl.pt)

Teaching Assistant: João Loureiro (joao.loureiro.rodriques@novasbe.pt)

1. Goals and class organization

The goal of this assignment is to analyse and discuss real case studies of Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) of projects or Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) of policies, plans and programmes, under European Directives 2014/52/EU (as amended) and 2001/42/EC, respectively, or under similar legal frameworks.

The class will be divided in 10 teams of 5 elements (a team per round table). Each team will assume the role of a technical committee, appointed under EIA/SEA law in a European country, tasked with analysing a different case study.

Note: the team must make their own minds and take an independent position about the project, policy, plan or programme, and be capable of defending it, irrespective of the official decision.

2. Selection and access to case studies

The main supporting document will be the published Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) of a project or the Environmental Report (ER) of a policy, plan or programme. The selected case may be open (under consideration), closed, or already implemented. The team will examine the non-technical summary of the EIS/ER, the results of public consultation, elements of the technical reports and other data deemed relevant, inside or outside the formal decision process. The team will identify the critical decision points and make specific recommendations to the decision-makers.

EIS and ER are public documents throughout the EU and can usually be found on the websites of national, regional or local environmental agencies tasked with EIA and SEA. A basic Google search will yield much information, although the official documents may not be amongst the first links found. The selected EIS or ER must be in English or Portuguese or, if need be, in Spanish or French.

3. Evaluation elements and contents

The assignment comprehends three elements: report, presentation and discussion (all in English).

The report and presentation will have the same structure (though naturally the presentation should be more graphic and synthetic), including the following sections:

- Team identification (school, course, date, title, authors' names and recognizable photos, and average hours effort per person to complete the assignment);

- Brief characterisation of the project, policy, plan or programme (goals, main alternatives, map);
- Major environmental and socioeconomic impacts and decision issues;
- Main results of public consultation (when available);
- Decisions proposal and key reasons thereof;
- References (including a link to the EIS/ER reviewed).

The proposed decision must be one of the following: a) approve the project, policy, plan or programme (why?), b) approve the project, policy, plan or programme with conditions (what are the essential conditions?), c) reprove the project, policy, plan or programme (why?), or (d) suspend the process and ask for essential missing information (what info?).

4. Submission and discussion

Each team will register their case study on the course Moodle website in the 'Case Study Selection' forum. Repetitions of case studies are not allowed.

The report and presentation will have a maximum of 5 pages (excluding references) and 10 slides, respectively (including the cover page, which should feature the names and small photos of the students). The report and the presentation should be uploaded to the Moodle website at the appropriate links, one per team, by **10 March**.

The assignments will be presented and discussed in class on **12 and 17 March**. Each team should bring to class a computer with an HDMI port. Each team will give an initial presentation of 10 minutes, with all team members participating, followed by about 10 minutes of discussion with lecturers and classmates (extra points may be awarded for contributions to the discussion; unjustified absence carries a penalty).