



Sustainability Impact Assessment: Definition, Approaches and Objectives

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Background and Activities:

- **informal network** of public administrators dealing with SD strategies in Europe
- **exchange experiences, knowledge and good practices** regarding SD strategy processes (EU SDS, para 42)
- annual **ESDN conferences** (30 June – 1 July 2008 in Paris)
- **Thematic workshops** (April 2008 in Berlin)
- **ESDN homepage** featuring:
 - Background on SD strategy processes
 - Country profiles (on EU-27, plus other European countries)
 - Quarterly Reports



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Welcome to the website of the ESDN

The **European Sustainable Development Network (ESDN)** is an informal network of public administrators and other experts dealing with sustainable development (SD) strategies in Europe.

This website serves as a one-stop-shop for SD strategies in Europe, and is the communication platform of the ESDN.

The activities of the ESDN are guided by a [Steering Group](#) with representatives from eight European countries. Since early 2006, the networking activities have been supported by the [ESDN Office](#). The ESDN Office also maintains and updates this website regularly.

For further information about the ESDN, the Steering Group, the ESDN Office, the network members and associated partners, please visit the section "[About us](#)" and read the  [ESDN Joint Understanding](#).



Subscribe to the ESDNewsletter

If you want to receive quarterly updates on SD governance and strategies in Europe and on new entries on this website, please subscribe to the ESDNewsletter by [clicking here](#). If you want to view the latest ESDNewsletter before subscribing, please [click here](#).

What's new at the ESDN?

Documentation of the 1st ESDN Workshop in Cascais online

The documentation of the 1st ESDN Workshop on 'Sustainable Development Indicators at the EU level' is now available.

[→ More](#)

[2007-12-21]

Country Profiles: new Section on SD Indicators

We have added a new section on "Indicators and Monitoring" to the ESDN country profiles providing information about national SDI sets and monitoring practices. Furthermore, the full list(s) of indicators as identified by a study commissioned by Eurostat are available for download.

[→ More](#)

[2007-12-21]

Current Quarterly Report December 2007:

[Objectives and Indicators of Sustainable Development in Europe](#) (by Markus Hametner & Reinhard Steurer)

displayed.
tries.

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Overview and definition:

Increasing interest in impact assessment (IA):

- Concerns for ***better and informed policy-making***
→ “better regulation” agenda in EU, White Paper on Governance
- SD as overarching principle in policy-making
→ need to ***evaluate impacts of (cross-)sectoral policies***

General definition of IA:

- Tool for ***informed decision-making*** to assess effects of decisions before they are taken (ex-ante evaluation)
- Involving ***systematic steps*** (e.g. problem definition, policy options, mitigation efforts)



Forms of IA:

- Not one widely accepted approach
- Starting in 1970s, IAs used as regulatory policy appraisal → Regulatory Impact Assessment (RIA)
- **Different forms** of sectoral IAs have developed:
 - Business IA,
 - Social IA, or
 - Health IA
- **Variety of methods** is used:
 - CBA, multi-criteria analysis, macro- and micro-economic models, etc
 - Quantitative assessments are supported by qualitative methods.

Impact Assessment Approaches



EIA & SEA:

- Developed in environmental policy:
 - seen by many as *first steps towards SIA* (EI, transparency, participation)
- **EIA:**
 - Environmental effects of *projects* identified and assessed before decision is taken
 - Largely developed in the 1980s (roots in US in late 1960s)
 - EU directive 1985 (amended in 1997)
- **SEA:**
 - Developed during 1990s: environmental effects of *plans and programmes*
 - EU directive 2001



Policy relation:

- Majority of **IA**s *focused on policy sectors*
 - integration of individual results in final decision-making stage
 - **Call for integrated IA**: SD efforts for policy integration
- **SIA**
 - All three **dimensions of SD** are *integrated into one assessment procedure*
 - **Interdependence of dimensions is analysed** before decisions are taken
- EU and Member States level:
 - Cardiff Process (**policy integration**)
 - **EU SDS** and Lisbon Agenda
 - **NSDS**: strategic policy planning → impacts of strategy objectives



Definition of SIA:

(Arbter, 2003)

- *systematic and iterative process*
 - of the likely *economic, social and environmental impacts*
 - of *policies, plans, programmes and strategies*
 - enabling stakeholders concerned to *participate pro-actively*
-
- SIAs are important to assess implementation of NSDSs
 - Some countries (e.g. Belgium, Finland, Switzerland) refer to SIA in their NSDSs

Sustainability Impact Assessment (SIA)



	EIA	SEA	SIA
Subject of assessment			
Frame of reference			
Scope of assessment			
Implementation by governments			

Objectives of SIAs:

- **Good governance:**
 - ◆ inter-dependencies of policy fields
 - ◆ address effects of planned action at early stage
- **Policy integration:**
 - ◆ integration of different policies
 - ◆ identify synergies and trade-offs
- **Transparency:**
 - ◆ decision-making process more open/transparent
 - ◆ identify underlying assumptions, interests, motivations, etc
- **Participation:**
 - ◆ include stakeholders → discussion of different view points
 - ◆ foster policy learning and capacity-building
- **Efficiency:**
 - ◆ objectives met at least costs
 - ◆ avoid unnecessary bureaucracy

(Ecologic et al, 2007; Pope et al, 2004; Arbter, 2003)

Concluding remarks and challenges



- Integrated SIA should be **more than sum of sectoral IAs**
- Creates two challenges:
 - **Institutional challenges** (Pope, 2003; Buselich, 2002):
 - ◆ Appropriate provisions and arrangements for SIAs in policy-making process
 - ◆ How to practically integrate, analyse and present sectoral information to decision-makers and stakeholders?
 - **Methodological challenges** (Bond et al, 2001):
 - ◆ Procedural and organisational provisions (responsible ministries, inclusion of stakeholders)
 - ◆ Development of interdisciplinary approach (policy integration)
- How to best **manage complexity in strategic policy planning?**



Thank you for your attention!

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