

Minutes EUPHA's Health Impact Assessment (HIA) Section Meeting, 7th EPH Conference Glasgow, Thursday, 20/11/2014, 10:30-12:00

1 Welcome; Agenda

Odile Mekel and Piedad Martin-Olmedo welcomed the 16 participants of the annual section meeting. The proposed agenda was approved.

At this year's EPH conference, the HIA section organizes a joint workshop with the emerging HTA section "Health Technology Assessment and Health Impact Assessment – Two key examples of health assessment", scheduled at the afternoon.

2 HIA development in countries and regions – EUPHA report

HIA provides unique opportunities for protecting and promoting human health, and is by now undertaken in many countries around the world as it was recorded in book publications such as:

- Kemm, J. (ed.) (2013): HIA. Past achievement, current understanding, and future progress. Oxford University Press, Oxford, UK
- O'Mullane, M. (ed.) (2013): Integrating HIA with the policy process. Lessons and experiences from around the world. Oxford University Press, Oxford, UK
- Wismar, M., Blau, J., Ernst, K., Figueras, J. (eds.) (2007): The effectiveness of HIA. Scope and limitations of supporting decision-making in Europe. European Observatory on Health Systems and Policies, Brussels
- Kemm, J., Parry, J., Palmer, S. (eds.) (2004): HIA. Concepts, theory, techniques, and applications. Oxford University Press, Oxford, UK

The format, approaches, methodologies and purposes used in the different cases are quite heterogeneous. Some of the experiences are project/policy orientated while others are focused mainly on how HIA is being integrated in the whole decision-making process, or on how HIA is being implemented from a legal basis. To this respect, the EUPHA HIA section proposes to conduct a comparative and analytical survey of the HIA experiences across Europe, considering several perspectives such as. (i) implementation of HIA as such or under any other impact assessment approach; (ii) implementation based on a legal requirement; (iii) what driving forces pushed forward the implementation of HIA; (iv) which sectors, outside the health sector, were more prompt or open to implement HIA and why. This list is not exhaustive.

In a parallel approach and linked to the initiative from EUPHA HIA section, WHO European Centre for Environment and Health (WHO-ECEH) plans to create a network of experts from the health and environmental sector to work towards a more integrated HIA. This network is expected to be focused mainly but not only in Eastern European countries, but its creation and success will depend on funding (not clear at the moment).

Participants welcome a coherent mapping exercise like the initiative is envisaging.

Piedad Martin-Olmedo and Julia Nowacki will follow up this initiative. They will contact HIA section members to gather information on their experiences on HIA.

3 Current project: „Health Impact Quantification“ (HIQ)

There is a growing interest to apply quantitative methods in HIA in addition to traditionally qualitative methods of analysis. Based on a series of workshops on quantitative health impact modelling a strong growth of tools for health impact quantification especially in Europe is seen. Based on this, a survey amongst model developers was conducted in 2013 to get answers to following issues: status quo of development; availability of tools; experiences with model usage, especially in real life situations; further priorities for development from the developers view.

Results of the survey were presented at the 7th EPH conference. Amongst others, it seems that the large amount of tools is not known to many potential HIA users. Often, tools are developed in projects and maintenance as well as dissemination including promotion of the tools is financially insecure. Section members expressed their interest to get an overview of available tools and methods and how to use them.

One option would be to organize an event where the community of tool developers and potential users can interact. An overview report of available tools and application areas as well as usage experiences including training opportunities would be very welcome as stated by section participants. It was noted by participants that not only tools for 'classical' public health issues like smoking, alcohol, BMI or environmental health factors are needed but also models related to other factors e.g., employment.

For further information: contact [Odile Mekel](#)

4 Book(let) “Health in Impact Assessments – opportunities not to be missed”

Examining the relationship between HIA and other types of impact assessment is not a recent development. At the (now famous) HIA workshop in Göteborg in 1999, one question was, “To combine or not to combine?” Around ten years later, a concept of “Family of health-related impact assessments” started being discussed intensively.

When EUPHA's HIA section was initiated, one subtopic of special interest was: “interrelationships of different health-related impact assessments ..., potential conflicts between them, and the pro's and con's of integrated assessments”. Soon there was joint interest of EUPHA, WHO Europe and the International Association for Impact Assessment (IAIA) to pursue this issue. There is a consensus that, even in well developed impact assessments, human health is not always covered adequately.

This publication aims to provide a detailed and balanced view on “health in impact assessments”. It considers five types of impact assessment of key relevance for health: environmental (EIA), strategic (SEA), social (SIA), sustainability assessment, and HIA. Experts outline the specific origins and dynamics of these assessments; analyse how health issues are covered; and give some perspectives on future developments.

The following questions are being addressed:

- How can the various assessments contribute to promoting and protecting human health?
- How can further integration of health support other forms of impact assessments?
- What experiences can be shared?
- What forms and levels of integration seem advisable?
- What should be seen as priorities for further development?

The analysis shows that the potential is underutilized. The contributions of the various impact assessments would benefit greatly from:

- consistent use of a clear conceptualization of health
- access to reliable health data and information
- involvement of health experts from early stages, contributing substantive as well as methodological knowledge and experience; and
- awareness by all impact assessors as well as decision-makers on the interconnections of policies and projects with health.

The booklet (133+10 pages) was edited by Rainer Fehr (EUPHA), Francesca Viliani (IAIA), Julia Nowacki and Marco Martuzzi (both WHO) and includes contributions from 10 additional experts. It can be downloaded, free of charge, from www.euro.who.int/health-in-IA. For questions and further information, contact: info@ecehbonn.euro.who.int.

5 EUPHA mini survey on Health Assessments

Already in the past, EUPHA's HIA section looked into commonalities and differences for HIA and Health Technology Assessment (HTA). Soon it became clear that there are more types of health assessments which combine factual analysis with evaluative elements and aim at supporting governance, e.g. Health Needs Assessment (HNA), Health Reporting, and Health Systems Performance Assessment (HSPA).

An initiative was started to elicit the opinion of several EUPHA sections and pillars on this, and to explore if "health assessments" might qualify as a unifying concept within EUPHA. In a mini-survey, three theses were formulated:

- The role of health assessments for building bridges between science and governance is underrated
- The diversity of health assessments is partially functional, in other parts accidental
- A more "unified" perspective could cross-fertilize the further development.

Based on this, three questions were posed concerning (i) a reaction to these theses; (ii) existing considerations on integration; and (iii) interest in further exploration. Answers were received from nine (out of 10 selected) EUPHA sections, and from two (out of four) EUPHA pillars.

As a result, the theses 1 and 2 were widely agreed upon (10 out of 11 responses), and thesis 3 with 7 out of 11 responses. Existing considerations on integration were very limited. Concerning interest in further exploration, three responses indicated "conditional yes" and the other eight responses were "yes".

In summary, among the respondents, there is considerable motivation to improve the discussion across "silos", to tackle potential duplication or inefficiency, and to go for mutual inspiration and learning synergies.

Next steps could refer to, e.g., the status quo of health assessments (on various administrative levels) as well as the comparison of definitions, procedures, methods, and tools. Also, the desirability and feasibility of harmonization or even (limited) integration deserves discussion.

EUPHA could support this discussion by organizing a workshop or pre-conference, and possibly initiating a strategic project.

(The full presentation was given in the EPH conference workshop "HTA and HIA – Two key examples of health assessment" in the afternoon.)

For further information: Rainer Fehr (U Bielefeld, rainer.fehr@uni-bielefeld.de) or Dineke Zeegers (EUPHA executive director, D.Zeegers@nivel.nl).

6 Options for practical HIA support

Occasionally requests for practical HIA support are addressed to the HIA section. The HIA section cannot offer this kind of full support, but members are happy to give recommendations via mail/telephone. Substantial HIA support will require financed / funded projects.

For further information, contact [Odile Mekel](#) or [Piedad Martin-Olmedo](#).

7 Miscellaneous

Future HIA conferences

As of current, it is unclear if and when the next International HIA Conference will take place.

In Austria, the 3rd Austrian HIA conference (in German) will be held in Graz at 25 June 2015. Contact: gfa.tagung.2015@ifgp.at

Other conferences in 2015 which include HIA as part of the programme:

- 35th Annual Conference of the International Association for Impact Assessment (IAIA), 20-23 April 2015, Florence, Italy: <http://conferences.iaia.org/2015/index.php>
At this conference, there will be a workshop on the European SEU directive
- 1st International Conference on Transport and Health, 06-08 of July 2015, London, UK, <http://www.tphlink.com/2015-transport--health-conference.html>
- National HIA Meeting (USA) 16-18 June 2015 in Washington, DC, USA
http://www.nationalhiameeting.com/?utm_campaign=2014-06-24%20HIP.html&utm_medium=email&utm_source=Eloqua

Information depository

The idea of having a simple collection of documents originating from, or closely related to, the HIA section was raised. It's function would be to have information access and continuity over time, for the benefit of the section work; possibly also: info for new section members. Volunteers please contact [Odile Mekel](#) or [Piedad Martin-Olmedo](#).

Steering group

All EUPHA sections are assisted by steering group, being active members of the section. Current members of the steering group are asked to confirm their participation. In addition a call for steering group membership will be sent out by the [president](#) and [vice-president](#).