HIA in Austria – A Voluntary Instrument for Health in All Policies

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Workshop: Mapping legal requirements for HIA institutionalization across Europe

Stockholm, Sweden
Starting Point for Implementation of HIA in Austria

» HIA is/was a voluntary instrument in Austria

» A few HIAs have been conducted in Austria before 2010 – also a few Master thesis's dealt with HIA

» Systematically implementation of HIA in Austria started in 2009/2010
   → Concept for the implementation of HIA in Austria

» Federal Ministry of Health commissioned Austrian Public Health Institute to elaborate this Concept and to support the described activities
Concept for the Implementation of HIA in Austria
(Horvath et al. 2010)

Key areas

Organisational development
- HIA Support-Unit
- HIA Website and HIA News

Workforce development
- HIA training
- HIA included in relevant Curricula
- HIA Guide
- Pilot-projects

Resource allocation
- Financial resources for HIA Support-Unit
- Financial resources to carry out HIA

Partnerships
- HIA network, internationally linked
- HIA Conference

Leadership
- Relevant policy makers familiar with HIA
- HIA-trained persons in all relevant institutions

Phase 1: Awareness (2010–2015)
A common understanding of HIA, its benefits and opportunities is established. At the end of the stage, HIA is recognised as an essential part of a broad health-promoting policy.

Phase 2: Adoption (2016)
HIA structures are built and financed. HIA are carried out in different sectors.

Phase 3: Implementation (2017–2020)
Intersectoral cooperation and HIA are recognized and approved "as better practice".

Phase 4: Institutionalisation (2021+)
HIA is established as a mainstream tool for decision-making and integrated in the budget law.
Activities phase 1: 2010–2015

» Establishing the national HIA support unit at the Austrian Public Health Institute
» Establishing of a national HIA-website: http://gfa.goeg.at/
» Establishing of a national HIA-network
» Establishing of an (intersectional) HIA steering committee
» HIA-guidelines for practice
» Conduction of HIAs in Austria
» HIA-trainings
» Presentation of HIA at national events
» Austrian HIA conferences
» …
Basis for HIA in Austrian Policies/Strategies

» Health Targets for Austria
» Strategy for the health of children and youth
» Strategy for the promotion of health (part of the Austrian Health Reform)
» National strategy on public health
» Health targets of Upper-Austria
» Strategy for the promotion of health in Styria

→ HIA mentioned concerning the achievement of targets, BUT no legal obligation to carry out HIAs
Resume of phase 1

» A lot of **important activities** for promoting HIA in Austria have been done between 2010 and 2015

» **Knowledge** about HIA got improved through events, presentations and courses

» **Expertise on HIA** in Austria is built up in the Austrian HIA network and the HIA−Support−Unit

» HIA is part of the **curricula** of specific higher education programmes

BUT…

» **Decision makers** (on federal an provincial level) **hardly know** HIA

» **Lack of Interest** or demand for commissioning HIAs
Modification of Implementation plan

» Activities for awareness raising have to continue
  → focus for the next year(s): Federal Ministries

» Creating a connection to health care reform (in Austria Federal Ministry of Health, Federal States & social insurance)
  → task: Elaboration of criteria for Application of HIA

» Further HIA trainings and inclusion of HIA in higher education curricula (not only in health–related study programmes)

» Conduction of further HIAs in Austria

» Long–term goal: obligation for an assessment if an HIA would be useful for certain policies
  → if HIA is not useful: (compulsory) statement why not
  → not obligation to do an HIA compulsory for certain policies
Obstacles when implementing HIA in Austria

» Comprehensive understanding of health and use of health determinants are challenges when implementing HIA in practice

» Silo-thinking of policy sectors is still challenging → sensitising decision makers that HIA has benefits for all policy sectors (not only health sector)

» Delimitation towards existing instruments is necessary (e.g. HTA, EIA, SEA)

» When establishing HIA, the creation of awareness is a central measure and has to focus also on the health care sector itself
Conclusions

» Implementing of HIA (in Austria) still needs time

» Austrian-specific HIA trainings, courses and events should continue to raise awareness for the instrument and improve the expertise on HIA

» Inclusion of HIA in higher education programmes (not only in health-related study programmes) could promote HIA/HiAP in Austria

» HIA is a voluntary instrument in Austria and will be in the future
  → Long-term goal: obligation for an assessment if an HIA would be useful for certain policies

» Challenges for the next years will be to build further capacities in the fields leadership and resources
Contact

😊 THANK YOU FOR YOUR ATTENTION! 😊

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