



Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) and Sustainability Impact Assessment (SIA)

Common features, differences and practical experience

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Topics

- 1. What is SEA? What is SIA?
Common features and differences**
- 2. Shift from SEA to SIA**
- 3. Lessons learned from practice in Austria
including public participation.**



What is SEA? What is SIA?

- **SEA: Strategic Environmental Assessment**

Evaluate the likely significant environmental effects of policies, plans and programmes (PPPs)

- **SIA: Sustainability Impact Assessment**

Assessment of likely economic, social and environmental impacts of PPPs and strategic projects



SEA & SIA: Common features

- **Decision-aiding instruments: decision-makers → more sustainable decisions**
- **Participatory processes, involving public affected or interested during the preparation of PPP**
- **Integrated into PPP-development process → optimise the solution interactively during PPP preparation**
- **Processes, consisting of several steps not only scientific studies, written reports.**



SEA & SIA: Differences

SIA

environmental, social and economic impacts; equally weighted

Plans, programmes, policies, strategic projects

Trade-offs of "weaker" environmental arguments

SEA

Raise profile of environmental considerations in decision-making

Plans, programmes, policies, no projects

Might be regarded as incomplete



However, ...

Not always as distinct as the definitions suggest:

- **Holistic definition of the environment, including bio-physical, social and economic environment**
- **Definition of environmental effects of EU SEA-Directive includes**
 - **social aspects: population, human health, cultural heritage**
 - **economic aspects: material assets.**



Shift from SEA to SIA

- **“SIA is widely regarded as the next generation of SEA”
(Fuller, 2002, IAIA Conference in The Hague)**
- **In Austria: SEAs including social and economic effects**
- **More and more SIA-approaches internationally.**



Possible reasons



- **SEA not taken for serious, biased or incomplete**
- **Participation of interest groups affected by the PPP**
- **Interdependency of effects, especially at strategic planning levels.**



Lessons learned from Austria



For effective assessments ...

- Getting the assessment “right” is not enough
- Process design as important as assessment method
- Participation of interest groups affected by PPP (NGOs, chambers) throughout the entire process.



Public participation in SEA

- **SEA: information and consultation on draft PPP is often too late and not effective**
- **→ pro-active cooperation with interest groups affected throughout the process**
- **SEA Round Table:**
 - take part in entire process,
 - consensual planning solution.







Round Table Approach

Added value for SEA & SIA:

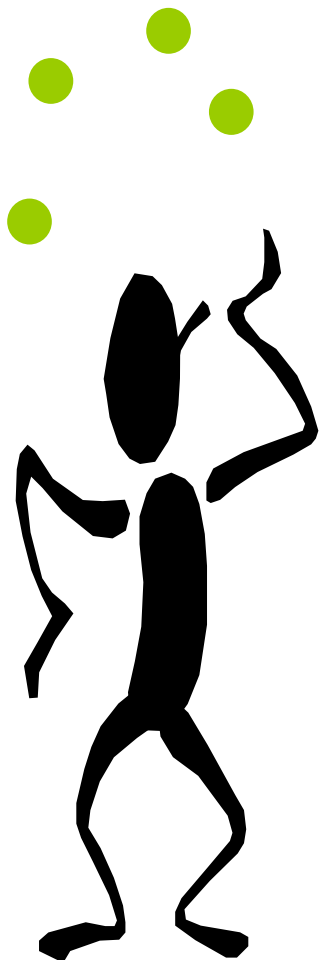
- **Public participation → more sustainable PPP?**
 - reconcile interests in face-to-face negotiations
 - increase mutual understanding
 - better and more consensual PPPs

- **Uncertainty in assessment, questions of values**
 - discussed and checked from different view points
 - more robust and justified results

- **Increase acceptance and credibility**
 - more effective SEA & SIA.



Austria's approach to SIA



- **No formally required SIA by now**
- **Procedure for developing sustainable policies and legislation**
- **No “assessment”**
- **process design**
 - 12 steps
 - assessment (check) one of them
- **methodological tools**
 - checklists
- **Participation of interest groups affected throughout the entire process.**



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