

“Shaping the Future of Health in SEA”

In-person Workshop 23rd January 2025

Online Workshop 30th January 2025

Workshop Notes

These notes summarise the detailed feedback collected during the online and in-person workshops.

Exercise 1: Structure and content of the Toolkit

This exercise aimed to gather feedback on the structure and content of the Toolkit. To guide the discussion, participants reviewed and commented on a draft Table of Contents.

Based on their input, **the key recommendations for improving the Toolkit are:**

Introduction and Scope

- The introductory section should be concise and clearly explain SEA, its purpose, and its relationship with other planning tools.
- Define the target audience, including health and planning authorities, as well as public and private sectors.
- Clarify the national and international applicability of the Toolkit and its alignment with existing SEA guidelines.
- Provide a glossary covering essential terms and concepts such as ‘health determinants,’ ‘social and health inequality,’ and ‘environmental justice.’

Approach and Usability

- Define the ‘proportionate’ approach and its practical application within SEA.
- Ensure the Toolkit is user-friendly, with clear instructions and possibly a demonstration video.
- Offer guidance on integrating health aspects at different SEA and planning levels.
- Address planning tiers in different sections to ensure proportionality in analysis.

Health and Well-Being Considerations

- Adopt the WHO definition of health and also presenting other complementary conceptualizations.
- Include One Health and Planetary Health frameworks and clarify the definition of ‘Population’ to encompass demographic groups and individuals.
- Define relevant population groups, particularly in the Irish context.
- Highlight social and health inequalities and propose approaches to addressing them.

Data Availability and Evidence

- Provide links to relevant data sources and address the challenge of incomplete health data, especially at local levels.
- Ensure representation of vulnerable groups (e.g., ethnic minorities) in data sources.
- Offer recommendations on interpreting health data and indicators to enhance practical application.
- Detail how GIS can support health considerations in SEA.

Stakeholder Engagement

- Identify when and how to engage health professionals, considering resource limitations.
- Ensure ethical considerations when consulting vulnerable populations for inclusivity and fairness.

- Outline strategies for cross-border consultation with the UK in an all-island cooperation context.
- Promote transparency and fair participation in SEA processes.

Legal and Policy Frameworks

- Clarify the legal framework for SEA application in both Irish and European contexts.
- Align the Toolkit with relevant health policies such as Health Well-being Ireland.
- Specify which health objectives and policies are relevant to SEA and provide a method for filtering them within assessments.

Indicators, Monitoring, and Practical Application

- Provide clear recommendations on identifying, applying, and monitoring health indicators, including their relevance at different planning levels and sectors.
- Address the relationship between health determinants and cumulative effects to ensure indirect impacts are considered.
- Include practical case studies illustrating SEA applications, including land-use plans.
- Offer templates and detailed steps for integrating health into SEA scoping.
- Discuss the role of green and blue infrastructure in promoting health and well-being.

Exercise 2 – Considering health outcomes in SEA.

The second activity focused on exploring key links between environmental topics, health determinants and health outcomes, and, ultimately, obtaining recommendations for data/indicators that could be used to evaluate and monitor SEA and health topics. In this context, the recommendations provided **highlight important aspects to consider:**

Health and Environment: Health effects are rarely immediate or isolated, making it challenging to attribute a specific impact to a single SEA issue (e.g., air pollution affects respiratory diseases but also interacts with other social and environmental factors).

Interdependence of Environmental Factors: Health impacts often stem from multiple SEA topics, making it difficult to isolate their contributions (e.g., traffic noise affects sleep and stress, which influence metabolic diseases like diabetes and obesity).

Understanding Environmental Impacts: People's perception and response to environmental changes vary, complicating the definition of adequate indicators.

Data and Monitoring Gaps: There is a lack of integrated, multi-sectoral data, making it difficult to track health impacts across different planning levels. Many indicators also fail to capture long-term health effects, such as chronic diseases.

Data, Information, and Indicators: Finding and utilizing data across different planning scales is challenging, and discrepancies between national and international standards (e.g., national pollution limits vs. WHO guidelines) create additional barriers.

Identifying and Measuring Impacts: Mental health and well-being effects are difficult to quantify objectively (e.g., cultural heritage loss can impact mental health but is hard to measure).

Cumulative and Long-Term Impacts: Many health effects develop over time, requiring longitudinal studies to establish causal links (e.g., prolonged exposure to air and noise pollution increases cardiovascular disease risk). These long-term effects are often overlooked in SEA discussions.