

SEA Action Plan 2021-2025



An Roinn Comhshaoil,
Aeráide agus Cumarsáide
Department of the Environment,
Climate and Communications



An Roinn Talmhaíochta,
Bia agus Mara
Department of Agriculture,
Food and the Marine



An Roinn Tithíochta,
Rialtais Áitiúil agus Oidhreacht
Department of Housing,
Local Government and Heritage



Environmental Protection Agency
An Ghníomhaireacht um Chaomhnú Comhshaoil

Environmental Protection Agency

The EPA is responsible for protecting and improving the environment as a valuable asset for the people of Ireland. We are committed to protecting people and the environment from the harmful effects of radiation and pollution.

The work of the EPA can be divided into three main areas:

- **Regulation:** Implementing regulation and environmental compliance systems to deliver good environmental outcomes and target those who don't comply.
- **Knowledge:** Providing high-quality, targeted and timely environmental data, information and assessment to inform decision making.
- **Advocacy:** Working with others to advocate for a clean, productive and well-protected environment and for sustainable environmental practices.

Our responsibilities include:

LICENSING

- Large-scale industrial waste and petrol storage activities;
- Urban wastewater discharges;
- The contained use and controlled release of genetically modified organisms;
- Sources of ionising radiation;
- Greenhouse gas emissions from industry and aviation through the EU Emissions Trading Scheme.

NATIONAL ENVIRONMENTAL ENFORCEMENT

- Audit and inspection of EPA-licensed facilities;
- Drive the implementation of best practice in regulated activities and facilities;
- Oversee local authority responsibilities for environmental protection;
- Regulate the quality of public drinking water and enforce urban wastewater discharge authorisations;
- Assess and report on public and private drinking water quality;
- Coordinate a network of public service organisations to support action against environmental crime;
- Prosecute those who flout environmental law and damage the environment.

WASTE MANAGEMENT AND CHEMICALS IN THE ENVIRONMENT

- Implement and enforce waste regulations including national enforcement issues;
- Prepare and publish national waste statistics and the National Hazardous Waste Management Plan;
- Develop and implement the National Waste Prevention Programme;
- Implement and report on legislation on the control of chemicals in the environment.

WATER MANAGEMENT

- Engage with national and regional governance and operational structures to implement the Water Framework Directive;
- Monitor, assess and report on the quality of rivers, lakes, transitional and coastal waters, bathing waters and groundwaters, and measurement of water levels and river flows.

CLIMATE SCIENCE AND CLIMATE CHANGE

- Publish Ireland's greenhouse gas emission inventories and projections;
- Provide the Secretariat to the Climate Change Advisory Council and support to the National Dialogue on Climate Action;
- Support National, EU and UN climate science and policy development activities.

ENVIRONMENTAL MONITORING & ASSESSMENT

- Design and implement national environmental monitoring systems: technology, data management, analysis and forecasting;
- Produce the State of Ireland's Environment and Indicator Reports;
- Monitor air quality and implement the EU Clean Air for Europe Directive, the Convention on Long Range Transboundary Air Pollution and the National Emissions Ceiling Directive;
- Oversee the implementation of the Environmental Noise Directive;
- Assess the impact of proposed plans and programmes on the Irish environment.

ENVIRONMENTAL RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT

- Coordinate and fund national environmental research activity to identify pressures, inform policy and provide solutions;
- Collaborate with national and EU environmental research activity.

RADIOLOGICAL PROTECTION

- Monitoring radiation levels and assess public exposure to ionising radiation and electromagnetic fields;
- Assist in developing national plans for emergencies arising from nuclear accidents;
- Monitor developments abroad relating to nuclear installations and radiological safety;
- Provide, or oversee the provision of, specialist radiation protection services.

GUIDANCE, AWARENESS RAISING, AND ACCESSIBLE INFORMATION

- Provide independent evidence-based reporting, advice and guidance to government, industry and the public on environmental and radiological protection topics;
- Promote the link between health and wellbeing, the economy and a clean environment;
- Promote environmental awareness including supporting behaviours for resource efficiency and climate transition;
- Promote radon testing in homes and workplaces and encourage remediation where necessary.

PARTNERSHIP AND NETWORKING

- Work with international and national agencies, regional and local authorities, non-governmental organisations, representative bodies and government departments to deliver environmental and radiological protection, research coordination and science-based decision making.

MANAGEMENT AND STRUCTURE OF THE EPA

The EPA is managed by a full-time Board, consisting of a Director General and five Directors. The work is carried out across five Offices:

- Office of Environmental Sustainability
- Office of Environmental Enforcement
- Office of Evidence and Assessment
- Office of Radiation Protection and Environmental Monitoring
- Office of Communications and Corporate Services

The EPA is assisted by advisory committees who meet regularly to discuss issues of concern and provide advice to the Board.



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An Ghníomhaireacht um Chaomhnú Comhshaoil
PO Box 3000, Johnstown Castle, Co. Wexford, Ireland

Telephone: +353 53 916 0600 Fax: +353 53 916 0699
Email: info@epa.ie Website: www.epa.ie LoCall: 1890 33 55 99

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Introduction

The EPA published the first Review of Effectiveness of SEA in Ireland in 2012. The review was broadly positive but identified several challenges and barriers to effective implementation of Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) in Ireland. It formed the basis for the first SEA Action Plan 2012-2016.

The Action Plan was jointly formulated by the statutory environmental authorities for SEA in Ireland:

- the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage (DHLGH)
- the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine (DAFM)
- the Department of Environment, Climate and Communications (DECC)
- the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA).

The SEA Action Plan assigned responsibility for implementing individual actions to particular environmental authorities and also set target dates for the delivery of the actions. The EPA, in association with the other SEA environmental authorities, published the SEA Action Plan 2012-2016 – Progress Update 2018 in 2018, to show how the action plan was being implemented and progressed. Based on the outstanding actions, an updated and extended SEA Action Plan 2018-2020 was published.

A Second Review of SEA Effectiveness in Ireland was funded by the EPA and published in 2020. The strategic recommendations in the second effectiveness review, as well as the outstanding actions from the previous action plan, were the basis for informing this SEA Action Plan 2021-2025.

The actions identified for the new plan are aimed at further improving SEA effectiveness in Ireland. There is a focus on capacity building in the SEA community in the form of further data provision, training and a focus on better implementation of plans and programmes through advocacy and monitoring.

Governance and Legislation

ACTION	RESPONSIBLE AUTHORITIES ¹	STATUS	TARGET DATE
Continue efforts to improve the effectiveness of the National SEA Forum. EPA to continue to act as Secretariat for the Forum.	All	The National SEA Forum continues to meet two to three times a year, since it was established in 2012. The EPA hosts the webpage for the National SEA Forum via the EDEN portal and acts as secretariat to the Forum. The Forum operates on a rotating-chair basis between the environmental authorities.	Ongoing
Clarify the role, key contacts and aspects of responsibility of each SEA environmental authority.	DHLGH	This will be clarified via the updated <i>Implementation of SEA Directive (2001/42/EC): Assessment of the effects of certain plans and programmes on the environment, Guidelines for regional authorities and planning authorities.</i>	2021
Reflect the need for adequate resources, including specific Environmental Assessment post(s), in relevant future workforce planning. Promote the benefits of establishing dedicated environmental assessment resources within regional and local authorities and other plan-making bodies.	All	Ongoing.	Ongoing

¹ Where 'All' appears in this column, it refers to all the environmental authorities.

Data Collection, Provision and Awareness

ACTION	RESPONSIBLE AUTHORITIES	STATUS	TARGET DATE
All environmental authorities are committed to reviewing their websites as part of efforts to increase awareness of national, EU and International SEA-related guidance.	All	Ongoing.	Ongoing 2025
Continue to explore the establishment of a national integrated SEA portal that would serve as a resource for SEA practitioners	All	<p>Significant progress has been made in the development of key standalone resources, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ EPA SEA WebGIS Search and Reporting tool, available via EPA Maps ■ EPA Inventory of Spatial Information Sources relevant to SEA ■ EPA-funded SEA Environmental Sensitivity Mapping (ESM) webtool ■ The Office of the Planning Regulator has developed an interactive map displaying details of live public consultations on statutory land use plans. 	2024
Promote the dissemination of spatial data from existing monitoring mechanisms, e.g. www.catchments.ie , www.enviromap.ie .	All	The project team responsible for the EPA-funded ESM webtool have run several capacity-building workshops to promote the use of the tool among spatial planners, SEA practitioners and government bodies.	Ongoing

Monitoring and Implementation

ACTION	RESPONSIBLE AUTHORITIES	STATUS	TARGET DATE
Promote the inclusion of monitoring plans and implementation plans through SEA advocacy roles. Each environmental authority will promote consideration of the EPA monitoring guidance in consultations on plans/programmes.	All	The EPA published <u>Guidance on SEA Statements and Monitoring</u> in 2020. The EPA will continue to advocate for monitoring of plans and related reporting.	Ongoing

Guidance

ACTION	RESPONSIBLE AUTHORITIES	STATUS	TARGET DATE
Revise <i>Implementation of SEA Directive (2001/42/EC): Assessment of the effects of certain plans and programmes on the environment, Guidelines for regional authorities and planning authorities</i> (DEHLG, 2004), clarifying/reiterating that SEA mitigation should be integrated into a final plan.	DHLGH	The work on the revision of these guidelines is at an advanced stage. It is expected that a final version of the guidelines will be published in 2021.	2021
Preparation of a series of concise SEA Good Practice Guidance Notes. Specific topics to be considered will include:			
■ Screening including role of statutory environmental authorities.	EPA	A good practice note for screening is currently being developed. The final document will be published in 2021.	Ongoing 2021
■ SEA and Water	EPA All	To commence.	2021- 2023
■ SEA and Energy	EPA	A good practice note for the energy sector in relation to SEA is currently being developed. This will be published in 2021.	Ongoing 2021
■ SEA and Tourism	EPA	To commence.	2022- 2023

ACTION	RESPONSIBLE AUTHORITIES	STATUS	TARGET DATE
■ SEA and Biodiversity, Flora and Fauna	DHLGH (NPWS)	To commence.	2025
■ SEA and Agriculture	DAFM	To commence.	2024
Guidance on transboundary consultation for sectoral plans.	DHLGH	It is intended that this guidance document would also address post-Brexit consultations with the United Kingdom.	2025
Revise, update and publish the EPA SEA Pack and EPA SEA Process Checklist to include information on legal standards that SEAs may need to consider.	EPA	The SEA Checklist will be updated to include more recent and relevant good practice.	2022
Publish a guidance note on SEA and Plan integration to promote good communication between the the Plan-making and SEA teams and their respective processes.	EPA All	To commence.	2023-2025
Prepare and publish guidance on effective and meaningful consultation with the public and statutory consultees.	EPA All	To commence.	2023-2025

Training and Capacity Building

ACTION	RESPONSIBLE AUTHORITIES	STATUS	TARGET DATE
Present the findings of the effectiveness review at appropriate environmental conferences and training events.	EPA (Effectiveness Review Project Team)	The findings of the effectiveness review are due to be presented at the conference of the International Association for Impact Assessment. These were due to be presented at the conference in 2020, but it was postponed due to COVID-19.	2021

ACTION	RESPONSIBLE AUTHORITIES	STATUS	TARGET DATE
<p>Develop an e-learning syllabus on SEA to provide training and capacity building for SEA practitioners, consultants and plan makers.</p> <p>The e-learning module will incorporate the SEA process, Screening, Scoping, Alternatives, SEA Statements and Environmental Reports and Monitoring and Implementation.</p> <p>The e-learning module will address relevant linkages to Environmental Impact Assessment, Appropriate Assessment, Water Framework Directive and Flood Risk Assessment.</p>	All EPA	To commence.	2021-2025
Convene the Regional SEA Fora in conjunction with Regional Assemblies.	Regional Assemblies	<p>The Regional Assemblies have taken active steps, in consultation with the EPA, towards re-establishing the regional SEA Fora through organising a series of online webinars and meetings.</p> <p>The Regional Assemblies are working towards establishing a governance structure for the Regional SEA Fora to ensure continuity in the delivery of capacity building workshops and provision of information into the future.</p>	2021

Research and Development

ACTION	RESPONSIBLE AUTHORITIES	STATUS	TARGET DATE
Promote research into quantification or monetisation of the benefits of SEA based on examples from the Irish context.	All	To commence.	2021-2025
Commission a review of a cross-section of SEA Statements to determine how integration of the SEA and plans/programme process is documented.	EPA	To commence and be repeated every two years.	2022
Development of national <i>SEA KPIs to evaluate SEA effectiveness</i> as a research project.	EPA	For inclusion in next EPA research call.	2021
Good practice guidance for addressing health in SEA.	EPA All	For commissioning	2023-2025
Good practice guidance for addressing landscape in SEA.	EPA All	For commissioning	2023-2025
Tiering of environmental assessment – the influence of SEA on project-level EIA.	EPA	A 12-month EPA-funded research project commenced in April 2020. The research is being carried out by the School of Geography in UCD and Levett Therivel Sustainability Consultants. The project will be completed in April 2021.	2021

Abbreviations

EIA	Environmental Impact Assessment
EPA	Environmental Protection Agency
DAFM	Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine
DECC	Department of Environment, Climate and Communications (formerly Department of Communications, Climate Action and Environment)
DHLGH	Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage (formerly Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government)
KPI	Key Performance Indicator
NPWS	National Parks and Wildlife Service
SEA	Strategic Environmental Assessment

An Gníomhaireacht um Chaomhnú Comhshaoil

Tá an GCC freagrach as an gcomhshaol a chosaint agus a fheabhsú, mar shócmhainn luachmhar do mhuintir na hÉireann. Táimid tiomanta do dhaoine agus don chomhshaol a chosaint ar thionchar díobhálach na radaíochta agus an truaillithe.

Is féidir obair na Gníomhaireachta a roinnt ina trí phríomhréimse:

- Rialáil:** Rialáil agus córais chomhlíonta comhshaoil éifeachtacha a chur i bhfeidhm, chun dea-thorthaí comhshaoil a bhaint amach agus díriú orthu siúd nach mbíonn ag cloí leo.
- Eolas:** Sonraí, eolas agus measúnú ardchaighdeán, spriocdhírthe agus tráthúil a chur ar fáil i leith an chomhshaoil chun bonn eolais a chur faoin gcinnteoireacht.
- Abhcóideacht:** Ag obair le daoine eile ar son timpeallachta glaine, táirgiúla agus dea-chosanta agus ar son cleachtas inbhuanaithe i dtaobh an chomhshaoil.

I measc ár gcuid freagrachtaí tá:

CEADÚNÚ

- Gníomhaíochtaí tionscail, dramhaíola agus stórála peitрил ar scála mór;
- Sceitheadh fuíolluisce uirbigh;
- Úsáid shrianta agus scaoileadh rialaithe Orgánach Géinmhodhnaithe;
- Foinsí radaíochta ianúcháin;
- Astaíochtaí gás ceaptha teasa ó thionscal agus ón eitlíocht trí Scéim an AE um Thrádáil Astaíochtaí.

FORFHEIDHMIÚ NÁISIÚNTA I LEITH CÚRSAÍ COMHSHAOIL

- Iniúchadh agus cigireacht ar shaoráidí a bhfuil ceadúnas acu ón GCC;
- Cur i bhfeidhm an dea-chleachtais a stiúradh i ngníomhaíochtaí agus i saoráidí rialáilte;
- Maoirseacht a dhéanamh ar fhreagrachtaí an údaráis áitiúil as cosaint an chomhshaoil;
- Caighdeán an uisce óil phoiblí a rialáil agus údaruithe um sceitheadh fuíolluisce uirbigh a fhorfheidhmiú
- Caighdeán an uisce óil phoiblí agus phríobháidigh a mheasúnú agus tuairisciú air;
- Comhordú a dhéanamh ar líonra d'eagraíochtaí seirbhíse poiblí chun tacú le gníomhú i gcoinne coireachta comhshaoil;
- An dlí a chur orthu siúd a bhriseann dlí an chomhshaoil agus a dhéanann dochar don chomhshaol.

BAINISTÍOCHT DRAMHAÍOLA AGUS CEIMICEÁIN SA CHOMHSHAOL

- Rialacháin dramhaíola a chur i bhfeidhm agus a fhorfheidhmiú lena n-áirítear saincheisteanna forfheidhmithe náisiúnta;
- Staitisticí dramhaíola náisiúnta a ullmhú agus a fhoilsiú chomh maith leis an bPlean Náisiúnta um Bainistíocht Dramhaíola Guaisí;
- An Clár Náisiúnta um Chosc Dramhaíola a fhorbairt agus a chur i bhfeidhm;
- Reachtaíocht ar rialú ceimiceán sa timpeallacht a chur i bhfeidhm agus tuairisciú ar an reachtaíocht sin.

BAINISTÍOCHT UISCE

- Plé le struchtúir náisiúnta agus réigiúnacha rialachais agus oibriúcháin chun an Chreat-treoir Uisce a chur i bhfeidhm;
- Monatóireacht, measúnú agus tuairisciú a dhéanamh ar chaighdeán aibhneacha, lochanna, uiscí idirchreasa agus cósta, uiscí snámha agus screamhuisce chomh maith le tomhas ar leibhéil uisce agus sreabhadh abhann.

EOLAÍOCHT AERÁIDE & ATHRÚ AERÁIDE

- Fardail agus réamh-mheastacháin a fhoilsiú um astaíochtaí gás ceaptha teasa na hÉireann;
- Rúnaíocht a chur ar fáil don Chomhairle Chomhairleach ar Athrú Aeráide agus tacaíocht a thabhairt don Idirphlé Náisiúnta ar Gníomhú ar son na hAeráide;

- Tacú le gníomhaíochtaí forbartha Náisiúnta, AE agus NA um Eolaíocht agus Beartas Aeráide.

MONATÓIREACHT AGUS MEASÚNÚ AR AN GCOMHSHAOL

- Córais náisiúnta um monatóireacht an chomhshaoil a cheapadh agus a chur i bhfeidhm: teicneolaíocht, bainistíocht sonraí, anailís agus réamhaisnéisiú;
- Tuairiscí ar Staid Timpeallacht na hÉireann agus ar Tháscairí a chur ar fáil;
- Monatóireacht a dhéanamh ar chaighdeán an aeir agus Treoir an AE i leith Aeir Ghlain don Eoraip a chur i bhfeidhm chomh maith leis an gCoinbhinsiún ar Aerthruailliú Fadraoin Trasteorann, agus an Treoir i leith na Teorann Náisiúnta Astaíochtaí;
- Maoirseacht a dhéanamh ar chur i bhfeidhm na Treorach i leith Torainn Timpeallachta;
- Measúnú a dhéanamh ar thionchar pleananna agus clár beartaithe ar chomhshaol na hÉireann.

TAIGHDE AGUS FORBAIRT COMHSHAOIL

- Comhordú a dhéanamh ar ghníomhaíochtaí taighde comhshaoil agus iad a mhaoiniú chun brú a aithint, bonn eolais a chur faoin mbeartas agus réitigh a chur ar fáil;
- Comhoibriú le gníomhaíocht náisiúnta agus AE um thaighde comhshaoil.

COSAINT RAIDEOLAÍOCH

- Monatóireacht a dhéanamh ar leibhéil radaíochta agus nochtadh an phobail do radaíocht ianúcháin agus do réimsí leictreamaighnéadacha a mheas;
- Cabhrú le pleananna náisiúnta a fhorbairt le haghaidh éigeandálaí ag eascairt as taismí núicléacha;
- Monatóireacht a dhéanamh ar fhorbairtí thar lear a bhaineann le saoráidí núicléacha agus leis an tsábháilteacht raideolaíochta;
- Sainseirbhísí um chosaint ar an radaíocht a sholáthar, nó maoirsiú a dhéanamh ar sholáthar na seirbhísí sin.

TREOIR, ARDÚ FEASACHTA AGUS FAISNÉIS INROCHTANA

- Tuairisciú, comhairle agus treoir neamhspleách, fianaise-bhunaithe a chur ar fáil don Rialtas, don tionscal agus don phobal ar ábhair maidir le cosaint comhshaoil agus raideolaíoch;
- An nasc idir sláinte agus folláine, an geilleagar agus timpeallacht ghlan a chur chun cinn;
- Feasacht comhshaoil a chur chun cinn lena n-áirítear tacú le hiompraíocht um éifeachtúlacht acmhainní agus aistriú aeráide;
- Tástáil radóin a chur chun cinn i dtithe agus in ionaid oibre agus feabhsúchán a mholadh áit is gá.

COMHPHÁIRTÍOCHT AGUS LÍONRÚ

Oibriú le gníomhaireachtaí idirnáisiúnta agus náisiúnta, údaráis réigiúnacha agus áitiúla, eagraíochtaí neamhrialtais, comhlachtaí ionadaíocha agus ranna rialtais chun cosaint chomhshaoil agus raideolaíoch a chur ar fáil, chomh maith le taighde, comhordú agus cinnteoireacht bunaithe ar an eolaíocht.

BAINISTÍOCHT AGUS STRUCHTÚR NA GNÍOMHAIREACHTA UM CHAOMHNÚ COMHSHAOIL

Tá an GCC á bainistiú ag Bord lánaimseartha, ar a bhfuil Ard-Stiúrthóir agus cúigear Stiúrthóir. Déantar an obair ar fud cúig cinn d'Oifigi:

- An Oifig um Inbhunaitheacht i leith Cúrsaí Comhshaoil
- An Oifig Forfheidhmithe i leith Cúrsaí Comhshaoil
- An Oifig um Fhianaise agus Measúnú
- An Oifig um Chosaint ar Radaíocht agus Monatóireacht Comhshaoil
- An Oifig Cumarsáide agus Seirbhísí Corparáideacha

Tugann coistí comhairleacha cabhair don Gníomhaireacht agus tagann siad le chéile go rialta le plé a dhéanamh ar ábhair imní agus le comhairle a chur ar an mBord.



ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY

An Ghníomhaireacht um Chaomhnú Comhshaoil
PO Box 3000, Johnstown Castle, Co. Wexford, Ireland

Telephone: +353 53 916 0600 Fax: +353 53 916 0699
Email: info@epa.ie Website: www.epa.ie

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