

SEA Effectiveness Review in Ireland

Action Plan 2018-2020:
Progress Update – February 2021



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 Gníomhaireacht 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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Introduction

In 2012, the EPA published the first *Review of Effectiveness of SEA in Ireland*. While broadly positive, the review identified several challenges and barriers to effective implementation of SEA in Ireland, similar to those experienced in other EU Member States. The report is available on the EPA website.¹

The review put forward recommendations and actions in the areas of governance, provision of guidance, training and awareness raising and data management, aimed at improving SEA effectiveness in Ireland. An *SEA Effectiveness Review in Ireland Action Plan 2012-2016*² was formulated jointly 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 Action Plan assigned responsibility for implementing individual actions to particular environmental authorities and set target dates for the delivery of the actions. The reference numbers assigned to individual actions in the Action Plan reflected the reference numbers associated with the recommendations in the *Review of Effectiveness of SEA in Ireland* report.

In 2017, the EPA published a Progress Update of the progress made in the delivery of the actions in the *SEA Effectiveness Review in Ireland Action Plan 2012-2016*. To drive progress in the implementation of actions that were not progressed or only partially delivered, an updated SEA Action Plan for the period 2018-2020³ was published alongside the Progress Update. Both reports are available on www.epa.ie.

This document is a further review of the SEA Action Plan for 2018-2020 and summarises progress towards delivery of the identified actions.

The EPA published a *Second Review of SEA Effectiveness in Ireland* in January 2020.⁴ The review, along with this progress update, will inform the preparation of a new SEA Action Plan for the period 2021-2025.

1 SEA Effectiveness Review – Full Report <http://www.epa.ie/pubs/advice/ea/reviewofeffectivenessofseainireland-mainreport.html>
SEA Effectiveness Review – Executive Summary
<http://www.epa.ie/pubs/advice/ea/reviewofeffectivenessofseainireland-executivesummary.html>

2 SEA Effectiveness Review Action Plan 2012-2016
<http://www.epa.ie/pubs/advice/ea/seaeffectivenessreviewinireland-actionplan2012-16.html>

3 SEA Action Plan 2018-2020 <http://www.epa.ie/pubs/advice/ea/seaeffectivenessreviewinireland-actionplan2018-2020.html>

4 Second Review of SEA Effectiveness in Ireland
<http://www.epa.ie/pubs/advice/ea/secondreviewofseaeffectivenessinireland.html>

Governance and Legislation

ACTION		RESPONSIBLE AUTHORITIES	TARGET DATE	PROGRESS UPDATE – DECEMBER 2020	ACTION STATUS
D1/D4	Continue efforts to re-focus and improve the effectiveness of the National SEA Forum. EPA to facilitate and act as Secretariat for the Forum.	DHLGH DAFM DECC EPA	Ongoing	The National SEA Forum was established in 2012 and has met two to three times a year since then. The Terms of Reference and membership of the Forum were revised in February 2018 with a view to improving the Forum's influence and effectiveness. EPA is facilitating and providing Secretariat support for the Forum, with the meeting chairmanship rotating between the environmental authorities.	Ongoing
D3	a. Update and issue circular letter clarifying the role, key contacts and aspects of responsibility of each SEA environmental authority.	DHPLG	2013	a. The DHPLG advised that the roles, key contacts and aspects of responsibility of each SEA environmental authority will be included in the review of the 2004 Guidelines for Planning Authorities.	Ongoing
D5	Pilot, refine and publish the draft SEA KPIs produced as part of the EPA-funded SEA KPI research project.	DHLGH DAFM DECC EPA	2015	EPA-funded project (2012-SL-FS-5) <i>Development and Testing of Key Performance Indicators for the Evaluation of SEA Effectiveness in Ireland</i> was completed in 2016. Further pilot application is to be explored with a view to refining and publishing national KPIs for SEA.	Ongoing
D6	Reflect the need for adequate resources, including specific Environmental Assessment post(s), in relevant future workforce planning.	DHLGH DAFM DECC EPA	Ongoing	Lack of SEA specific resources is still a significant issue within government departments.	Ongoing

Data Collection, Provision and Sharing

ACTION		RESPONSIBLE AUTHORITIES	TARGET DATE	PROGRESS UPDATE – DECEMBER 2020	ACTION STATUS
C1	Progress the establishment of a national central SEA Portal.	DHLGH DAFM DECC EPA	2013-2020	<p>While a DHPLG/EPA Working Paper issued to the 7th SEA Forum Meeting in May 2013, no further progress has been made on development of a national central SEA repository.</p> <p>It should be noted, however, that significant progress has been made in the development of key standalone SEA related resources, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ EPA SEA GIS Search and Reporting tool has been updated. ■ DHLGH web map portal MyPlan.ie ■ EPA Inventory of Spatial Information Sources ■ EPA-funded SEA Environmental Sensitivity Mapping webtool ■ OPR Evaluation of Statutory Plans interactive map. 	Not progressed

Training and Awareness

ACTION		RESPONSIBLE AUTHORITIES	TARGET DATE	PROGRESS UPDATE – DECEMBER 2020	ACTION STATUS
B1/B2/ B3/D4	Examine possibilities for organising targeted SEA and AA training modules, particularly for Departmental Officials and Local Authority Officers, via the IPA or an equivalent CPD delivery organisation.	DHLGH DAFM DECC EPA	2013-2016	<p>An SEA Effectiveness Training Workshop was held in Portlaoise in March 2020 to build capacity for SEA practitioners.</p> <p>A number of training workshops on the Environmental Sensitivity Mapping webtool were also conducted throughout 2020, with further workshops planned for 2021.</p> <p>The overall SEA training module has been carried through as an action for the SEA Action Plan 2021-2025.</p>	Ongoing
B4	<p>Consider organising SEA-related sessions/ presentations as part of Ireland's Environment 2018 Conference and/or a parallel training event.</p> <p>Organise a National SEA/AA Conference in 2020.</p>	EPA	2014 & Ongoing Every 3 Years	<p>The EPA-funded project on the SEA Environmental Mapping Sensitivity tool was formally launched at Environmental Ireland 2019 and included as part of the planning and environment section of the conference.</p> <p>Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, no SEA/AA conference was organised in 2020. This will remain as an action for the next action plan.</p>	Ongoing
B5/D2	Re-establish the Regional Fora in Q2 2019, in conjunction with Regional Assemblies.	DHLGH DAFM DECC EPA	2012 & Ongoing Annually	The EPA and the Regional Assemblies reconvened the Regional SEA Fora in November 2020. The proposal is to hold a series of short virtual webinars covering a range of topics including climate change and climate action, biodiversity, legal frameworks and monitoring. The first virtual webinar was held on 26 November 2020.	Ongoing

Guidance

ACTION		RESPONSIBLE AUTHORITIES	TARGET DATE	PROGRESS UPDATE – DECEMBER 2020	ACTION STATUS
A1	All environmental authorities to review their websites in 2018 as part of increasing awareness of existing national EU and International SEA/AA and related guidance.	DHLGH DAFM DECC EPA	2012-2016	All Environmental Authorities committed to reviewing their websites in 2018 as part of efforts to increase awareness of national, EU and International SEA/AA related guidance.	Ongoing
A2	Review and update 2004 Guidelines for Planning Authorities to reflect outcomes of EC REFIT review, national SEA effectiveness reviews and developments in case law.	DHLGH	2014	The SEA Guidelines for Regional Authorities and Planning Authorities (available on www.housing.ie), which were published by the DHLGH in 2004, are in the process of being updated. Public consultation on the guidelines is expected to be under way in Q4 of 2020. Progress on publication of the guidelines has been delayed due to both the COVID-19 pandemic and the formation of the new government in 2020.	Ongoing
A3/A5	Preparation of a series of concise SEA Good Practice Guidance Notes. Specific topics to be considered will include: a. Progress the preparation of screening guidance (Note: this may be subject to conclusion of various ongoing CJEU SEA cases).	EPA DHLGH	2013-2016	a. The EPA has engaged the services of RPS Group Ltd to prepare to prepare a screening guidance for SEA. The final guidance document will be published once the revised DHLGH Guidelines for Planning Authorities have been finalised and published.	Ongoing

ACTION	RESPONSIBLE AUTHORITIES	TARGET DATE	PROGRESS UPDATE – DECEMBER 2020	ACTION STATUS
b. Consider Assessment of Significance Criteria for environmental topics for future EPA (or other) research calls in 2019/2020.	EPA	2013-2016	This may be included in future EPA research calls.	Not Progressed
c. Guidance on SEA Statements will be produced as part of Second SEA Effectiveness Review (commenced March 2018).	EPA	2013-2016	c & d. The EPA published <u>Guidance on SEA Statements and monitoring</u> in January 2020. It is available to view on the EPA website (www.epa.ie).	Completed
d. Guidance on SEA Monitoring will be produced as part of the Second SEA Effectiveness Review (commenced March 2018).	EPA	2013-2016		
e. Review the requirement for guidance on Transboundary Consultation for sectoral plans.	DHLGH DECC DAFM EPA	2013-2016	e. No progress has been made on this action.	Not Progressed
f. Consider the role of SEA in informing project-level EIA as a topic for future EPA (or other) research calls in 2019/2020	EPA	2013-2016	f. A 12-month EPA-funded research project commenced in April 2020 entitled <i>Tiering of environmental assessment – the influence of SEA on project level EIA</i> .	Ongoing

ACTION	RESPONSIBLE AUTHORITIES	TARGET DATE	PROGRESS UPDATE – DECEMBER 2020	ACTION STATUS	
A4	Preparing SEA Good Practice Guidance for priority sectors in association with the relevant sectors initially including:				Completed
	a. Waste	EPA DHLGH	2014-2016	a. <u>Good practice note on SEA for the Waste Sector</u> was published by the EPA in 2019.	Completed
	b. Forestry	EPA DAFM	2014-2016	b. <u>Good practice note on SEA for the Forestry Sector</u> was published by the EPA in 2019. A training session on the guidance was provided to the National SEA Forum.	Completed
	c. Energy	EPA DECC	2014-2016	c. Working draft was prepared in 2015 however this was not finalised. The EPA has commissioned a review of that document and intends to publish a final guidance document in early 2021.	Ongoing
	d. Water related plans	EPA DHLGH	2014-2016	d. Working draft prepared. Further input needed to finalise and publish guidance document.	Ongoing
A6	Preparing detailed guidance on Cumulative Effect Assessment/ In-Combination Effects Assessment in SEA/AA.	EPA	2013	<u>Good practice guidance on Cumulative Effects Assessment in SEA</u> was published by the EPA in January 2020.	Completed

Abbreviations

AA	Appropriate Assessment
CPD	Continuous Professional Development
DAFM	Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine
DECC	Department of Environment, Climate and Communications
DHLGH	Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage
EIA	Environmental Impact Assessment
EPA	Environmental Protection Agency
IPA	Institute of Public Administration
KPI	Key Performance Indicator
SEA	Strategic Environmental Assessment

An Gníomhaireacht um Chaomhnú Comhshaoil

Tá an GCC freagrach as an gcomhshaoil a chosaint agus a fheabhsú, mar shócmhainn luachmhar do mhuintir na hÉireann. Táimid tiomanta do dhaoine agus don chomhshaoil 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.

FORFHEIDHMÍÚ 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 chomhshaoil.

BAINISTÍOCHT DRAMHAÍOLA AGUS CEIMICEÁIN SA CHOMHSHAOIL

- 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 GCOMHSHAOIL

- 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 chomhshaoil 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.

COSAINN 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 ionadaíochta agus ranna rialtais chun cosaint comhshaoil 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 Iánaimseartha, ar a bhfuil Ard-Stiúrthóir agus cúigear Stiúrthóir. Déantar an obair ar fud cúig cinn d'Oifig:

- An Oifig um Inbhuanaitheacht 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.



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