

SECOND REVIEW OF SEA EFFECTIVENESS IN IRELAND

This fourth and final Newsletter provides an outline of the key research findings from the EPA-funded project. The seven dimensions of SEA effectiveness have formed the basis for the review of 15 case studies presented in the previous Newsletters.

Key Findings

Broadly speaking improvements can be identified across the SEA effectiveness dimensions compared to the first SEA effectiveness review undertaken in Ireland in 2012.

- **More sectors have engaged in SEA** and there is a **greater openness to the process overall**. The profile of SEA continues to be championed by the EPA. Legal challenges at planning and project levels may also be driving greater engagement with the process.
- **SEA is leading to changes in plans through both direct and indirect pathways**. It is generally resulting in positive and proactive approaches to **environmental integration in plan-making** (e.g. incorporating SEA mitigation measures, rezoning lands). It is also indirectly **increasing environmental awareness** amongst those involved in the process.

While considerable progress has been made, **challenges remain** including:

- Consideration of alternatives - although EPA guidance on the **development of alternatives** (EPA, 2015) has been reported as adding to good practice approaches, this is not necessarily evidenced in the case studies reviewed.
- **Monitoring** remains the most significant gap. Clear guidance on how to develop effective monitoring needs to be complemented with a commitment to implementing it, if future plan cycles are to benefit from properly understanding environmental pressures and impacts.
- Opportunities exist for better **engagement** at both SEA and plan level as the statutory minimum consultation appears ineffective at engaging the public and in particular marginalized groups.
- **SEA Statements** often fail to capture how SEA recommendations and consultation have influenced the plan. This and the general lack of monitoring are **impeding an evaluation of the substantive effectiveness of SEA and its real impact 'on the ground'**.

Key Project Outputs

The project has resulted in a number of deliverables, including a **final report and guidance on SEA Statement and Monitoring**. The report and the guidance will be made publicly available at project completion (in the last quarter of 2019).

Training on Effective SEA

The project team will deliver a one-day training workshop in October 2019. This **participative workshop** will combine presentations with hands-on exercises covering the following aspects:

- Key findings on effectiveness of Irish SEA practice
- Good national and international practice case studies
- Strategic and practical recommendations to improve current practice
- Guidance on SEA statements and monitoring

To register your interest or for any queries, please email ainhoa.gonzalez@ucd.ie

Special Issue on SEA Effectiveness

Members of the project team have guest-edited two Special Issues on SEA effectiveness for the international peer-reviewed journal **Impact Assessment and Project Appraisal**. 16 papers cover various or all of the seven dimensions of SEA effectiveness, providing insights into the performance of SEA across Europe and globally. The Special Issues include a paper on Irish SEA Practice: González, A, Bullock, C, Gaughran, A and Watkin-Bourne, K (2019). **Towards a Better Understanding of SEA Effectiveness in Ireland**. *Impact Assessment and Project Appraisal*. To request a copy, contact: ainhoa.gonzalez@ucd.ie

Project Completion and SEA Training

The project will be completed in September 2019 and training on SEA effectiveness is planned for October 2019.

If you are interested in the training session please contact: ainhoa.gonzalez@ucd.ie



Project Partners



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