

ASSESSING HEALTH IN THE EIA PROCESS

TII NATIONAL ROADS CONFERENCE

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BACKGROUND

- 2017 revisions across Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) legislation European Union EIA Directive
- ‘population and human health’ factors should be on the list of environmental topics considered by EIA.
- The EIA Directive does not seek to define the way in which topics are addressed.
- There is thus no prescribed EIA definition for ‘population and human health’.

WHAT IS HEALTH?

- Health is defined here as a state of complete physical, mental and social wellbeing and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity (WHO)

WHAT IS DIFFERENT IN THE NEW EIAR?

- The previous endpoints of EIA analysis are expected changes in, for example, air quality or noise levels. From a public health perspective, these are changes in determinants of health, not changes in health outcomes
- The endpoint of EIA population and human health analysis should, where possible, describe the predicted health and well-being outcomes.

HEALTH OUTCOME

- A **health outcome** is a change in the health status of an individual, group or population which is attributable to a planned intervention or series of interventions, regardless of whether such an intervention was intended to change health status
- **Determinants of health** are the range of personal, social, economic and environmental factors which determine the health status of individuals or populations .

SIGNIFICANCE

- What is significant in Health terms?
- Not defined
- Everything that might happen to ME is significant to ME
- Professional Judgement
- Differentiate group and individual effects

SIGNIFICANCE (ONE INTERPRETATION)A

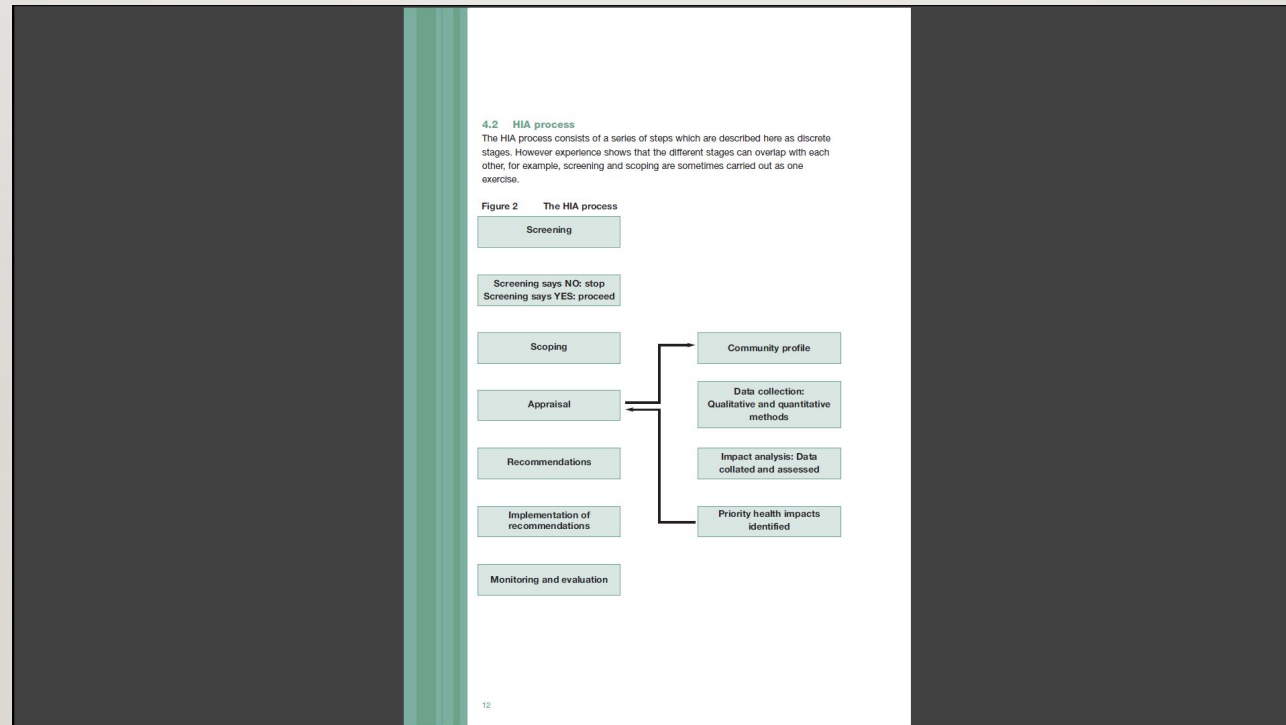
Effect Level	Significance Criteria
Imperceptible	No significant human health impacts are apparent. An example is no measureable effect attributable to the Proposed Development.
Slight	A small impact on individual reported symptoms but no change in health status can be attributed to the proposed development. An example is a temporary increase in symptoms in an individual but no change in the severity of the underlying condition or treatment required.
Moderate	An impact on health status of individuals but no change in overall morbidity or mortality can be attributed to the proposed development. An example is an individual increasing their use of a treatment attributable to the development but no change in underlying condition.
Significant	A proposed development has the potential to impact on individual health status An example is an individual's condition becoming measurably more severe as a result of the proposed development.
Very Significant	A proposed development has the potential to impact on the health status of groups. An example is a group of individuals' condition becoming measurably more severe as a result of the proposed development.
Profound	A proposed development has the potential to impact on the health status of communities. An example is a measurable increase in the incidence or severity of a condition in a community.

WHAT IS A HEALTH IMPACT ASSESSMENT (HIA)

- HIA is defined as a combination of procedures, methods and tools that systematically judges the potential, and sometimes unintended, effects of a policy, plan, programme or project on **both the health of a population and the distribution of those effects within the population**. HIA identifies appropriate actions to manage those effects
- An EIAR is defined in the EIA regulations as:

'A statement of the effects, if any, which proposed development, if carried out, would have on the environment.'

HIA GUIDANCE 2009



COMMUNITY PROFILE

- Almost impossible to perform for an individual project
- National Statistics available for many health conditions
- Few have local statistics
- Cannot collate these , confidentiality, data protection etc.
- Even those who do, rarely coincide with potentially affected
- Data often historical e.g. cancer or census data
- Not predictive of future (populations change)

SO WHAT ABOUT A STAND ALONE HIA

- Often demanded by communities
- Almost impossible to do for projects
- Expensive
- As soon as they are completed they are potentially out of date
- Disproportionate

EPA DRAFT GUIDELINES AUGUST 2017

While no specific guidance on the meaning of the term Human Health has been issued in the context of Directive 2014/52/EU, the same term was used in 3.3.6 the SEA Directive (2001/42/EC). The Commission's SEA Implementation Guidance states 'The notion of human health should be considered in the context of the other issues mentioned in paragraph (f)'.⁵⁸ (Paragraph (f) lists the environmental factors including soils, water, air etc

BUT IT GOES ON

*The evaluation of effects on these pathways is carried out by reference to accepted standards (usually international) of safety in dose, exposure or risk. These standards are in turn based upon medical and scientific investigation of the direct effects on health of the individual substance, effect or risk. This practice of reliance upon limits, doses and thresholds for environmental pathways, such as air, water or soil, **provides robust and reliable health protectors [protection criteria] for analysis relating to the environment***

Restatement of 2002 Guidelines

HEALTH BASED STANDARDS

- Usually international
- Scientific
- Based on direct medical effects
- Has to protect the vulnerable
- Examples include Air Quality Standards, WHO Noise Guidelines
- Have to be achievable

MAIN TOPICS IN ASSESSMENT

- Air
 - Various Emissions
- Noise
 - Day
 - Night
 - Mind the units
- Water
- Other

LITERATURE REVIEW

- Pier reviewed medical literature
- E.g. Pubmed
- Similar projects elsewhere and in past
- Careful with Google
- Useful for issues not readily modelled e.g. cancer risks

PSYCHOLOGICAL EFFECTS

- Difficult to be objective
- Differentiate nuisance from health effects
- Is it plausible that there will be different effects for this project than for similar projects elsewhere

COMPETENT PERSON



SUMMARY

- Need for a practical and proportional response
- Reasoning behind new EIAR is not to prevent anything being built anywhere
- Ireland must have sensible approach
- Must not try to measure the unmeasurable