

Impact Assessment for a New Europe and Beyond



European Conference
University of Manchester, UK
15-17 June 2005

Status Feb 2005

The conference aims to develop greater understanding of how different forms of strategic impact assessment (or evaluation) can work together as an integrated whole, with the specific aim of strengthening European sustainable development - locally, nationally, across the entire 25 member Union, in partnership with other countries, and in the EU's contribution to global governance.

The Manchester conference is the first of a series of events taking place in seven countries of the enlarged Europe, as part of EASY-ECO 2005-2007 (for further details on the events within the EASY-ECO series, please see <http://www.sustainability.at/easy>). It will set the scene for the subsequent conferences and training courses in the programme, by addressing in particular the **strategic issues of impact assessment for sustainable development**.

Participants

The conference will bring together senior academics and young researchers, policy-makers, impact assessment and evaluation practitioners, and commissioning agents, from the expanded EU and other countries, to share their experiences and gain greater insight into the prospects and challenges of using impact assessment approaches to strengthen sustainable development in the European region and beyond.

EASY-ECO 2005-2007 is organised under the European Community's Sixth Framework Programme Marie Curie Conferences and Training Courses action. One of the aims of the programme is to enable the experience of leading researchers and practitioners to be shared with those who are new to the field. **Grants are available for researchers with less than ten years experience**, to cover travel expenses, participation fees, accommodation and living allowance. For further details of eligibility for grants, please see the EASY-ECO website <http://www.sustainability.at/easy>.

Conference venue: Chancellors Conference Centre is within easy access of Manchester city centre, in the grounds of the Victorian residence previously occupied by University Vice-Chancellors. The original building is incorporated into the modern conference and hotel facilities.



Conference theme

The expansion of the European Union to embrace its ten new member states, along with new neighbourhood initiatives with other countries to the east and south, and economic partnerships with developing countries, are occurring in parallel with significant new developments in public policy formulation and decision-making. These include greater emphasis on evidence-based decision-making, better governance and governance reform, and the adoption of sustainable development as the overarching objective for public policy.

Impact assessment (or evaluation) is playing an increasingly important role in all these areas. This applies to the European Commission itself, to national governments, local government, NGOs and the private sector, in EU member states and beyond.

What lessons can be learned from experience in each field of application that are relevant to others? What techniques developed in different areas can be applied successfully in others? In what ways do approaches need to be different in different areas, in order to meet specific needs, and to complement each other in their separate contributions to an overall goal? Can common principles be identified which help to achieve this?



All new EC directives and major policy initiatives are now subject to the Commission's recently introduced procedures for preliminary and extended impact assessments. The EU has commissioned sustainability impact assessments of trade policy, both for WTO agreements and for regional trade agreements in the Mediterranean and elsewhere. Its directive on strategic environmental assessment is now in force, requiring SEAs of development plans in all member states, as well as the earlier directive for environmental impact assessment of development projects.

Most member state governments have introduced regulatory impact assessment procedures for their own policy-making processes, and candidate countries are being encouraged and helped to do the same. The EC's development assistance programmes and those of member states, as well as the EU's internal structural funds, are also subject to impact assessment or evaluation procedures, including *ex-post* assessment of the effectiveness of the assistance given. Similar techniques are being used by local governments through Local Agenda 21 initiatives, and by private sector corporations in sustainability reporting and environmental management systems.

This increasing use of impact assessment as a tool for strengthening public policy-making and its integration with corporate responsibility presents many challenges. The need for better evidence in decision-making, for greater civil society involvement in governance, and for closer alignment of policy with the goal of sustainable development, is well understood in principle, but less readily applied in practice. Innovative techniques are required, the accumulating experience needs to be shared, and a greater degree of coherence needs to be developed. In many areas, policy-making processes themselves need to be adapted, to make more effective use of the evolving techniques.

Invitation for Papers

Papers are sought on theory, practice and specific experience in all areas of strategic impact assessment, particularly those from which lessons may be learned in the wider context.

Fields of application include:

- national and regional strategies and policies for sustainable development
- EU policy, directives and international agreements (IA, extended IA, sustainability IA)
- national legislation and policy-making (regulatory IA)
- regional, sectoral and local planning (implementation and integration of the SEA Directive)
- EU structural funds and agricultural funds (especially in new member states)
- Local Agenda 21 activities, urban and rural development programmes
- corporate sustainability and corporate responsibility
- development assistance programmes

Techniques of current interest include: integrated assessment; optimisation techniques such as cost-benefit analysis and multi-criteria analysis; quality standards; indicators; monitoring and policy adaptation; attribution of effects at the strategic level.

Contextual issues that may be addressed include: integration into policy-making processes; institutional transformation and capacity-building; identification of goals and needs; stakeholder identification and involvement; evaluation culture and strategies to enhance it; expert networks, evaluation societies and other networking possibilities (particularly in relation to new member states and neighbouring countries).

Case Studies: We are very much interested in case studies from evaluators or commissioners of evaluations and impact assessments. Conference papers on these will be welcomed, and space will be available for poster presentations.

Further Information and Bookings

The conference will run across three days in Manchester with a maximum attendance of 100 delegates. It will centre on plenary and parallel sessions with a mixture of papers and topical discussion. Plans are underway for a book and/or special issue of a suitable journal, that draws on a collection of papers presented at the conference.

In order to book a place, please fill in the online booking form at <http://www.sustainability.at/easy>. If you do not have access to the internet, please contact Debrah Whitehead, Tel: +44 (0)161 275 2821, Fax: +44 (0)161 273 8829, debra.whitehead@manchester.ac.uk

Delegates who wish to present a paper or poster session should send an **abstract by 28th February 2005**. Full papers should be received by the organisers by **2nd May 2005**. Please send abstracts per e-mail to Debra Whitehead (debra.whitehead@manchester.ac.uk) and a copy to Judith Galla (judith.galla@wu-wien.ac.at). Abstracts should have 250-300 words and be sent in Word document format, file named "*last name_abstract_manchester.doc*". Abstracts not meeting this criteria cannot be processed.

For further details on the conference's aims and the submission of papers, please contact:

Colin Kirkpatrick (colin.kirkpatrick@man.ac.uk)
Tel: +44 (0)161 275 2807

Clive George (clive.george@man.ac.uk)
Tel: +44 (0)161 275 0812

Joe Ravetz (joe.ravetz@man.ac.uk)
Tel: +44 (0)161 275 6879

The conference is being organised by the Impact Assessment Research Centre in the University of Manchester's School of Environment and Development.

