



Minutes

Kick-off meeting “The effectiveness of health impact assessment” Brussels, 30 September – 2 October 2004

The participants agreed that the Minutes should be brief and should focus on essential issues, agreements and actions to be taken. A list of participants (Annex 1) is attached herewith.

The purpose of the meeting was to:

- Develop a common understanding of the project objectives, tasks and expected results;
- Discuss in detail the template for the literature review (Task 1), the questionnaire for the interviews with key informants (Task 2) and the package of indicators (Task 3);
- Clarify project management and administrative procedures.

Project aims, objectives, deliverables and relevance

The project's aims and objectives were reiterated, discussed and endorsed.

Aims:

- to map the use of HIA;
- to evaluate its effectiveness; and
- to identify the determinants for its successful implementation.

Objectives:

- to map the use of health impact assessment in Member States;
- to map the use of other impact assessment methodologies that have taken up health;
- to develop a set of indicators to measure the implementation of HIA;
- to assess the factors that enable or hinder the implementation of HIA including the institutional, organisational and cultural contexts as well as the decision-making process; and
- to disseminate the findings to improve the use of HIA in the decision-making process in the Member States.

A number of deliverables has been specified in the research proposal. Amongst the deliverables the key product will be a report. This report should result in a book. A very preliminary outline for this book was presented to fuel the discussion on what the end product could look like and how to integrate the various parts of the research into one coherent book. It was agreed that a constant stream

of publications should emanate from the project. The book should include both analytical chapters and case studies. It was suggested to pair/group case studies together and then contrast them according to specific themes or aspects. All partners are encouraged to publicise the project (through articles, website etc.). Project results should be published jointly.

The scientific and political relevance of the project was underlined by speakers from the WHO, the European Commission and the Member States.

Anca Dumitrescu, Divisional Director, WHO Regional Office for Europe, pointed out the relevance of HIA to WHO by presenting the various HIA-related activities of WHO.

Josep Figueras, Head of the Secretariat of the European Observatory on Health Systems and Policies, outlined the Observatory's mission and presented its products. He pointed out that, scientifically, a European map of HIA and an in-depth analysis of the effectiveness of HIA was overdue, bearing in mind that HIA could be a major mechanism of intersectoral health policy-making.

Anna Hedin, representative from the European Commission, underlined the political and practical relevance of the project for the European Union (EU). The EU is developing an integrated impact assessment of all policies. Politically, HIA remains an important issue with the European Institutions. The High Level Committee on Health and the High Level Group on Health and Medical Services are currently dealing in their work with 'health in all policies' and HIA.

Eero Lahtinen from the Finnish Health Department introduced the Finnish plans for the Council Presidency in the second half of 2006. He outlined a European public health event for high level policy-makers and explained the role of our project in this event. The project would substantially contribute to provide evidence on HIA and its effectiveness. This contribution would be complemented by domestic input and input from the WHO Programme on investment in health.

Literature review (Task 1), interviews (Task 2), indicators (Task 3)

The literature review (Task 1) will be the key methodology employed for the mapping exercise. The literature review will be explorative. Therefore, it will neither be designed for testing a specific hypothesis nor for employing a pre-defined definition of HIA. This was agreed among participants in order to do justice to the expected or assumed variations in terminology and practice of HIA across Europe. The literature review will address the national, regional and local level. A common template for the literature review will be provided by the Observatory. Additionally, guidance for researchers on how to conduct the search and use the template will be provided.

The interviews (Task 2) will be the key methodology employed for the effectiveness analysis. Each team will select one single HIA identified during the literature search. Criteria for the selection will be provided. Preferably, “successful” HIAs should be selected. Interviews will be conducted with ca. five interviewees involved in the HIA (decision-makers, HIA-practitioner, stakeholder, affected population). The interviews will be based on a common definition of ‘effectiveness’. This definition will take into account the variations identified by the literature search. Effectiveness will include both the influence on policy-making and the effect on the community in terms of empowerment. A matrix of various variants of effectiveness will be developed. The Observatory will also provide a questionnaire for the interviews and instructions for the interviewers.

During the kick-off meeting, project partners provided conceptual input for the development of indicators (Task 3). Further progress will be reported by the next meeting.

Project management and administrative procedure

Due to the progress in contractual negotiations, the Commission authorized us to officially start the project on 15 August 2004, despite the fact that the contract has not yet been signed, and the money has not yet been transferred.

Upon signature of the contract, the Commission will ask us to calculate and present a partner budget. The partner budget specifies the individual expenditure and income of each of the partners. Its main purpose is to specify the distribution of the Commissions funds. The partner budget will need to be signed by each of the partners by an authorized person from their organization.

An initial indicative estimate on the partner’s income was sent 10 December 2004. There may be some variations due to the new budgetary rules of the Commission and due to differences in air fare costings.

Partners will be notified as soon as the funds have arrived. The Observatory would prefer to use simple contracts to disburse the money to the partners and to have a tight control on the travel budget. However, it is not yet clear if this will be possible. Partners will be informed on further developments.

Lithuania, Malta, Portugal, Switzerland would like to join the project and become full partners. The Observatory will explore how to include the four as new partners.

It was proposed to hold the next meeting in Stockholm, prior to the IUHPE-conference. Furthermore, the OBS will submit a workshop proposal for the conference to present preliminary results of the mapping exercise.

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