

Health Impact Assessment (HIA)

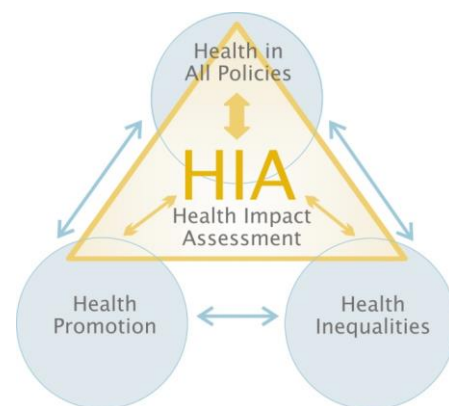
Health Impact Assessment (HIA) is a tool to improve the cooperation between different political areas concerning health aspects. HIA is crucial for the implementation of the Health in All Policies (HiAP) approach.

Health in All Policies (HiAP)

The most important determinants of health are located outside the traditional health (care) system (e.g. social and welfare politics, politics concerning environment, labour market, economics or education). Therefore, the cooperation of all political areas is necessary to promote health and wellbeing of the whole population. The aim of the HiAP-strategy is to sensitize all political sectors regarding the health impacts of political decisions and to implement health as a cross-sectional topic.

HIA is an important tool to implement HiAP.

Figure 1: Theoretical position of HIA



Source: GÖG/ÖBIG

What is HIA and what are the aims of HIA?

HIA is an internationally established tool for the analysis and evaluation of planned policies. HIA assesses potential positive and negative impacts on population health and the distribution of these health impacts within the population (see Figure 1).

HIA offers the opportunity to assess impacts of planned policies on population health and gives recommendations how positive impacts can be maximized and negative impacts can be minimized. The tool enables informed and transparent political decisions.

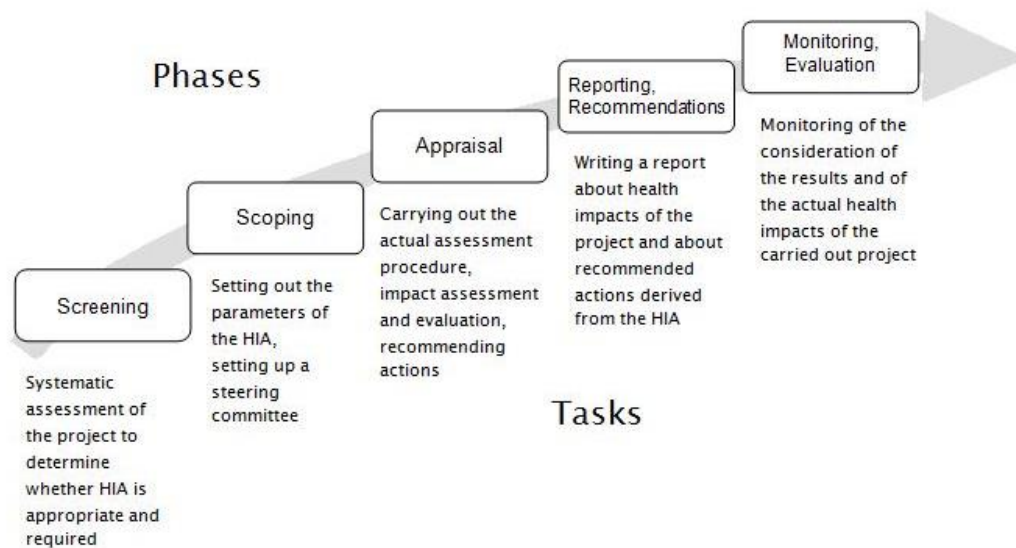
How is HIA done?

HIA is a systematic process consisting of different standardised phases (see Figure 2; screening, scoping, assessment, reporting, follow-up) and can be carried out in different depths and time span:

- » Desk-based HIA (2–6 weeks)
- » Rapid HIA (6–12 weeks)
- » Comprehensive or in-depth HIA (6–12 months)

The beginning of each of these forms consists of the same procedure: in the screening phase, you have to prove if an HIA is required and reasonable for the planned policy.

Figure 2: Graphic illustration of HIA



Source: GÖG/ÖBIG

Values and principles of HIA:

- » Prospective approach: when HIA is conducted during the draft phase of a policy, recommendations can be taken into account before implementation
- » Participation: active involvement of addressed population groups
- » Equity: ensure health equity for everybody
- » Transparency: present deduced recommendations to the public
- » Intersectorality: cooperation of different political sectors

What is the benefit of HIA?

- » HIA leads the political decision-makers' attention to the impacts of population health affected by their decisions.
- » HIA makes health impacts visible and offers the opportunity to control them.
- » HIA promotes the awareness for health related decisions in other sectors.
- » HIA offers the opportunity for transparent and evidence-based political decision-making.

Examples for HIA in Austria

A comprehensive HIA was conducted in 2012 to assess the positive and negative health impacts of compulsory kindergarten education for each child in Austria. Health impacts were assessed for children, parents and staff in Kindergarten. Health impacts were analysed for three scenarios: no compulsory kindergarten education, one year of compulsory kindergarten education and two years of compulsory kindergarten education. (Haas et al. 2012)

In Styria, a rapid HIA was conducted in 2015 on community level to assess the health impacts of a road building project (relocation and expansion of the road). Health impacts of the scenarios expansion versus no expansion of the road were assessed for different groups (inhabitants, industry, gastronomy, etc.). (Neuhold et al. 2015)

For more information see <http://gfa.goeg.at>