



The LIAISE Approach to Co-Designing Knowledge on Impact Assessment

Tarja Söderman, Sanna-Riikka Saarela, Sabine Weiland & Jacques Jansen, Built Environment Unit, Finnish Environment Institute (SYKE), Helsinki, Finland.

ABSTRACT

Impact Assessment (IA) intends to collect evidence on the likely impacts of new policies and thereby minimize unwanted side-effects and maximize the benefits to society. Although it is a requirement in the EC and all OECD countries, the scope and methods vary considerably. Governments have invested considerably in research to support the evidence basis of policy making for sustainable development. However, the general picture shows a gap between the proliferation of IA tools and information from the scientific community and their actual use in the policy process and a need for a more effective knowledge exchange in science-policy interface. The FP7 network of excellence LIAISE (Linking Impact Assessment Instruments to Sustainability Expertise, www.liaise-noe.eu) is designed to explore the causes for limited use of IA tools and bridge the gaps between researchers with a generally strong orientation towards their (disciplinary) peers, and practitioners who tend to focus on their policy domain and current policy problems. LIAISE aims at: 1) understanding of the policy process and the resulting needs for IA knowledge, IA tools and approaches; 2) description of IA tools and scientific IA expertise in a standardised way; 3) a shared IA toolbox targeted at the needs of both researchers and practitioners; 4) a shared IA research agenda integrating scientific knowledge gaps and the priorities for new IA knowledge arising from the future policy agenda; and 5) safeguarding the project results beyond the period of project funding, by developing an institutional setting and business plan that facilitates the extension of the present consortium towards a broad centre of IA expertise with a structural permanence. The presentation will outline the overall approach of LIAISE and focus on the lessons learned from the test cases about transdisciplinary integration of knowledge, knowledge brokerage techniques, factors influencing case-specific brokering activities and recommendations for a more successful use of IA tools in policy processes.