



The shared IA toolbox

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ABSTRACT

A key ambition in the development and use of models and software in impact assessment (IA) is to support the policy process with tools to evaluate the impacts of policy options on the three dimensions of sustainability: economic, environmental and social. To achieve this, IA tools need to be scientifically and technically sound, reliable, relevant to users, and widely applicable in a societally accepted participatory process. Various examples exist of complex and sophisticated models being applied in IA for policy making. However, in many cases, a gap persists between the currently realized and potential use of models in IA. Here, we will discuss causes and possible solutions for this.

We discuss how a lack of demonstrated robustness of model results, scarcity of documentation and usability of tools present barriers for uptake by potential users. This includes, but is not limited to, information about reliability, robustness, uncertainty as a lack of transparency, resulting in a 'black-box' perception of tools. It may result in evidence for IA not being deemed trustworthy. To overcome these problems, the LIAISE network of excellence developed a common reference framework and guiding structure (the Reference Model for Impact Assessment Tools, RM-IAT), which provides a starting point for developing a shared toolbox, bringing together information about tools, experts, best practices and related documents to support policy impact assessments. Describing IA tools consistently following this framework gives users more information about the tools, scale of use, complexity, data requirements and application area, existing applications in IA, amongst many other parameters. The toolbox provides guidance to tool users for a better selection of tools for their specific purposes, which in turn may improve tool use in IAs. In addition, the toolbox utilises taxonomies to classify not only tools, but also experts and best practices in a consistent fashion. The LIAISE Toolbox thus aims to serve as a central platform for the community of IA practitioners and researchers.