Developing common best practices to promote urban health

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Introduction

In 2008 a working party on HIA was established inside the Agenda 21 Italian coordinating group. The demand for common methodological guidelines on HIA, coming from an increasing number of institutional bodies, triggered a project for developing a common basic knowledge and procedural pathway to be extended nationwide. The central role of local authorities in developing local strategies for sustainable development has been recognized inside the newborn technical board. Then a call for interest was disseminated among public representatives already sensitive to health and environment sustainable development. A shared program between members, focused on HIA cultural background dissemination and monitoring-surveillance system integration within health impact assessment procedure, has been finalized. The overall project aims to create common ground for HIA, develop methods and disseminate knowledge, create expertise to address health impacts inside environmental and strategic impact evaluations (EIA, SEA), and share common practice to formulate advice on project permit relies.

Description

An “Agreement of Intent” among government institutions and local authorities with mandatory duties for health and environment protection has been finalized. Three main actions have been identified:

1. Establish an archive of knowledge, data and available documents on national HIA experiences;
2. Pilot a national training course on HIA procedure to harmonize curricula and competencies of HIA practitioners; and
3. Propose a “best practice tool” aimed at increasing the value of the training experience performed at the local level.

Four Work Packages coordinated by technicians and researchers will put these activities into practice. A pilot case study will be also selected to be applied within a specific local context and proposal. This pilot application will validate procedures, highlight existing opportunities for HIA integration and test effectiveness in the context of local public services.

Supporting urban health planning

The project will facilitate the integration of EIA and SEA administrative procedures with the already existing compulsory mandate of the local health authorities on health prevention issues. The project will further support urban planning choices that are globally and locally sustainable, taking into account both environmental and health aspects as well as the socio-economic ones.

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