

HEALTH IMPACT ASSESSMENT. ALTERNATIVES FOR AN EFFECTIVE IMPLEMENTATION OF ARTICLE 35 OF THE SPANISH PUBLIC HEALTH ACT 33/2011

(Organised by General Directorate of Public Health, Quality and Innovation, Ministry of Health and Carlos III Health Institute - 10 June 2019)

BACKGROUND

According to the General Public Health Law (Law 33/2011), the Health Impact Assessment (HIA) consists of “a combination of procedures, methods and tools with which a standard, plan, program, or project can be analysed in relation to its potential effects on the health of the population and about their distribution”. The HIA is included in article 35, which establishes that Public Administrations must submit to HIA the standards, plans, programs and projects that have a significant impact on health.

However, since the publication of Law 33/2011, the MoH has not developed the article 35. Some Autonomous Communities (Basque Country, Catalonia, Andalusia and Valencian Community) decided to take the initiative and have normatively developed the application of the HIA in their territorial scope. The dilemma is whether the health authorities should have a greater participation (integration) in the Environmental Impact Assessment, or if they should develop the methodology and the application of the HIS in a parallel and independent way; or adopt a mixed and integrated approach.

OBJECTIVES

To reinforce collaboration between the MoH and the MET to jointly address health and environment and to assess the possibility to include health indicators into Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA). They specifically hoped to achieve a clear commitment to intersectoral work addressing equity and social and environmental determinants of health, as well as the establishment of formal mechanisms for joint work between the two ministries.

CONCLUSIONS AND MAIN ACTION POINTS

The action plan detailed an agreement to create an Inter-Departmental Working Group between the two Ministries to address the above-mentioned issues. This is a permanent working group with participants from both Ministries (Ministry of Health, Consumer Affairs and Social Welfare and Ministry for Ecological Transition).

Main Action Points:

- Establishment of criteria for HIA within EIA that takes into account equity and social determinants of health
- Joint elaboration of methodological guidelines and ”ad hoc” tools
- Addressing involvement of Autonomous Communities and adequate channels and procedures for it
- Definition of the HIA scope of application, particularly when there is no implicit link with the EIA
- Joint evaluation of alternative solutions for the establishment of specific regulations to perform HIAs.