



Chapter/Annex: Health

Resource Manual to Support
Application of the UNECE Protocol on
Strategic Environmental Assessment

draft 24-Sep-07

Protocol on SEA

- Introduction
- Why health matters
- Possible practical considerations



- Guidance on consideration of human health as part of SEA, as required by Protocol
- Intended to be useful to
 - SEA practitioners wishing to understand potential effects on human health of P/P
 - environmental & health authorities
 - from whom information & advice may be sought
 - which wish to ensure health issues fully addressed
- Might use ideas here to explore how health can be considered in national setting
 - pilot studies
 - procedures to satisfy Protocol requirements
 - guidance meeting institutional needs & context



- “Good health is something which everyone wants – for themselves, their children and for the wider economic and social benefits it brings to our society. It plays a major role in long-term economic growth and sustainable development – there is increasing evidence showing that it is not so much the cost of health that is high, but rather the cost of ill-health (in terms of healthcare, medicines, sick leave, lower productivity, invalidity and early retirement).” – European Environment & Health Action Plan 2004-2010
- Protocol provides for consideration of health as integral part of SEA of P/Ps



- Interpretative & methodological challenges, and practical approaches to consideration of health as part of SEA
 - Determination of significant health effects
 - Consulting environmental & health authorities
 - Assessing expected impacts on health, including qualitative & quantitative assessment of health effects
 - Scoping and preparation of the environmental report



A7.3.1 Determination of significant health effects

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- Protocol does not provide definition of health
- But requires relevant health issues/factors to be considered within SEA identified for each P/P
 - taking into account results of consultation of relevant environmental & health authorities

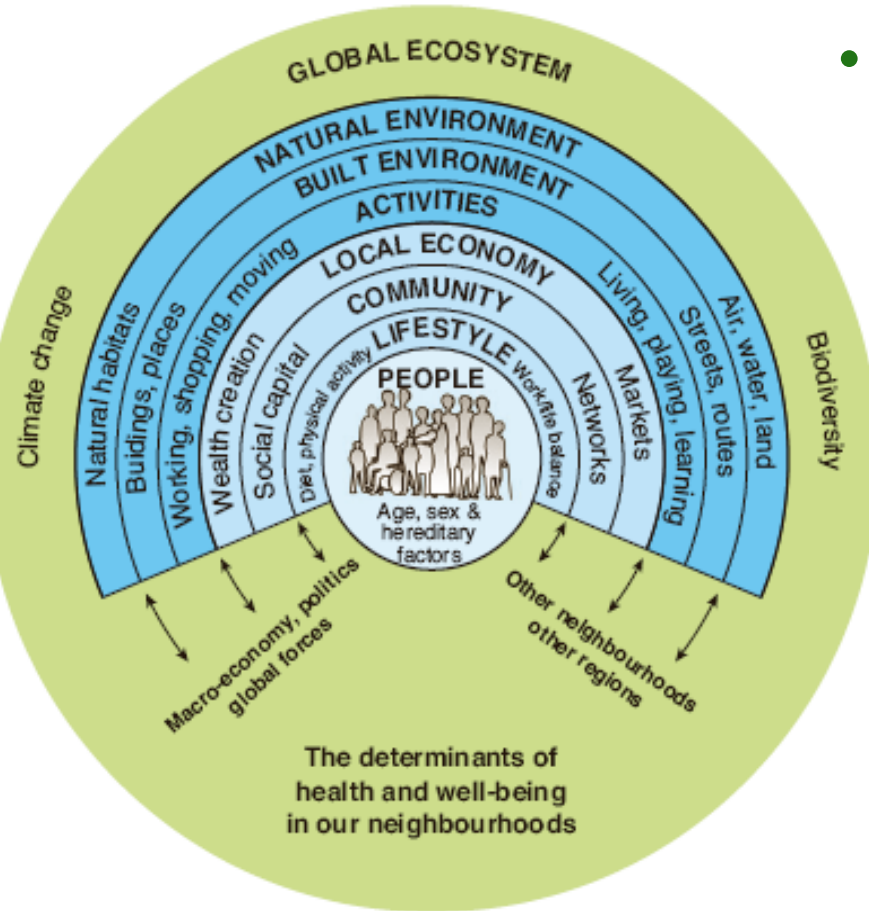


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A7.3.1 (cont'd) Determination of significant effects

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- Relevant authorities might consider this framework of health determinants
 - Identify which determinants of / factors influencing health may be significantly affected by P/P implementation
 - Consider how P/P may protect & promote health in line with relevant environmental, including health, objectives

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A7.3.1 (cont'd) Determination of significant effects

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- WHO's broad concept of health – well-being, not merely the absence of disease – suggests P/Ps may influence health in many ways
 - Some effects direct & self-evident, & many well recognized in practice
 - Other effects indirect & difficult to predict
 - pathways between factors in physical environment and health outcomes can be complex and take place over long timescales
 - effects of P/Ps on health often synergistic, with different types of impact combining to bring about both beneficial & adverse effects

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A7.3.1 (cont'd) Determination of significant effects

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- Significant issues in relation to relevance to SEA of available data on health, collected for different purposes and often at too high level of generality to be useful in SEA
 - Statistics on rates of illness & death do not necessarily provide illuminating baseline data or sound basis for monitoring effects of implementing P/P
- Uncertainty about relative importance of various determinants & their complex interactions
- But determinants in Figure recognized as being main factors that influence health
 - can be used as starting point for assessment of likely significant health effects of P/P

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A7.3.1 (cont'd) Determination of significant effects

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- P/Ps may influence transport, housing, employment, education & social services and so
 - promote social cohesion
 - ease access to community facilities
 - encourage exercise
 - reduce the need to drive
- Transport plan may affect following health determinants:
 - individual lifestyle (e.g. through encouraging or discouraging levels of physical activity)
 - social & community networks & influences (through altering community facilities or changes in fragmentation of communities)
 - living & working conditions (e.g. through changes in road traffic accidents)
 - environmental conditions (e.g. through air pollution & noise)

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A7.3.1 (cont'd) Determination of significant effects

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- Health determinants that may be affected by P/P, e.g.:
 - Factors affecting healthy lifestyle
 - facilitation of walking and cycling
 - availability of healthy products
 - availability of public spaces for exercise
 - provision of public transport & discouraging private car use
 - ... related to social / community influences / networks
 - community cohesion
 - community severance or fragmentation
 - social support or isolation
 - accessibility of community services (including medical services, social support, shopping)
 - accessibility of local transport & communication networks
 - land use & urban design
 - safety & levels of crime

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A7.3.1 (cont'd) Determination of significant effects

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- Factors related to living & working conditions
 - availability & quality of housing
 - access to safe drinking water & adequate sanitation
 - indoor air quality
 - exposure to hazards (i.e. risk of accidents, including work-place & transport hazards)
- General socio-economic factors
 - education, employment, income
- cultural factors
 - effects on traditional lifestyle values, religious values, or sites of cultural & spiritual significance
- environmental factors
 - air, water & soil pollution, noise, disease vector breeding places

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A7.3.1 (cont'd) Determination of significant effects

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- Some factors inter-linked or cannot easily be clustered into one category of determinant – might be in more than one category
 - framework of health determinants not meant as complete checklist for categorizing health factors
 - framework possibly used in initial identification of health factors that may be affected by particular P/P
- Focus of SEA under Protocol on physical environment
 - as practice develops, anticipate more complex interactions between physical, social & behavioural environments might be assessed in some countries
- Environmental factors important in determining health, but socio-economic ones probably more so, with income & education strongly correlated with health
 - may be difficult to assess influence of many types of P/Ps on these health determinants

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A7.3.1 (cont'd) Determination of significant effects

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- Protocol requires assessment of only those environmental, including health, issues deemed likely & significant
- Environmental & health authorities may find useful to gradually reduce long list of possible health factors that may be affected by particular P/P to only those on which P/P may have likely significant effects
- Some guidance in annex III



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A7.3.2 Consulting environmental & health authorities

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- Consultation of environmental & health authorities at core of consideration of health within SEA
- In many countries, easier to identify relevant authorities with environmental responsibilities than health counterparts
- Typically many organizations with differing responsibilities:
 - **National authorities** often lead agencies on health policy development & implementation issues
 - **Regional & local authorities** may have more specific role in operational matters relating to local populations
 - **Municipal authorities** may have a role in protecting & promoting health: traditional health management (sanitation & water supplies) and issues such as health promotion activities & primary health care services

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- Health authorities rarely involved in P/P-making process
 - Health & planning agencies cooperate regularly in only 25% of cases studied *
 - Health authorities may lack capacity to contribute effectively and may need (initially) proper support or guidance
 - If necessary, appropriate liaison arrangements and procedures for soliciting their inputs could be put in place



* Source: WHO



- Determination of health factors likely to be significantly affected by particular type of P/P, and drawing of conclusions about positive & adverse impacts of P/P on health, not easy tasks at first
- Could be useful if environmental & health authorities and those developing P/Ps share information and gradually reach a common understanding on:
 - Health determinants likely to be significantly affected by different types of P/Ps
 - Causal linkages between changes in health determinants and corresponding health effects
 - Measures to prevent/reduce/mitigate significant adverse effects on health
 - Arrangements for monitoring actual health effects during implementation of various P/Ps



A7.3.3 Assessing expected impacts on health

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- Identification of key health determinants likely to be significantly affected by P/P can provide basis for assessment of positive & negative effects of P/P on health
- Changes in these determinants may result in health effects
 - Direct or secondary
 - Short-, medium- or long-term
 - Cumulative or synergistic
 - Permanent or temporary
- Table A7.2 in Manual provides summary of physical environmental risk factors and possible related diseases & risks
 - Table, adapted to local conditions, may be useful to authorities in certain circumstances
 - Might also be adapted to different types of P/P

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A7.3.3 (cont'd) Assessing expected impacts on health

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- In light of uncertainties & limitations discussed above
 - Not realistic to expect authorities carrying out SEA to make precise / detailed predictions about potential effects, beneficial or harmful, of their P/Ps on health
 - Not generally practicable for them to carry out very detailed studies to predict effects
 - Essential that appropriate, simple & practical approaches be taken with more detailed studies being undertaken only in special cases
 - Adequately addressing health in SEA poses important methodological & procedural challenges



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A7.3.3 (cont'd) Assessing expected impacts on health

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- Protocol requires (art. 2.7) only information that may reasonably be required, taking into account
 - a) Current knowledge & methods of assessment
 - b) Contents and the level of detail of P/P and its stage in decision-making process
 - c) Interests of the public
 - d) Information needs of decision-making body
- Annex IV, item 8, of Protocol requires environmental report include information on difficulties encountered in providing information to be included, e.g. technical deficiencies or lack of knowledge



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- Generally, assessment is qualitative, not quantitative
 - Qualitative assessment does not mean guessing
 - judgement well reasoned
 - whenever possible, relying on existing research & knowledge
- At least assess positive & negative effects of P/P on relevant health determinants and draw overall conclusions on whether P/P creates favourable conditions for healthy population – health to include well-being, not just absence of disease
- Table A7.1 in Manual gives examples of questions related to health that SEA practitioners might raise in connection with their proposals, together with notes on links which have been established between these issues and health of individuals & social groups.



- Most approaches to quantitative assessment of health effects likely to rely on elements of Health Impact Assessment (HIA)
 - HIA developed separately from SEA
 - based on different disciplines
 - less focused on predicting effects of strategic proposals
 - Careful use of HIA approaches & methods can provide decision-makers with valuable information on implications for health of P/Ps
- Manual emphasizes integration of health into SEA and avoidance of separate HIA for P/P subject to SEA under Protocol

