

Lise Frendo, Edwin Zaccai:

Integration at local level: lessons learned from the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) system in the Walloon Region (Belgium)

While environmental integration is still seeking its ways of implementation at policy level, Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) of projects at local level already benefits from a rich experience in the EU as well as internationally. Indeed, the EIA directive (1985) has been considered as one of the cornerstones in environmental legislation. However, so far there have been few extended studies on the ways the procedures could be able to effectively integrate environmental objectives in cross sectorial issues.

The CEDD has just achieved a 3-year survey of the EIA system in the Walloon Region of Belgium, based on an extensive multi sector field study. It aimed at evaluating the performance of the procedure. The study includes the analysis of the inputs and interactions of all the actors involved : the project developer, the author of EIA, environmental and other administrations, advisory bodies, and the public.

Results show the importance of :

- Capacity building among the actors ;
- Development of accessible data ;
- Juridical institutionalisation ;
- Differences among sector types ;
- EIA as a basis of dialogue among various actors ;
- Specific means to be devoted to these tasks.

Some results suggest progress in taking environmental aspects into account among project developers. However, some aspects of the system have been criticized for their "lengths", posing the question of a balance between environmental efficiency and means to be devoted to this objective compared to other requirements.

This contribution will also seek to evaluate how the EIA system could fit in new procedures such as the Strategic Environmental Assessment (Directive 2001/42/CE), and the Sustainability Impact Assessment (COM(2002) 276 final).