



Environmental Impact Assessment

The Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) is an assessment of the environmental effects of those public and private projects which are likely to have significant effects on the environment.



Did you know that major building or development projects in the EU must first be assessed for their impact on the environment?

This is done before the project can start. The aim of these assessments is to avoid environmental damages prior to the authorisation and to examine the environmental impacts of a project from an integrative and comprehensive viewpoint.





Where is this regulated?

Directive 2011/92/EU on the assessment of the effects of certain public and private projects on the environment, as amended by Directive 2014/52/EU.

Each EU Member State has its own national legislation regulating the EIA procedure in details.

For what kind of projects is an EIA required?

- thermal power stations
- crude-oil refineries
- nuclear power stations
- long-distance railways
- motorways and express roads
- Integrated chemical installations
- waste disposal installations for the incineration
- quarries and open-cast mining
- dams of a certain capacity, etc. (See Annex I and II of the Directive).

For other projects, including urban or industrial development projects, roads, tourism development and canalisation and flood relief works, it is up to individual EU Member States to decide if there will be an EIA on a case-by-case basis or by setting specific criteria (such as the location, size or type of project), the so-called screening process.

What is being assessed?

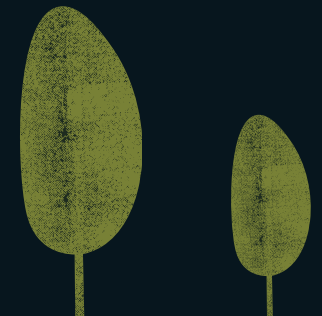
The EIA assesses the direct and indirect significant impacts of a project based on a wide range of environmental factors and impacts, including:

- population and human health
- biodiversity, land, soil, water, air
- climate landscape
- material assets
- cultural heritage
- risks of major accidents and disasters

Consultation with the public is a key feature of the EIA process. There are strict rules about how the public is informed of the project as well as the EIA procedure (e.g. electronically, via the local newspaper or by public notices) and how those affected can participate in the decision-making process. The public is also informed of the decision afterwards and can challenge it before the courts as provided by the national rules.

What are the stages of the EIA procedure?

- Start of the EIA procedure
- Screening: the process of identifying whether an EIA is for the project necessary,
- Scoping: setting the boundaries for the EIA,
- Impact Assessment and Mitigation: preparation of an EIA report,
- Consultations with competent authorities and the public,
- Decision-making and development consent: the EIA procedure will end with issuing of a development consent (the decision of the competent authority or authorities which entitles the developer to proceed with the project),
- Information on the decision: the public can challenge the decision before the courts,
- Monitoring.





Who has the right to participate in the EIA procedure?

Members of the public concerned!

Non-governmental organisations promoting environmental protection (and meeting any requirements under national law) shall be deemed to have an interest, therefore, these organisations are regarded as members of the public concerned.

Who is who according to the Directive?

Developer: the applicant for authorisation for a private project or the public authority which initiates a project
Competent authorities: authority or authorities which are competent in every Member State to perform the duties arising from the EIA Directive and the national legislation

Public: means one or more natural or legal persons and, in accordance with national legislation or practice, their associations, organisations or groups;
Public concerned: means the public affected or likely to be affected by, or having an interest in, the environmental decision-making procedures.



When can one participate in the EIA procedure?

Public participation takes place at every stage of the EIA process where the public can comment on the information provided on the proposed project.

There are deadlines in the national implementing laws that must be met in this regard.



What are the benefits of public participation in EIA procedure?

1. Informing of all stakeholders on the specific project
2. Collecting data and information from the public
3. Higher quality of the project and creation of alternatives
4. Partnership between decision makers and the public
5. Better quality of the monitoring of the project

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Sources:

- European Commission, Environmental Impact Assessment:
https://environment.ec.europa.eu/law-and-governance/environmental-assessments/environmental-impact-assessment_en



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