

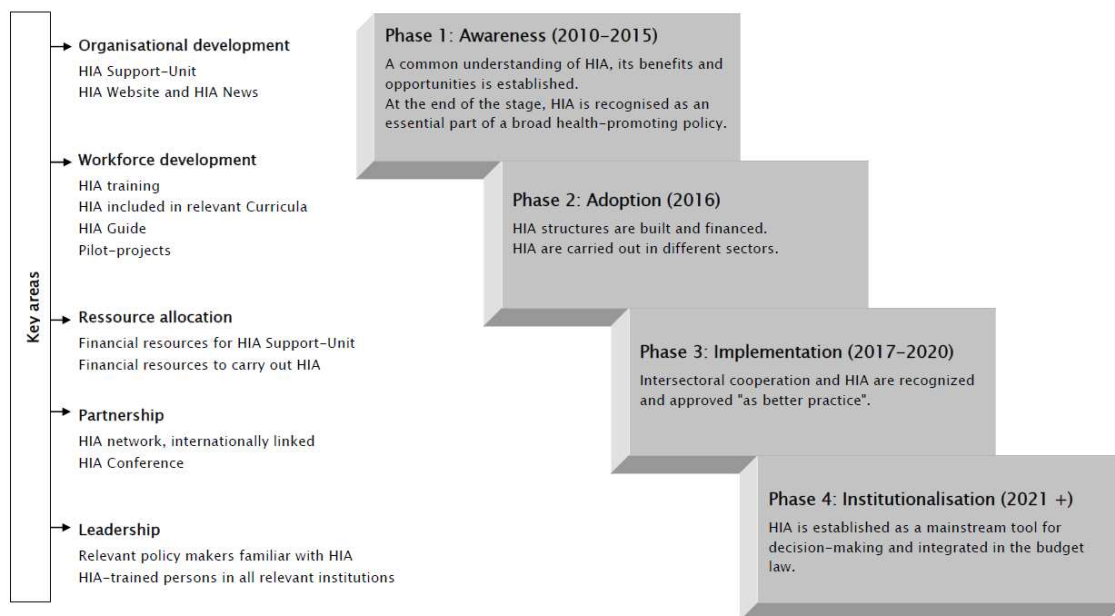


Reflection on Phase 1 (awareness) of the HIA Implementation Concept Austria

The development of an Austrian concept for implementing HIA had been commissioned by the Austrian Federal Ministry of Health in 2009 (since 2016: Federal Ministry of Health and Women's Affairs) and formulated by Gesundheit Österreich GmbH / division Österreichisches Bundesinstitut für Gesundheitswesen (GÖG / ÖBIG). The project was intended to draft the possibilities for the implementation of HIA on national level – based on international and Austrian experiences and consideration of the national framework.

The concept for implementing HIA in Austria was developed by following a model, well established in the health sector. As implementing HIA is a long-term process, the five pillars of the Capacity-Building-Model (organizational development, development of human resources, resource assignment, leadership, partnership) were extended by four implementation phases (awareness, adoption, implementation, institutionalisation; compare figure 1). For each pillar and each phase, specific targets were defined and implementation strategies were identified. Following this system, it was possible to derive activities necessary for establishing HIA in Austria.

Figure 1: Phases for HIA in Austria and corresponding timeframes



Source: Horvath et al. 2010

At the end of phase 1 (awareness) in 2015 the Austrian HIA Support Unit (situated at GÖG / ÖBIG) reflected activities and goals described for phase 1 in the Concept for Implementation of HIA in Austria. Regarding this reflection, a groupwork was done in the national HIA network meeting in

autumn 2015; various outcomes of the HIA steering group meeting were included. The internal reflection was done in the HIA Support Unit team considering inputs of the Federal Ministry of Health and Women's Affairs. The reflection report was published by the HIA Support Unit in 2016 (in German only).

Conclusions

A lot of important work for raising awareness for HIA was done in Phase 1. The HIA Implementation Concept for Austria says that activities for raising awareness for HIA should be done in each phase to address various target groups.

Table 1 compares the main targets of phase 1 (as written in the HIA Implementation Concept) with their progress at the end of phase 1 in 2015.

Table 1: Comparison of targets written in HIA Implementation Concept and their state at the end of phase 1

Targets written in HIA Implementation Concept (2010)	State at the end of phase 1 (2015)
The Minister of Health supports the implementation of HIA and pursues a discussion in the Council of Ministers.	HIA is mentioned in the Austrian Health Targets as an important tool for promoting Health in All Policies (HiAP) in Austria and in the Council of Ministers' decision concerning the Austrian Health Targets (2012). HIA is also mentioned in the Austrian Strategy for Children and Adolescents' Health.
A decision of the Council of Ministers is prepared.	So far, no specific decision of the Council of Ministers has been prepared, but HIA is mentioned as an important tool for HiAP in the Council of Ministers' decision concerning the Austrian Health Targets (2012).
A common understanding of HIA is established, the benefits of HIA are known and the chance for undertaking HIAs is given.	Awareness building activities (presentations, expert conferences, workshops, etc.) have raised the knowledge about HIA and its benefits. HIA is taken into account in Public Health education. Nevertheless, interest and need regarding HIA in Austria is not well established until now.
An HIA Support Unit is established to foster the implementation of HIA in Austria.	Since 2010, the Austrian HIA Support Unit has been located at GÖG / ÖBIG.
Expertise on HIA is built in Austria.	Expertise has been developed in the HIA Support Unit and in the national HIA network.
An Austrian HIA network is created and integrated in an international network.	An Austrian HIA network exists and is in contact with international HIA experts and an international network.
HIA is embedded in institutions, public administration, education, training, events and projects.	There are some efforts in this area but still work to do.

Source: GÖG / ÖBIG

The Austrian HIA network is one of the most important resources concerning the implementing HIA in Austria. In regular meetings (once a year), the members report about their activities and exchange their experience. The network supports the implementation of HIA in the Austrian federal states and regions. The number of network members should be increased in the next years.



Styria is the leading federal state regarding implementation of HIA. A Styrian HIA network exists, several HIAs have been done by members of this network and in 2015 the HIA expert conference was organized by institutions of this HIA network. Most of the members of the Styrian network are also members of the national HIA network. This offers the opportunity for directly exchanging experience with members of other federal states in the national HIA network meetings.

On federal level, it is necessary to address the different ministries. For this reason, the national HIA steering group should be systematically enlarged by including representatives of all federal ministries in Austria.

The national HIA steering group is seen as important strategical support for the implementation of HIA in Austria. The steering group was established in 2013 and has been consulted in connection with routine work in phase 1. Some members left the steering group because of resource scarcity. A reason for this could be that other topics and strategies have a higher priority for some institutions; thus people had to transfer their resources away from HIA. Maybe, the role of the steering group was not clear enough which might have had negative impacts on the motivation to participate.

Sometimes, staff turnover at the HIA Support Unit but also at the Ministry of Health and Women's Affairs was challenging. In addition, the limited resources for the HIA Support Unit were difficult sometimes. Nevertheless, phase 1 was quite successful for capacity building and raising awareness for HIA.

For a couple of years, legislative proposals and larger projects in public administration have to pass through the tool WFA (Wirkungsorientierte Folgenabschätzung). There, legislators have to describe the proposal and assess costs, benefits and the potential of possible not intended impacts within different categories. Participation or research of evidence are not taken into account. Health is not a category per se but sparsely included in other categories like e.g. the one about children's and adolescents' matters or consumer protection. In general, this tool offers the opportunity for more impact orientation in public administration, but in practice WFA is often seen as onerous bureaucratic obligation. Negative opinions concerning WFA could also affect the formation of opinion about other impact assessments. This fact has to be taken into account when trying to build capacity within ministries.

In the end, it is important to continue the activities to promote HIA and raise awareness for this tool. Beside presentations and workshops about HIA the conduction of national HIAs is crucial for promoting the tool in Austria. The Austrian HIA network and the national steering group play an important role when consultations about future activities are necessary.