Legal implementation of HIA; reflections

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Interview with a vice-mayor in Slovakia:
“…get it (HIA) into law and we will do it…”
Is it really so?

Rogers – Diffusion of innovation

- Innovation
- Social system
- Channels
- Time
Innovation

• HIA as a method (process, way of thinking and acting, etc..) is an innovation
  • Health was not part of considerations on new policies, projects, plans
  • If it was taken in account within for example EIA, it was at a rather limited extent (environmental determinants only)

• Can a legal act add to content to HIA?
  • Yes
    • standardization, quality assurance and control, qualification of doers
  • No
    • He is a “creative exercise” which should not be restricted by legal matters

• Whole HIA or parts of it only? (screening + scoping for example?)
Social system

Rogers – “set of interrelated units that are engaged in joint problem solving to accomplish a common goal”

- Common goal 😊
- Interrelated units
  - Governmental institutions (Ministries, departments, institutes)
  - Academia
  - Non-governmental institutions

- Can a legal act provide supportive social system?
  - Yes, but needs to define the Units and their way of collaboration
  - Tradition and history plays an important role!
Channels

Rogers – “communication channel is the means by which messages get from one individual to another”

- Who are the “individuals” in case of HIA
  - Research ➔ practice
  - Research ➔ policy
  - And opposite way?

- A legal act is a channel in principle, mostly a channel from policy to practice

- Knowledge transfer channels? Education? Media?
Time
Rogers divides time into five parts:

- **Knowledge**
  - Development and establishment of HIA within academia and research environment, set up of training mechanisms; establishment of the innovation?

- **Persuasion**
  - Opening of communication channels and knowledge transfer to policy makers and practitioners; set up of the social system?

- **Decision**
  - Law on public health includes HIA as a “must” for the social system

- **Implementation**
  - HIA is routinely conducted

- **Confirmation**
  - Systematic research-practice-policy communication is ongoing

- Last two steps feedback to first three
Conclusion

• Legal implementation of HIA is certainly possible but remains a challenge
• In some cultures a law is perceived as a restriction; HIA should act as opposite and lead to options based on evidence and knowledge