

Planarch Guiding Principles final text – copy December 2005

Planarch

The Interreg Planarch project aims to further the protection and management of the cultural heritage, particularly the archaeological heritage, through its greater integration in spatial planning. The Planarch 2 partners (from Belgium, England, France, Germany and The Netherlands) have carried out a review of the cultural heritage component in EIA, assessing the strengths and weaknesses of present practice, in the light of which the guiding principles in this document have been formulated.

Environmental Impact Assessment

Development and related activities can have significant impacts on the environment. Assessing such impacts to minimise significant damage, including effects on the cultural heritage, is fundamental to the spatial planning process. The European Union, through the EIA Directive, and more recently the SEA Directive, has set out frameworks within which member states should develop their own measures. The guiding principles in this document aim to improve best practice for EIAs in respect of the cultural heritage.

What is Cultural Heritage?

Cultural heritage embraces all those remains and remembrances which link us to our past, whether in the landscape around us or in the arts, languages or traditions. It helps us to understand long term social and environmental change. In the context of EIA it includes physical remains of the past – historic buildings and structures, archaeological sites and monuments, artefacts, palaeo-environmental deposits, historic landscapes and townscapes, and marine heritage.

Why Cultural Heritage matters

Cultural heritage is an essential part of sustainability. It is non-renewable: once the evidence of the past has been destroyed, it can never be replaced. It is a valuable resource with the potential to increase knowledge and is an excellent vehicle for wider educational objectives. It contributes strongly to people's sense of place and identity. It has important social and economic roles for community development, regeneration, access, leisure and tourism.

Cultural Heritage in EIA

In assessing cultural heritage within EIA procedures the purpose should be to:

- minimise loss of and avoid adverse impacts on an important aspect of the environment in which we live.
- ensure that cultural heritage is incorporated in spatial planning, social, economic, education and access strategies affecting the study area.
- improve understanding of cultural heritage and the contribution it can make to broader agenda.
- ensure that, where the cultural heritage cannot be preserved, appropriate investigation, recording and communication is undertaken.
- The results of the EIA process are an integral part of the decision-making process.

Planarch Guiding Principles for Cultural Heritage in the EIA process and Environmental Statements

These operational principles are intended to provide a rigorous, robust and reasonable framework for ensuring that cultural heritage is appropriately treated in the EIA process

1. Cover all aspects of cultural heritage.
2. Integrate cultural heritage expertise into all stages of EIA, from screening through to implementation.
3. Describe the project requiring assessment clearly and in sufficient detail to allow identification of all impacts that could affect the cultural heritage.
4. Define a sufficiently large study area to allow a clear understanding of the cultural heritage and the extent of potential impacts upon it.
5. Undertake all cultural heritage surveys and investigations to a high standard sufficient to ensure a full understanding of the nature and significance of the resource and to allow informed decisions to be taken.
6. Assess all beneficial and adverse impacts on cultural heritage, including direct, indirect, temporary, permanent and cumulative effects.
7. Evaluate the significance of any impacts on the cultural heritage resource to take account both of the intrinsic value of the resource and how much it will be changed. Use relevant international, national and local legislation and policy to explain the significance of the resource, and make explicit the basis for any statements concerning value or importance.
8. Consider the likely effects on cultural heritage assets of alternative scenarios, including doing nothing.
9. Consider a variety of approaches to mitigation, including design modification and appropriate investigation and recording measures. Make provision for unforeseen effects. Propose realistically achievable mitigation measures and monitor fully and document any agreed actions, including responsibility for their implementation.
10. Ensure all communication relating to cultural heritage in EIAs shall be clear, focused and accessible to the non-specialist. Archive and index all documentation in a clearly traceable manner.