

To be or not to be green

September 20 2013, by Martin Ince



Credit: Daniel Boyd

What happens to research findings once the researchers have gone away? A [web site](#) run from the University of Stuttgart in Germany offers scientists an opportunity to bring their own data from completed research project on environmental and health risks and contribute to an Integrated Environmental Health Impact Assessment System, dubbed IEHIAS. "This site is a toolbox with material from [completed EU projects such as] [INTARESE](#), [HEIMTSA](#) and also [2-FUN](#)," Radu Rautiu of [Imperial Consultants](#), the commercial arm of the London, UK-based Imperial College, tells youris.com.

In a nutshell, it is a complete do-it-yourself kit for environmental assessments. The idea is to go beyond ideas such as emission controls for

a specific chemical. Instead, it is designed to provide the fuller picture by means of a detailed model of the effect of a possible development or policy change.

"IEHIAS includes [a] guidance system with a detailed description of all the steps needed for an impact assessment, various types of data needed for an assessment, and information on different models that may be used, as well as several worked examples of assessments," explains Joachim Roos, a research assistant at the Stuttgart University's Institute for Energy Economics and the Rational Use of Energy, who has been involved with its development. Users do not need to bring publicly-available data on, say, [weather patterns](#) or [population structure](#), as these resources are already included.

Roos is especially proud of the EcoSense system for modelling [air pollution](#), ranging from [heavy metals](#) to gases. EcoSense has been updated with new results from INTARESE and HEIMTSA. It is in active use in current EU projects.

Experts welcome the IEHIAS's web-based structure as being original. "Air quality issues can arise in a broad range of settings, so this is a very broadly applicable tool for decision-making," Patrick Kinney, director of the Climate and Health programme at Columbia University in New York, USA, tells youris.com. Its biggest influence might occur in the developing world, he thinks. "People who are responsible for environmental decision-making in the developed world already have these kinds of tools at their disposal."

Kinney adds that the biggest challenge for IEHIAS is the quality of the input data. But he says that if a constant method is applied to several scenarios, the comparison between different outcomes will be useful even with imperfect information.

Integrated impact assessment is a "very complex" area, according to Ian Marnane, manager of environmental enforcement for air at the Environmental Protection Agency of Ireland, based in Dublin. Problems such as identifying the effects of climate change policy are especially knotty. Projects in this area normally call for a large and diverse team. "The EIHIAS methodology is beneficial in terms of the high level coordination of such teams," he tells youris.com. Besides, "it provides a consistent approach to the completion of assessments and a high level of transparency of the assessment for the end user on the basis for the methodology applied to carry it out."

Provided by Youris.com

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