

Integrating the Do No Significant Harm principle in Finland

Support was provided to Finnish authorities in three interlinked project phases between 2022 and 2024.

Project background

The European Green Deal aims to make Europe climate neutral by 2050, whilst Finland has committed to achieving carbon neutrality by 2035.

The Do No Significant Harm principle (DNSH) has retrieved from the EU Taxonomy, where the principle was mainly intended to be used in private funding, to public funding and even beyond.

Most EU Member States, Finland included, had first experiences with DNSH in the Recovery and Resilience Facility Funding. Since 2021, Finland has started to implement DNSH in various contexts, even in relation to environmental permitting with the introduction of a priority law for green transition projects that have undergone a simplified DNSH assessment. Finland intends to increase its administrative capabilities and knowledge on the application of the DNSH principle in order to mainstream it.

Project results

The project provided guidance to the Finnish authorities on the implementation of the DNSH criteria in national funding decisions. Specific guidelines were created for programme level assessment and programme design. For project level assessment, a designated simplified assessment and detailed assessment guidelines were created.

Training on how to utilise the guidelines was provided for three groups: Programme designers, evaluators of project application and potential applicants.

The guidelines were also piloted in three contexts:

- How the Priority Law's DNSH assessments have worked
- How could the Finnish Transport Infrastructure Agency implement the DNSH guidelines?
- What are the sector-specific questions related to the hydrogen sector

Key results

1

The guidelines produced have proved useful for both authorities and applicants. In particular, programme guidelines provide funding authorities with a way to implement the DNSH principle in a lean and effective way.

2

The guidelines have been piloted in three different contexts, providing support that DNSH can be included in various public funding purposes and even more widely, as in the case of priority treatment for environmental permits.

3

Sector-specific guidelines are needed, including how to define significance, how to consider the whole life cycle of a project, and how to consider indirect impacts caused by the project or programme.

Project team

The project was implemented with the support of AARC Consulting Ltd (Ireland) in partnership with Gaia Consulting (Finland) and Trinomics (The Netherlands).

Project contacts:

Gaia Consulting: info@gaia.fi

Trinomics: info@trinomics.eu

Ministry of the Environment: kirjaamo.ym@gov.fi

European Commission (DG Reform): refomm-b1@ec.europa.eu

