

TF Introductory Speech of Welcome

Good morning and welcome to the first Tallinn Forum SEA conference. My name is Ross Marshall, and I am one of the co-organisers

We decided to hold this conference because quite simply we felt that SEA was failing to achieve its overall objective as a strategic planning tool that addresses and promoting smart alternatives to European problems, and instead now risks becoming obsolete in decision-makers eyes, process driven, document heavy and a summary to poor sustainability decisions already made!

So, the question we wanted to discuss with you over the next 3 days is

– Is this true?

How do you feel about the role SEA plays, What needs to change and how can you play an active role in re-invigorating both the Strategic environmental assessment and strategic land use planning professions?

The Tallinn Forum is a new European engagement and networking programme for impact assessment professionals. The Forum seeks only to establish itself as a Forum for debate, discussion and professional development amongst European and International professionals who seek to gain understanding on how to meet the common environmental, social and economic challenges that face us today, and the decisions that have to be solved.

The Tallinn Forum was established in 2018 under the umbrella of the Estonian Environmental Institute to encourage best-practice and recognize progress made in impact assessment. Since then elements such as Brexit and Covid-19 have taken place, each emphasising the disruptive social and economic turmoil that can suddenly arise and the challenge they present to promoting further sustainable development.

It is easy to lapse into complacency and to take the paths of least resistance – but the question still remains in a crowded, resource dependent and over populated world – Do we still have the casual framework of unlimited time not to engage in strategic planning and sustainability?

Across Europe we feel there is still a significant gap in knowledge and understanding in defining the leadership, better decision making and facilitation of debate on issues and problems that are needed in European

societies. Critical areas that strategic environmental assessment and strategic rural, marine and urban planning can bring to European Plans and Programmes - especially amongst regional and local authorities, national government and infrastructure sectors - and in recent years the new challenges of climate change, health and the rural/urban interfaces.

The economic recessions that will now occur within governments, cities & towns because of Covid-19 will further add to the stagnation that has occurred in developmental planning, at a time of critical climatic and social adjustment. That is why we have called this conference, to start bringing together those with the ideas and enthusiasm to make a positive change, to challenge the norms of the past and to lead in the debates that have to take place.

Our unique approach is not to present you with lecture after lecture, but to define topics of emerging importance in our world and to allow you to debate and network with similar minded people. Our drivers for starting the Tallinn Forum have been down to knowledge sharing, skills enhancement, national leadership and to fund further collaborative events in this area.

Your challenge is to enjoy this new format of online conference, - and believe me it has been new to everyone who has contributed to the programme, make it a success by expressing your views and ideas, and to make at least 20 new contacts during it with whom you remain in touch.

As a Forum for engagement, we are at the Tallinn Forum believe we have a strong position and duty to take forward a pan-European engagement programme which can not only capture emerging challenges in Strategic Environmental Assessment, but provide solutions and guidance based on professional experience which we can foster strategic transformation.

Before I close and pass you onto my colleague Anna Longueville who will remind you of some of the virtues and actions within an online conference,

I would just like to say a thank you to mid Sweden and Berlin Universities who have given so freely of their time, our friends in IAIA and IEMA for their promotion of the conference and to all of our contributors from across Europe.

Finally please enjoy the next few days, and engage with all that we have sought to place in front of you

Thank You for attending the Tallinn Forum's inaugural conference