



TERMS OF REFERENCE

Evaluation of Environmental Performance Review

I. Purpose

The purpose of the 2019 evaluation is to analyze the current arrangements for carrying out environmental performance reviews (EPR). This evaluation will assess the relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, sustainability and impact of the EPR in supporting member States to reconcile their environmental and economic targets and in meeting their international environmental commitments. The results of the evaluation are expected to contribute to a long-term vision for the reviews in order to further strengthen the impact of the EPR programme. The results of the evaluation will be used to improve the EPR process and its visibility with donors and the civil society of the country under the review. The outcomes of the evaluation can also be used to better coordinate the EPR Unit's work with the Expert Group on EPRs and the Committee on Environment Policy (CEP).

II. Scope

The evaluation will involve an assessment of the entire EPR process based on the reviews carried out in 2016–2018. Experts provided lately by international organizations, i.e. UNEP and WHO, will also provide inputs to the evaluation. UNDP offices, where the EPRs were carried out during this period, as major partners for substantive and logistics matters will be also involved. The UNECE staff of the transport and energy division will be also involved, since they participated to various reviews.

The universally recognized values and principles of human rights and gender equality need to be integrated at all stages of an evaluation, in compliance with the United Nations Evaluation Group's revised gender-related norms and standards. Therefore, the evaluation will assess how gender considerations were included in the process and it would make recommendations on how gender can be better included in the process.

All relevant information, brochures, progress reports, will be made available.

III. Background

An EPR is an external assessment of the progress a country has made in reconciling its environmental and economic targets and in meeting its international environmental commitments. EPRs have their genesis in the work of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD). In 1991, the Environment Ministers of OECD launched a programme for environmental performance review to help OECD Member countries improve their individual and collective performances in environmental management.

After the Dobris Assessment had drawn a first overall picture of the state of the environment in Europe in 1993, the Environment Ministers decided that countries would be reviewed individually in much more detail. The aim was to examine not only these countries' environmental conditions, but also the strategies, policies and tools that they used to manage the environment.

At the second Ministerial Conference "Environment for Europe", held in Luzern, Switzerland, in April 1993, the Ministers decided that the Environmental Performance Review Programme would be gradually extended to the whole region of Europe and mandated UNECE to carry out this extended programme. In 1996, at its third session, the Committee on Environmental Policy decided to make the Environmental Performance Review Programme a part of the regular programme of the ECE.

Since 1996, Central, Southeastern and Eastern Europe and Central Asia countries have been reviewed by UNECE, in addition to a few countries that were reviewed in cooperation with OECD (Poland (1995), Bulgaria (1996), Belarus (1997) and the Russian Federation (1999).

At the seventh Ministerial Conference "Environment for Europe", held in Astana, Kazakhstan, in September 2011, the Ministers decided that building upon the success of the UNECE EPR Programme, UNECE has to conduct its third cycle of EPRs, which may include environmental governance and financing in a green economy context, countries' cooperation with the international community and environmental mainstreaming in priority sectors.

At the Eighth Environment for Europe Ministerial Conference, held in Batumi, Georgia, environmental ministers acknowledged the important contribution of the UNECE Environmental Performance Review Programme over the past 20 years as an effective and practical policy tool, and highlighted the role it can play in supporting the achievement and monitoring of SDGs in the pan-European region. Since 2017, EPRs include the review of relevant goals and targets of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

Moreover, the efficiency and effectiveness of the EPR methodology have attracted the attention of countries outside of the ECE region, leading to requests for a transfer of know-how from ECE to other UN regional commissions. Morocco was reviewed by ECE in cooperation with the Economic Commission for Africa and Mongolia – in cooperation with the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and Pacific.

The EPRs target decision- and policy-makers but are also directed to a wider audience (general public, NGOs, academia, business and government at different levels) in the country under review as well as in other countries interested to learn from the EPR experience. In addition, EPRs are of interest to donors wishing to know how best to direct their support of countries with economies in transition.

The EPR process comprises the following main steps:

1. Preparation, including a preparatory mission to agree with the country on its EPR structure, development of the terms of reference (ToR) assembly of a review team of experts.
2. Review Mission, by an expert team that travels to the country under review and meets with representatives of the government at national and local levels, NGOs, academia, the private sector the international community.
3. Expert Review, by the ECE Expert Group on EPRs.
4. Peer Review, the member States in the Committee on Environment Policy (CEP). The peer review concludes with the adoption the EPR recommendations. The reviewed country commits to implementing the adopted recommendations.
5. Publication of the report by the ECE secretariat.
6. Launch organized to present the EPR findings to the governmental authorities, international community, NGOs and other stakeholders.

The main objectives of the ECE EPR Programme are:

1. To assist countries to improve their management of the environment and associated environmental performance by making concrete recommendations for better policy design and implementation;
2. To promote the exchange of information among countries about policies and experiences;
3. To help integrating environmental policies into sector-specific economic policies, such as agricultural, energy, transport and health policies;
4. To promote greater accountability to the public;
5. To strengthen cooperation with the international community; and

6. To contribute to the achievement and monitoring of the relevant Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

As an integral part of the study, recommendations on ways to improve areas of concern are extended to the government of the reviewed country. Since 2017, third-cycle EPRs include the review of relevant SDGs and their targets of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

EPRs are carried out by the EPR Unit in the Operational Activities and Review Section (OARS) of the ECE Environment Division. The EPR Unit works with experts in other ECE divisions and other international organizations, as well as with member States.

In 2012, a self-evaluation was carried out. It evaluated the process of carrying out the UNECE EPR programme. The main purpose of the evaluation was to examine the strengths of and gaps to be filled in by the programme. The objective was to identify possible measures that could be taken to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of implementing the programme. This evaluation was a tool for internal use by the UNECE EPR secretariat. It was based on the experiences made in the course of implementing seven country reviews during the period 2009–2011. The evaluation involved views and comments collected through specific questionnaires sent to and/or interviews with key stakeholders in the EPR review process. However, the quality and impact of EPR was outside the scope of the 2012 evaluation report.

IV. Issues

The present evaluation will answer the following questions:

Relevance

1. How relevant were the activities to the specific needs and priorities of the beneficiary countries in sectoral integration, such as in climate change, energy, industry, transport and in media management, i.e. water, air, waste, biodiversity?
2. To what extent were the activities related to the UNECE mandate as expressed in the programme of work?
3. To what extent were the activities consistent with global and regional priorities and the programme of work of the UN Regional Commissions?
4. How relevant are the EPR activities with regards to gender equality and empowerment of women?
5. Does the programme incorporate the perspective of vulnerable groups in the design of the recommendations?
6. To what extent were the activities intervention relevant for meeting the objective of the UNECE Subprogramme 1 "Environment" and beyond?
7. How relevant is the collaboration with other entities in the UN system and other international organizations?

Effectiveness

8. To what extent were the expected accomplishments of the activities achieved?
9. What were the challenges/ obstacles to achieving the activities objective and expected accomplishments?

Efficiency

10. Did the activities achieve its objectives within the anticipated budget and allocation of resources?
11. Were the resources (financial and human) appropriate?
12. Were the activities implemented according to the planned timeframe?

Sustainability

13. How is the stakeholders' involvement likely to continue in the beneficiary countries?
14. To what extent do partners and beneficiaries participate in and "own" the outcomes of the work?
15. Is the capacity being developed adequate to ensure that institutions/organizations will take over and sustain the benefits?

Impact

16. Have the EPRs been used and/or results led to new policies or policy changes in the beneficiary countries?
17. Have the EPRs been used by other international organization to substantiate their own analysis?
18. Is there any evidence that measures have been taken to implement recommendations following the publication of EPR reports?
19. Have the EPRs helped to strengthen the application of gender mainstreaming principles and contribute to substantial and meaningful changes in the situation of the most vulnerable groups?
20. Were any unintended positive or negative impacts of the programme observed?
21. Are specific actions needed from UNECE, or its government counterparts, to address unintended negative consequences on human rights as a result of our work?

Evaluation criteria and questions are designed in a way that ensures Gender Equality and Empowerment of Women data will be collected.

V. Methodology

The evaluation will be conducted based on:

1. A desk review of all the relevant documents obtained from EPR activities files including:
 - Programmes and materials (presentations, background documents) developed for review missions, and workshops and related list of participants;
 - Project documents from the first and second cycles
 - Reports of workshops;
 - 2012 Self-evaluation.
2. An electronic questionnaire will be developed by the consultant to assess the views of EPR stakeholders: experts, national coordinators, the EPR Expert Group, members of the Committee on Environment Policy and staff from UNECE and other international organizations involved in the process. Other stakeholders might be also be invited to answer the questionnaire in order to assess the perception of EPRs from outsiders and experts. Potential names to be added to the list of interviewees would be provided by the UNECE project manager. The results of the survey will be disaggregated by gender.
3. This questionnaire will be followed by selected interviews (methodology to be determined by the evaluator in consultation with UNECE). The interviews will take place via phone and Skype, or face-to-face when possible.

The report will summarize the findings, conclusions and recommendations of the evaluation. An executive summary (max. 2 pages) will summarize the methodology of the evaluation, key findings, conclusions and recommendations.

All material needed for the evaluation, will be provided to the consultant: EPR activities documents and reports, meeting reports and publications, list of involved experts that can be interviewed by telephone. UNECE will provide support and further explanation to the evaluator as needed.

The evaluation will be conducted in accordance with the UNECE Evaluation Policy. A gender-responsive methodology, methods and tools, and data techniques are selected. The evaluation findings, conclusions and recommendations reflect a gender analysis.

VI. Evaluation Schedule

22 March 2019	ToR finalized, and evaluator selected
15 April 2019	Desk review of all documents provided by UNECE to the evaluator
19 April 2019	Delivery of inception report including design of survey
26 April 2019	Feedback on inception report by the project manager
6 May 2019	Launch of data gathering
27 May 2019	Analysis of collected information
10 June 2019	Draft report sent to Programme Manager
28 June 2019	Comments back to the evaluator after review by the project manager and the PMU
19 July 2019	Final report

VII. Resources

An independent consultant will be engaged for a period of 30 days to conduct the evaluation. The evaluator will be managed by the Operational Activities and Review Section (OARS). Mr. Antoine Nunes, programme manager, will manage the evaluation in consultation with the OARS Section Chief, Mr. Nicholas Bonvoisin. The Programme Management Unit (PMU) will provide guidance to the Project Manager and evaluator as needed on the evaluation design, methodology and quality assurance of the final draft report.

VIII. Intended Use/Next Steps

The EPR Unit will review the results of the evaluation and report the results to the Committee on Environmental Policy. The results will be used in determining whether revision of the EPR process may be necessary. If so, the results of the self-evaluation will be reflected in a review of the EPR process for subsequent consideration by the CEP.

IX. Criteria for Evaluators

Evaluators should have:

- An advanced university degree or equivalent background in relevant disciplines
- Specialized training in areas such as evaluation, project management, social statistics, advanced statistical research and analysis.
- Demonstrated relevant professional experience in design, management and conduct of evaluation processes with multiple stakeholders, survey design and implementation, and project planning, monitoring and management.
- Demonstrated methodological knowledge of evaluations, including quantitative and qualitative data collection and analysis for end-of-cycle project evaluations.
- Fluent in written and spoken English. Knowledge of another language (for example Russian) may be desirable depending on the countries included in the project (for the purpose of being able to seek inputs from national authorities in their native tongue).



Evaluators should declare any potential conflict of interest to ECE before embarking on an evaluation project, or at any point where such conflict occurs.