ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR EUROPE

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

Eighty-ninth meeting
Geneva, 1 February 2017

Item 9

<div align="right">Informal Document No. **2017/6**</div>

ECE Knowledge management strategy and action plan
-For information-

UNECE Knowledge Management Strategy

Introduction

The creation, collection, and dissemination of knowledge is fundamental to the work of UNECE and considered among its foremost assets. To succeed in the implementation of its mandate to " promote sustainable development and regional cooperation and integration through (a) policy dialogue; (b) normative work; and (c) technical cooperation"[1], knowledge management is critical, both within the Organization and externally, among staff and in an active exchange with member States and other partners.

Since the establishment of the Commission, many useful practices have been developed to generate, document and share knowledge created in UNECE and preserve it as the institutional memory of the Organization. Thus far, however, these practices have not been compiled into a coherent framework and the utilization of knowledge to inform decision-making and programme planning is uneven. In 2016, the Office of Internal Oversight therefore made the recommendation that "the UNECE secretariat should develop and operationalize a knowledge management strategy that addresses how institutional knowledge and expertise will be captured, stored, shared and integrated into its work programme and activities." [2]

UNECE's efforts to strengthen its knowledge management practices is also aligned to the spirit of the 2005 UNECE reform that emphasized the importance of continued effective and efficient use of UNECE limited budgetary and human resources and, *inter alia*, efforts to harmonize procedure and practices and improve communication, coordination and cooperation across the divisions and subprogrammes.

In formulating its knowledge management strategy, UNECE has drawn on good practices from the UN system and beyond. The preparation of the strategy was undertaken in parallel to a review of Knowledge Management in the United Nations System, initiated by the Joint Inspection Unit in 2016[3]. To the JIU review, UNECE provided input on its own practices, and, from it, it took valuable guidance, especially regarding the approaches taken in the UN system that the JIU report compiled. To learn from relevant expertise available in the UN system, UNECE also joined the Geneva-based Focal Point group on Knowledge Management that meets periodically in the UN Agencies Swiss Knowledge Management Forum. Further, this strategy built on targeted desk research on international good practices on Knowledge Management and on a wealth of inputs from UNECE staff, who expressed a strong commitment to knowledge management and readily shared their experiences and aspirations.[4]

Definition

The United Nations system does not currently have a common definition of knowledge management. For the purpose of this strategy, the definition proposed by the Joint Inspection Unit is used to provide a common point of reference:

> Knowledge management can be defined as the systematic processes, or range
> of practices, used by organizations to identify, capture, store, create, update,

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[1] A/69/6 (Prog. 17), para 17.3.
[2] OIOS/IED, Evaluation of the Office of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (ECE) (Assignment No. IED-16-003), p. 23
[3] JIU/REP/2016/xxx.
[4] UNECE Knowledge Management survey, administered in November 2016.

represent, and distribute knowledge for use, awareness and learning across the organization.[5]

Knowledge management is understood as a cyclical process that takes place in an enabling environment comprised of organizational leadership, ICT tools, organizational culture and strategic direction (see Figure 1).[6]
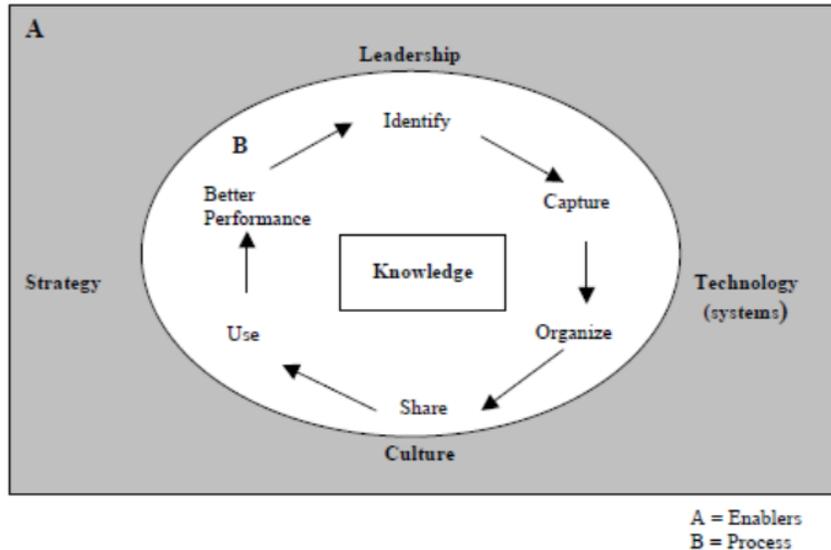
Objective

The objective of the UNECE Knowledge Management Strategy is to make effective use of the knowledge available across the Organization. This includes

(i)   collection and retention of knowledge as institutional memory, including to counter its potential loss due to staff mobility and attrition;

(ii)   timely and open access to knowledge to enable high performance, efficient work processes, and cross-sectoral/cross-divisional synergies;

(iii)   systematic exchange of knowledge to inform decision-making processes in support of the objectives outlined in the Strategic Framework.

Principles

UNECE's Knowledge Management Strategy builds on a number of principles drawn from good practice:

1.   Core organizational value and joint responsibility of all staff

In UNECE, knowledge management is recognized as a core value that is an integral part of the organizational culture. Knowledge management is a joint responsibility of all staff and management – everybody contributes to the collection and sharing of knowledge in their area of responsibility according to defined roles (see Annex I).

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[5] JIU/REP/2007/6, para 21.

[6] JIU/NOTE/2004/1: Knowledge Management at the International Labour Organization, section II, p. 2.

2. Focused on people with technology as enabler

Knowledge management will be organized around people rather than documents. It will foster regular interaction to identify, document and share knowledge and facilitate joint learning across organizational lines. Knowledge management will be supported by ITC tools that will ensure more systematic knowledge gathering and sharing, enable collaborative working, and provide easy access to knowledge repositories.

3. Covering different types of knowledge – explicit and tacit

Knowledge management will cover the whole breadth of knowledge that is available in UNECE in its different forms. It will capture and codify explicit organizational knowledge (e.g. technical know-how and procedural guidance) that can be shared in knowledge repositories, while also providing interactive formats to bring to bear tacit knowledge (e.g. accumulated experience and personal competence of individuals) that does not readily lend itself to being captured in written records.

4. Applying multiple approaches and tools

Knowledge management will be organized in a multi-pronged (rather than a one-size-fits-all) approach to cover the diverse types of knowledge of UNECE and to respond to the specific needs of different audiences. To underpin a variety of processes, ranging from routine transactions to complex analytical work that requires expert know how, interpretation and judgement, UNECE will develop/maintain a set of Knowledge Management tools, such as guidance templates, knowledge repositories and collaboration platforms.

5. Needs-based, context-specific and evidence-based

Knowledge will be captured to respond to specific business needs with a concrete usage and audience in mind. It will be documented in a context-specific and evidence-based way that indicates how and by whom such knowledge was gathered.

6. Continuous, iterative process

Knowledge management will be undertaken as an ongoing and iterative process that allows UNECE to continuously learn from its experience. Good knowledge management practices will be embedded in all activities. Accordingly, knowledge management practices/products should routinely be included as deliverables in effective project management. Validation and review mechanisms will be established to ensure the relevance of knowledge and periodically reconfirm its continued usefulness over time.

7. Linked to performance management framework

To encourage active contribution to knowledge management across UNECE and recognize good practices, a knowledge management goal will be included in the performance appraisal of all staff. All managers are encouraged to explore ways to recognize and reward effective knowledge managers and support learning activities that promulgate good knowledge management practices.

8. KM priorities defined in annual action plans

Knowledge management will respond to identified needs, concrete challenges and potential risks identified for UNECE. Annual action plans will define priorities for knowledge management activities to deepen the uptake of good practices, broaden the content available in knowledge repositories, and increase the usage of interactive knowledge sharing platforms.

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Annex 1: Roles and Responsibilities

Executive Secretary
- Provide leadership to shape a learning and knowledge-based organization
- Set strategic direction for knowledge management
- Foster organizational culture that recognizes knowledge management as a core value

Managers
- Create an enabling environment for effective knowledge management
- Identify needs and define priorities for annual knowledge management action plan
- Designate knowledge managers in their area of responsibility (e.g. Chiefs of Divisions/Sections/Units, Secretaries to subsidiary bodies, etc.) and ensure timely capture of key knowledge
- Provide guidance and oversight to validate knowledge and ensure its periodic review

Staff
- Integrate knowledge management in e-Performance document
- Actively engage in knowledge capture and sharing across the organization

Office of the Executive Secretary
- Serve as organization-wide focal point for Knowledge Management and periodically convene Knowledge Management Focal Point Group
- Monitor implementation of annual Knowledge Management Action Plan
- Identify, set up and maintain ICT tools to enable Knowledge Management

UNECE KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT - 2017 ACTION PLAN

	Proposed Action	UNECE focal point	Timeline
capture	1. Clarification of the organizational learning processes (How to capture relevant knowledge ? How best to validate it? How to review knowledge periodically to keep it up to date?)	OES +FPs	3/2017
	2. Development of KM toolbox (Templates for knowledge sharing in recurrent situations, e.g. handover notes, debriefing mechanism for departing/retiring staff, mission report, meeting minutes; etc)	OES + FPs	6/2017
	3. Development of guidance on routine transactions (5 topics tbd in consultation with FPs, e.g. EXCOM, meeting planning and servicing)	OES + FPs	3/2017
	4. Performance management: Inclusion of individual KM goal in all ePas documents	All staff	4/2017
	5. Training opportunities and induction to UNECE Knowledge Management practices and tools	OES with HR/UNOG	8/2017
access	6. Compilation of available knowledge in existing knowledge repositories (Capturing status quo and improving access through consolidation/ systematic collection and organization), including central repository for mission reports; briefing notes; meeting minutes; guidance on administrative issues, etc.	OES + FPs/all Divisions	Ongoing (detailed timeline tbc)
	7. Selection and introduction of content management tool (standard enterprise solution)	ISU (with UNOG and OICT)	tbc (aligned to Secretariat-wide timeline)
exchange	8. Needs assessment and establishment/maintenance of Communities of Practice (e.g. for Secretaries of subsidiary bodies) and WiKis	OES + FPs	4/2017
	9. Brown Bag Series/ occasional meetings to share knowledge (periodic informal briefings on cross-cutting issues and good practices)	OES (coordination) + interested staff	Ongoing
	10. Communication Strategy for Knowledge Management	OES (lead)	3/2017