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Evaluation Survey
of the Regional Forum on Sustainable Development
for the UNECE Region 2020

Note by the Secretariat

Evaluation Survey of the Regional Forum on Sustainable Development for the UNECE Region 2020

Results

A.   Introduction and overall characteristics of the sample

1.   The Regional Forum on Sustainable Development for the UNECE Region 2020 took place under exceptional circumstances. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the original format was revised. A much shorter meeting than originally intended was held without physical presence of participants. Due to these drastic changes, it would not be possible to make a strict comparison of the results of this survey with those concerning previous Forums.

2.   The Evaluation Survey was sent to all identified participants and those who had registered to join the Regional Forum on Sustainable Development for the UNECE Region 2020 (Geneva, 19 March 2020) at the end of the meeting. It remained open until 10 April 2020.

3.   During this period, 24 responses were received (out of a total of around 200 identified participants). Most of the responses came from representatives of UNECE governments (50.0 per cent) and non-governmental organizations (33.3 per cent).

Table 1 shows the complete breakdown of respondents according to the organizations to which they belong.

Table 1. Organization of respondents

Group	Percentage	Number
UNECE Government	50.0	12
UN department, fund, programme, specialized agency or related organization	4.2	1
Intergovernmental and regional organization	0	0
Non-governmental organization	33.3	8
Private sector	4.2	1
Academia	0	0
Others (please specify)	8.3	2
Total	100	24

4.   Answers were received from government representatives from Austria, Belarus, France, Italy, Kyrgyzstan, Poland, Romania, Switzerland, Ukraine and the United States of America. Responses were received by more than one participant in one case: Switzerland, with 3 responses, accounted for 25.0 per cent of all government answers.

B.   Assessment

5.   Participants were asked to assess the Forum regarding three areas. Table 2 summarizes the responses received.

Table 2. Assessment by areas, all respondents, percentages

Areas	Not useful	Somewhat useful	Useful	Very useful	Extremely useful	Total
Significance of the issues discussed	0.0 (0)	4.2 (1)	16.7 (4)	50.0 (12)	29.2 (7)	100 (24)
Knowledge and information relevant for your future work	0.0 (0)	4.2 (1)	25.0 (6)	58.3 (14)	12.5 (3)	100 (24)
Identification of good practices and useful experiences	0.0 (0)	8.3 (2)	25.0 (6)	50.0 (12)	16.7 (4)	100 (24)

Note: Absolute numbers in brackets.

6.   The three areas received consistently high marks. Differences in the assessments are too small to be significant: at least two out of three respondents and up to four of five considered the Forum as very useful or extremely useful in relation to the area discussed.

7.   The assessment provided by UNECE governments (table 3), is rather similar, although governments were somewhat more positive across all areas.

Table 3. Assessment by areas, governments, percentages

Areas	Not useful	Somewhat useful	Useful	Very useful	Extremely useful	Total
Significance of the issues discussed	0 (0)	0 (0)	16.7 (2)	50.0 (6)	33.3 (4)	100 (12)
Knowledge and information relevant for your future work	0 (0)	0 (0)	16.7 (2)	75.0 (9)	8.33 (1)	100 (12)
Identification of good practices and useful experiences	0 (0)	0 (0)	25.0 (3)	58.3 (7)	16.7 (2)	100 (12)

Note: Absolute numbers in brackets.

8. Participants were also asked to provide their opinion on various aspects regarding the preparation and organization of the Forum, which are summarized in Table 4.

Table 4. Assessment of the preparatory and organizational aspects of the Forum, all respondents, percentages

Aspect	Poor	Needs improvement	Adequate	Very good	Excellent	Total
Programme	0 (0)	12.5 (3)	8.3 (2)	58.3 (14)	20.8 (5)	100 (24)
Documentation	0. (0)	4.2 (1)	20.8 (5)	50.0 (12)	25.0 (6)	100 (24)
Communication with participants prior to the event	8.3 (2)	12.5 (3)	25.0 (6)	37.5 (9)	16.7 (4)	100 (24)
Organizational arrangements for and during the event	8.3 (2)	12.5 (3)	20.8 (5)	33.3 (8)	25.0 (6)	100 (24)
Possibilities for remote participation	4.2 (1)	12.5 (3)	25.0 (6)	45.8 (11)	12.5 (3)	100 (24)

Note: Absolute numbers in brackets.

9. The aspects which received the most positive evaluation were the programme (79.1 per cent of respondents thought it was excellent or very good) and the documentation provided (75 per cent thought that was excellent or very good). The area that attracted comparatively less favourable assessment was the communication with participants prior to the event (54.2 per cent considered that it was very good or excellent while 20.8 per cent thought that it was poor or needed improvement).

10. The assessment of preparatory and organizational aspects of the Forum by government participants (table 5) is more positive than in the overall sample. However, there are no differences in the ranking of the different areas. Governments also give the highest marks to the programme (91.7 per cent thought it was very good or excellent) and see in a less favourable light communication with participants prior to the event (66.2 per cent thought it was very good or excellent and 8.3 per cent considered it was poor).

Table 5. Assessment of the preparatory and organizational aspects of the Forum, governments, percentages

Aspect	Poor	Needs improvement	Adequate	Very good	Excellent	Total
Programme	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	8.3 (1)	66.7 (8)	25.0 (3)	100 (12)
Documentation	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	25.0 (3)	50.0 (6)	25.0 (3)	100 (12)
Communication with participants prior to the event	8.3 (1)	0.0 (0)	25.0 (3)	41.2 (5)	25.0 (3)	100 (12)
Organizational arrangements for and during the event	0.0 (0)	8.3 (1)	16.7 (2)	50.0 (6)	25.0 (3)	100 (12)
Possibilities for remote participation	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	25.0 (3)	66.7 (8)	8.3 (1)	100 (12)

Note: Absolute numbers in brackets.

11. Participants were asked their opinion on the use of a virtual format for the Forum (table 6). The overall assessment was rather mixed. While 62.5 per cent thought that such a format was good or excellent, more than one fifth considered that was not satisfactory and 16.7 per cent found that it was just adequate. The responses of governments follow a similar pattern, although the share of those who found the format not satisfactory is less than half the share observed in the overall sample.

Table 6. Overall assessment of the virtual format, percentages

Assessment	All respondents	Governments
Not satisfactory	20.8 (5)	8.3 (1)
Adequate	16.7 (4)	16.7 (2)
Good	50.0 (12)	58.3 (7)
Excellent	12.5 (3)	16.7 (2)
Total	100 (24)	100 (12)

Note: Absolute numbers in brackets.

12.   The overall assessment of the Forum was overwhelmingly positive. Almost three out of four respondents considered that the Forum was good or excellent, while only 8.3 per cent rated it as not satisfactory. Governments gave a better assessment: 83.4 per cent thought that it was good or excellent while no respondent considered it was not satisfactory.

Table 9. Overall assessment of the Forum, percentages

Assessment	All respondents	Governments
Not satisfactory	8.3 (2)	0.0 (0)
Adequate	20.8 (5)	16.7 (2)
Good	54.2 (13)	66.7 (8)
Excellent	16.7 (4)	16.7 (2)
Total	100 (24)	100 (12)

Note: Absolute numbers in brackets.

13.   In their comments, respondents explained some of the reasons for their assessment of the Forum. The meeting, despite the limitations of a virtual forum, provided an opportunity to hear different and representative voices on different aspects. However, some technical glitches marred the event and possibilities for interaction were more limited than would have been desirable. While some would have preferred a longer meeting, other acknowledged that the format allowed for the delivery of precise and concise messages.

C.   Incorporation of virtual elements

14.   Respondents were asked on their views regarding virtual meetings and related suggestions. Points raised in the comments included:

- Virtual meetings can save time and money and the potential should be exploited, when possible.

- Clearer rules regarding interaction, stated at the beginning of the meeting, are required for the smooth conduct of the event. A brief training on virtual meeting etiquette would be useful.

- Platforms that can accommodate a very large number of participants and allow for simultaneous translation should be explored.

- Different formats (physical and virtual) could be combined. The scope and reach of the physical Forum could be extended with the simultaneous incorporation of virtual elements, which would facilitate interaction, tackling more issues and sharing materials more effectively.

- The physical Forum could be the culmination of a consultative process using a range of virtual tools over the preceding months. Some side events, in particular, could take place in a virtual format.

- Remote participation could remain as an option in physical meetings. However, this would require an effective mechanism to raise questions from remote participants.

- Recordings of virtual meetings will make wider dissemination possible.

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