

OCTOBER 2019



REPOSITIONING THE REGIONAL UN DEVELOPMENT SYSTEM

Implementation in **Europe and Central Asia**



I. The starting point: UN cooperation in Europe and Central Asia

1. Cooperation among the entities of the regional UN system in the Europe and Central Asia region has intensified significantly over the past 3-5 years, largely in response to the more integrated policy and country support required by the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The two existing interagency coordination mechanisms – the Regional Coordination Mechanism (RCM) and the Regional UN Sustainable Development Group (R-UNSDG) – started to integrate already in 2015, while the SDGs were being negotiated, and have held fully integrated, joint Regional UN System Meetings¹ since 2016. This has led to improved coordination in a collaborative spirit and has resulted in a range of joint products and activities comprising advocacy, analysis, operational and programming support and contributions to intergovernmental processes.

2. The revamping of cooperation in response to the SDGs focused on creating an infrastructure to collaborate on strategic, cross-cutting issues the region is facing. Despite a high general level of development, the region is struggling to cope with technological and economic change, lack of environmental sustainability, rising inequalities, exclusion of marginalized groups and migration crises. A number of key areas have been identified that include both challenges and opportunities to accelerate sustainable development in the region, such as sustainable production and consumption patterns, gender equality, decent jobs, social protection, quality education, population dynamics, health and well-being, and large movements of people, among others. Addressing these issues requires comprehensive measurement and data, coherent policies and actions and integrated UN support. The interlinked challenges were set out in a joint advocacy paper on *“Building More Inclusive, Sustainable and Prosperous Societies in Europe and Central Asia”*.²

3. To develop the joint response to regional bottlenecks to sustainable development, the regional UN system in 2016 started setting up regional UN Issue-based Coalitions (IBCs) on themes cutting across the work areas of several UN entities. These IBCs have the following set-up and roles:

- Serve as regional task forces to facilitate cooperation between different UN agencies
- Are led by one or several agencies and guided by Regional UN System Meetings
- Coordinate the UN response to cross-cutting challenges in the region
- Help realize synergies among related areas of work
- Help coordinate joint country support
- Develop joint action plans, products and messaging (guidance notes, position papers, intergovernmental inputs)
- Serve as platforms to reach out to non-UN stakeholders

4. Six regional IBCs currently exist in Europe and Central Asia: on Health and Well-being; Gender Equality; Youth and Adolescents; Social Protection; Large Movements of People, Displacement and Resilience; and SDG Data and Monitoring (see table 1). Two further IBCs - on

¹ So far, the Regional UN System Meeting has been co-chaired by the RCM Chair, the UNECE Executive Secretary, and the R-UNSDG Chair and Director of the UNDP Regional Bureau for Europe and the CIS. The meeting has been convened twice a year, in spring and autumn, with over 20 regional UN entities participating mostly at the level of Regional Directors and Deputy Regional Directors. For further information on UN cooperation in Europe and Central Asia, see also: www.unece.org/runcwelcome/un-cooperation-in-the-unece-region.html.

² Available at: www.unece.org/index.php?id=50091&L=0.

Environment and on Urban Issues - are under consideration, with a decision to be made at the next Regional UN System Meeting to take place in Vienna on 10-11 December 2019. To further strengthen the role of the IBCs in SDG-related policy support going forward, it is envisaged to review their structure and thematic coverage to identify gaps, for example with regard to the economic pillar, and ensure comprehensive support on major policy issues.

Table 1: UN regional Issue-based Coalitions in Europe and Central Asia (October 2019)

IBC	Established in	Lead agency/-ies	Selected key products and activities	# of organizations participating (incl. Chair(s))
Health and Well-being	2016	WHO	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • UN common position on ending HIV, TB and viral hepatitis in Europe and Central Asia 	9
Gender Equality	2016	UN Women, UNFPA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • UN Interagency Guidance Note on SDGs and Gender Equality • Desk Review of UNDAFs in Europe and Central Asia • Gender checklist for MAPS missions 	14
Adolescent and Youth	2016	UNFPA, UNICEF	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Co-organized first-ever youth pre-meeting at the 2019 Regional Forum on Sustainable Development for the UNECE Region 	9
Social Protection	2016	ILO, UNICEF, UNDP, WHO	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Joint advocacy messages on social protection • Social protection checklist for MAPS missions 	9
Large Movements of People, Displacement and Resilience	2016	UNHCR, UNDP	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Key messages on Large Movements of People, Displacement and Resilience 	8
SDG Data and Monitoring	2017	UNICEF, UNECE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participation in several MAPS missions • Joint review of data gap analysis generated by MAPS missions 	13
Environment	<i>under consideration</i>	UNEP, UNESCO, UNECE (tbc)		
Urban Issues	<i>under consideration</i>	UN Habitat (tbc)		

II. Overall approach of implementing regional UNDS repositioning

5. Building on the advanced practice of UN cooperation in Europe and Central Asia, the regional UN system has initiated an inclusive process with broad engagement by Specialized Agencies, Funds and Programmes (AFPs) and other UN entities to progress on the regional reform agenda. While many deliverables of Phase I of the regional UNDS review had already been standard practice in the region, the regional UN system welcomes the recommendations of the Secretary-General on the longer-term reprofiling and restructuring of UN assets at the regional level (Phase II) as an opportunity to further strengthen collaboration, joint action and impact towards the SDGs. As per his report on the implementation of the quadrennial comprehensive policy review of operational activities for development of the UN system³, the Secretary-General identified five key areas of transformation and proposed related actions:

- Creation of UN Regional Collaborative Platforms (RCPs) as unified mechanism for coordination in each region (Recommendation 1)
- Establishment of regional knowledge management hubs (Recommendation 2)
- Enhancing transparency and results-based management at the regional level (Recommendation 3)
- Consolidation of data and statistical capacities at the regional level (Recommendation 4)
- Provision of administrative services to regional offices through common back offices (Recommendation 5)

6. The modalities of the Regional Collaborative Platforms (Recommendation 1) are defined at the global level under the lead of the Internal Review Team (IRT), including the specific RCP functions and secretariat support structures. Pending the outcomes of this work stream, the regional UN system in Europe and Central Asia with its already existing and well-functioning integrated platform for UN cooperation is strongly placed to transform to the RCP in 2020. To ensure a smooth transition, another joint Regional UN System Meeting will be held in the well-established format in Vienna on 10-11 December 2019.

7. To adapt SG recommendations 2-5 to the specific context and institutional landscape of the region, a Regional Task Team for Europe and Central Asia was established in September 2019, co-chaired by the UNECE Executive Secretary and Chair of the Regional Coordination Mechanism, and the UNDP Regional Director and Chair of the Regional UN Sustainable Development Group Team, with strong support from the Regional UN Development Coordination Office (DCO) for Europe and Central Asia. All 26 entities of the regional UN system (see table 2) have nominated a total of about 60 focal points to engage in the task team or have participated in the discussions related to UNDS reform, reflecting a high level of engagement and ownership.

³ Report of the Secretary-General A/74/73-E/2019/14 of 15 April 2019, paragraphs 104-118.

Table 2: Entities of the regional UN system in Europe and Central Asia

1. United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE), Geneva
2. Regional United Nations Sustainable Development Group (R-UNSDG), New York / United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), Regional Bureau for Europe and the Commonwealth of Independent States, Istanbul
3. UN Development Coordination Office (DCO) for Europe and Central Asia, Istanbul
4. Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), Regional Office for Europe and Central Asia, Budapest
5. International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), Department of Technical Cooperation, Division for Europe, Vienna
6. International Organization for Migration (IOM), Regional Office South Eastern Europe, Eastern Europe and Central Asia, Vienna
7. International Labour Organization (ILO), Regional Office for Europe and Central Asia, Geneva
8. International Telecommunication Union (ITU) a. Regional Office for Europe, Geneva b. Regional Office for the Commonwealth of Independent States, Moscow
9. International Trade Centre (ITC), Office for Eastern Europe and Central Asia, Geneva
10. Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS), Regional Support Team for Eastern Europe and Central Asia, Moscow
11. Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), Field Operations and Technical Cooperation Division, Americas, Europe & Central Asia Branch, Geneva
12. United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF), Regional Office for Europe and Central Asia, Geneva
13. United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), Regional Bureau for Science and Culture in Europe, Venice
14. United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-WOMEN), Europe and Central Asia Regional Office, Istanbul
15. United Nations Environment Programme (UN Environment), Regional Office for Europe, Geneva
16. United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), Regional Bureau for Europe, Geneva
17. United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat), Office for Liaison with European Institutions, Brussels
18. United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO), Europe and Central Asia Bureau, Vienna
19. United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), Eastern Europe and Central Asia Regional Office, Istanbul
20. United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNDRR), Regional Office for Europe, Brussels
21. United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS), Europe and Central Asia Regional Office, Geneva
22. United Nations Volunteers (UNV), Regional Office for the Arab States, Europe and the Commonwealth of Independent States, Amman
23. World Food Programme (WFP), Regional Bureau for Middle East, North Africa, Eastern Europe and Central Asia, Cairo
24. World Health Organization (WHO), Regional Office for Europe, Copenhagen
25. World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO), Department for Transition and Developed Countries, Geneva
26. World Meteorological Organization (WMO), Regional Office for Europe, Geneva

8. The task team set up recommendation-specific working groups for SG recommendations 2-4. The working groups held several rounds of conference calls and consultations in October and early November 2019. The task team also discussed SG recommendation 5 on common back offices for regional offices.

9. The general preference of the task team across the recommendations was to develop solutions that build on existing structures, in particular the Issue-based Coalitions, that are based on a sound understanding of the users and their needs, and that avoid heavy mechanisms and additional layers of coordination and reporting. Linkages and synergies between the different recommendations should also be sought. Moreover, best practices, standards and guidance from further global and interregional coordination of implementation efforts will also be taken into account.

10. Following initial discussions in the interagency task team, an intergovernmental consultation on the regional UNDS repositioning was held at the 107th meeting of the UNECE Executive Committee on 14 October 2019⁴ in line with ECOSOC resolution E/RES/2019/5. The purpose of the intergovernmental consultation was to exchange views on the approach and preliminary findings of the region-by-region review and to seek guidance on the needs and expectations of member States. The UNECE Executive Secretary/RCM Chair, the UNDP Regional Director/R-UNSDG Chair, and the Regional Director a.i. of the Regional DCO introduced the suggested way forward to member States, in the presence of a number of other UN Regional Directors, Deputy Regional Directors and UN system representatives.

11. In the discussion, UNECE member States in general expressed their commitment to UNDS reform and recognized the already effective coordination of UN activities in the region. The need was stressed to take into account regional specificities in the reform process. Countries supported closer ties between the regional and country levels, in particular to the Resident Coordinators and UN Country Teams. A number of delegates called for a balanced approach between the needs of the 17 programme countries in the region and needs of the other 39 UNECE member States. Member States also focused some interventions on the specific role of UNECE and the need to recognize and preserve its normative and standard-setting activities. An exchange was held with regard to the specific SG recommendations, including some issues that required clarification (for a full account, see separate Chair's summary of the discussion and list of participating member States and organizations of the regional UN system).

12. The present initial regional plan for the implementation of the SG proposals has been developed as a result of above interagency and intergovernmental consultations. It is submitted to the IRT in accordance with the established roadmap.

13. Regional Directors of the UN system in Europe and Central Asia will have an opportunity to discuss the operationalization of the implementation plan at the Regional UN System Meeting, the joint meeting of the RCM and the R-UNSDG Team, to be held in Vienna on 10-11 December 2019.

Recommendation 2: Regional knowledge management hubs

14. In his recommendation 2 on regional UNDS repositioning, the Secretary-General proposes the creation of a regional knowledge management hub. The hub is expected to pool expertise available in the regional UN system and to provide a virtual entry point to experts and knowledge products for Resident Coordinators, UN Country Teams and governments.

15. The working group on recommendation 2, co-led by UNECE, IOM and UNEP with support from DCO, acknowledged that a consolidated entry point across all regional UNDS entities to expertise and knowledge products does not exist at present. It was agreed to address this recommendation through a phased approach involving the following steps:

- a) A web-based guide will be created by the end of 2019 providing main entry points and flagship products of the regional UN system by major policy area. This guide could be

⁴ Item 3, see www.unece.org/info/about-unece/executive-committee-excom/meetings/2019/107th-meeting.html.

gradually expanded towards a more elaborate knowledge hub. The guide will be located on the website of regional UN cooperation website in Europe and Central Asia at: www.unece.org/runcwelcome/un-cooperation-in-the-unece-region.html.

- b) The existing and future Issue-based Coalitions (IBCs) will initially be used as the backbone for the web-based guide and the gradual move towards a more elaborated hub. Discussions will be scheduled with the IBC Chairs/coordinators in November 2019 to map out and make available their specific expertise. Other priority issues could be added in the process.
- c) The regional knowledge management hub needs to be closely aligned with the needs of clients, in particular the Resident Coordinators, their offices and the UN Country Teams. The needs of Resident Coordinators in terms of accessing and using expertise and knowledge at the regional level will be more closely assessed. Opportunities to obtain feedback such as the global Resident Coordinators' meeting in New York on 18-22 November 2019 will be explored in cooperation with DCO.
- d) The hub should provide an added value compared to existing platforms by consolidating selected regional and subregional tools. The approach should build on existing platforms containing relevant information and repositories of agencies. Existing digital repositories by members of the regional UN system will be mapped by the end of 2019. Ongoing global mapping exercises of by some AFPs will also be taken into account as potential inputs and in defining the longer-term parameters of the regional knowledge management hub with regard to the roster of expertise and the knowledge products.
- e) The technological aspects of the hub need to be closely considered. A system that requires double entry of information should be avoided. An interface that harvests and pulls together information from existing regional platforms (a networked knowledge management function with a search engine) could be considered. Opportunities for collaboration on technological initiatives in other regions, e.g. by other Regional Commissions, will be explored.
- f) Based on the outcomes of the initial steps, a number of issues will be addressed to shape the longer-term solution. These include the scope and concrete approach of pooling expertise and knowledge, level of granularity, structure of information, modalities for the availability and deployment of experts, custodianship and administration, financial and human resource implications.

Recommendation 3: Transparency and results-based management at the regional level

16. In recommendation 3, the Secretary-General proposed to implement a series of initiatives to enhance transparency and results-based management at the regional level. This includes strengthening regional and subregional intergovernmental forums, annual results-based reporting of regional UN system, and clarifying the value proposition of regional UN system with information on funding allocation, results and impact achieved.

17. While the region has a rich intergovernmental structure in place, dialogue with member States will be continued to keep all intergovernmental bodies impactful and well aligned with the SDGs, both at the regional level – such as in the many intergovernmental bodies of UNECE, the WHO

Regional Committee for Europe or the ILO European Regional Meeting – or at the subregional level, for example within the UN Special Programme for the Economies of Central Asia (SPECA).

18. The working group on recommendation 3, co-led by UNECE and UNDP with support from DCO, has focused on the annual results-based report of the regional UN system. A number of options for the structure, content and format of the report have been developed, with inputs from the Internal Review Team, which will provide the basis for further specifications:

- a) The system-wide regional report should focus exclusively on the results of joint initiatives and actions at the regional level and avoid duplication with reporting by UNCTs at country level and reporting by individual agencies at different levels.
- b) The regional report should not aim to be exhaustive in nature to include all regional UN joint activities, but rather a selected number of thematic areas decided upon on a yearly basis (e.g. the SDGs under review at the HLPF or regional development priorities).
- c) The existing and future Issue-based Coalitions and their reports on activities, results and support modalities should be at the core of the results-based report. Discussions will be scheduled with the IBC Chairs/coordinators in November 2019 to explore whether a regional reporting function could be integrated in the Terms of Reference of the IBCs.
- d) Other inputs and data sources that could be integrated in the report could be the regional, subregional and transboundary aspects of Sustainable Development Cooperation Frameworks (UNSDCFs) and collaboration on regional intergovernmental processes, such as the Regional Forum on Sustainable Development for the UNECE Region and the follow-up to the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and to the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD).
- e) Moreover, the QCPR monitoring and reporting framework could serve as a reference point for the system-wide regional reporting in this context. The report could build on the existing set of QCPR indicators that track the performance of the regional dimension.
- f) The results-based report will be closely aligned with the annual regional SDG progress report, which will be prepared in accordance with the request of the Economic Commission for Europe to the secretariat *“to publish a yearly report on the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in the ECE region to support the discussions at the sessions of the Regional Forum, with a focus on the Sustainable Development Goals under review by the high-level political forum for sustainable development that year, using existing data sets and statistics”*⁵.
- g) The results-based report will ultimately be submitted to the annual Regional Forum on Sustainable Development for the UNECE Region and possibly to the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), pending final decisions on the report’s recipients. The first results-based report will be prepared in the course of 2020 for submission to the Regional Forum in 2021.

⁵ Economic Commission for Europe, 68th session, 9-10 April 2019, E/2019/37-E/ECE/1488, Decision B (68), paragraph 6.

Recommendation 4: Consolidation of statistical capacities at the regional level

19. In recommendation 4, the Secretary-General proposed to launch a region-by-region change management process that seeks to consolidate existing data and statistical capacities as well as other relevant analytical functions.

20. In Europe and Central Asia, there is a strong regional infrastructure on data and statistics to build on. The UNECE governing body on statistics, the Conference of European Statisticians, serves as the intergovernmental centre of gravity and brings together Chief Statisticians of member States and international organizations. On the interagency side, the Issue-based Coalition on SDG Data and Monitoring of the regional UN system has been working closely to coordinate work and common inputs.

21. The working group on recommendation 4, co-led by UNECE and UNICEF, together with the Issue-based Coalition on SDG Data and Monitoring, has developed a suggestion for a future mechanism to advance on statistical consolidation:

- a) First and foremost, it is proposed to establish a Regional UN Coordination Group on Data and Statistics, building on the existing Issue-Based Coalition, with new Terms of Reference reflecting the regional UNDS reform. The Group will be co-chaired by UNECE and a UN agency. The approach follows the example of the UN Committee of Chief Statisticians created by the UN Statistical Commission in 2014 at the global level.
- b) The work of the Group will be demand-driven upon the requests of individual countries, including through the Resident Coordinators and UN Country Teams. A similar but broader coordination group, also involving the non-UN agencies active on data and statistics in the region (EuroStat, OECD, World Bank etc.) could also be considered.
- c) The main aim of the Coordination Group is to work in partnership with the Conference of European Statisticians as the main intergovernmental body on statistics, and the Resident Coordinators and UN Country Teams. It will support improving the national collection, analysis, and dissemination of accurate, reliable and comparable data, disaggregated by sex, age, migration status and other characteristics towards better monitoring of national policies and priorities, including those related to the SDGs. Global and regional commitments and UN conventions to which Member States are signatories represent other governance frameworks which regional data strengthening efforts should respond to.
- d) The Coordination Group could contribute to annual regional SDG reporting, and provide input to the Conference of European Statisticians (CES) and the various expert meetings and Working Groups that exist under the Conference.
- e) An annual report on statistical activities of the UN in the region will be submitted to the CES Bureau as a standing agenda item. The Group will benefit from participating in and contributing to the various activities under the Conference
- f) The Coordination Group will cooperate on the modernization of statistical processes, including sharing knowledge and coordinating UN initiatives on the use of innovative and

alternative data sources for statistics. Clear roles and responsibilities will be agreed for members and chairs towards enhanced accountability and results.

- g) The Group will coordinate data dissemination and communication activities related to regional statistical products produced by the UN agencies.
- h) The Group will strengthen the coordination of capacity development activities in the 17 programme countries of the region through common mechanisms, such as joint assessments of countries' needs and coordinated action plans. The UNECE Regional Advisor on Statistics will promote synergies and consistent approaches to capacity-building and provide the link between UN and other capacity development partners active in the region.

Recommendation 5: Common back offices

22. The implementation of common back offices (CBO) and co-location of regional offices, where feasible, aim to lower management cost and enhance the harmonization of processes and the quality of services provided in support of programme implementation at the regional level.

23. It will involve close collaboration with the Business Innovation Group (BIG), which is currently focusing largely on the country-level with a target to implement CBO in all countries by 2022. The CBO concept is currently under development with BIG and, once approved, it can be further tailored to the regional level.

24. The concept and timelines for the implementation of a regional CBO and co-location of regional offices will be closely aligned with the global level process.
