

Meeting Report¹

Draft of 12 January 2015

I. Background information

The UNECE Committee on Housing and Land Management adopted a decision at its 75th session in October 2014 (ECE/HBP/179) to develop a policy study on urban planning, which would contain recommendations for addressing risks from natural and human-induced disasters (ECE/HBP/2014/6).

The proposed *Policy Study on Urban Planning: for inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable cities and human settlements in the ECE region* aims at providing guidance on urban planning and development to member States for the implementation of the Geneva UN Charter on Sustainable Housing and the Strategy on Sustainable Housing and Land Management 2014-2020.

The study will update the policy guidance *Spatial Planning: Key Instrument for Development and Effective Governance* (ECE/HBP/146), which was elaborated by the Committee in 2008 and will support the dissemination of the International Guidelines on Urban and Territorial Planning (IG-UTP), which are being developed by the UN-Habitat².

The UNECE secretariat established an interagency task group for the preparation of the policy study and organized the first meeting of this task group on 15 December 2014 in Geneva. This document includes a summary of the discussions at this first task group meeting.

a) Attendance

Representatives of the governments of the following ECE countries participated in the meeting: Czech Republic, Malta and Slovakia.

Representatives of the Joint Research Centre of the European Commission (JRC), Secretariat of the UNECE Convention on the Transboundary Effects on Industrial Accidents, the UNECE Real Estate Advisory Group attended the meeting.

Representatives of the following non-governmental organizations, academic and private sector partners also participated: International Society of City and Regional Planners (ISOCARP), Landor LINKS, Delft University of Technology, ETH Zurich, Istituto Nazionale di Urbanistica, TU-Darmstadt, Univeristà per Stranieri di Perugia, and Integrated Regional and Environmental Planning Ltd.

¹ The workshop agenda and presentations are available at <http://www.unece.org/index.php?id=37615#/>

² <http://unhabitat.org/development-of-international-guidelines-on-urban-and-territorial-planning/>

b) Adoption of the Agenda

Ms. Daniela Grabmullerova, Vice-Chair of the Committee on Housing and Land Management, opened the meeting.

c) Organizational matters

Ms. Paola Deda, Acting Director of Forests, Land and Housing Division, welcomed participants and reported on the challenges the UNECE region is facing in the field of urban development.

Ms. Gulnara Roll, Head of Housing and Land Management Unit, informed participants about activities of the UNECE Committee on Housing and Land Management, especially on the recent activities, including on the preparation of UNECE country profiles on housing and land management and the smart city project.

She also informed about the expected scope and timeline of the policy study. The study will be a regional contribution to the Global Conference on Cities and Human Settlements - Habitat III, which will take place in 2016 in Quito, Ecuador. An advanced draft of the policy study document is expected to be completed by October 2015 and presented at the 76th session of the Committee. The draft will be finalised and published for the Habitat III Conference in 2016.

The policy study is a joint project of the UNECE Committee on Housing and Land Management and its partners - international and non-governmental organizations, government agencies, universities and other institutional partners from the UNECE region. The following partners expressed their interests to be partners: Joint Research Center of the European Commission, ISOCARP, UN-Habitat, and the World Health Organization. Within the UNECE, while Housing and Land Management Unit, which is secretariat to the Committee on Housing and Land Management, will be leading the work. Representatives from other UNECE divisions, first of all, from the Environment Division, will participate and contribute.

The study will be prepared through the organization of a series of workshops where partners will meet and discuss the planning of work and the content of the policy study. As soon as the partners agree on the structure of the policy study document (expected in February 2015 after the workshop on 13 January), they will be invited to submit their contributions (chapters, subchapters) to the document.

II. International Guidelines on Urban and Territorial Planning

Mr. Remy Sietchiping, Representative of the Regional and Metropolitan Planning Unit, Urban Planning and Design Branch, UN-Habitat, informed about the status of drafting the UN-Habitat International Guidelines on Urban and Territorial Planning (IG-UTP). According to Mr. Sietchiping, the IG-UTP will be a core contribution of the UN-Habitat to the Habitat III

Conference. It is expected that the next draft of these global guidelines will be available for comments in spring 2015.

In his presentation, Remy Sietchiping stressed that urban and territorial planning should be more than a technical tool; it is an integrative and participatory decision-making process that addresses competing interests and is linked to a shared vision, an overall development strategy as well as national, regional and local urban policies. Further, he recommended that the UNECE policy study could be a regional adaptation of the IG-UTP to the context in the UNECE region considering the variety of needs and challenges that this region is facing.

III. UNECE 2008 Guidelines on Spatial Planning

Mr. Dominic Stead, Lead Author of the 2008 UNECE Spatial Planning Guidelines presented information about the rationale and results of this study and suggested elements to be considered by the Committee to update the 2008 guidelines.

Participants were also informed about recent urban planning related documents produced since 2008 by other international organizations, including Council of Europe, the European Commission and UN-Habitat. Mr. Stead recommended to address in the new policy document the topics of (1) transferability of policies (concepts, methods, tools, etc.); and (2) the effectiveness of planning systems.

Meeting participants also highlighted the following issues, which should be addressed in the new policy study (1) an impact of the global economic crisis to the planning practices; (2) challenges related to the multilevel governance, i.e. the need of coordination between different levels of the government; (3) disparities between the knowledge and tool available and used by planning authorities.

IV. Proposals for the policy study on urban planning

Mr. Michele Melchiorri, UNECE Housing and Land Management Unit, presented UNECE proposals for possible thematic areas to be addressed in the study. He underlined that planning traditions across the UNECE region are very diverse and vary from spatial ordering to discretionary or statutory planning systems.

Mr. Pietro Elisei, ISOCARP, informed about key principles of the contemporary urban planning. He advocated the strategic and integrated approach to urban planning and stressed the fundamental role of stakeholders and citizens in all stages of the planning process. According to Mr. Elisei, public spaces should be treated as structural components of urban transformations, capable of improving the quality of life.

Following these two presentations, the meeting participants agreed on the following thematic focuses for the policy study:

- Fundamental services and informal settlements;
- Sustainable accessible and inclusive mobility and transport;
- Safe and resilient human settlements;

- Spatial dimensions of sustainability, compactness, climate responsive design and energy efficiency;
- Healthy, liveable, vital and inclusive public spaces;
- Between rural and urban, the links for better regional policies, city governance and regional cooperation

In addition, it was proposed to address in the study the following cross-cutting issues:

- Multilevel governance;
- New tools of urban planning and the use of innovative technologies (including Geographical Information Systems, remote sensing and geospatial models to support policy making and assessment);
- Transferability of experiences;
- Integrated approach of policy design; and
- Management of externalities, including inequality.

V. Closing of the session and next steps

Secretariat informed that the next meeting of the task group will be held on 13 January 2015 in the framework of the thematic workshop organized by the UNECE and the University of Geneva. This workshop will address the thematic of policy area 3 “Safe and Resilient Human Settlements”. Letters of invitation to join the Task Group will be sent to partners in January 2015.

Chair of the Committee Ms. Elena Szolgayova closed the session.