



UNITED NATIONS ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR EUROPE

EVALUATION POLICY

1. Introduction

The UN General Assembly (GA) in its resolution 67/227 emphasized the importance of having “independent, credible and useful evaluation functions, with sufficient resources, and promoting a culture of evaluation that ensures the active use of evaluation findings and recommendations in policy development and improving the functioning of the organizations.”¹ It also recommended norms and standards developed by the United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG) for the use of evaluation in the United Nations system. As a follow-up to the GA resolution, the Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS) introduced the Evaluation Scorecard², to assess the evaluation capacity, practice and quality of the evaluation in the UN Secretariat against the UNEG Norms and Standards and report thereon to the General Assembly.

UNECE inter-governmental bodies have always viewed evaluation as an important means of ensuring organizational learning, strengthening accountability and improving programme performance. In 2005, the Commission asked the Secretariat “to develop and streamline its evaluation functions and practices in conformity with the relevant decision of the Commission and in compliance with the instructions of the Office for Internal Oversight Services.”³ In 2013, the Commission emphasized “the importance of internal controls, oversight and evaluation functions... through proper evaluation, reporting and discussion on evaluation of subprogramme performance.”⁴

The present policy reflects the latest mandates from UN and UNECE member States for evaluation. It is based on the UNEG norms⁵ and standards⁶ for evaluation and follows the OIOS Guidance for Developing an Evaluation Policy⁷. It takes into account the OIOS Guide to Using Evaluation in the United Nations Secretariat⁸, the UNEG Impact Evaluation Guidance⁹ and the UNEG Good Practice Guidelines for Follow-up to Evaluations.¹⁰ It draws upon the Regulations and Rules Governing Programme Planning, the Programme Aspects of the Budget, the Monitoring of Implementation and the Methods of Evaluation.¹¹

The UNECE Evaluation Policy is complemented by the UNECE Support Guide for Conducting Evaluation¹² which is based on the UNEG Handbook for Conducting Evaluations of Normative Work

¹ A/RES/67/226

² OIOS IED-13-006 UN Secretariat Evaluation Scorecards 2010-2011 (December 2013)

³ E/ECE/1415/Add.1.

⁴ E/ECE/1468

⁵ UNEG Norms for Evaluation in the UN System (2005)

⁶ UNEG Standards for Evaluation in the UN System (2005)

⁷ Guidance for Programmes for Developing an Evaluation Policy

⁸ A Guide to Using Evaluation in the United Nations Secretariat (June 2005)

⁹ UNEG Impact Evaluation in UN (2013)

¹⁰ UNEG Good Practice Guidelines for Follow Up to Evaluations (2010)

¹¹ ST/SGB/2000/8

¹² UNECE Support Guide for Conducting Evaluations (2014)

in the UN System¹³ and UNEG Guidance on Integrating Human Rights and Gender Equality in Evaluation.¹⁴ Jointly, the UNECE Evaluation Policy and the UNECE Support Guide for Conducting Evaluation constitute the UNECE Evaluation Framework.

2. Concept of Evaluation in UN

In UN, Evaluation is defined as *a systematic and discrete process, as objective as possible, to determine the relevance, efficiency, effectiveness, impact, and/or sustainability of any element of a programme's performance in relation to their objectives. The objective of evaluation is to enable the Secretariat and member States to engage in systematic reflection with a view to increasing the effectiveness of the programmes by altering their content and, if necessary, reviewing their objectives.*¹⁵

Evaluation is mandatory in the UN Secretariat.¹⁶ It is an integral part of results-based management (RBM) programming.¹⁷ While RBM assesses *whether* results have been achieved, evaluation explores *why* and *how* they were achieved or not achieved, by providing measurable evidence of the relevance, efficiency, and effectiveness of activities and programmes.

3. Purpose and Use of Evaluation in UNECE

A properly designed and conducted evaluation should provide answers to three key questions: (i) are we doing the right thing; (ii) are we doing it right; and (iii) are there more efficient ways of achieving our expected results?

UNECE Evaluations are conducted to:

- Review and reaffirm the *relevance*¹⁸ of activities in light of UNECE's broad programme objectives;
- Assess the *effectiveness*¹⁹ of activities in achieving expected results;
- Assess the *efficiency*²⁰ with which these activities are implemented;
- Assess the *impact*²¹ of UNECE's work; and
- Assess the extent to which UNECE's work leads to successful and *sustained*²² development results.

¹³ UNEG Handbook for Conducting Evaluations of Normative Work in the UN System (2013)

¹⁴ Integrating Human Rights and Gender Equality in Evaluation: Towards UNEG Guidance (2011)

¹⁵ ST/SGB/2000/8, Regulation 7.1

¹⁶ ST/SGB/2000/8, Regulation 7.2

¹⁷ *RBM* is a broad management approach that uses information about expected results for strategic planning, human resources and budgetary decision-making, performance measurement and learning.

¹⁸ *Relevance* is the extent to which an activity, expected accomplishment or strategy is pertinent or significant for achieving the related objective, and the extent to which the objective is significant to the problem addressed. Retrospectively, the question of relevance often becomes a question as to whether the objectives of an intervention or its design are still appropriate given changed circumstances.

¹⁹ *Effectiveness* is a measure of the extent to which an activity attains its objectives.

²⁰ *Efficiency* is a measure of how economically resources/inputs (funds, expertise, time, etc.) are converted to results. It is an economic term which signifies that activities use the least costly resources possible in order to achieve the desired results. This requires comparing alternative approaches to achieving the same outputs, to see whether the most efficient process has been adopted.

²¹ *Impact* is, in general, an expression of the changes produced in a situation as the result of an activity that has been undertaken - It includes positive and negative, primary and secondary long-term effects produced by an intervention, directly or indirectly, intended or unintended. The impact may also refer to the ultimate, highest level, or end outcome of an activity/set of activities.

²² *Sustainability* measures whether the benefits of an activity are likely to continue after the external funding has been withdrawn. The probability of continued long-term benefit.

UNECE evaluations serve as a source of evidence of achievements in the past and an agent of change in the future. In particular, UNECE evaluations aim to:

- promote organizational learning, by identifying lessons learned and best practices;
- contribute to improvement of programme performance; and
- ensure accountability of the Secretariat²³ to member States, senior leadership, donors, and beneficiaries.

The value of UNECE evaluations is determined by (i) the relevance of evaluations in terms of their importance and timing; (ii) the credibility of evaluations which is determined by their independence and impartiality; (iii) acceptance of recommendations by the stakeholders; and (iv) the appropriateness of the management response to evaluations' recommendations.

4. UNECE Institutional Framework for Evaluation

- i. **The Commission** is responsible for providing strategic guidance and ensuring sound governance of UNECE.²⁴ As the inter-sessional governing body of the Commission, the Executive Committee approves UNECE's Evaluation Policy and biennial Evaluation Plan.²⁵
- ii. The **Executive Secretary** is responsible for fostering an enabling environment for evaluation and ensuring that:
 - the UNECE evaluation is adequately resourced and budgeted,
 - the UNECE evaluations contribute to evidence based decision-making, programme management and organizational learning;²⁶
 - the UNECE evaluations are conducted in an independent and impartial way;²⁷
 - the UNECE evaluation findings are made available to all stakeholders, other parts of the UN Secretariat and the public;²⁸
 - all follow-up measures to UNECE evaluations are implemented.²⁹

The commitment of the Executive Secretary to evaluation is reflected in the Senior Management Compact, and cascades down to all staff through the e-Performance of the senior managers.³⁰

- iii. The **Programme Management Unit (PMU)** supports the Executive Secretary in his/her efforts to ensure the consistent application of evaluation norms and standards across UNECE. In particular, the PMU:

²³ *Accountability* is defined as "the obligation of the Secretariat and its staff members to be answerable for all decisions made and actions taken by them, and to be responsible for honouring their commitments, without qualification or exception. Accountability includes achieving objectives and high-quality results in a timely and cost-effective manner, in fully implementing and delivering on all mandates to the Secretariat approved by the United Nations intergovernmental bodies and other subsidiary organs established by them in compliance with all resolutions, regulations, rules and ethical standards; truthful, objective, accurate and timely reporting on performance results; responsible stewardship of funds and resources; all aspects of performance, including a clearly defined system of rewards and sanctions; and with due recognition to the important role of the oversight bodies and in full compliance with accepted recommendations." (A/RES/ 64/259)

²⁴ E/ECE/778/Rev.5 Terms of Reference and rules of Procedure of the Economic Commission for Europe

²⁵ UNEG Standard 1.2, and TOR for EXCOM

²⁶ UNEG Norm 2.6 and 2.7

²⁷ UNEG Norm 2.4

²⁸ UNEG Norm 2.7

²⁹ UNEG Norm 2.6

³⁰ UNECE Accountability Framework (2012)

- Ensures that UNECE evaluation policies and guidelines reflect mandates and meet requirements for evaluation from the UN General Assembly and other relevant bodies;
 - Coordinates the development and implementation of the UNECE biennial evaluation workplan;
 - Manages internal evaluations at the programme level requested by the Commission;
 - Acts as a focal point for all external evaluations of UNECE;
 - Monitors and reports on the implementation of recommendations from external evaluations;
 - Provides advice and develops tools to support the internal evaluations;
 - Organizes workshops and provides training on evaluation;
 - Establishes and maintains a roster of evaluators with relevant background, working experience and evaluation competencies;
 - Disseminates best evaluation practices of other UN entities in UNECE;
 - Manages a repository of the UNECE internal evaluations;
 - Maintains the public and internal UNECE websites on evaluation; and
 - Contributes to the development of UN evaluation policies and tools through UNEG,
- iv. With respect to evaluation, **the Divisions:**
- Manage internal evaluations at the subprogramme level;
 - Ensure that internal evaluations at the subprogramme level are properly budgeted and adequately resourced;
 - Ensure that internal evaluations at the subprogramme level meet OIOS requirements;
 - Ensure the proper disclosure and dissemination of internal evaluations at the subprogramme level;
 - Report on the results of internal evaluations at the subprogramme level to the Sectoral Committees;
 - Prepare a formal management response³¹ to internal evaluations at the subprogramme level; and
 - Ensure effective follow-up to internal evaluations at the subprogramme level.

5. Types of Evaluations in UNECE

There are two types of evaluations in the UNECE: (a) external evaluation or evaluation in which the evaluation function is located externally, i.e. outside UNECE and (b) internal evaluation or evaluation in which the evaluation function is located internally, i.e. within the UNECE.

A. External Evaluation

External evaluations of UNECE are managed and conducted by independent UN oversight bodies such as the Office for Internal Oversight Services (OIOS) and the Joint Inspection Unit (JIU). These evaluations have either a broad thematic scope (thematic evaluations) or address issues of strategic importance (strategic evaluations) for the Organization (in case of OIOS) or the entire United Nations system (in case of JIU). The results of these evaluations are reported to the General Assembly and the implementation of the recommendations from these oversight bodies is monitored.

External evaluations of extra budgetary (XB) projects of traditional (OECD/DAC) donors are usually determined by their evaluation policies. Such evaluations are normally managed by a development agency and conducted by an independent team of consultants or a consultancy firm. To this end,

³¹ UNEG Standard 3.17

sufficient resources are budgeted at the planning stage, to conduct a credible and independent evaluation at any stage of the project.

B. Internal Evaluation

UNECE conducts four internal evaluations per biennium: three evaluations at the subprogramme level, and one evaluation at the programme level. Programme level internal evaluations are managed by PMU. Internal evaluations at the subprogramme level are managed by the Divisions. Both programme and subprogramme level internal evaluations are conducted by consultant/s, to ensure their independence and impartiality.

All projects funded from the UN Development Account and extra budgetary projects with a budget at or above USD 250,000 are subject to internal evaluation. To this end, at least 2% of the project budget should be set aside at the planning stage, to engage a consultant for conducting the evaluation upon the completion of the project.

6. Resources for UNECE internal evaluations

In addition to consultancy and staff costs related to evaluation in the regular budget, the Executive Secretary and subprogrammes can mobilize extra budgetary and in-kind resources from donors for conducting internal evaluations.

7. Planning of UNECE internal evaluations

As part of the biennial planning and budget process, UNECE prepares an evaluation workplan based on the risk assessment.³² The theme for the programme level internal evaluation is selected by the Executive Secretary in consultation with EXCOM. The themes for internal evaluations at the subprogramme level are selected by Divisions in consultation with Sectoral Committees.

8. Conducting internal evaluations in UNECE

Internal evaluations are designed and conducted in accordance with the UNECE Support Guide for Conducting Evaluations. The Terms of Reference for internal evaluations should meet UNEG requirements.³³ They should be cleared by the Directors of Divisions and approved by the Executive Secretary before the issuance of a contract to the independent consultant (the ‘evaluator’) by the Executive Office. The independent consultant must be selected on the basis of UNEG core competencies and ethical guidelines³⁴ in a competitive process, to ensure credibility, as well as independence and impartiality of evaluation.

9. Follow-up to evaluations in UNECE

As a follow-up to evaluations, the Secretariat prepares a management response.³⁵ The management response should aim to strengthen evaluation, increase stakeholder and management buy-in, ensure action and facilitate organizational learning. A management response is produced for all evaluations conducted in UNECE, and forms an integral part of the final evaluation report. The management response clearly states whether UNECE accepts, partially accepts, or rejects recommendations. Where a recommendation is rejected, a detailed justification is required. The management response indicates

³² *Risk assessment* is an analysis of the likelihood (or probability) and potential impact of a risk. Risks are assessed in the context of the objectives, mandates and strategic plans, and once identified, are measured and scored according to the weighting of perceived impact, likelihood and level of internal control effectiveness.

³³ UNEG Standard 3

³⁴ UNEG Standards 2.5, 2.6, 2.7, 2.8

³⁵ UNEG Norm 12

the timeframe, specific actions and designated staff members or a unit for each action. The management response should be completed within two months from completion of the final evaluation report. All management responses in UNECE are approved by the Executive Secretary. Progress made on responding to areas of improvement shall be monitored and integrated into future planning processes.

10. Disclosure and Dissemination of UNECE evaluations

UNECE is accountable to UN and UNECE member States for the achievement of its objectives, expected accomplishments and activities. As a public international organization, it will make available all evaluation reports with the management responses on the UNECE public website as of 1 May 2014. Should the contents of an evaluation report contain sensitive information, an executive summary of the evaluation report and the management response will be made public while the full report will be provided to UNECE member States upon request.
