



ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR EUROPE

Executive Summary of Self-Evaluation Report

Title	Evaluation of the ECE studies on procedural and regulatory barriers to trade in countries with economies in transition: Belarus, Kazakhstan and Tajikistan
Coverage Period	2010-2014
Subprogramme	Subprogramme 6. Trade
Purpose of Evaluation	The primary purpose of the evaluation was to establish the extent to which the recommendations emanating from the UNECE needs assessment studies of regulatory and procedural barriers to trade were used to inform reform measures in the three countries concerned.

Background

This evaluation analysed the design, management, results and the outcomes of the Economic Commission of Europe project “Studies on procedural and regulatory barriers to trade”, implemented between 2010 and 2014 in cooperation with the Governments of Belarus, Kazakhstan and Tajikistan. The project aimed at assessing the trade environment of the three countries and making recommendations in line with the worlds’ best standards, in order to facilitate the integration of the three national economies in the international trade flows.

The evaluation consisted of a desk review of relevant documents (project proposal, project document, official correspondence, consultants’ reports, the Needs Assessment Methodologies, project outputs – the Need Assessment Reports and their follow-up documents), meetings and interviews with stakeholders in Geneva, online and phone discussions with people involved in the assessment, and beneficiaries. For Kazakhstan, a field visit was carried out for in-depth discussions, based on the participatory evaluation principles. The methodology for this evaluation was based on the Terms of Reference provided by UNECE, and the UNEG Standards for Evaluation in the UN System comprising the afferent Code of Conduct and the Ethical Guidelines.

The objective of the evaluation was to undertake an in-depth analysis of the UNECE funded project in order to generate comprehensive and specific evaluation feedback of the project, namely to:

- assess the relevance, the effectiveness and the efficiency of the project;
- assess the sustainability and the potential impact of the project;
- analyse the challenges to the project’s success and the lessons learnt from managing them;
- highlight good practices and success stories;
- analyse the added value of the UNECE expertise.

Key Findings

The project proved to be successful in achieving the intended results, by creating three national Studies on Regulatory and Procedural Barriers to Trade, discussing them with national stakeholders and stimulating them to take ownership on the recommendations and supporting the countries in transition to integrate the legislation more into international trade. In this sense, the Donor can see the commitment as justified and should build upon the results.

Although performing an analysis of similar initiatives in the selected countries, some minor overlaps could be noted in Belarus and Kazakhstan with other projects implemented by UNDP or EU. This analysis should be done more thoroughly in the future, especially through the UN Country Team in the country, in order to employ the synergies created by other UN agencies' initiatives.

Having a leading advantage on analysing and influencing public policies in trade sector, UNECE should be bolder in sharing its' results and achievements with the development community and take the lead in coordinating and planning trade related programmes, at least within the region. The studies it produces should be used by the beneficiary countries not only to better structure their trade policy, but should also be the groundwork for new project proposals (creating a "shopping list" for potential Donors).

Building national capacities by employing national consultants to perform researches and to draft studies, UNECE should also invest in training its experts, adapting the working methods to local conditions, standards and habits. The final recommendations in the studies should be more innovative, and try to avoid repeating what previous studies suggested.

In the project design stage, the Secretariat should consider using the "backward planning" method, starting from the deadline and planning the stages accordingly, so as to allow at least one year and a half to properly implement the project and present the final recommendations and discussion during the Committee on Trade sessions.

Recommendations

On Project Design:

- In drafting similar future projects, the usage of the Logical Framework tool is highly recommendable, in order to ensure a thorough analysis of the logical chain leading from inputs to project outputs and outcomes;
- All project activities should have attached indicators (direct or proxy indicators), with methodology of collecting data, frequency and responsibilities. This will ensure that, during project implementation, a Monitoring and Reporting Mechanism will be created and reliable information will be collected;
- The project plan should foresee follow-up activities with clear time frame and, if possible, to agree with the governments responsible persons/structures for that;
- The project design should use the backward planning method, allowing for enough time (minimum one year and a half) to plan, implement and to draft the recommendations, to be timely presented during the Committee on Trade sessions.

On Project Results:

- Interviewing methods should differ from country to country and be adapted to the local conditions and habits. The Secretariat tested this approach in Tajikistan, visiting the country and carrying face-to-face interviews after the draft report has been created, thus refining and

validating the results collected by the consultants. This step should be added to the Methodology, to secure data validity

- Create a mechanism to ensure the national consultants' quality, given the scarcity of good consultants with experience in trade, fluent in both Russian and English and with good drafting skills. This could be done either through direct delegation from the governments, through employing Lead Consultants or simply by securing more funds, to make such positions more appealing;
- Clarify in advance with governments the fast actions to be undertaken in case of changed membership of the NACs;
- Employ more of the peer-review mechanism during the final drafting phase, in order to secure quality of the reports and to decrease workload in the secretariat. This should be done within the limits of the funding available.

On the Process:

- Interviewing methods should differ from country to country and be adapted to the local conditions and habits. The Secretariat tested this approach in Tajikistan, visiting the country and carrying face-to-face interviews after the draft report has been created, thus refining and validating the results collected by the consultants. This step should be added to the Methodology, to secure data validity
- Create a mechanism to ensure the national consultants' quality, given the scarcity of good consultants with experience in trade, fluent in both Russian and English and with good drafting skills. This could be done either through direct delegation from the governments, through employing Lead Consultants or simply by securing more funds, to make such positions more appealing;
- Clarify in advance with governments the fast actions to be undertaken in case of changed membership of the NACs;
- Employ more of the peer-review mechanism during the final drafting phase, in order to secure quality of the reports and to decrease workload in the secretariat. This should be done within the limits of the funding available.

Analysis of the Intended Outputs vs. Actual Outputs Table

Expected Outputs (Accomplishment)	Planned Activities	Actual Outputs	Comments on Actual Outputs
EA1.1: Aid for Trade Needs Assessment report including an evaluation of the implementation of UNECE trade and transport facilitation instruments for one Eastern European Country.	A1.1 Carry out the AfT Needs Assessment study on regulatory and procedural barriers to trade that is in line with the UNDP guide on Trade Needs Assessments and the WTO framework for trade facilitation evaluations, focusing on those areas where UNECE has expertise such as UNECE trade and transport facilitation instruments in one Eastern European country.	The AfT NA study for Belarus has been carried out between 2010 and 2011, based on the initial Methodology, and has been finalized in 2012.	Output achieved: the study has been performed following the Methodology and involving national consultants.
EA1.2: Improved understanding by country policy makers, civil society and the private sector of the impact of trade policy on development, economic growth, efficiency and integration.	A1.2 Translate into English/Russian the country study; present and validate the findings to the authorities concerned; and publish the results.	The Belarus NA Study (English and Russian versions) is publicly available on UNECE web-site, printed and distributed to BY stakeholders and it was disseminated in the UNECE Publication ECE/TRADE/4.03 available at the Secretariat. The results have been discussed and agreed with the stakeholders in Minsk.	Output achieved: the study is available in both languages and the recommendations have been discussed and agreed with national stakeholders.
EA1.3: Discussions in the UNECE Committee on Trade between countries, civil society and the private sector on the implications of the report for	A1.3: Organize, with implementation partners, a conference to discuss the results of the AfT Needs Assessment as part the work of the UNECE Committee on Trade with the participation of 3 country government	During the Fifth Session of CT (June 2012), the results of the Belarus NA Study have been discussed and Belarus government presented a follow-up document, outlining priorities and immediate and mid-term activities to be pursued.	Output achieved: the Belarus government took ownership on the next steps.

regional trade, regional integration and the work of the UNECE.	representatives and 3 private sector representative (to be held in Geneva). Submit the results of the study and the discussions to the WTO Aid-for-Trade Process.		
EA2: A Russian translation of the annual OECD Aid for Trade questionnaire for beneficiary countries, responses to the OECD questionnaire and their translation into Russian and English for the 11 low and middle-income countries in the Region where Russian is spoken .	A2: Translate into Russian the "OECD Aid for Trade questionnaire for beneficiary countries" and work with government experts to develop replies for 11 Russian-speaking countries. Then submit the replies, translated into English, to the OECD.	The translation was finalized and submitted to WTO for the 9 th Global Review of the Aid for Trade Initiative. The ECE circulated these to its Russian-speaking AfT recipient countries, collected the inputs and made them available in English to the WTO. The questionnaires were also shared with OECD as part of their evaluation report, but the results were not published yet.	Output achieved.
EA3.1: Aid for Trade Needs Assessment report including an evaluation of the implementation of UNECE trade and transport facilitation instruments for two additional countries with transition economies.	A3.1: Carry out AfT Needs Assessment studies that are in line with the UNDP guide on Trade Needs Assessments and the WTO framework for trade facilitation evaluations, focusing regulatory and procedural barriers to trade as well as those areas where UNECE has expertise such as UNECE trade and transport facilitation instruments for two additional countries with economies in transition.	Two additional AfT NA studies have been carried out (KZ and TJ) between 2012 and 2014, based on the updated Methodology, following the Belarus example.	Output achieved: the studies for KZ and TJ have been performed between 2012 and Jan 2014.
EA3.2: Improved understanding by the two selected countries' policy makers, civil society and the private sector of the impact of trade policy on development,	A3.2 Translate into English/Russian the country study; present and validate the findings to the authorities concerned; and publish the results	The KZ Study is available in English, while the TJ report is being finalized in English and will be shortly translated into Russian (as of Jan 2014). The KZ Study has been presented in Astana (2013) to the national stakeholders, while the TJ one will be presented in	Output partially achieved: the KZ study has not been printed in English and Russian versions, while the

economic growth, efficiency and integration.		Geneva (Feb. 2014).	TJ study is in the final drafting stage in Jan 2014.
EA3.3: Discussions in the UNECE Committee on Trade between countries, civil society and the private sector on the implications of the two reports for regional trade, regional integration and the work of the UNECE.	A3.3 Organize, with implementation partners, a conference to discuss the results of the Aft Needs Assessments as part the work of the UNECE Committee on Trade with the participation of 3 government and 3 private sector representative from each government (to be held in Geneva). Submit the results of the study and the discussions to the WTO Aid-for-Trade Process.	February 2014.	Output to be achieved in February 2014.
EA4: A sub-regional strategy on Aid for Trade in Eastern Europe and a contribution to the preparations of possible capacity building strategies within the Aft process for these countries.	A.4 Based on the two conferences and discussions with government representatives develop proposals for a sub-regional strategy for aid-for-trade for Eastern Europe.	The Aft Matrices for SPECA have been created in collaboration with Governments.	Output achieved.
EA5: Recommendations to the selected countries on Aid for Trade strategies, trade development, facilitation and integration priorities	A.5: Organize a conference, under the auspices of the UNECE Committee for Trade, in one of the selected countries covering travel expenses of 3 experts per country and 3 UN staff to (1) finalize Recommendations on sub-regional priorities for trade development and facilitation based on	The conferences were part of the Committee on Trade (CT) Sessions: http://www.unece.org/tradewelcome/trademeetings/committee-on-trade/committee-session.html	Output achieved.

	the results of the project (2) present these priorities to representatives from the WTO and potential Aid-for-Trade donors.		
EA6: The responses for a second year to the annual OECD Aid for Trade questionnaire for beneficiary countries in Russian and English.	A6: Work with government experts from the 11 UNECE Russian-speaking countries to reply for a second year to the annual "OECD Aid for Trade questionnaire for beneficiary countries". Then submit the replies, translated into English, to the OECD.	The translation was finalized and submitted to OECD as part of their evaluation report, but was not published yet.	Output partially achieved.