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Economic Commission for Europe

Executive Committee

Guidelines for the establishment and functioning of teams of specialists within UNECE

The Executive Committee of the Economic Commission for Europe (ECE) approved the following revised guidelines at its thirty-fifth meeting on 31 March 2010:

1. Status and Characteristics

A team of specialists* is an expert body which is established through a procedure set by a UNECE Sectoral Committee and supervised either directly by the Sectoral Committee or by one of its Working Parties. Its main characteristics are as follows:

- (a) It addresses a specific area of activities under the broader theme covered by the parent body;
- (b) Its central function may be of an advisory or operational nature, or a combination of the two, depending on the tasks assigned by the parent body;
- (c) It normally has a two-year duration but can be extended after careful evaluation, by the parent body, of the work achieved and the need to perform additional tasks.

2. Membership and Officers

Teams of specialists are comprised of governmental experts and they can also include eminent specialists or representatives of international organisations, NGOs and the private sector, in compliance with the UN rules and practices in this respect. The procedure of nomination is established by the parent body. To the extent possible, consideration should be given to ensuring an appropriate geographical balance in the representation of these teams.

A team of specialists appoints its officers: a Chairperson and, if deemed necessary, one or two Vice-Chairpersons.

* These teams of specialists can also be named “advisory groups”, “ad hoc groups”, “task forces” etc.

3. Methods of Work

(a) The Sectoral Committee and, where relevant, the Working Party under it, have to determine the scope of issues and the achievements expected of the team of specialists, as well as to decide on the membership of the team; the parent body must then submit the proposed establishment of a team of specialists to the Executive Committee for approval;

(b) At its first meeting, the team of specialists adopts its work plan for the period for which it was established, clearly defining its objectives and activities and making a time schedule for their implementation; the activities can include: undertaking studies and advisory missions; organising seminars and training workshops; drafting policy models and guidelines; collecting data; and providing information and training kits etc.;

(c) The resources required for implementing the work plan have also to be identified; depending on the amount of regular budget resources that can be devoted to servicing the team of specialists and the magnitude of the work to be done, the team of specialists may raise funds and/or solicit in-kind contributions in support of its activities, in compliance with the relevant UN rules and regulations;

(d) The team of specialists reports to the annual session of its parent body;

(e) At the end of the period for which it has been established, the team submits a full report on its accomplishments to the parent body in order to share the achievements and conclusions of its work to the wider UNECE membership;

(f) On the basis of this report, the parent body makes an evaluation and, if there is a request for extension, determines whether the team should be recommended for such an extension in order to continue its work and/or undertake supplementary activities. The recommendation for discontinuation or extension should then be submitted to the Executive Committee for final approval;

(g) In the case where the duration of the team is extended, the membership should be reviewed by the parent body and, at the end of the new period of extension, a report on its achievements should also be submitted by the team of specialists to the parent body;

(h) Should the parent body feel that a particular team of specialists has a standing character by nature of its continuing activity, it can on an exceptional basis propose to the Executive Committee to exempt that team of specialists from the sunset clause, giving appropriate justification. In this case, the mandate and standing nature of the concerned team of specialists should be reviewed every five years.

4. The Secretariat

The UNECE secretariat, with the support of the members of the team of specialists, has the responsibility for:

(a) Handling official contacts, including correspondence, with governmental and nongovernmental experts as well as experts from international agencies involved;

(b) Assisting in the scheduling of meetings and other activities for adoption by the group;

(c) Cooperating with the members of the team in organising missions, workshops, seminars and training in member countries;

(d) In cooperation with the Chairperson of the team, preparing the report on the team's accomplishments at the end of the two-year period and of any new period of extension.

5. Role of the members of the Team of Specialists

Members of the team of specialists, with the support of the secretariat as resources permit, undertake the substantive work, in particular the preparation of substantive documentation for the meetings and the reports to be submitted to the annual/biennial session of the parent body.
