

Economic Commission for Europe
Committee on Housing and Land Management

Report

Geneva, 5 October 2016

Strengthening National Capacities for Sustainable Housing, Energy Efficiency, and Urban Development

16 September 2016, Room XVI

Introduction

1. The meeting on Strengthening National Capacities for Sustainable Housing, Energy Efficiency, and Urban Development took place on the 16th of September in Room XVI at 10.11 AM.
2. Before the meeting started, the participants introduced themselves.
3. The opening remarks were delivered by Ms. Gulnara Roll. In her opening remarks, she mentioned that work on developing national plans has already been done in Armenia, Moldova, Tajikistan, and Serbia. On the other hand, in countries such as Albania, Ukraine, Georgia, and Kyrgyzstan, developing national action plans is still in an experimental phase. There are many new ideas being presented so it will take time.

Discussion on National Action Plans

4. It was discussed that there is a need to find an approach for developing the national action plans – that it should be based on the conclusions of the country profiles, and that it should be based on specific recommendations, too. The way the action plan is approached is very important.
5. It was also mentioned that the methodology that is going to be used for the action plan needs to be evidence based. It should not only be in papers, but it should also include indicators – something measurable that would allow for it to be worked on with the help of others.

Discussion on Country Situations

6. Each country representative present were asked to give a few words on the issues and bottlenecks that they have experienced/are experiencing. They were also asked how they want to develop the actions plans correctly in their countries and how they can ensure the long term sustainability of this work.
 - a. Albania
 - i. The representative (Doris Andoni) commenced by giving a brief information on the situation in Albania. She said that since they had the study of country profiles in Albania, through the process of engagement of many stakeholders, they have started to develop a law in social housing (2004); and based on this law, they developed regulations.
 - ii. In 2005, they applied in the CEB and was approved in 2006. In 2007, they were approved by the Albanian parliament, and in 2008 they started their project.
 - iii. Based on the analysis that they carried out after the project was finalized, they developed a legislation on the management of condominiums based on country profiles, together with regulations. Unfortunately, this has not been very successful with management of condominiums.
 - iv. In 2014, the Ministry developed a national strategy for social housing and social programs. The strategy for social housing was approved in 2015, together with an action plan to implement the strategy.
 - v. This year (2016), there is an ongoing revision of the social program on housing. It is still under consultation and under peer review with the help of local governments and other partners.

- vi. Also, this year, they need to pass to the parliament, for approval, new building standards with focus on energy efficiency because the old regulations they have are not valid anymore.
- vii. Since the first day, they have proposed the establishment of a centre for sustainable housing. With the help of that, they have now the basis on how to organize the next steps for developing housing and urban planning. All they need to do now is to discuss, internally, which plans they want to elaborate (ex. How to establish daytime information on homeless people/ people in need of housing).
- viii. They have also already agreed on one city to be the pilot city for Smart Cities. However, for the indicators, they still need to decide which city to choose.
- ix. It is very important to develop specific standards for energy efficiency. This way, we have a means to assess the future of national housing agency and those in need of assistance, with the help of national associations and national agencies.
- x. It is also important not to be too ambitious. What's more necessary is to have something concrete in the end – a document, for example, defining certain steps and deadlines (timeline).
- xi. At the end of the presentation, Albania was asked a few questions: “In what jurisdiction is it working? What is the legal status? Any specific organization?”
- xii. Answers: “The national housing agency is a state owned enterprise established in 1992 to provide affordable housing. Today, national housing is financed by our own funds. We extend our activities to support the housing sector, in general. We implement policies designed by the national government in the local level.”
- xiii. Gulnara made an intervention and said that Albania is ready to go for the work. With regards to adoption and endorsement, the MoU will be signed by the Minister, also for the establishment of the centre. Concerning the activities, maybe the Minister will decide or other entities. For now, the aim from short to medium term is to establish a coalition for sustainable housing (getting together partners).
- xiv. Questions: “With the number of activities in terms of local legislation, is there any realistic time frame for the work to be in place? If the update for existing legislation will be done this year, what about energy efficiency?”
- xv. Answers: “Even though we are revising the legislation, the legal framework is already in place; it doesn't change the essence of the law. The law on energy efficiency was passed this year by the parliament, and the Ministry of Energy is dealing with it because it is a component of sub legal acts.”
- xvi. Regarding CEB comments on regulations: “When we implemented the projects, we based them on our standards; on what has already been developed – we included very minimal things. This is not going to be CEB's problem because together, we can develop the standards. We hope for cooperation with the CEB. The partnership with the centre for sustainable housing will be a body/network/ office that will monitor the implementation, and at the same time, promote stakeholder cooperation.”

b. Armenia

- i. Diana Harutyunyan started from saying that in Armenia they are looking at the energy efficiency in terms of the improvement of heating and lighting sector.
- ii. Armenia did not speak about legislation issues regarding housing, instead, they spoke about energy efficiency problems.
- iii. They bring investments in buildings in view of energy efficiency, and so far, they have made a very good progress. The law on energy efficiency was passed more than 10 years ago but it didn't cover the building sector.

- iv. They regulate energy efficiency through the standard on energy performance. Also, Armenia mentioned that they have a very important cooperation with the Russian Federation.
- v. Many countries were involved in energy management organization. However, even though the legislation was done at the national level, it was only implemented at the local level. In any case, the local sector is important for implementation as well.
- vi. Armenia also mentioned that if there is no financial support to sustain the operations, the projects are not going to work. Moreover, when donors are funding something that is not followed up, it has a tendency to collapse and fail. A useful approach is to have colleagues coming on board. It also helps to have a specialized body for implementation in addition to having experienced people on the ground.
- vii. With the action plan in Armenia, they think that the UNDP is going to be supportive and that they will benefit, most especially, from the methodical support.
- viii. Individual house owners in Armenia are still looking for outside support because they are poor in resources. It is important for them to understand the state policy that will support them until they attain full ownership of their houses (most of them do not feel ownership at all). These are some of the reasons why the action plan needs to be instrumental and realistic – it has to have the core methods that can be shared with each other, and it has to contain mistakes and good examples from which others can learn from.
- ix. Gulnara's intervention: "With the similarities in the national action plan, having a peer review mechanism is a good idea; and for this a focal point is needed. Another key issue is to find an action plan that would attract investments."
- x. Questions: "In the roles of different Ministries, who is responsible for legislation on energy efficiency? Who implements it? Are there any common working groups?"
- xi. Answers: "This is a good question because Ministry of Energy holds the primary responsibility. However, Ministries of energy are not so much on the demand side of energy efficiency issues; it is not the first priority for them. There is also an energy efficiency counsel where UNDP is represented, and a revolving fund in the energy sector (not including housing). By itself, the Ministry of Energy has a responsibility, but each agency has to propose and channel its priorities through the Ministry of Energy."

c. Georgia

- i. Georgia was represented by Nino Gventsadze. She started from saying that Georgia are in the same situation as Armenia – they are also working on a new law and working on adopting it.
- ii. They mentioned that they had a competition (not only involving Georgian companies), which was won by Denmark, that would help start the work on the action plan and to see how to regulate the topic.
- iii. They also have a new building code that they hope to adopt by 2019 – this should help them resolve a lot of issues that deal with the energy aspect as well. Georgia had the old law based on Moscow laws that have not been replaced yet, and unfortunately, it's not very effective today anymore.
- iv. Georgia recently talked about the national special planning for the country, and they decided to hold a competition for the municipalities. This is something new for them; before, no one in Georgia knew that they would be needing this – this is the reason why until now, nobody has thought of working on this project. But

today, more and more people are working on renewing the master plan, and they will be needing participants to improve this.

d. Kyrgyzstan

- i. Kyrgyzstan was represented by Tolobai Keneshov and Bakytbek Dhusupbekov. He agreed to the importance of the national action plans. Preparation of the UN-Habitat national report allowed them to focus on the problems in their country and highlight the conditions that they needed to overcome these problems. To act, however, they would need a high level political decision.
- ii. They are also dealing with urban planning and building codes. Urban planning is essential – it is an academic discipline for them and it allows them to write decisions in many different ways. For example, there was a law in construction of housing in the 1990s. But during Perestroika, change has brought in different laws in many major cities. During this time, the population were calling for programs to be adopted.
- iii. 25 years later, they are facing a different problem – the capital of Kyrgyzstan, Bishkek, has grown, and they now have 49 suburbs consisting of individual homes. This means that people would need to have communication links.
- iv. They are aware that it is difficult to deal with the problem; they have looked at different ways in order to solve this. In fact, they have adopted 2 programs for the building of houses – one in 2001, and another in 2010. They admitted that they couldn't find investment.
- v. At the same time, they saw a demographic growth in Kyrgyzstan. Young people today should also have the possibility to have decent housing – they think that this is something worth focusing and working on.
- vi. The construction of houses is linked to many different problems and many issues are involved. Therefore, it is necessary to look at the existing structure and see what else is needed. Kyrgyzstan believes that the problems are broader than housing issues; there are many interlinked concerns.
- vii. For the 2nd or 3rd year now, they have been working in Russian Kyrgyz fund – this aims to finance the building of houses. In turn, this might help solve other issues as well.
- viii. In 2012, the parliament has adopted the housing code, but according to the information that they have received, it is already slightly outdated.
- ix. Kyrgyzstan also mentioned the importance of definitions: What is social housing? What are the standards for it? What is decent, accessible, affordable housing? Where do you find affordable housing? In addition, they talked about the differences in incomes – the rich, middle class, working class, and the vulnerable – the range of incomes are increasing and it would be good to have a matrix for this in order to see the changes.
- x. Because of migration, there was an increase in nomadic population. And for seasonal workers, there are now caravans (movable housing) – there are so many different matters to tackle.
- xi. Energy efficiency: NGOs in Slovakia and ECE were able to receive, for 3 years now, 40 million euros so that they could provide individual builders with energy efficient loans. This is based on work done by research. Very cold winters need very good materials, especially for heating (ex. banks in Kazakhstan are working on these). Also, global problem linked to global warming needs to be looked at and examined comprehensively.
- xii. Conclusion: Kyrgyzstan believes that they need to work on a national action plan that they could take to the government in order to guide them in a systematic,

step by step manner. The market economy has a certain way of working, and their country is new to this. The Kyrgyz Republic now has objective information in place to make sure they attain sustainable development in a systematic way. They hope to be able to talk about this, in detail, next year.

xiii. Gulnara's intervention: "Best practice is a very important issue. You might want to think about doing something on the basis of your institute. Maybe have an expert group and bring together your stakeholders. Energy efficiency is a very important topic for everyone; this is why it is useful to have regional meetings involving different countries."

e. Moldova

- i. According to Ghenadie Ivascenko, "Speaking of the same things over and over and expecting different results is insanity; we risk being lost in transition."
- ii. H said that they have upgraded; they have considered the national housing plan to have strategic interventions than solve problems. They are considering a 3-year implementation matrix because in a short period, it is impossible to implement even partial housing profiles. Moldova needs at least 10 years, which they have divided into 3 in order to support long term changes – they already have pledges for this.
- iii. Moldova plans to enhance institutional capacities and finalize the housing reform by 2025. This, however, has not yet been approved. But, the majority of legal acts are either approved or in the process of endorsement. For example, the housing law was approved last year. On the other hand, the condominium law is still under endorsement proves.
- iv. In July, the parliament of Moldova upgraded the Cadastre Law (just fyi, Moldova is one of the most advanced in cadastre law). With the help of a good electronic system of documentation, the plan will be drafted by the end of this year.
- v. Challenges and lessons in the process: The first challenge for them was the mentality and attitude of their citizens. They realized that communication is lacking and they need to put more work into it. Housing management is a grass root democracy.
- vi. Another challenge: Economic crisis (macroeconomic stabilization). Everything could be done in a more efficient manner.
- vii. Example to integrate in action plan: Moldova has a fragmented system; therefore, putting ambitions is not possible and not realistic. But what they could do is be more innovative and use the concept of cooperation.
- viii. Conclusion 1: Moldova must be more innovative; this means that if it didn't work before, it won't work now – it is necessary to change the mechanisms and tools used. Regarding the cooperation with UNECE, international guidance works with countries in transition, therefore, keep it and develop it.
- ix. How about implementation? There needs to be an international monitoring matrix – not to put grades to countries, but only compare them. This could create *constructive jealousy* – comparing countries can be a good motivational point to explore knowledge management system (knowledge sharing experience).
- x. Housing management is a big problem of countries in transition; Western Europe is not speaking about housing management.
- xi. Conclusion 2: By promoting the national action plan in housing, the status of the sector in national development agenda is raised. Although this is not a technical matter, it must be set clearly because it is an important factor for economic growth and democracy.
- xii. Moldova asked the Committee to consider their country for Smart Cities.

- xiii. Question 1: "You proposed not to continue doing the same things, can you give an example of an innovative approach that would be good to avoid insanity?"
- xiv. Answer: "We should discuss this topic in December, otherwise it is too long to explain. Housing management should be discussed larger."
- xv. Good instrument: *carrot and stick* method – this allows things to be done instantly.
- xvi. Question 2: "Let's say that both the law and political will are in place, the different condominiums are established, the appropriate laws and trainings are also there – what could be the shortcomings?"
- xvii. Comment; Some countries have already started the actions plans; it is important that countries not only follow, but also try to look for more innovative approaches that would attract investments. Communication is crucial. At this stage, think about the best practices that can be involved in the process. Organize a workshop for national focal points for the people responsible to see how to improve methodologies. Feedbacks from countries can be very useful, also, the lessons learned from bad action plans. Organize a regional group of coordinators and start a dialogue about all these.

f. Tajikistan

- i. Tajikistan was represented by Ulugbek Umarov. His statement was linked to what has already been carried out and the steps that they are taking in the future.
- ii. Tajikistan provided a brief background. They said that in 2010, an international group of experts under the UNECE received a request from Tajikistan and started a study. As a result, they began working with international experts and conducted a survey. Results of the survey showed 26 recommendations of great importance within all aspects.
- iii. They also mentioned that they had a seminar on enhancing the national potential on housing. The workshop that they held looked at different issues on housing, as well as adopted issues regarding construction.
- iv. Tajikistan has developed and worked on a way to compile registers for urban planning and urban planning developments regarding the development of urban areas. Aside from that, they already have the draft program for energy efficiency. They have a research institute, which includes a consultation, who works on issues regarding energy efficiency – this institute also looks at places in which improvement is needed. In addition, they conduct interviews, and prepare surveys and documents to examine the impact of energy efficiency in Tajikistan.
- v. Aside from the measure mentioned above, Tajikistan also provides ongoing training for specialists. This involves a skills upgrading course containing 14 different topics – there are courses that last up to 2 weeks, some for 2 months.
- vi. In Tajikistan, they see how the housing sector impacts all other sectors. This is why, aside from developing infrastructure in populated areas, they also have programs that help establish the future development of housing. These programs aim to ensure the accessibility of the population to housing, sanitation, decent drinking water, and all other issues that are outlined in their major documents.
- vii. The agreement on the 10th of September allowed them to implement the general programs and plans that they had for their citizens and regions. So far, Tajikistan continues to develop and update their plans for the whole country – even their administrative procedures are simplified in order to facilitate adoption of these programs.
- viii. They work with architects and urban planners to ensure that the infrastructures in both urban and rural areas, as well as all major sites, are accessible to people with disability and limited mobility.

- ix. Tajikistan also shared that lack of proper coordination is one difficulty that they faced. But now, aside from the help provided by different ministries and experts, they also have local and international partners and donors who help them with the action plan. They know that they need to step up their work so they could make sure that they have all their stakeholders involved.
- x. They mentioned that they would continue to take account of the energy efficiency in buildings and reduce greenhouse gas. In addition, Tajikistan will be constantly analysing the degree of accessibility in the housing area – and they think that producing a strategy paper on existing housing guidelines would be a useful idea. The concept of this strategy paper would not be based only on individual housing but of an area as a whole. For this, cooperation is a crucial component.

Expert Insights and Comments

7. Some of the experts from the group shared their insights and provided comments regarding the current topic being tackled.

a. Remy Sietchiping

- i. According to Mr. Remy Sietchiping, it was very interesting to hear about the different journeys, stages, and focuses that each country went through. And based on the presentations, there really are issues in energy efficiency and of managing the current housing stock.
- ii. Right now, the issue on housing is at the centre, and it is crucial to find a way to move forward – and in order to keep the housing plan moving forward, timing, strategy, and sequencing are needed. To not waste time, it is important to look at what is already existing; look for various avenues where it is possible to piggyback on. Pin point the areas of improvement to enhance the coherence so that action plans can be implemented, while taking into account the context, the demand, the capacity, etc.
- iii. Mr. Sietchiping mentioned that the issue of communication is sometimes overlooked. But as of now, there are already many lessons we can gather from all the experience; diversity is rich and all could contribute to the work, for example by working with different governments and engaging with stakeholders.
- iv. Question: “Is there any knowledge-based platform that we could use to develop policies?”
- v. Answers: “The housing component of our work has an extensive network. We started working in a global platform with the UN development account with the Arab states. This global platform will be able to accommodate all languages, and it has already started with the government of Japan – this means a lot of synergy. Also, apart from cadastre, we should also look at the issue of land management and the standards on building codes. For this, we would be needing a range of expertise, knowledge, and resources; it is important that we respond to the needs and the demands for support.”

b. Iryna

- i. According to Iryna, it is important to focus on the Habitat and the ECE initiatives as guiding principles to develop the action plans and to tackle different problems.
- ii. In planning, all plans must be of high quality. It is essential to develop the guiding principles, not only by using the best principles, but also by using the best technologies.
- iii. These guiding principles bring together all documents by the states, which in turn is used as an instrument by the national government. Moreover, these guiding principles allow the better understanding of the goals and tasks.
- iv. The main goal of development is to implement the action plan in different ways to ensure development. For instance, even though housing is available, the

population cannot afford to live in it – this produces an imbalance. It is imperative to have a step by step action plan. It is also equally important to understand what the targets are. Tasks must be easy to understand; specific concrete activities should be outlined, and goals should be detailed (i.e. how to stimulate economic activity in a certain area).

- v. National action plan is a document of social consensus. It contains, not only budget, but also investment by other companies. The key principles in developing an action plan include: a list of recommendations in order to determine the goals and targets (these can be broken down in different processes), and a specific time period. It is up to each state to determine their own, but it would be preferable to have the time period broken down into different stages – short term, medium term, and long term – this allows planning for concrete activities in the future.
- vi. In connection to this, here are the criteria for choosing the goals and targets: everyone needs to understand that the goal should not only be identifying the bottlenecks and problems, but also the solutions. Also, include targets, goals, and measures that would allow the achievement of housing and land use policy. The approach should be methodological. For plans to be effective, the goal should respond to 2-3 targets.
- vii. Division of labour is also important – who should fulfil those functions? It is only possible to fulfil the tasks if there is somebody responsible for implementation.
- viii. It would be advantageous to have measures that are relevant and can be used for different targets and goals. Activities should be able to deal with different programs; they must be doable and should contain indicators that are measurable.
- ix. If, at some point, financing is removed, we should still be able to understand how targets can be achieved. It is essential that the target indicators are supplemented by statistical data, and that there are efficiency criteria for every measure used.
- x. For these measures, it is important to have a source of funding/financing, which usually depends upon the state budget. Lobbying and raising awareness of various targets and objectives makes a state attractive for investment.
- xi. One core element of an action plan is to clearly define the risks involved to avoid consequences.
- xii. Iryna also provided some functional criteria for the indicators. She said that we need to make sure that the person responsible is influential enough.
- xiii. The national plan needs to be reliable. It is paramount that they relate to the country or the region. All the documents that are associated with the action plan must have a clear structure; this allows everyone that are involved in the process to have a clear idea of what is happening. The effectiveness of the activities should also be evaluated afterwards to find out to what extent they have reached the target.
- xiv. In conclusion, this document is a vital one; it is important, even in the municipal level.
- xv. Comment: "Experts are going to make sure that they are implemented."

Domenica on Smart City Indicators, Smart Sustainable Cities

- 8. Domenica said that they started with United Smart Cities and they worked with 2 different tools. The first tool: key performance indicators – practical and perfectly aligned with the SDGs, particularly with SDG 11. This tackles smartness and sustainability of the city.
- 9. The KPIs are endorsed. They had a local level support from UNDP Armenia, who also gave them feedback for improvement.
- 10. Together with 18 topics, they also have 82 indicators, which are divided in 3 areas – economy, society, and culture.

11. The 2nd tool: it is important to involve people in the recommendation process. It is important, as well, to have an innovative approach, to involve people, to start from the bottom, and to not push things and orders from the top.
12. During their research mission, they collected ideas from people – they should be able to give their opinion and their feedback. With the help of the citizens, we could get ideas that we could use to brainstorm.
13. Questions: “How is the work related to the city profiles? How are we going to merge the indicators and the smart city profiles?”
14. Answers: “The smart city profiles leverage the indicators. On the other hand, the city profiles analyse the performance and draft them for the cities to implement and to be developed further afterwards.”
15. Question: “Will the first step be the identification of indicators?” Answer: “Core and additional indicators. With these, the pilot city should collect data; and from these data, we analyse their performance.”
16. Question: “How do we ensure the sustainability of what we are doing?” Answer: “To integrate your exercise, we need local planning.”
17. Question: “In the selection of the pilot city, do we elaborate a new plan or only update an existing one?”
18. The implementation should detail, in some way, the evaluation – who is monitoring the evaluation and how is the monitoring of the evaluation done – in order to have a clear vision.
19. We must provide some structured approach. It is important to fix the timelines of monitoring the progress and come back with indicators to see whether they are achieved or not (it is up to the national entities to apply the indicators).

Conclusions

20. The discussion was very useful; it allowed everyone to plan for the next steps to take. The brief discussion allowed us to improve our approaches and methodologies – for instance, we could hold workshops and involve national coordinators.
21. Aside from that, they were able to identify a number of needs and make sure that the best practices are going to be taken into account. For now, the most urgent thing to do is organize regional meetings, update the guidelines, and provide more methodology into the content (for Remy).
22. Next is to review the guidelines and meet. “Do we add side events to the already organized meetings?”

REM

23. The REM Chair talked about energy efficiency and financing. On the side of energy efficiency, there is a standard for buildings designed for developers to develop the housing to this quality. They want to bring this as a global standard for home energy – the fact that this is needed would encourage them to bring it forward as a standard.
24. On the financing side, one possibility is to look at the developments in the USA with their low income tax credit scheme – this is bringing in the private sector. Also, this allows the government to introduce tax credits. However, one can only get tax credits when everything is ready and is in order – this could take 10 years. This method is encouraging the companies to pay taxes.
25. Comment: “The involvement of the private sector is important. We must be very open to standards that other countries are using (i.e. task force on energy efficiency).”
26. Question: “Before Quito, can you give your comments?”
27. Answer by Iryna: “I think it’s possible to send the comments next week. For now, we still have cases to illustrate and think of ideas and methodologies. Also, the documents would be in Russian since we don’t have time to translate.”
28. Answer by Remy: “Yes, but the personal thoughts could take a bit longer.”

Other Matters

29. The calendar of events need to be agreed upon.
30. Need to decide when the next meeting is going to be. In November?
31. The establishment of the centre of sustainable housing, which would include elements of the action plan.
32. The Secretariat will be sending the calendar of events in case anyone is interested in the schedule of the international meetings.