



**Economic and Social  
Council**

Distr.  
GENERAL

HBP/2002/5  
8 July 2002

ORIGINAL: ENGLISH

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**ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR EUROPE**

**COMMITTEE ON HUMAN SETTLEMENTS**

Sixty-third session

(Geneva, 16-18 September 2002)

(Item 5 of the provisional agenda)

**ACTIVITIES OF THE HOUSING AND  
URBAN MANAGEMENT ADVISORY NETWORK**

Report by the Chairman of the Network

**Background**

1. At its fifty-eighth session in September 1997, the Committee on Human Settlements established the Housing and Urban Management Advisory Network and approved its terms of reference (ECE/HBP/104, annex II). A major task of the Network was to assist the Committee in identifying strategic issues of importance to its work and assessing the priorities of its programme of work on the basis of common interests and partnership between Governments, the private sector and non-governmental organizations.

2. The experience gained since 1997 and the adoption of the ECE Strategy for a Sustainable Quality of Life in Human Settlements in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century now form the basis for a critical assessment of the activities of the Advisory Network, its terms of reference and its membership. These issues were discussed at a meeting of the Advisory Network in Prague in December 2001. At the meeting it was decided to discuss these issues with the Committee's Bureau and the secretariat. On the basis of discussions with the Bureau in February and May 2002, the Advisory Network has prepared this report, which includes revised draft terms of reference (annex) to be discussed and possibly adopted by the Committee.

### Lessons learnt

3. It is fair to conclude that the activity of the Advisory Network since 1997 has not always been based on its specific terms of reference. In future its work should, therefore, reflect better the spirit of its terms of reference, which should be updated.

4. The current terms of reference of the Network are set out below with comments under each specific point.

5. *Identify strategic issues of importance to its [the Bureau's] work and assessing the priorities of its programme of work, taking due account of resource availability and the need for efficiency gains.* It is important to note that the Network is specifically mandated to advise and help the Bureau. The Bureau is the primary arena of communication for the Network. It is, understood, however, that the Network's role as an advisory body gives it the freedom to advise and speak freely to both the Bureau and the Committee. Indeed, it is encouraged to do so (see also paras. 10-11 below). By contributing to the preparation of the Committee's Strategy, the Network has reasonably fulfilled this strategic element of its terms of reference. There is, however, a need to consider whether this item should remain in the revised terms of reference and, if so, how to get practical output from this Network activity. The Network considers that a continuous and critical assessment of the Committee's Strategy and its relevance to the priorities of member countries should remain a central element in the revised terms of reference.

6. *Facilitate transfer of knowledge and know-how within the priority areas of ECE member countries.* This has been a central element in the practical work of the Network since 1998. The activity of the Network and its members within this area has, however, been planned and implemented on an unstructured, ad hoc basis. It has included members participating in expert missions, giving advice and participating in conferences organized by member countries and responsibility for organizing and financing thematic conferences. The activity has required extensive resources, both financial and time-wise, from the Network members. Given the definite limits on such resources available to the members of the Network, this activity be clearly limited in scope if it is to be retained in the revised terms of reference.

7. *Implement the programme of work so as to achieve tangible and useful results and add value to its activities.* There is great discrepancy here between the terms of reference and the resources available to the Network. It is strongly recommended that this item should be changed accordingly. The Network can advice on implementation strategies and projects but should not be charged with implementation as such. It is of course possible for the Network as a whole, or for members or groups of members, to engage actively in implementation issues. Such work must, however, as a general rule, be financed from outside the Network itself.

8. *Expand its contacts, in particular with regional institutions, lender and donor organizations and the business community.* This provision has, to a limited degree, been fulfilled. A good example of successful implementation is the work done by the Network on financing the "Guidelines on Available Housing Finance Instruments" project by the private sector and other donors. This activity should remain a central element in the revised terms of reference of the Network. The objective of strengthening cooperation between the Committee and the private sector should remain a central part of the *raison d'être* of the Network.

9. However, the need for strengthening cooperation with NGOs should be stressed in the revised terms of reference. It should also be clearly understood that cooperation between the Committee and the private sector on practical/financial issues involves bringing together two worlds with a different conceptual understanding of issues, time, administrative procedures, etc. If such cooperation is going to prove successful, both parties must be flexible and be willing to adapt to the other. One area of concern is the administrative procedures and time efficiency within ECE.

10. *Monitor and assess the work of the Committee.* This item has, so far, not been addressed by the Network at all. It implies a role for the Network that overlaps with that of the Committee. However, the way in which the Network communicates with the secretariat, the Bureau and the Committee could be improved. The normal procedure in ECE is that the secretariat prepares issues, proposals and recommendations for the Bureau. The Bureau discusses them, and implements them or forwards them to the Committee. The discussions at the Bureau's meetings are crucial with regard to the implementation of the Committee's programme of work. The Bureau and the Committee could get more input from the Network if it were more closely involved in the Bureau's meetings. The professional knowledge and personal experience of the Network's members would then be tapped during, and not after, the discussions of the Bureau.

11. The secretariat could also consult the Network more extensively at a preliminary stage of preparing issues for discussion by the Bureau. This would strengthen the basis for discussion by the Bureau. If this point is accepted, practical forms of communication between the secretariat and the Network should be examined. Such communication should not lead to increased bureaucratic procedures.

12. *The Network's members can undertake missions as appropriate at the request of ECE countries or at the discretion of the Bureau.* For Network members to participate in missions requires time and financial resources normally not available within the Network itself. For this activity to be relevant, external resources should be provided by member countries, for example to the Trust Fund on Human Settlements, or the Network could itself raise funds. However, this item would in any case represent a minor part of the Network's responsibilities.

### **Membership of the Network**

13. In terms of size, the Network's present membership is reasonable from a practical point of view. With regard to composition, the mix of members from North America, Western, Central and Eastern Europe is also relevant and constructive. However, NGOs are insufficiently represented in the Network. This issue should be addressed urgently.

Annex

REVISED TERMS OF REFERENCE OF  
THE HOUSING AND URBAN MANAGEMENT ADVISORY NETWORK

The Housing and Urban Management Advisory Network of the ECE Committee on Human Settlements consists of experts from the private sector, financial institutions, non-governmental organizations, professional associations, research institutions dealing with housing, planning and land administration, and local authorities. On the recommendation of the Advisory Network, the Bureau of the Committee on Human Settlements invites these experts to become members of the Network in their personal capacity. The Housing and Urban Management Advisory Network shall work in close cooperation with the secretariat and the Committee's Bureau and participate in its meetings. The objectives of the Housing and Urban Management Advisory Network are to:

- (a) Identify strategic issues of importance to the Committee's programme of work and assess the priorities of this programme of work, taking due account of the resources available and the need for efficiency gains;
- (b) Identify areas within the Committee's Strategy where transfer of information and know-how between ECE member countries is important for the implementation of specific human settlements policies. Advise on possible ways to facilitate such transfer;
- (c) Advise the Committee and ECE member States on the implementation of strategies and specific activities to ensure maximum practical results in member countries in the implementation of the Committee's Strategy;
- (d) Expand the contacts of the Committee, the Bureau and the secretariat with regional financial institutions, lender and donor organizations, NGOs and the business community so as to make the Committee's activities and its assistance to the member countries more efficient;
- (e) Submit to the Committee an annual progress report based on these terms of reference.

The Network's activities will not have any financial implications for the United Nations.