



**Economic and Social
Council**

Distr.
GENERAL

HBP/2005/2
30 June 2005

ORIGINAL: ENGLISH

ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR EUROPE

COMMITTEE ON HUMAN SETTLEMENTS

Sixty-sixth session

(Geneva, 19-21 September 2005)

(Item 4 of the provisional agenda)

DRAFT PROGRAMME OF WORK FOR 2006-2007

Introduction

1. The present note provides information to assist the Committee in establishing its programme of work, the duration of each activity, as well as its methods of work. The note is based on related decisions of the Committee's Bureau, which met twice in February and May 2005.
2. At its sixty-fifth session the Committee reviewed the implementation of the UNECE Strategy for a Sustainable Quality of Life in Human Settlements in the 21st Century, and paid special attention to the countries in Eastern and South-Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia. It considered the relevance of its long-term goals to the specific needs of these countries as well as to the new developments and challenges. Some of the challenges facing these countries are: general weakness of the banking sector to support housing finance; lack of human settlements development programmes, governmental policies and new legislation on spatial planning; outdated master plans; increase in the number of refugees and humanitarian problems; corruption in the land and real estate sector; growing disparities representing a real threat to security; and lack of training and education in the planning professions (ECE/HBP/134, para. 18).
3. The Committee also discussed the possibility of organizing a high-level meeting to review the implementation of the Strategy. The proposed draft programme of work for 2006-2007 addresses all these issues within its programme elements.
4. The draft programme of work for 2006-2007 is set out below. When discussing its programme activities, the Committee may wish to keep in mind that the programme should

reflect the real commitment of member countries and their willingness to contribute to its implementation in terms of expertise, human and financial resources.

5. At its sixty-sixth session, the Committee is expected to hold an in-depth discussion on the social and economic benefits of human settlements development in the light of the implementation of the UN Millennium Development Goals.

6. At the Committee's session, the secretariat will report on the Human Settlements Trust Fund's expenditures and balance in 2005. It is important to stress that without the Trust Fund the Committee would not have been able to carry out its programme of work. However, the Trust Fund needs to be maintained at a level that allows the Committee to fulfil its tasks. It is, therefore, important that countries should continue to make either general contributions to the Trust Fund or specific contributions to earmarked programme elements.

Proposed decisions by the Committee

7. In the light of the discussion, the Committee may wish to:

- (a) Take note of the progress made in the implementation of the programme of work;
- (b) Discuss and adopt its programme of work for 2006-2007, as presented below;
- (c) Call upon Governments to make either general contributions to the Human Settlements Trust Fund or specific contributions to earmarked programme elements;
- (d) Entrust its Bureau with highlighting, in cooperation with the secretariat, the main outcome of the in-depth discussion in a document, which could be the basis for a draft declaration to be discussed and adopted at a high-level/ministerial segment of its next session in September 2006;
- (e) Set up an open-ended drafting group to work on the draft declaration.

SUBPROGRAMME 10 - HUMAN SETTLEMENTS

10.1.1 Country profiles on the housing sector

Description: The housing sector has a critical role to play in ensuring the success of economic and social development in the UNECE region and the reform process in countries in transition. At the same time, the transition to a market economy has had a profound impact on housing policy implementation and management. This project represents a tool for Governments to analyse their housing policies, strategies, institutional and financial frameworks for the housing sector and to compare the progress made internationally. The country profile is a process-oriented exercise. At its core is an analytical study on the housing sector, drafted by independent international experts. Recommendations for improving policies and practices are an essential part of the programme. It also aims to provide information to potential investors.

Work accomplished: The country profiles on the housing sector of Bulgaria, Poland, Slovakia, Lithuania, Romania, the Republic of Moldova, Albania, Armenia and the Russian Federation have been published. The study for Serbia and Montenegro was finalized. Preparations for a country profile study on Azerbaijan have started: a pre-mission was carried out in April 2005 in conjunction with a similar mission on land administration review.

The concept of the country profiles has been revised so as to strengthen the focus on thematic areas, which are of particular concern for the country under review. Follow-up activities related to the implementation of the recommendations in the country profiles were organized in Albania in 2004 and in Armenia in May 2005. The workshop in Armenia sought to bring together all stakeholders to discuss and agree on priorities in preparation for the national housing policy paper.

In cooperation with the Council of Europe, the Council of Europe Development Bank and the International Finance Corporation, the Committee undertook a study on trends and progress in housing reforms in South-Eastern Europe, following the outcome of the High-level Conference on Housing Reforms in South-Eastern Europe, held in Paris, on 23 and 24 April 2003.

The country profile project is presented on the Committee's web site: <http://www.unece.org/env/hs/cph>.

Work to be undertaken: The Committee will continue its activities for the preparation of country profiles on the housing sector. The research mission to Azerbaijan is planned for October/November 2005. The following countries have stated or restated their interest in having a country profile carried out: Belarus, Ukraine, and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia. The next study will be undertaken in Azerbaijan in coordination with the land administration review.

Further workshops or ad hoc meetings of experts will be held to discuss the results of policy implementation as a follow-up to the studies' recommendations and to provide additional expertise in specific areas where needed.

Cooperation with the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-HABITAT), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the European Union and the World Bank will be maintained and strengthened.

10.1.2 Improvement of urban environmental performance

Description: Local systems and cities are efficient starting points for promoting sustainable quality of life. Numerous initiatives have already been launched in cities and towns to raise public awareness of the environmental impact of individual consumption behaviour, to promote environmentally sound goods, services and sustainable use of energy, water, raw materials and land by individuals and communities. Modern local planning focuses on a broad range of issues and factors: social, economic, environmental, financial, etc. It is important to develop effective local planning as an integral part of strategic national and regional planning.

Work accomplished: In September 2004 the Committee held a joint in-depth discussion with the International Society of City and Regional Planners (ISOCARP) on the contribution of strategic planning to housing and urban planning policies and considered the modalities for the preparation of a UNECE study on spatial planning at the local level.

The delegation of Poland prepared a questionnaire on spatial planning at the local level, which was distributed among spatial planning authorities in the ECE Member States. A workshop on spatial planning systems at the local level was held in Warsaw from 19 to 21 June 2005, to discuss practical experience in the functioning of spatial planning systems, bottlenecks, effective solutions and methods. The results of the questionnaire, case studies and lessons learned were reviewed during the workshop. The workshop also considered the extended outline for the UNECE study on spatial planning at the local level. A first meeting of the reference group on the study was held in Warsaw on 22 June 2005.

Work to be undertaken: A study on spatial planning at the local level will be prepared by a consultant with the assistance of a reference group.

10.1.3 Land registration and land markets

Description: Proper land registration is crucial for security of tenure and property rights, effective housing policies and the promotion of reforms in economies in transition, as well as in the context of European integration. The activity is aimed at providing assistance to countries in transition in reforming cadastre and land registration systems and sharing information and experience of modernizing land administration systems in the more advanced economies through education and training; research and development; exchange of experience; transfer of technology; and standardization.

Work accomplished: The Guidelines on real estate units and identifiers were published in English (2004). The Russian delegation translated the guidelines into Russian (2004).

The delegation of the United Kingdom (HM Land Registry) prepared and published the second edition of the “Statement on Social and Economic Benefits of Good Land Administration” (2005). The study “Land administration in the UNECE region: development trends and main principles” was prepared. A policy paper on public/private partnership in land administration was prepared for discussion at the fourth session of the Working Party on Land Administration.

A Workshop on Real Property Administration in Developing the Information Society was held in Lithuania on 24 and 25 September 2004, and it considered the implementation of recommendations made in the land administration review on Lithuania. Furthermore a Workshop on EU Enlargement and Developments in Land Administration in the ECE Region, was held in Budapest in April 2005.

An international team of experts undertook a land administration review on Lithuania, which was published in January 2005. A pre-mission for the land administration review on Azerbaijan was held in May 2005.

Work to be undertaken: The study “Land administration in the UNECE region: development trends and main principles” will be published by the delegation of Greece. The delegation of the United Kingdom will update the land administration inventory.

Workshops are planned in Finland (Multipurpose Cadastre – Be Inspired, 1-2 September 2005), Georgia (spring 2006), the Czech Republic (autumn 2006), Germany (spring 2007) and Ireland (autumn 2007).

The fourth session of the Working Party on Land Administration will take place in Geneva on 21 and 22 November 2005. Cooperation with key partners, such as the World Bank, the Central European Land Knowledge Center, the Permanent Committee on Cadastre in the European Union and EuroGeographics, will be further developed.

10.1.4 Housing modernization and management

Description: This activity mainly aims at identifying and providing tools to face problems related to the existing housing stock and its management. It also provides an opportunity to look at urban renewal policies and at the existing and emerging housing problems, especially regarding housing financing. As a result of privatization in countries in transition, the proportion of owner-occupied dwellings in multi-family housing has increased considerably. It is therefore important to establish property rights, define mixed ownership, and establish a legal and institutional framework for operating housing condominiums. This programme element also focuses on the basic mechanisms for social housing development.

Work accomplished: A second Workshop on Social Housing was held in Vienna in November 2004 and the Guidelines on Social Housing were prepared. The study on housing finance systems was published.

Work to be undertaken: The Committee and its Bureau will continue to promote the practical application of the Guidelines on Condominium Ownership of Housing and ensure their wide dissemination in countries in transition. The study on housing finance systems for countries in transition and the Guidelines on Social Housing will be distributed and discussed in the ECE countries and it is envisaged that the Committee will assist the ECE countries in the implementation process.

10.1.5 Development of human settlements statistics

Description: The Committee, together with the Conference of European Statisticians, develops and improves international human settlements statistics, and publishes the Bulletin of Housing Statistics for Europe and North America every two years.

Work accomplished: In 2004 the Committee prepared a new edition of the Bulletin of Housing Statistics for Europe and North America and posted it on the Web. Delegations of the Committee and of the Conference of European Statisticians held two consultations in 2004 and 2005 on the new round of recommendations on the housing censuses. The human settlements statistics web site is accessible at: <http://www.unece.org/env/hs/bulletin/>.

Work to be undertaken: Work will continue on a new round of UNECE recommendations on housing censuses, as well as on collection of data for the 2006 Bulletin.

10.1.6 Major trends characterizing human settlements development

Description: The development of human settlements encompasses a wide range of changes and trends, which are not always compatible with the principles of sustainability. More knowledge of the forces influencing the configuration of urban development and the characteristics of the implementation of urban policies will be provided by studying major trends characterizing human settlements development and presenting national experiences in formulating and implementing policies for a more sustainable development of human settlements.

Work accomplished: The Ninth Conference on Urban and Regional Research took place in Leeds (United Kingdom) from 9 to 12 June 2002. Preparatory work for the 10th Conference on Urban and Regional Research was initiated by the delegation of Slovakia. The programme for the conference on the network of sustainable cities was prepared and the first meeting of the rapporteurs was held in Bratislava in July 2005. The meeting decided the outline of the discussion papers to be prepared by the rapporteurs.

Work to be undertaken: The Committee will continue the exchange of experience in the implementation of the Habitat Agenda and the Millennium Declaration, and will consider the priorities of the Plan of Implementation of the World Summit on Sustainable Development in the context of its programme activities. The Committee will carry out work in the context of the preparations for the third session of the World Urban Forum and the implementation of the UNECE Strategy for a Sustainable Quality of Life in Human Settlements in the 21st Century. The second and third meetings of the rapporteurs will be held to coordinate and finalize papers for the 10th Conference on Urban and Regional Research, which will take place in Slovakia (Bratislava) in May 2006.