



**Economic and Social
Council**

Distr.
GENERAL

ECE/HBP/2008/4
8 July 2008

Original: ENGLISH

ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR EUROPE

COMMITTEE ON HOUSING AND LAND MANAGEMENT

Sixty-ninth session
Geneva, 22–23 September 2008
Item 3(a) of the provisional agenda

PROGRAMME OF WORK FOR 2008–2009

COUNTRY PROFILES ON THE HOUSING SECTOR

SELF-EVALUATION 2006–2007 – PREPARATION AND PROCEDURAL STEPS

Note by secretariat

Summary

This is one of the self-evaluation exercises initiated by the Executive Committee to assess the effectiveness of UNECE work. The results were discussed at the Bureau of the Committee on Housing and Land Management in May 2008 (ECE/HBP/2008/10).

The self-evaluation exercise assesses the procedural steps undertaken for the preparation of the country profiles of the housing sector, and provides some useful recommendations for future work.

I. BACKGROUND, PURPOSE AND METHODOLOGY OF THE EVALUATION

1. The purpose of the 2006–2007 self-evaluation was to analyse the procedural steps for the preparation of the country profiles on the housing sector (see chapter II and annex below). These analytical studies are drafted by an international expert team and conducted at the request of countries of Eastern Europe, Caucasus and Central Asia (EECCA) and South-Eastern Europe (SEE). Their objective is to review housing policies, the condition of the existing housing stock, practices of spatial planning, and the construction and utilities sector, as well as the socio-economic, institutional, legal and financial framework of the housing sectors in the countries concerned. Policy recommendations on how to improve housing strategies and policies, an integral part of the study, are extended to the host government.

2. The 2006–2007 self-evaluation aimed at streamlining the procedural steps of the country profile exercise, improving cooperation between the partners involved and minimizing possible delays. This is expected to increase the efficiency in carrying out the subprogramme and to contribute to a more effective use of secretariat resources. The annex of this document shows the standard procedure for completion of a country profile. It distinguishes 12 procedural steps with an estimated time requirement of 35 weeks, allowing three reviews to be conducted in a biennium. During the evaluation period, the actual progress of the study was noted and delays at each step were identified.

II. FINDINGS

3. The following table shows the actual progress of the current study on the housing sector of Belarus, its deviations from the estimated time requirements, as well as the reasons for the delays.

Step(s)	Deviation (= estimated – actual time)	Reasons / comments
1	0	The official request was submitted within the estimated time frame
2 and 3	2 months	<u>Step 2:</u> The nomination of the national focal point and the establishment of the local expert team were delayed due to unclear institutional responsibilities and sluggish communication between the government bodies concerned. <u>Step 3:</u> The preparation of data and basic background documentation took longer than expected, as the host government did not have appropriate means to translate documents and legal acts into English.
4	0	The pre-mission was carried out within the expected timeframe
5 and 6	1.5 months	<u>Step 6:</u> Regarding the preparation of more comprehensive documents, again bottleneck in terms of translation occurred. To avoid further delays, the secretariat decided to have the translation done by UNDP ¹ Minsk and to finance it through the trust fund.
7	0	Outlines were prepared on time.
8	0	The research mission was carried out within the expected time frame.
9	3 months	Delays at this stage occurred due to insufficiently precise information provided by local experts, the disregard of deadlines by international experts, and the very limited resources of the secretariat in view of meetings and other commitments, to review and harmonize the draft chapters.
10–12	–	Ongoing; evaluation will be continued on an informal basis.

¹ United Nations Development Programme.

III. CONCLUSIONS

4. Altogether, the study could not be finalized within the estimated time period. Major reasons were the following:
 - (a) The unclear division of responsibilities and a lack of communication between the participating government bodies led to delays in the establishment of an adequate local expert group. Participating experts were not sufficiently aware of their role in the project and of the issues involved. Therefore, specific questions of the international expert team could be answered only to a limited extent;
 - (b) The host government agreed to provide documentation, data and legal acts in English as far as possible. However, human and financial resources for translation turned out to be insufficient;
 - (c) The international experts, who were contracted independently, submitted their contributions according to their terms of reference. The expert, however, nominated by a Government and operating without a contract and terms of reference, did not provide his chapter on time;
 - (d) Secretariat resources to work on the draft report, to harmonize the chapters and recommendations, to clarify unclear parts and pending questions and to prepare the final publication, are very limited. Due to other commitments such as official meetings, workshops, missions etc., the draft chapters could be revised only with delays.

5. To address these issues and to reduce delays in upcoming reviews, the following measures will be taken:
 - (a) Awareness among the host authorities will be raised and strengthened by the prompt establishment of a local expert team and a clear definition of their roles vis-à-vis finalizing the study within the expected timeframe. To better communicate the project goals and procedures, a document on Procedural steps of the country profiles has been translated into Russian and sent to the hosts of the next review, which will take place in Kyrgyzstan;
 - (b) A more detailed agreement on the provision and translation of documents should be achieved at future pre-missions, i.e. a complete list of available documents should be discussed, including who is responsible for the translation. In the case of specific documents for which translators with substantive knowledge are required, the secretariat will continue to use its own funds to finance translation through local UNDP offices;
 - (c) International experts who are nominated by Governments and not contracted as consultants should also be provided with terms of reference for their assignments, and deadlines will be more strictly enforced.

6. The secretariat will look into the possibility to hire additional staff to support the preparation and finalization of the studies (JPOs, extrabudgetary staff etc.).

Annex

TERMS OF REFERENCE

Purpose and scope of the evaluation

1. The purpose of the 2006–2007 self-evaluation is to analyse the procedural steps for the preparation and conducting of the country profiles on the housing sector. The evaluation will involve assessing the status of the current project throughout 2007, and will finish with an evaluation report.

Relevant background information about the activity

2. The country profiles on the housing sector are analytical studies, drafted by international experts and conducted at the request of EECCA and SEE countries. Their objective is to review housing policies, the condition of the existing housing stock, practices of spatial planning, and the construction and utilities sector, as well as the socio-economic, institutional, legal and financial framework of the housing sectors in the countries concerned. As an integral part of the study, policy recommendations on how to improve housing strategies and policies are extended to the host government.

Issues to be addressed and questions to be answered through the evaluation

3. The evaluation aims at streamlining the procedural steps of the country profile exercise, at improving cooperation between the partners involved, and at minimizing possible delays. This is expected to increase efficiency in carrying out the subprogramme and to contribute to a more effective use of secretariat resources.

Methodology for data collection

4. A standard procedure for a country profile is displayed in the annex. It distinguishes 12 procedural steps and estimates the time required to complete each step. According to this, a standard country profile would take 35 weeks from the official request of the member country to the publication and dissemination of the report. This would mean that three studies could be conducted in one biennium. The implementation of the individual steps of the current project will be closely monitored to gather data for the evaluation.

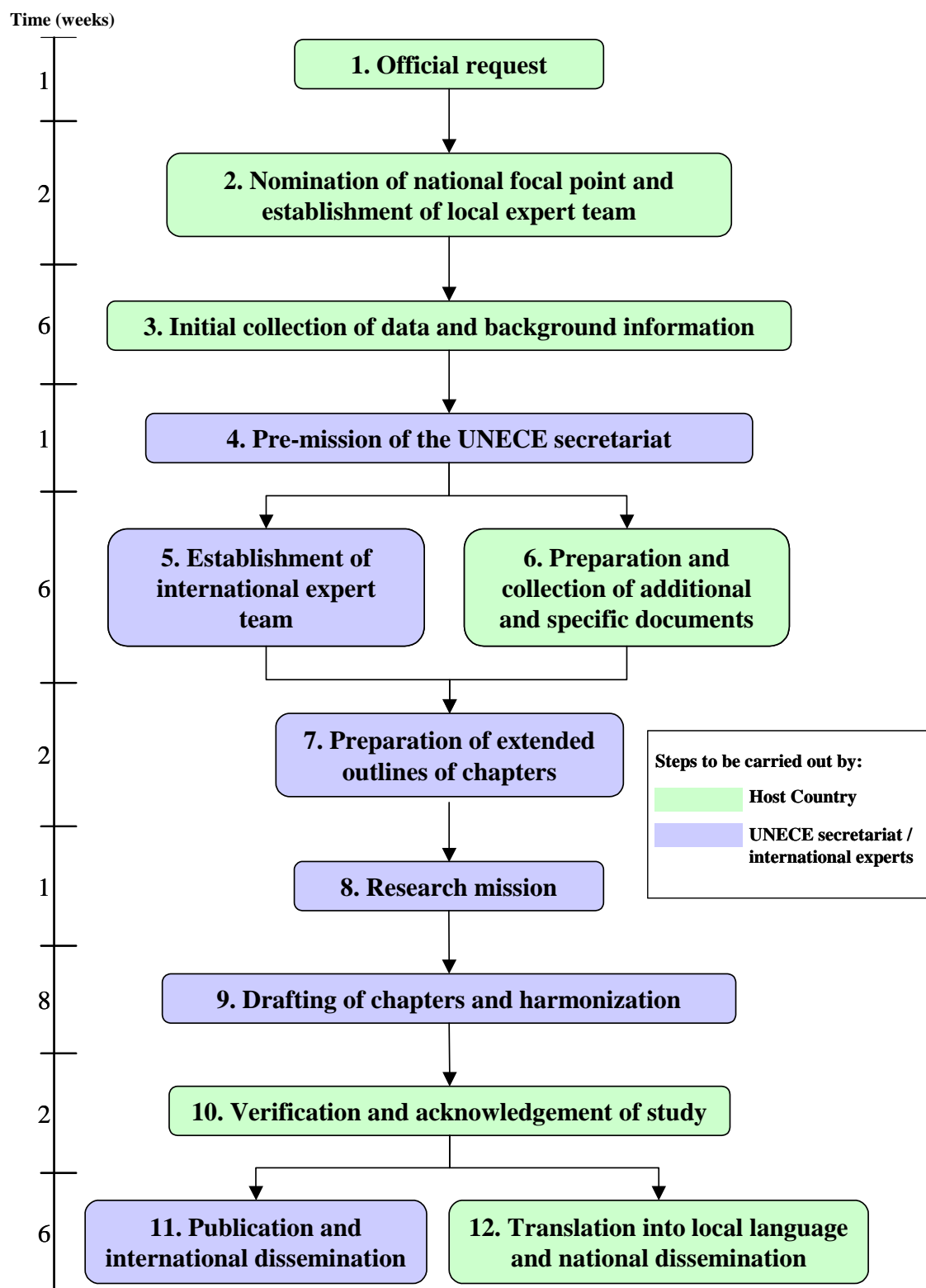
Schedule and required resources

5. The evaluation takes place from December 2006 to December 2007. In December 2006, Belarus requested the secretariat to carry out a country profile study, which constitutes the starting point for the review. During the evaluation period, time requirements for and delays occurring at each of the 12 steps will be noted. At the end of 2007, it will be evaluated whether actual progress has complied with the standard procedure. The objective is to identify the underlying causes for deviations from the benchmark. The evaluation will be conducted by the secretariat (a P-2 post in consultation with the P-5 post) within available resources, and is estimated to take two working weeks for the P-2 and two working days for the P-5.

Use of the findings

6. The findings of the evaluation will be used to optimize cooperation between the host authorities, the international experts and the secretariat in carrying out this activity, and to avoid unnecessary delays in the preparatory process. The outcomes and recommendations will be presented to the Bureau of the Committee on Housing and Land Management.

Annex: Procedural Steps of the country profiles on the housing sector



Total: 35 weeks
