

External evaluation of the **Environment Performance Review process in the period 2015–2019** (September 2019)

**Progress report as at 30 June 2020**

#	Recommendation	Management response	Responsibility	Target date/ deadline	Date of implementation/comments
1	<b>The EPR unit should continue to align the future EPRs with the specific needs and priorities of the beneficiary countries, by integrating sectors, such as agriculture, energy and transport.</b>	<p>UNECE accepts the recommendation.</p> <p>Environmental Performance Reviews (EPRs) have always been geared to serve needs of the beneficiary countries and the EPR unit will continue to align the EPRs with the needs and priorities of the beneficiary countries. In particular, the EPR unit will sensitize the countries to design the structure of the respective review to further integrate economic sectors, such as agriculture, energy and transport.</p> <p>As a voluntary programme the EPR has to be responsive and support the needs and requests of the countries willing to have their environment management reviewed. The EPR unit will continue to respect this mutual understanding and will ensure that the country representatives understand and will be informed about the importance of integrating environment into sectoral policies, such as agriculture, energy and transport. When an EPR report is launched, the EPR unit will also explore with the respective country the initiation of a national process to monitor and assess progress in the implementation of EPR recommendations, including the establishment of an inter-ministerial working group necessary to support the integration of sectors, such as agriculture, energy and transport.</p>	EPR Unit	December 2021	<p><b>In progress</b></p> <p>One feature and advantage of the EPR programme is to be flexible to meet specific needs of the beneficiary countries. In November 2019 in Azerbaijan, the EPR unit with the Ministry of Ecology and other stakeholders agreed on the structure of the EPR that would fit the needs of the country. The impact of the economic sectors which are the main polluters will be described in the media chapters and also in one specific chapter on greening the agriculture, energy, industry and transport sector. The review mission to Azerbaijan was postponed to Sept. 2020 due to COVID 19 pandemic.</p>

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2	<p><b>The EPR unit should increase the role of EPRs in supporting the achievement and monitoring of EPR-relevant SDGs.</b></p>	<p>UNECE partially accepts this recommendation.</p> <p>The EPR unit has organized capacity-building activities to support the achievement and monitoring of EPR-relevant SDGs. Several events supporting these efforts were organized in the framework of EPR Programme (e.g. 4 peer-learning workshops in Minsk, Astana, Tbilisi and Budva) and the UNDA Project 1819AE “Evidence-based environmental governance and sustainable environmental policies in support of the 2030 Agenda in South-East Europe”, which supports five countries (Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Serbia) in formulating actions on the basis of their EPRs in order to achieve relevant SDGs.</p> <p>The EPR unit will work with the ECE Expert Group on EPRs at the 31st meeting of the EPR Expert Group on EPRs (22-23 Oct. 2020) to start revising the structure of the chapters in order to integrate the SDGs more deeply and coherently and, based on the availability of funds including from RPTC, to design capacity-development activities and materials to support countries in their implementation of the relevant recommendations.</p>	EPR Unit	December 2020	<p><b>In progress</b></p> <p>New guidance has been given to experts drafting the EPR of Romania in December 2019–January 2020 to further integrate SDGs into the text of the review, including directly into recommendations, instead of reflecting relevant SDG targets in separate boxes in the text. However, a planned workshop to provide additional support to the countries in their implementation of review recommendations relating to SDG 7 was postponed due to the COVID 19 pandemic.</p>
3	<p><b>The EPR unit should seek advice from the Expert Group on EPRs on the need and modalities for deeper coverage of human rights and environment in EPRs in future EPRs.</b></p>	<p>UNECE accepts the recommendation.</p> <p>The EPRs have concentrated on the state of the environment, environmental management, health and measurable environmental issues such as emissions. Human rights issues related to environment have not been covered by EPRs and the EPR unit will seek advice from the Expert Group on EPRs and OHCHR colleagues dealing with environment and human rights how and to</p>	EPR Unit	December 2020	<p><b>In progress</b></p> <p>Activities have started. The EPR unit is currently analysing how to further address human rights and environment in the EPRs, i.e. through the coverage of Aarhus Convention topics and preparing recommendations which take human rights concerns into consideration. Outcomes are expected to be presented at the next meeting of the Expert Group on EPRs in October 2020.</p>

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		<p>what extent to address these issues.</p> <p>The EPR unit will invite OHCHR colleagues to raise the issue of human rights connected to environment in the next meeting of the Expert Group on EPRs. The EPR unit will then analyse and subsequently implement the recommendations that the Expert Group will give on how to cover and integrate human rights in the general structure of EPRs at the 31st meeting of the EPR Expert Group on EPR (22-23 Oct. 2020).</p>			
4	<p><b>UNECE should extend cooperation with other UN entities and other international organizations for organization of the future EPRs since the EPR Programme covers several fields that are beyond the expertise of UNECE, such as industry, health, agriculture, waste management and environmental risk management. This should include WHO, UNEP, UNIDO.</b></p>	<p>UNECE accepts this recommendation.</p> <p>The EPR Programme by its nature is a wide ranging and multi-faceted and therefore needs expertise on very diverse and specified issues – such as biodiversity, protected areas management, waste and chemical management and climate change adaption and mitigation. The five staff of the EPR unit does not and cannot have all this expertise. Therefore, the EPR unit has had hundreds of UN system, in-kind or outside experts contributing to EPR reviews over the course of the past 23 years. For example, during the period from 2015 to 2019, 162 experts worked on EPRs out of which 41 were either from the EPR unit or ECE. The EPR unit has collaborated with UNEP, OCHA, WHO and OECD.</p> <p>The EPR unit will continue its long-standing policy of using the best available experts on specific issues and continue and, if possible, expand its contacts with WHO, UNIDO, UNEP, UNDP, FAO, OECD and others for the best possible expertise on all environmental issues for the next review that will take place spring 2020.</p>	EPR Unit		<p><b>Implemented in June 2020</b></p> <p>This is a current practice which can be extended to relevant organisations, depending on the structure of the review. After a preparatory mission, the EPR unit contacts other international organizations to ask them to provide expertise or to share information on related topics based on the agreed structure. For example, after the preparatory mission carried out in Azerbaijan mid-November, the EPR unit approached UNEP and colleagues from transport division to request expertise. The review mission to Azerbaijan was postponed to Sept. 2020 due to COVID 19 pandemic.</p> <p>During the consolidation of the report, the EPR unit also contacts relevant international organisations, if needed.</p>

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5	<b>Future EPRs need to continue supporting the beneficiary countries in developing/refining legal and policy framework for green economy together with putting in place specific green economy initiative and financing.</b>	<p>UNECE accepts this recommendation.</p> <p>As responses to the emerging global and regional concerns, new concepts and approaches, such as green economy, have been developed. In 2011, the seventh Ministerial Conference “Environment for Europe” requested the EPR Programme in its third cycle to include amongst others, financing in a green economy context. However, in some reviewed countries, the legal and policy framework for green economy and specific green economy initiatives are lacking.</p> <p>The Pan-European Strategic Framework for Greening the Economy provides guidance to an inclusive green economy that will bring investment in innovation, foster the transfer of green technology and products and stimulate sustainable consumer behaviour. To respond to the identified challenge and based on the Pan-European Strategic Framework for Greening the Economy, the EPR unit will work with the Expert Group on EPRs and UNEP, and in cooperation with OECD, to design and increase capacity-development activities and materials to support countries in integrating green economy approaches at the 31st meeting of the EPR Expert Group on EPR (22-23 Oct. 2020). These actions will be undertaken in order to reduce environmental risks and ecological scarcities, create green jobs and minimize negative consequences for enterprises and vulnerable groups.</p>	EPR Unit	December 2020	<p><b>In progress</b></p> <p>Activities continue. A consultant performs the following tasks:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Take stock of what has been done in greening the economy, identify commonalities in the problems and the solutions and draw lessons for all involved in chapters related to environmental economics or green economy in EPRs carried out since 2015</li> <li>2. Examine what have been the challenges and bottlenecks for the greening the economy of the reviewed countries and how the economic and environmental practices, economic and legal instruments, investments, expenditures and subsidies on environment have supported or hindered sustainable development.</li> </ol>
6	<b>UNECE in collaboration with CEP, EPR Expert Group, donors and relevant UN and other</b>	The availability of data has been problematic throughout the time of the EPR Programme. The voluntary nature of the Programme sometimes hinders the enthusiasm of the country under review to provide the necessary data.	EPR Unit	December 2020	<p><b>In progress</b></p> <p>The EPR unit in all forums and in all phases of the EPR process, consistently reminds countries under review to submit to the EPR review team accurate</p>

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	<p><b>international organizations should increase the awareness and readiness of reviewed countries to provide all necessary data and information facilitating a smooth incorporation of relevant SDGs into the reviews.</b></p>	<p>There are several, sometimes overlapping, reasons for non-provision of data. These include: institutional practices of ministries and statistical offices; data are considered confidential; or data for specific environmental area not being collected at all. In communications with the countries under review, the EPR Programme has always emphasized the importance of the availability of good, reliable and timely data. The rationale for having data for EPRs has been that good data enables better analysis of the environmental problems leading to good recommendations best suited for the needs of the country, including the incorporation of SDGs in the reviews.</p> <p>The EPR Programme will continue to underline the need for reliable data and to increase awareness of the reviewed countries of the importance of data availability. The EPR unit will seek support from the Executive Secretary and the Statistical Division to obtain the necessary data for future countries under review. The next review is expected to take place spring 2020.</p>			<p>information and data in particular those related to the structure of the review.</p>