

ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR EUROPE

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

120th meeting
Geneva, 26 January 2022

Item 9

Informal Document 2022/5

**Programme-level evaluation
of UNECE engagement with the private sector**

(for information)

In September 2017, the UNECE Framework for the Engagement with the business sector (informal document 2017/40) was approved by the Executive Committee that had requested to strengthen the management of reputational risks. The Due Diligence Review of Private Sector Entities Engaging with UNECE was presented at the same time.

Programme-level evaluation

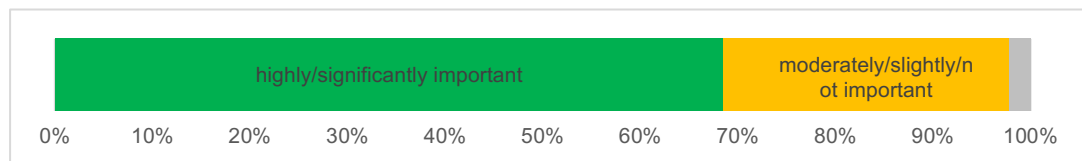
To strengthen UNECE's understanding of how to better engage and partner with the private sector for the benefit of its member States in the context of the 2030 Agenda.

Methods and tools

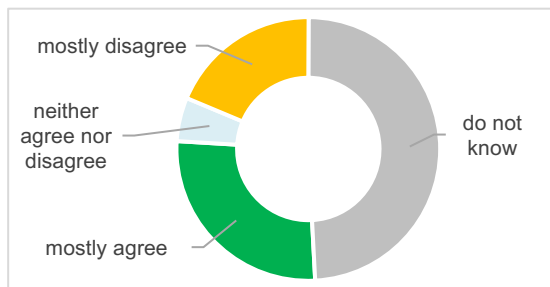
Desk review (50+ documents)
Questionnaire (24 Secretaries of subsidiary bodies)
Remote semi-structured interviews (26)

Stakeholders' opinion about UNECE engagement with the private sector:

68% Importance of the business sector in advancing towards sustainable development and regional cooperation and integration

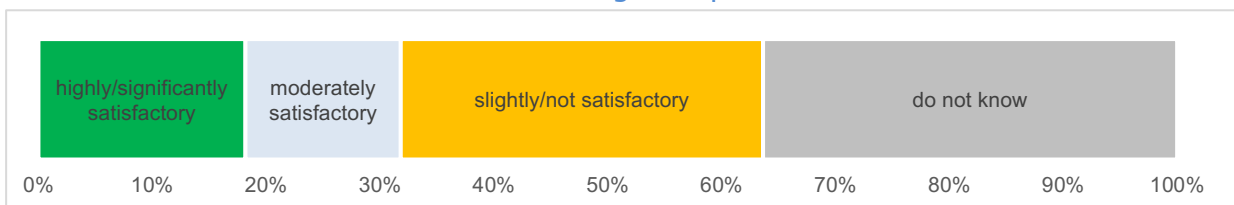


Opinion on the Framework usefulness, responsiveness and coherence with UN practices and UNECE mandate

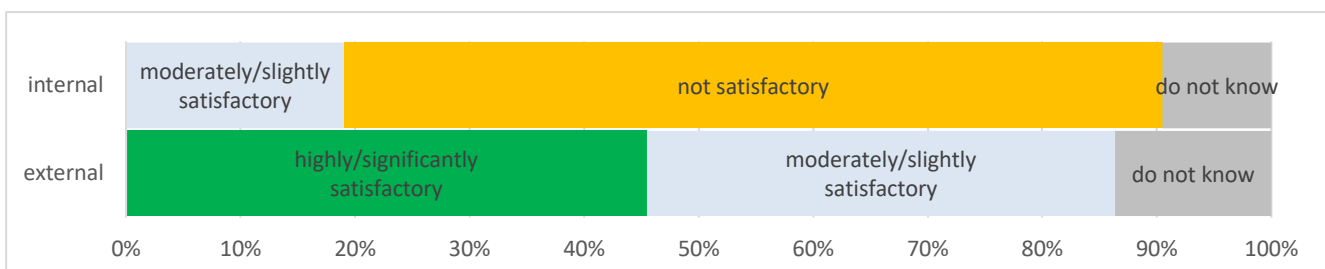


49% Staff familiarity with the Framework for engagement with the private sector

18% Staff satisfaction with the due diligence procedures



0% & 45% Satisfaction with communication



Main conclusions:

The relevance of the engagement with the private sector is broadly recognized by UN and UNECE strategic documents. Both staff and country representatives thought that the business sector should be an important partner for UNECE in advancing towards sustainable development and regional cooperation and integration.

The UNECE Framework does not provide a detailed roadmap for further action and does not contain a forward-looking vision for strengthening strategic engagement with the private sector. UNECE does not have dedicated staff devoted to engagement with the private-sector.

UNECE has benefited from engaging with the business sector in terms of raising the relevance of its work; accessing specific expertise and new solutions; testing the relevance of the norms; raising awareness of its work; encouraging business sector contribution to the SDGs.



Nevertheless, the approval of the Framework did not increase the effectiveness of UNECE engagement with the business sector that remained low. For example, it did not contribute to promote cross-sectorial cooperation and strategic partnerships.

The perception of UNECE's engagement with the business sector was significantly different inside and outside the Organization.

Recommendations:

- [R1]** Strengthen buy-in from membership, senior management and other relevant stakeholders through better sharing the benefits of engaging with the private sector. This would allow to forge a consensus on what is expected from the private sector.
- [R2]** Review the Framework in the spirit of SDG 17 and complement it with an overarching UNECE partnership strategy, including operational guidance responsive to current issues in the specific context of UNECE's mandate and activities.
- [R3]** In the business sector partnership strategy, clarify the type of partnerships and determine their role in advancing UNECE's mandate. This would allow to strategize on its vision and areas of engagement, ensuring that competing interests are sufficiently represented and possibly exploring innovative types of collaboration.
- [R4]** Strengthen the organizational capacity to develop and manage partnerships, including clarification of internal processes and specific awareness raising activities (even training) for staff. This would allow a strengthened implementation of a partnership strategy and learning from successes and failures.
- [R5]** Strengthen capacities that support collaboration with the business sector, including improved due diligence and risk management. This would allow to further develop the due diligence and associated processes as a function that is meant to serve the Organization to identify the most strategic opportunities, while at the same time properly assessing potential risks (including simplified mechanisms tailored to low-risk types of engagement or small financial contributions).
- [R6]** Implement a monitoring system of the engagement with the private sector at Subprogramme/Division level and establish a consolidated knowledge management database at the Organization level. This would allow to promote clear results and replicate good practices.
- [R7]** Consider putting in place a "one-stop shop" to receive and appropriately channel private sector partnership initiatives which could facilitate engagement and reduce the associated bureaucracy.
- [R8]** Partnerships should explore the possibility of engaging various Subprogrammes exploiting more fully the potential of new relationships (such as cross-sectorial cooperation around the UNECE nexus areas) to achieve a greater impact on the SDGs, including SDG 5 on gender equality. This could be done both in the partnership strategy itself or during its implementation (specific agreements).

MANAGEMENT RESPONSE

Evaluation Title:	Programme-level evaluation of UNECE engagement with the private sector		
Period of Review:	2017-2021		
Date of Evaluation Report:	27/09/2021		
Approved by	Executive Secretary Olga Algayerova	Date	Signature
		22/12/2021	
Prepared by:	Chief, a.i., Programme Management Unit Nicolas Dath-Baron	22/12/2021	

Recommendation 1:

Strengthen buy-in from membership, senior management and other relevant stakeholders within the Organization through better sharing the benefits of engaging with the private sector. This would allow to forge a consensus on what is expected from the private sector (desirable scenario).

Management Response:

UNECE accepts the recommendation.

Follow up actions and responsibilities:

UNECE, with inputs of all subprogrammes, will prepare a Partnership Strategy, which will clarify inter alia, the benefits of engaging with the private sector.

Responsibility: Deputy-Executive Secretary

Timeline: 31 December 2023

Recommendation 2:

Review the Framework in the spirit of SDG 17 (living document) and complement it with an overarching UNECE partnership strategy. This would include providing operational guidance that is responsive to current issues in the specific context of UNECE's mandate and activities.

Management Response:

UNECE accepts the recommendation.

Follow up actions and responsibilities:

The Partnership Strategy will provide operational guidance for engagement with the private sector at the subprogramme level, in the context of UNECE's mandate and activities.

Responsibility: Deputy-Executive Secretary

Timeline: 31 December 2023

Recommendation 3:

In the business sector partnership strategy, clarify the type of partnerships and determine their role in advancing UNECE's mandate. This would allow to strategize on its vision and areas of engagement, ensuring that competing interests are sufficiently represented and possibly exploring innovative types of collaboration (ensuring consistency with other rules such as those related to the right to vote, non-reimbursable loans of personnel services from external sources, etc.)

Management Response:

UNECE accepts the recommendation.

Follow up actions and responsibilities:

The Partnership Strategy, to be developed in consultation with all the subprogrammes will clarify the type of partnerships with the private sector and determine their role in advancing UNECE's mandate, ensuring that competing interests are sufficiently represented, including with regard to the UN rules, policies and procedures.

Responsibility: Deputy-Executive Secretary, supported by Executive Office and PMU.

Timeline: 31 December 2023

Recommendation 4:

Strengthen the organizational capacity to develop and manage partnerships, including clarification of internal processes and specific awareness raising activities (even training) for staff. This would allow a strengthened implementation of a partnership strategy and learning from successes and failures.

Management Response:

UNECE accepts the recommendation.

Follow up actions and responsibilities:

Partnerships have been centralized in the Office of the Deputy-Executive Secretary since 1 September 2021. While internal processes have already been simplified in practice, they will be outlined in the Partnership Strategy. The training of staff will need to be supported within existing resources. Subsequent Partnerships reports to EXCOM will inform member States about the implementation of the strategy.

Responsibility: Deputy-Executive Secretary

Timeline: 31 December 2023

Recommendation 5:

Strengthen capacities that support collaboration with the business sector, including improved due diligence and risk management. This would allow to further develop the due diligence and associated processes as a function that is meant to serve the Organization to identify the most strategic opportunities, while at the same time properly assessing potential risks (including simplified mechanisms tailored to low-risk types of engagement or small financial contributions).

Management Response:

UNECE partially accepts the recommendation.

Follow up actions and responsibilities:

ECE support functions are funded from the regular budget and opportunities to strengthen capacities are limited, with reference to the zero-growth instructions included in the guidance from the Secretary-General in the last 10 years.

However, UNECE is always looking for efficiencies through the improvement of existing internal processes. The due diligence and associated processes will be aligned with the Partnership Strategy to identify the most strategic opportunities, while at the same time properly assessing potential risks.

Responsibility: Deputy-Executive Secretary, supported by Executive Office

Timeline: 31 December 2023

Recommendation 6:

Implement a monitoring system of the engagement with the private sector at Subprogramme/Division level and establish a consolidated knowledge management database at the Organization level. This would allow to promote clear results and replicating good practices.

Management Response:

UNECE accepts the recommendation.

Follow up actions and responsibilities:

A first Partnerships report will be presented to EXCOM in 2022; it will provide information on partnerships at Subprogramme/Division level, including with the private sector, and capture best practices. An internal knowledge management system will also be released by the end of 2022 and will, among other areas, enable a more streamlined information and knowledge sharing as regards the partnerships with the private sector.

Responsibility: Deputy-Executive Secretary, supported by Executive Office

Timeline: 31 December 2022

Recommendation 7:

Consider putting in place a “one-stop shop” to receive and appropriately channel private sector partnership initiatives which could facilitate engagement and reduce the associated bureaucracy.

Management Response:

UNECE accepts the recommendation.

Follow up actions and responsibilities:

Partnerships have been centralized in the Office of the Deputy-Executive Secretary since 1 September 2021. While internal processes have already been simplified in practice, they will be outlined in the Partnership Strategy.

Responsibility: Deputy-Executive Secretary, supported by Executive Office

Timeline: 31 December 2023

Recommendation 8:

Partnerships should explore the possibility of engaging various Subprogrammes exploiting more fully the potential of new relationships (such as cross-sectorial cooperation around the UNECE nexus areas) to achieve a greater impact on the SDGs, including SDG 5 on gender equality. This could be done both in the partnership strategy itself or during its implementation (specific agreements).

Management Response:

UNECE accepts the recommendation.

Follow up actions and responsibilities:

The Partnerships reports will reflect at the subprogramme level the engagement with the private sector to achieve a greater impact on the SDGs, including SDG 5 on gender equality.

Responsibility: Deputy-Executive Secretary, supported by the Gender Focal Point

Timeline: 31 December 2023