UNECE

TERMS OF REFERENCE

1819AE: Evidence-based environmental governance and sustainable environmental policies in support of the 2030 Agenda in South-East Europe

I.   Purpose

The primary purpose of the evaluation is to assess the extent to which the objectives of the UNDA 11th tranche project "Evidence-based environmental governance and sustainable environmental policies in support of the 2030 Agenda in South-East Europe" were achieved. The evaluation will assess the relevance, coherence, effectiveness, efficiency and sustainability of the project in supporting member States to strengthen their capacities in the area of sustainable environmental policies, in the context of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The evaluation will also assess progresses on human rights, gender equality results, disability inclusion, climate change and disaster risk reduction in the context of this engagement. The evaluation will finally look at the activities repurposed to address the impact of the Covid-19 crisis, and assess, to the extent possible, the ECE's COVID-19 early response through this project.

The results of the evaluation will allow improving capacity building services provided to member States through regular technical cooperation as well as the development and implementation of similar future projects and activities by the Environment Division (ED) of UNECE.

II.   Scope

The evaluation will include the full project implementation during the period of 1 January 2018-31 December 2021 in five countries (Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, North Macedonia, Montenegro and Serbia) and Republic of Moldova.

III.   Background

The project supports the expected accomplishment (d) of the subprogramme 1 "Environment" "Improved environmental performance review of interested countries". The main goal of the project is to strengthen environmental governance and development of sustainable environmental policies. The lack of comprehensive and evidence-based policy and of concrete and realistic plans of actions prevent countries from progressing towards implementation of the 2030 Agenda.

An EPR is an assessment of the progress a country has made in reconciling its environmental and economic targets and in meeting its international environmental commitments. The EPR Programme has been mandated to assist the UNECE member States in supporting the achievement and monitoring of SDGs in the pan-European region by the Eighth Environment

for Europe Ministerial Conference (Batumi, 2016).

The project builds on the EPRs of the targeted countries. These countries have recently been reviewed by the EPR Programme. Moreover, the stretched national resources in the five countries are currently strongly focused on EU integration. Additional efforts are therefore needed to emphasize and prioritize the implementation of the 2030 Agenda, including by aligning it, as much as possible, with the EU accession process. Another selection criterion has been the opportunity to strengthen the impact at the country level by applying the regional approach. As the five countries have similar conditions and priorities, they often face similar challenges in improving their environmental policies and legislation. For these reasons, they can benefit from peer learning, identification of common issues and solutions, and exchange of best practices, offered through the proposed project.

All targeted countries have achieved some progress with the integration of environmental issues in existing sector-specific policies and legislation. However, such integration exists at the level of policy documents and laws and is weaker at the level of secondary legislation. Mechanisms to integrate them are often absent.

The project assisted countries to conduct a review and a needs assessment of the implementation of the recommendations coming from their EPRs in line with relevant SDGs. Further, it facilitated the development of a national action plan or policy packages to implement the EPR recommendations related to SDGs. Specific attention was paid to vulnerable groups, as relevant to specific EPR recommendations.

In March 2020, the project was modified to involve additional studies to ascertain the impact of the COVID 19 and possible recovery pathways. For example, in Montenegro, the public participation on environmental matters in times of COVID-19 was addressed.

The primary partners of the project wee the ministries involved in environmental issues, together with sectoral ministries responsible for agriculture, energy, industry, mining or transport, the inspection authorities responsible for environmental enforcement, NGOs, the private sector and academia.

The project was implemented in cooperation with UNEP, UNDP and the United Nations Country Teams in beneficiary countries.

The budget of the project was $470,000 funded from the 11th tranche of the Development Account. The project was managed by the Environmental Affairs Officer from the Operational Activities & Review Section, funded from the UN regular budget (Sect.20) resources.

IV. Issues

The evaluation will answer the following issues: Relevance; Coherence; Effectiveness; Efficiency and Sustainability.

Relevance:

1. To what extent did the Project respond to the priorities and needs of the beneficiary countries to develop evidence-based policies, in the context of the 2030 Agenda and EU integration?

2.	To what extent were the activities consistent with global and regional priorities? How relevant were the activities vis-à-vis the programme of work of the UNECE? What value has UNECE's efforts added in this area?
3.	How relevant was the project to the target groups' needs and priorities? Was there a focus on the most vulnerable ones?
4.	Did the project apply gender, rights-based and disability inclusion approaches in the design, implementation, and results of the activities?
5.	How relevant was the project with regards to climate change and disaster risk reduction?

Coherence:
6.	How coherent was the collaboration with other entities in the UN system and other international organizations?
7.	How coherent was the project design? Were the activities implemented in the required sequence needed to ensure the greatest impact of the project? To what extent are the outputs consistent with and relevant to the overall objective and expected accomplishments?
8.	What adjustments, if any, were made to the project as a direct consequence of the COVID-19 situation, and to what extent did the adjustments allow the project to effectively respond to the new priorities of Member States that emerged in relation to COVID-19?
9.	How did the adjustments, if any, affect the achievement of the project's expected results as stated in its original results framework?

Effectiveness:
10.	Did the project achieve the results expected during the project design in terms of the planned activities, outcome, and impact?
11.	What were the challenges/ obstacles to achieving the activities, objective and expected accomplishments?

Efficiency:
12.	Did the project achieve its objectives within the anticipated budget and allocation of resources?
13.	How could the use of resources be improved? Would you propose any alternatives to achieve the same results? If yes, which ones?
14.	Were the human and financial resources allocated to the project used efficiently and commensurate the project results?

Sustainability:
15.	How is the stakeholders' engagement likely to continue, be scaled up, replicated or institutionalized? To what extent do the partners and beneficiaries 'own' the outcomes of the work?
16.	To what extent are the objectives of the activity still valid? How can the activity be replicated in the UNECE region or in other regions?
17.	What are the lessons learnt from the COVID-19 related activities? Could they be replicated?
18.	What are the laws, regulations, policies or projects that have been developed so far based on the strengthening of environmental governance and development of sustainable environmental policies?

V.   Methodology

a) The evaluation will be conducted based on the following mixed methods to triangulate information:

- <u>A desk review</u> of all relevant documents, as the primary source of information. The desk review will include *inter alia*: the project document and information on project activities (monitoring data); studies and reports (EPRs reports, EPR-related CEP reports); and the EPR-related decisions from the CEP annual sessions. These documents will be provided by the EPR unit. The consultant will also research projects in the same area conducted by other UN agencies.

- <u>Interviews</u> (in person and/or by telephone/video) to be conducted with (i) national coordinators who acted as UNECE counterparts throughout the national assessments and follow up activities; (ii) representatives of government agencies responsible for the areas addressed in the studies; (iii) representatives of enterprise support institutions ; and, (iv) partners involved in the project, UNECE responsible staff from the Market Access Section and UNCTAD. As deemed necessary, focus group discussions via online platforms can also be organized.

- <u>Online survey</u> of the key stakeholders and beneficiaries. The survey will be developed by the consultant on his preferred platform.

- <u>Remote observation</u> of virtual workshops and meetings

b) Norms and standards

The evaluation will be conducted in accordance with the [ECE Evaluation Policy](#) and the Administrative instruction guiding Evaluation in the UN Secretariat ([ST/AI/2021/3](#)).

Gender equality and human rights considerations are integrated at all stages of the evaluation: (i) in the evaluation scope of analysis, evaluation criteria and questions design; (ii) in the methods, tools, and data analysis techniques; (iii) in the findings, conclusions and recommendations of the final report.

c) Outline of the final report

The evaluation report will strive not to exceed 30 pages and follow the mandatory outline for UNDA report to be shared by the Programme Management Unit. An Executive summary (max. 2 pages) will summarize the methodology of the evaluation, key findings, conclusions, and recommendations.

VI.   Evaluation schedule

A. Preliminary research: by 1 November 2021;
B. Data collection: by 15 December 2021;
C. Data analysis: by 15 January 2021;
D. Draft report: 20 February 2022;
E: Final draft report: 1 March 2022
F: Final report: 15 March 2022

Final timetable to be agreed following engagement of the evaluator. The timing above is indicative.

VII. Resources and Management of the evaluation

An independent consultant will be engaged for a period of 40 days to conduct the evaluation, within a budget of $19,600, inclusive of all costs.

To enhance the relevance, quality and credibility of the evaluation process, an Evaluation Committee will support the evaluation process. The Committee will be comprised of three members:
- Antoine Nunes, EPR Manager, Operational Activities & Review Section (OARS)
- Nicolas Dath-Baron, Programme Officer in charge of evaluations, Programme Management Unit (PMU)
- Ms. Olivera Kujundzic, Senior Advisor, Ministry of Ecology, Spatial Planning and Urban Development, Montenegro

The Evaluation Committee will be involved in the following steps:
- Review of the Terms of Reference
- Review of the proposed evaluator profiles
- Reception and review of the draft evaluation report

The Project Manager, Mr. Antoine Nunes, in consultation with Mr. Nicholas Bonvoisin, OARS Chief of Section will be involved in the following steps:
- Provide all documentation needed for desk review, contact details, support and guidance to the evaluation consultant as needed throughout the timeline of the evaluation.
- Advise the evaluator on the recipients for the questionnaire and for follow-up interviews.
- Process and manage the consultancy contract of the evaluator, along the key milestones agreed with PMU.

The Programme Management Unit will be involved in the following steps:
- Selection of the evaluator
- Development and clearance of the Terms of Reference
- Provide guidance to the Project Manager and evaluator as needed on the evaluation design and methodology
- Clearance of the final report after quality assurance of the draft report

VIII. Intended Use/Next Steps

Findings of this evaluation will be used when possible to:
- improve direct project's follow up actions, implementation of products by project beneficiaries and dissemination of the knowledge created through the project;
- learn lessons from early response to the impact of COVID-19, to develop further related projects
- assess the gaps and further needs of countries in the area of this project;
- formulate a tailored capacity building projects for the development of evidence-based policies for environment;
- induce new project ideas, improving the planning and design of future capacity-

building activities and projects on evidence-based regulatory and environmental policies in the UNECE region;

The results of the evaluation will be reported to the Committee on Environmental Policy (CEP).

Following the issuance of the final report, the Project Manager will develop a Management Response and action plan for addressing the recommendations made by the evaluator. The final evaluation report, the management response and the progress on implementation of recommendations will be available on the UNECE website.

IX. Criteria for evaluators

Evaluators should have:
- An advanced university degree or equivalent background in relevant disciplines
- Specialized training in areas such as evaluation, project management, advanced statistical research and analysis.
- Demonstrated relevant professional experience in design, management and conduct of evaluation processes with the UN Secretariat, with multiple stakeholders, survey design and implementation, and project planning, monitoring and management, gender analysis and human rights due diligence
- Demonstrated methodological knowledge of evaluations, including quantitative and qualitative data collection and analysis for end-of-cycle project evaluations.
- Fluent in written and spoken English.

Evaluators should declare any conflict of interest to UNECE before embarking on an evaluation project, and at any point where such conflict occurs.