



Economic Commission for Europe**Committee on Urban Development, Housing and Land Management****Eighty-third session**

Geneva, 4-5 April 2022 (Part I); and San Marino, 3-6 October 2022 (Part II)

Item 2 of the provisional agenda

Second Forum of Mayors

Item 6 of the provisional agenda

Report on the outcomes of the second Forum of Mayors and related recommendations**Results of the evaluation of the Forum of Mayors****Note by the secretariat***Summary*

At its 112th session, the Executive Committee (EXCOM) of the Economic Commission for Europe (ECE) mandated the Steering Committee of the Forum of Mayors to evaluate the 2020 session of the Forum and submit the results for the consideration of the Committee on Urban Development, Housing and Land Management (CUDHLM) at its eighty-third session (2022). The results of the evaluation are to provide the basis for the session's deliberations on the objectives, format and frequency of the Forum, if extended beyond 2022, with a view to submitting a proposal on the future of the Forum for endorsement by EXCOM in 2022 and/or by the seventieth session of the ECE Commission in 2023 (ECE/EX/2020/L.16).

This document contains the main conclusions and recommendations emerging from the evaluation. The Committee is invited to consider the document. The entire evaluation report is contained in information document ECE/HBP/2022/Inf. 1.



I. Introduction

1. This evaluation was mandated by EXCOM to decide whether to extend the Forum of Mayors beyond 2022 as well as to agree on its objectives, format and frequency.
2. The results of the evaluation will be considered by CUDHLM at its 83rd session and by EXCOM during 2022.
3. The following events were included in the scope of the evaluation: Day of Cities (8 April 2019), the first Forum of Mayors (6 October 2020) and the second Forum of Mayors (4-5 April 2022).
4. An Independent Evaluation Committee oversaw the evaluation process to reinforce its impartiality. The findings and results of the evaluation were based on sound evidence and analysis by triangulating the information where possible.
5. The evaluation relied on complementary methods and sources: document review, interviews with key informants and an online survey targeting participants in the above-mentioned events.

II. Main conclusions

A. Relevance

6. The role of mayors and cities as a positive and growing force on the global stage was broadly acknowledged. It is necessary for ECE to engage with cities to ensure the relevance and effectiveness of its work.
7. Mandated by an intergovernmental body, the Forum has emerged as a broad and valued platform to engage ECE mayors and member States in practical discussions on sustainable urban development in the region.

B. Efficiency and coherence

8. Although the Forum has its own programme and agenda and has been operating independently from other ECE bodies, it being *de facto* part of CUDHLM has ensured its relevance and effectiveness. The link with the Committee – formal body that allows to bring the output of the forum into the official discussions – is very valuable.
9. The Forum should be a crucial instrument for implementing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and localizing the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).
10. The Steering Committee, established to coordinate the preparatory work and organization of the Forum, is currently providing advice but without the framework of agreed terms of reference. There is a need to further clarify its relationship with both member States and the secretariat.
11. ECE provided efficient support through regular budget staff. Although no personnel were used exclusively for the Forum, the outreach was positive and the feedback very good. Over 92 per cent of the stakeholders approached as part of this evaluation assessed the organization of the events as satisfactory and 85 per cent rated the support provided by the secretariat as satisfactory.
12. The secretariat has recently been strengthened with a fully dedicated Regional Advisor position and a Junior Professional Officer (JPO) funded by Italy at the P2 level. This should contribute to improving cross-collaboration with other divisions as well as the quality of the services of ECE in general.

C. Effectiveness

13. The current process of selecting the participating cities fully corresponds to the intergovernmental nature of the ECE. The limit of one city per country is a pragmatic approach to maximize cost-effectiveness.

14. The Forum is a “work in progress” with immense opportunities to build up a record of action beyond sharing experiences. It is necessary to keep the momentum and to provide a response to a quickly evolving context by offering a neutral platform to bring stakeholders together.

15. Geneva offers a “neutral place” to host the Forum, one that minimizes any selection problems. In addition, it facilitates the participation of member States, ensures economies of scale (including the contribution of the Geneva Cities Hub) and strengthens the Forum’s character and connection with the United Nations’ processes (stressing mayors as another layer of diplomacy).

D. Impact and sustainability

16. Between 85 per cent and 100 per cent of the stakeholders believed that the Forum satisfactorily contributed to peer-learning, the exchange of knowledge and increased understanding by urban authorities of successful examples of transitioning toward smart sustainable cities. Stakeholders broadly highlighted that more space for informal exchange should be planned.

17. Involving participating cities in the substantial preparation of the meetings proved an excellent strategy to strengthen ownership, and ensure active engagement of local governments on issues as well as practical discussions on sustainable urban development at the regional and international levels.

18. The Forum has increased its relevance by providing a venue for deliberations and initiatives by ECE mayors. Allowing the participants to discuss political matters contributed to strengthening ownership and visibility in 2022. The secretariat demonstrated excellent skills in resolving conflict and managing difficult situations that could have jeopardized the event.

18. While there is broad agreement that the Forum should be kept as a regional initiative, the potential of the Forum extends far beyond the ECE region, as its outcomes will contribute to the global vision of the future of cities. Most stakeholders appreciated the participation of mayors from outside the ECE region. Many highlighted that the Forum is also valuable for ECE and non-ECE member States and that clear criteria to invite them should be defined.

19. Having the well-known architect Norman Foster opening both the 2020 and 2022 Forums and his involvement in the Forum organization—*de facto* acting as its patron—provided huge visibility to the events and the participation of urban stakeholders beyond the usual ECE constituency.

III. Recommendations

- **Recommendation 1:** Formally establish the Forum of Mayors. It represents an innovative initiative that (i) responds to the role of mayors and cities as a positive and growing force on the global stage; and (ii) ensures the relevance and effectiveness of the ECE.
- **Recommendation 2:** Further strengthen the connection of the Forum with the work of CUDHLM by attaching it to the Committee’s annual sessions and finding a complementary narrative but keeping the Forum’s own programme and agenda.
- **Recommendation 3:** Keeping the tradition of providing a report to inform the ECE Regional Forum on Sustainable Development (RFSD) is a good practice and could be maintained.

- **Recommendation 4:** Have informal meetings with the representatives of municipalities to define the theme of the Forum’s meetings. Consider organizing the presentations specifically around progress toward the SDGs.
- **Recommendation 5:** Provide more information at the Forum on impact measurement to strengthen the role of the Forum as a crucial instrument to keep mayors and cities focused on the 2030 Agenda by, for example, presenting existing ECE tools for sustainable urban development, measuring progress toward smart sustainable cities, developing urban SDG strategies, trade-offs, implementation, monitoring, participation, etc.
- **Recommendation 6:** Consider hiring one dedicated staff to strengthen the secretariat. In this respect, the Government of Italy has recently provided support through a JPO at the P2 level to help with the Forum. If the experience proves successful, it should be considered to make this position a regular budget one.
- **Recommendation 7:** Strengthen the connection with the work of other ECE subprogrammes and divisions. The above-mentioned JPO position, together with the recently established fully dedicated Regional Advisor position, should contribute to improving cross-collaboration with other divisions and the quality of ECE services.
- **Recommendation 8:** Develop terms of reference that clearly define the role and mandate of the Steering Committee as crucial instrument for providing an “institutional structure” for the Forum and guiding its activities. The terms of reference would also further clarify the relationship of the Forum with both member States and the secretariat.
- **Recommendation 9:** Strengthen the current city selection system that fully corresponds with the intergovernmental nature of the ECE. Further develop objective selection criteria to ensure alignment with the work of CUDHLM and maximize impact. The limit of one city per country is a pragmatic approach. In the future, an increased number could be considered if sufficient resources are available. In any case, the selection should allow to mix new with previous participants.
- **Recommendation 10:** Organize the Forum on an annual basis, at least until it becomes a well-known event and frequency could be then reconsidered. The Forum is a work in progress with immense opportunities to build up a community of action beyond sharing experiences. A yearly event would allow the Forum to “keep the momentum” and provide a response to a quickly evolving context by offering a neutral platform to bring stakeholders together.
- **Recommendation 11:** Organize the Forum two or three times in Geneva and then consider alternating every other year. This would minimize any selection problems, facilitate participation, ensure economies of scale, strengthen the Forum’s character and connection with the United Nations processes and stress mayors as another layer of diplomacy.
- **Recommendation 12:** Allow space to discuss political matters that could happen on the sides of the Forum (e.g., non-official declarations or discussions, side events, etc.), but with consideration to include more political discussions and outcome in the formal session (together with the presentations with images). It is necessary to keep the relevance of the initiative by providing a venue for mayors’ deliberations and initiatives. This will also strengthen ownership and visibility.
- **Recommendation 13:** Consider including a “global segment” in the Forum’s future sessions so as to contribute to the global vision of the future of cities. The selection of participants should be based on clear criteria to ensure that their engagement benefits all parties, including the other Regional Commissions of the United Nations.
- **Recommendation 14:** Consider formalizing the position of the “Patron” of the Forum to increase its visibility and the participation of urban stakeholders beyond the usual ECE constituency.