

Annex 1. TERMS OF REFERENCE

Cluster Evaluation of UNDP Country Programmes in Europe and the Commonwealth of Independent States

1. Background to the evaluation

The Independent Evaluation Office (IEO) of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) is undertaking a cluster evaluation of UNDP Country Programmes in 10 countries and 1 territory of Europe and the Commonwealth of Independent States (RBEC) each of which goes to the UNDP Executive Board in 2020 for the approval of their new Country Programme Documents (CPDs).

Each of the 11 countries (and territory) will undergo an Independent Country Programme Evaluation (ICPE), examining UNDP's work at the country level during the ongoing programme cycle 2016-2020. Results of the ICPEs are expected to provide a set of forward-looking recommendations as input to the new CPD development process for the next country programme development.

The UNDP programme countries under review, which can be grouped under three sub-regions based on their unique challenges and priorities, include:

- **Central Asia:** Kazakhstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan
- **South Caucasus and Western CIS:** Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus and Georgia
- **Western Balkans & Turkey:** North Macedonia, Serbia and Kosovo*

The outputs of this cluster evaluation will include 11 Independent Country Programme Evaluation (ICPE) Reports and a Regional Synthesis Report building on the ICPEs.

2. RBEC Regional Context and UNDP Programme

The countries of Europe and the Commonwealth of Independent States have recorded upward human development progress and significantly improved states capacity over the past two decades. All countries have achieved middle income status and eradicated extreme poverty during this period. At the same time, region has witnessed growing disparities in terms of income distribution, gender, and access to quality and affordable public services.

While many countries have reached high and very high Human Development Indices, an estimated 70 million people in the region live on less than 10 USD/day and are vulnerable to poverty. According to the last regional HDR report for the region (2016), some countries identified up to 50 per cent of their workforce (particularly youth) as either long-term unemployed or engaged in precarious, informal employment. Social exclusion also affects ethnic minorities, including Roma communities, people living with disabilities and in ill-health. Some of the countries in the region have seen rapid growth in HIV infection rates.

The countries of the region face similar governance challenges. Many are in need of public management reform, greater recognition and enforcement of the rule of law and access to justice, improved compliance with human

* All references to Kosovo shall be understood to be in the context of the Security Council Resolution 1244 (1999)

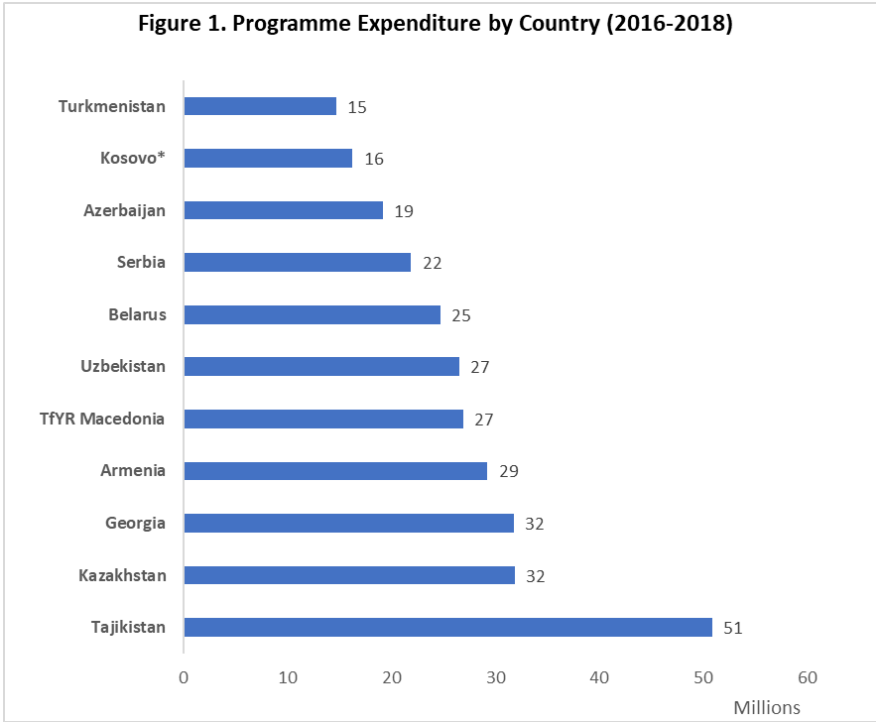
rights and other international conventions, as well as greater engagement of women and civil society in government policy setting and decision making. The region is vulnerable to natural disasters including climate change related issues such as flooding, droughts, seismic risks, and environmental risks, some of which are exacerbated by human activities such as unsustainable water and land management practices, and high reliance on fossil fuels. All of these risks pose long terms threats to human security and biodiversity.

Geopolitical tensions continue to affect the region due to on-going conflicts and the heritage from past conflicts. This is exacerbated by the geographical position of this region located at the juncture between Western Europe, Asia, and the middle east, making the region an important transit area but also a source and destination for human migration.

Policy reforms at the sub regional level (Western Balkans, Central Asia, South Caucasus and Western CIS) are influenced by the aspirations of countries to integrate with larger country groupings neighboring the regions, in particular the European Union.

UNDP Programming in the region

Between 2016-2018 (the review period), UNDP programmes in the 10 countries and 1 territory under review have aimed to contribute to sustainable and inclusive growth, accounting for almost 38% of the expenditure



(core and non-core), followed by support to institutions to deliver on universal access to basic services (32%) and democratic governance (15%), and lowering the risk of natural disasters including from climate change (10%). Gender equality and women’s empowerment cuts across all outcome areas, with evidence of explicit support to promote women’s empowerment. Efforts are also being made to assist countries mainstreaming the SDGs. Figure 1 highlights the total programme expenditures by country for the 11 UNDP country programmes under review, the thematic distribution of which varies by country taking into account context, economic and

social challenges in the three RBEC sub-regions.

3. Scope of the evaluation

The focus of the evaluation is the current country programme cycle (2016-2020) in the 10 countries and 1 territory, covering activities until the end of 2018. It will also include any ongoing projects and activities from the previous programme cycle that either continued or conclude in the current programme cycle.

The scope of each of these ICPEs will include the entirety of UNDP’s activities in the country and therefore will cover interventions funded by all sources, including core UNDP resources, donor funds, government funds. Each of the ICPEs will pay particular attention to their sub-regional and regional development context within which

the UNPD programme has operated. The roles and contributions of UNV and UNCDF in joint work with UNDP will also be captured by the evaluation.

4. Key Evaluation Questions and Guiding Principles

The ICPEs will address the following three questions.:

1. What did the UNDP country programme intend to achieve during the period under review?
2. To what extent has the programme achieved (or is likely to achieve) its intended objectives?
3. What factors contributed to or hindered UNDP's performance and eventually, the sustainability of results?

ICPEs are conducted at the outcome level. To address question 1, a Theory of Change (ToC) approach will be used in consultation with stakeholders, as appropriate. Discussions of the ToC will focus on mapping the assumptions behind the programmes desired change(s) and the causal linkages between the intervention(s) and the intended country programme outcomes. As part of this analysis, the CPD's progression over the review period will also be examined. In assessing the CPD's progression, UNDP's capacity to adapt to the changing context and respond to national development needs and priorities will also be looked at. The effectiveness of UNDP's country programme will be analyzed under evaluation question 2. This will include an assessment of the achieved outputs and the extent to which these outputs have contributed to the intended CPD outcomes. In this process, both positive and negative, direct and indirect unintended outcomes will also be identified.

To better understand UNDP's performance, the specific factors that have influenced - both positively or negatively - UNDP's performance and eventually, the sustainability of results in the country will be assessed under evaluation question 3. They will be examined in alignment with the engagement principles, drivers of development and alignment parameters of the Strategic Plan¹, as well as the utilization of resources to deliver results and how managerial practices impacted achievement of programmatic goals. Special attention will be given to integrate a gender equality approach to data collection methods. To assess gender across the portfolio, the evaluation will use the gender marker² and the gender results effectiveness scale (GRES).³

The regional synthesis will build on the findings from the ICPEs to analyze UNDPs corporate-level programme policy issues in addressing the unique challenges and priorities in the region, with special consideration to similarities across the three RBEC sub-regions, to consider the contribution of UNDP through its advisory and programmatic support at the regional level.

5. Approach and Methodology

The evaluation methodology will adhere to the United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG) Norms & Standards⁴. Methods for data collection will be both quantitative and qualitative. The evaluation will use data from primary and secondary sources, including desk review of documentation, surveys and information and interviews with key stakeholders, including beneficiaries, partners and project managers at the country level, Istanbul Regional

¹ These principles include: national ownership and capacity; human rights-based approach; sustainable human development; gender equality and women's empowerment; voice and participation; South-South and triangular cooperation; active role as global citizens; and universality.

² A corporate tool to sensitize programme managers in advancing GEWE through assigning ratings to projects during project design to signify the level of expected contribution to GEWE. It can also be used to track planned programme expenditures on GEWE (not actual expenditures).

³ The GRES, developed as part of the corporate evaluation on UNDP's contribution to gender equality and women's empowerment, classifies gender results into five categories: gender negative, gender blind, gender targeted, gender responsive, gender transformative.

⁴ <http://www.uneval.org/document/detail/1914>

Hub and at the UNDP Headquarters. Specific evaluation questions and the data collection method will be further detailed and outlined in an evaluation matrix.

Stakeholder Analysis: The evaluation will follow a participatory and transparent process to engage with multiple stakeholders at all stages of the evaluation process. During the initial phase of each ICPE, a stakeholder analysis will be conducted to identify all relevant UNDP partners, including those that may have not worked with UNDP but play a key role in the outcomes to which UNDP contributes. This stakeholder analysis will serve to identify key informants for interviews during the main data collection phase of the evaluation, and to examine any potential partnerships that could further improve UNDP's contribution to the country.

Desk review of documents: The evaluation team will undertake an extensive review of documents. This will include, among others, background documents on the regional, sub-regional and national context, documents prepared by international partners and other UN agencies during the period under review; project and programme documents such as workplans, progress reports; monitoring self-assessments such as the yearly UNDP Results Oriented Annual Reports (ROARs) and project and programme evaluations conducted by the country office, regional bureau and partners, including the quality assurance and audit reports. All project, programme and background documents related to this evaluation will be posted on a dedicated IEO SharePoint website. IEO will share the link to this website with the Regional Hub and Country Offices.

Pre-mission survey: A pre-mission survey will be administered for the UNDP Country staff and their counterparts in the country; and one for the UNDP RBEC Regional Programme staff (at Headquarter and Istanbul Regional Hub) at the onset of data collection.

Project and portfolio analysis: A number of projects that represent a cross section of UNDPs work will be selected for in-depth review and analysis at both the country and regional level based on the programme coverage (projects covering the various thematic and cross-cutting areas); financial expenditure (a representative mix of both large and smaller projects); maturity (covering both completed and active projects); and the degree of "success" (coverage of successful projects, as well as projects reporting difficulties where lessons can be learned).

Country missions and Key Informant Interviews: Country missions for data collection will be undertaken to the UNDP programme countries to gather evidence and validate findings. Field visits will be undertaken to projects selected for in-depth review. A multi-stakeholder approach will be followed, and interviews will include government representatives, civil-society organizations, private-sector representatives, UN agencies, multilateral organizations, bilateral donors, and beneficiaries of the programme. Focus groups will be used to consult some groups of beneficiaries as appropriate.

Triangulation: All information and data collected from multiple sources will be triangulated to ensure its validity. The evaluation matrix will be used to guide how each of the questions will be addressed and organize the available evidence by key evaluation question. This will facilitate the analysis and support the evaluation team in drawing well substantiated conclusions and recommendations.

Evaluation quality assurance: Quality assurance for the evaluation will be ensured by a member of the International Evaluation Advisory Panel, an independent body of development and evaluation experts. Quality assurance will be conducted in line with IEO principles and criteria, to ensure a sound and robust evaluation methodology and analysis of the evaluation findings, conclusions and recommendations. The expert will review the application of IEO norms and standards to ascertain the quality of the methodology, triangulation of data and analysis, independence of information and credibility of sources. The evaluation will also undergo internal IEO peer review prior to final clearance.

6. Management arrangements

Independent Evaluation Office of UNDP: The UNDP IEO will conduct the evaluation in consultation with the UNDP offices, the respective governments, the Regional Bureau for Europe and the Commonwealth of Independent States (RBEC) and other key partners at national, regional and international levels. IEO will lead and manage the evaluation and meet all costs directly related to the conduct of the evaluation.

UNDP Country Offices in the RBEC region: Each of the UNDP offices in the 10 RBEC countries and a territory will support the evaluation team to liaise with key partners and other stakeholders, make available to the team all necessary information regarding UNDP's programmes, projects and activities in the country, and provide factual verifications to the draft report on a timely basis. The CO will provide support in kind (e.g. arranging meetings with project staff, stakeholders and beneficiaries; assistance for field site visits). To ensure the anonymity of interviewees, the country office staff will not participate in the stakeholder interviews. Towards the later part of the evaluation, the CO and IEO will jointly organize the final stakeholder meeting, ensuring participation of key government counterparts, through a videoconference, where findings and results of the evaluation will be presented. Once finalized, the CO will prepare a management response in consultation with the Regional Bureau and support the outreach and dissemination of the final evaluation report.

UNDP RBEC and its Regional Hub: IEO will work closely with the Istanbul Regional Hub in coordinating the implementation of the ICPEs. UNDP RBEC and its Regional Hub will make available to the evaluation team all necessary information regarding UNDP's Regional programming and Hub activities and provide factual verifications to the draft report on a timely basis. The Regional Hub and the Bureau will help the evaluation team identify and liaise with key partners and stakeholders and help in arranging meetings and interviews. To ensure the anonymity of interviewees, UNDP staff will not participate in the stakeholder interviews. Towards the later part of the evaluation, the regional Hub and Bureau will participate in discussions on emerging conclusions and recommendations from the regional synthesis and support the outreach and dissemination of the final report.

Evaluation Team: The IEO will constitute an evaluation team to undertake the RBEC cluster evaluation. The likely composition of the evaluation team will be as follows.

- **IEO Evaluation Team:** IEO will put together an evaluation team comprising of three Lead Evaluators. Each of the three Lead Evaluators will have the responsibility for leading and coordinating the ICPEs for the countries in their respective RBEC sub-regions. Working together with an external research/ consultancy firm, they will be responsible for the finalization of the ICPE reports for their assigned countries and finalizing the sub-regional synthesis reports for their sub-region and contribute in the finalization of the regional synthesis report. One of the Lead Evaluators will have the additional responsibility for the overall coordination of the entire cluster evaluation process and deliverables.
- **External Consultancy Team:** IEO will launch a 'Request for Proposals/ Expression of Interest' inviting consulting firms/ think tanks/ research institutions/ individual consultants and put together a team of evaluation experts with substantial work experience and knowledge of the countries in the region/ sub-region and bring to the team their evaluation expertise in one or more of the UNDP work areas in the region, which include:
 - **Governance and Inclusive Sustainable Development** (including rule of law, justice, public administration, service delivery, poverty reduction, economic transformation and related areas)

- **Environment and Natural Resources Management** (including climate change adaptation, resilience and disaster risk reduction, environmental governance and related areas)

IEO will recruit up-to a maximum of three external consultancy teams to cover UNDP countries in each of the three sub-regions, with one Team Leader for each of the three sub-regions.

Under the direct supervision of the IEO Lead Evaluator, the recruited consulting teams will be responsible for research, data collection, analysis of findings, conclusions and recommendations leading to the preparation of the ICPE reports. The Team Leaders for the three sub-regions will also be responsible for drafting a sub-regional synthesis report and contribute in the finalization of the regional synthesis report.

7. Evaluation Process

The cluster evaluation will be conducted according to the approved IEO evaluation processes and methodologies. The following represents a summary of the key evaluation phases and the process, which will constitute the framework for conduct of the RBEC cluster evaluation.

Phase 1: Preparatory work. The IEO will prepare the TOR and evaluation design and recruit the external consultancy teams and finalize the Evaluation teams for the each of the three RBEC sub-regions. In order to allow for comparability and a strong high-level synthesis across the ICPEs, the evaluation design will identify and include the evaluation components to be used in the sub-regional synthesis. With the help of the UNDP country offices, IEO will initiate data collection. The evaluation questions will be finalized in an evaluation matrix containing detailed questions and means of data collection and verification to guide data collection, analysis and synthesis.

External Consultancy Teams on-boarding workshop (Skype Meeting): Following the finalization and recruitment of the external consultancy teams for the three RBEC sub-regions, IEO Lead Evaluators, will organize a virtual on-boarding orientation workshop for the Team Leaders and Members of the external consultancy teams. The purpose is to orient the Teams on the ICPE code of conduct, methodology and quality assurance procedures, evaluation templates and processes, clarification on the roles and responsibilities of the IEO team members and the external consultancy teams, expected outputs and the quality of deliverables and finalization of the detailed work-plans for the ICPEs in the three sub-regions.

Phase 2: Desk analysis. Evaluation team members will conduct desk reviews of reference material, prepare a summary of context and other evaluative evidence, and identify the outcome theory of change, specific evaluation questions, gaps and issues that will require validation during the field-based phase of data collection. The data collection will be supplemented by administering survey(s) and interviews (via phone, Skype etc.) with key stakeholders, including country and regional office staff. Based on the desk analysis, survey results and preliminary discussion with the regional and country level staff, the evaluation team will prepare an initial draft report on the emerging findings, data gaps, field data collection and validation mission plans.

Phase 3: Field data collection. This will be an intense 3-4 weeks period during which the evaluation teams will conduct the ICPE country missions (5-7 days per country) with back-to-back country missions. During this phase, the evaluation team will undertake missions to the ICPE countries to engage in data collection activities and validation of preliminary findings. The evaluation team will liaise with regional hub and the country office staff and management, key government stakeholders, other partners and beneficiaries. At the end of the mission, the evaluation team will hold a debriefing presentation of the key preliminary findings at the country office. IEO Lead Evaluators will join the External Evaluation Teams in most of the ICPE Country missions.

Phase 4: Analysis, report writing, quality review and debrief. Based on the analysis of data collected and triangulated, the IEO Lead Evaluators, together with the external consultancy team will initiate the analysis and synthesis process to prepare the ICPE report for each of the countries in their respective RBEC sub-region. The first draft (“zero draft”) of the ICPE report will be subject to peer review by IEO staff and then circulated to the respective country office and the UNDP Regional Bureau for any factual corrections. The second draft will be shared with national stakeholders in each country for further comments. Any necessary additional corrections will be made, and UNDP country office management will prepare the required management response, under the oversight of the regional bureau. The report will then be shared at a final debriefing where the results of the evaluation will be presented to key national stakeholders. Ways forward will be discussed with a view to creating greater ownership by national stakeholders in taking forward the recommendations and strengthening national accountability of UNDP. Taking into account the discussion at the stakeholder event, the final country evaluation report will be published.

The individual ICPE reports will be used for preparing the three sub-regional evaluation synthesis reports and. IEO Lead Evaluators will lead the preparation of the overall regional synthesis report in consultation with the three sub-regional Team Leaders. Prior to finalization, this will be shared with the Regional Hub and the Bureau for any factual corrections and comments.

Phase 5: Publication and dissemination. The ICPEs and the Regional Synthesis Report with their brief summaries will be widely distributed in hard and electronic versions. The individual ICPE reports will be made available to the UNDP Executive Board at the time of approval of the new Country Programme Documents in June and September 2020. The UNDP country offices and the respective Governments will disseminate the report to stakeholders in each country. The individual reports with the management response will be published on the UNDP website⁵ as well as in the Evaluation Resource Centre. The regional bureau will be responsible for monitoring and overseeing the implementation of follow-up actions in the Evaluation Resource Centre.⁶

The Regional Synthesis Report will be presented to the Executive Board at its Annual session in June 2020. It will be distributed by the IEO within UNDP as well as to the evaluation units of other international organisations, evaluation societies/networks and research institutions in the region. The RBEC Regional Bureau will be responsible for generating a management response, which will be published together with the final report.

8. Evaluation timeline and responsibilities

The timeframe and responsibilities for the evaluation process are tentatively⁷ as follows:

Timeframe for the cluster evaluation of UNDP 11 Country Programmes in Europe and the CIS Region		
Activity	Responsible party	Proposed timeframe
Phase 1: Preparatory work		
TOR – approval by the Independent Evaluation Office	LE	Sep 2018
Launch ‘Request for Proposals/ Expression of Interest’ for external consultancy teams	LE	Oct 2018
Finalization of the External Consultancy Team	LE	Nov-Dec 2018

⁵ web.undp.org/evaluation

⁶ erc.undp.org

⁷ The timeframe and deadlines are indicative and may be subject to change.

On-boarding workshop for the Team Leaders of external consultancy teams (workshop date will depend on the recruitment of the external consulting teams)	IEO Evaluation Team	Jan-Feb 2019
Phase 2: Desk analysis		
Preliminary analysis of available data and context analysis	External Team/LE Consulting	Jan-Mar 2019
Launch of pre-mission surveys (Country offices, RBEC Regional Programme and Regional Hub)	External Team/LE Consulting	Jan/Feb 2019
Preparation of draft pre-mission country analysis papers	External Team/LE Consulting	15 Mar 2019
Phase 3: Data Collection and Validation		
Data collection and validation country missions (5-7 days per country over a period of 3-4 weeks with back-to-back country missions)	External Team/LE Consulting	May/ Early June 2019
Phase 4: Analysis, report writing, quality review and debrief		
ICPE Analysis and Synthesis	LE/External Team Consulting	Jun-Jul 2019
Zero draft ICPE report for clearance by IEO and EAP	LE/External Team Consulting	Aug 2019
First draft ICPE report for CO/RBEC review	CO/RBEC/LEs	Sep 2019
Final (Second draft) ICPE report shared with GOV	CO/GOV/LEs	Sep-Oct 2019
Sub-regional evaluation synthesis report	LE/TLs	Sep-Oct 2019
UNDP management response to ICPE	CO/RBEC	Oct 2019
Regional evaluation synthesis report (Draft)	LE/TLs	Oct 2019
Final ICPE debriefing with national stakeholders	CO/LEs	Nov-Dec 2019
Final Regional Synthesis Paper	LEs	Nov-Dec 2019
Phase 5: Production and Follow-up		
Editing and formatting	IEO	Dec 2019
Final report and Evaluation Brief	IEO	Jan 2020
Dissemination of the final report	IEO/CO	Feb 2020
Phase 6: Executive Board Presentation		
EB Paper	EM/LE	Feb 2020
EB Presentation	IEO	May-Jun 2020