

# Evaluation Survey of the Regional Forum on Sustainable Development for the UNECE Region 2022

## Results

### 1. Introduction and overall characteristics of the sample

The Evaluation Survey was sent to all registered participants in the Regional Forum on Sustainable Development for the UNECE Region 2022 (Geneva, 6-7 April 2022) on 7<sup>th</sup> April 2022. It remained open until 10 May 2022.

During this period, 31 responses were received (out of a total of 958 registered participants). Most of the responses came from representatives of UNECE governments (25.8 per cent) and non-governmental organizations (41.9 per cent).

Table 1 shows the complete breakdown of respondents according to the organizations to which they belong.

**Table 1. Organization of respondents**

Group	Percentage	Number
UNECE Government	25.8	8
UN department, fund, programme, specialized agency or related organization	9.7	3
Intergovernmental and regional organization	3.2	1
Non-governmental organization	41.9	13
Private sector	6.8	1
Academia	0.0	0
Others	16.3	5
<b>Total</b>	100	31

The governments who participated in the survey were Albania, Andorra, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Greece, Portugal, Slovenia and Sweden. Responses were received by more than one participant in one case (Portugal).

Most respondents participated in the high-level policy segment *“Building back better from the COVID-19 while advancing the full implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in the UNECE Region”* and, in slightly lower numbers, in the plenary session *“Forward-looking policies for a sustainable COVID-19 recovery”*, in the first and second day, respectively. The most attended round table was on *“Gender equality”*, where 45.2 per cent of the respondents participated. Table 2 has full details on participation.

**Table 2. Participation by segments, all respondents.**

Segment	Percentage	Number
High-level policy segment (first day): Building back better from the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) while advancing the full implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in the UNECE Region	58.1	18
Plenary session (second day). Forward-looking policies for a sustainable COVID-19 recovery	48.4	15
SDG 4. Quality education and lifelong learning	32.3	10
SDG 14. Life below water - oceans, seas and marine resources	3.2	1
SGD 17. Partnerships for the goals (I). Data and Statistics for Sustainable Development	19.4	6
SGD 17. Partnerships for the goals (II). Accelerating digital development through multistakeholder partnerships	19.4	6
SDG 5. Gender Equality	45.2	14
SDG 15. Life on Land- Action to protect and restore terrestrial ecosystems	3.2	1
SDG 15. Life on Land- Urban forests for future proof cities	12.9	4
SDG 4. Education for Sustainable Development	22.6	7
SDG Business Dialogue. Advancing gender equality and women's leadership in selected industries	9.7	3
Pre-meetings	16.1	5

## 2. Assessment

Participants were asked to assess the Forum regarding five areas. Table 3 summarizes the responses received.

**Table 3. Assessment by areas, all respondents, percentages**

Areas	Not useful	Somewhat useful	Useful	Very useful	Extremely useful	Total
Relevance of subject to your work/area of expertise	0.0	6.5	12.9	48.4	32.3	100
Knowledge and information relevant for your future work	0.0	6.5	25.8	38.7	29.0	100
Providing a forum for exchange of information and sharing of experiences with other participants	3.2	9.7	16.1	41.9	29.0	100
Providing an opportunity to establish new useful contacts	9.7	22.6	19.4	22.6	25.8	100
Identification of good practices and useful experiences	3.2	6.5	29.0	41.9	19.4	100

The five areas received consistently high marks, although there are clear differences in how they were

assessed by respondents. The discussions at the Forum were seen as highly relevant to the work area or expertise of participants: 80.7 per cent considered them very or extremely useful while only 6.5 per cent thought that they were not or just somewhat useful. The second highest favourable score concerned the exchange of information and sharing of experiences, which was assessed as extremely or very useful by 70.9 per cent of respondents. The area that received a less positive assessment concerned the opportunity to establish new useful contacts, which shows the limitations of a virtual format in this regard. Thus, only 48.4 per cent considered the Forum very or extremely useful while 32.3 per cent thought that it was somewhat useful or not useful.

**Table 4. Assessment by areas, governments, percentages**

Areas	Not useful	Somewhat useful	Useful	Very useful	Extremely useful	Total
Relevance of subject to your work/area of expertise	0.0	0.0	12.5	37.5	50.0	100
Knowledge and information relevant for your future work	0.0	0.0	25.0	25.0	50.0	100
Providing a forum for exchange of information and sharing of experiences with other participants	0.0	25.0	12.5	37.5	25.0	100
Providing an opportunity to establish new useful contacts	0.0	37.5	25.0	25.0	12.5	100
Identification of good practices and useful experiences	0.0	0.0	12.5	50.0	37.5	100

The assessment provided by UNECE governments is similar but they provide a much more favourable view of the contribution of the Forum to identify good practices while they are even more critical than the rest of participants on the opportunity provided to establish new useful contacts: only 37.5 per cent believed that the Forum was very or extremely useful in this regard.

UNECE member States have repeatedly underlined the importance they attach to peer learning in the Forum, so the questionnaire included a separate question on this aspect. The full set of answers provided to this question can be found in table 5 (next page).

The overall assessment was positive, with 61.3 of responses assessing the peer learning experience as very good or excellent and only 3.2 per cent considering that it was poor or needed improvement. Time management, which in previous years has attracted relatively low marks, was perceived very favourably, with 67.8 per cent of respondents considering that it was excellent or very good while only 6.5 per cent thought that it was poor or needed improvement. The virtual platform provided attracted the best mark, with the difference between positive and negative assessments at 71 per cent.

**Table 5. Assessment of the peer learning experience at the round tables, all respondents, percentages.**

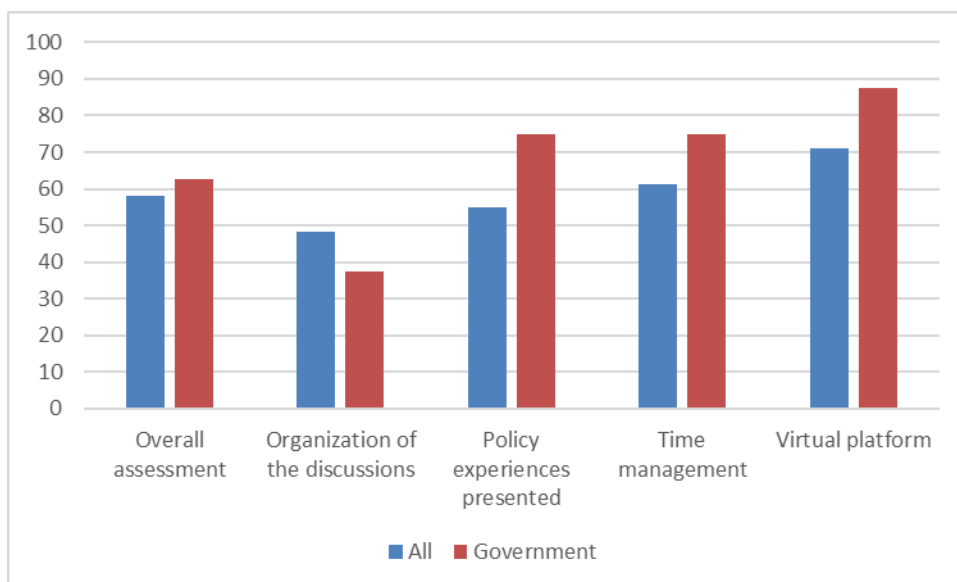
Aspect	Poor	Needs improvement	Adequate	Very good	Excellent	Total
Overall assessment	3.2	0.0	35.5	32.3	29.0	100
Organization of the discussions	3.2	6.5	32.3	35.5	22.6	100
Policy experiences presented	3.2	6.5	25.8	45.2	19.4	100
Time management	0.0	6.5	25.8	45.2	22.6	100
Virtual platform	3.2	3.2	16.1	41.9	35.5	100

The answers of government participants only are shown in table 6. There are no significant differences in the overall rankings with the group of all respondents. Government participants gave a slightly better assessment than total respondents regarding the overall consideration of peer learning, as nobody considered that was poor or in need of improvement, while 62.5 per cent thought that it was excellent or very good. The assessment of policy experiences presented, time management and the virtual platform were also significantly better among government participants. However, governments participants are even more critical of the organization of the discussions, with the difference between positive and negative answers being only 37.5 per cent (Chart 1, next page).

**Table 6. Assessment of the peer learning experience at the round tables, governments, percentages.**

Aspect	Poor	Needs improvement	Adequate	Very good	Excellent	Total
Overall assessment	0.0	0.0	37.5	25.0	37.5	100
Organization of the discussions	0.0	12.5	37.5	37.5	12.5	100
Policy experiences presented	0.0	0.0	25.0	50.0	25.0	100
Time management	0.0	0.0	25.0	50.0	25.0	100
Virtual platform	0.0	0.0	12.5	37.5	50.0	100

**Chart 1. Difference between more and less positive assessments, percentages**



**Note:** Sum of answers “excellent” and “very good” minus the sum of answers “poor” and “in need of improvement”

Virtual platforms have been used in 2020, 2021 and 2022 in order to address the limitations posed by COVID-19. The survey included a question regarding the continued use of virtual platforms to organize peer learning sessions in a similar way as it has been done in recent years. Table 7 shows the extent to which respondents agreed with this possibility.

**Table 7. Future use of virtual platforms to organize peer learning sessions**

Assessment	All respondents	Governments
Strongly agree	46.7	50.0
Agree	30.0	37.5
Neither agree nor disagree	16.7	12.5
Disagree	6.7	0.0
Strongly disagree	0.0	0.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>

The use of virtual platforms is generally supported, as more than three quarters of respondents agreed or strongly agreed while those that are clearly against it represented less than 7 per cent. The acceptance of this option is even more marked among government participants. While 87.5 per cent agreed with the use of virtual platforms, no government respondents disagreed with their use.

Comments provided to justify the answers given mentioned that a virtual format broadens the possibilities for participation but continued to stress the need for physical contact for networking and informal exchanges.

**Table 8. Assessment of the preparatory and organizational aspects of the Forum, all respondents, percentages**

Aspect	Poor	Needs improvement	Adequate	Very good	Excellent	Total
Programme	0.0	9.7	16.1	48.4	25.8	100
Structure of the Forum	3.2	3.2	19.4	48.4	25.8	100
Documentation	3.2	16.1	29.0	38.7	12.9	100
Communication with participants prior to the event	9.7	9.7	29.0	35.5	16.1	100
Organizational arrangements for and during the event	3.2	6.5	22.6	51.6	16.1	100

Participants were also asked to provide their opinion on various aspects regarding the preparation and organization of the Forum, which are summarized in Table 8.

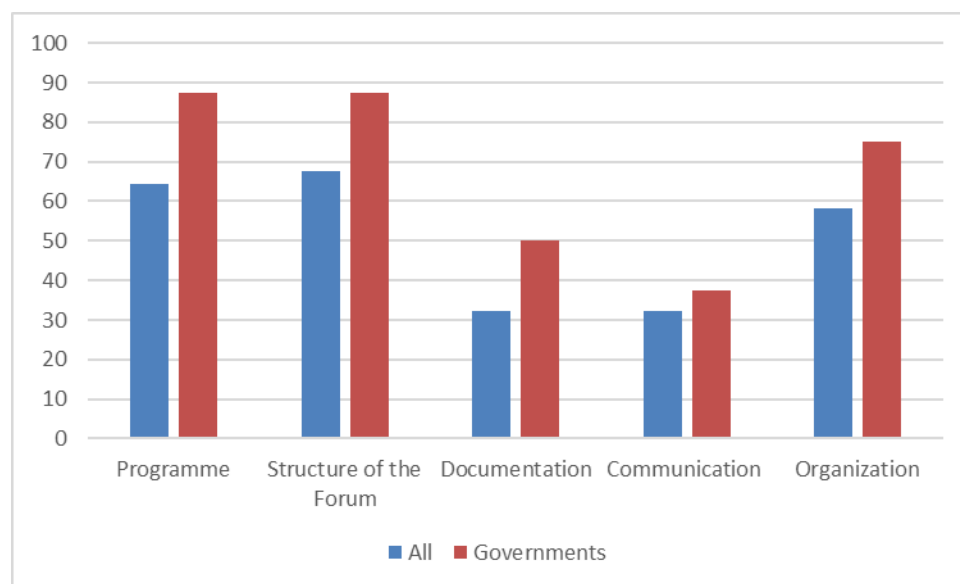
The programme of the event was the most appreciated aspect (74.2 per cent of respondents thought that it was excellent or very good while only 9.7 per cent considered that it needed improvement). The structure of the Forum also scored highly (64.5 per cent of respondents considered that was very good or excellent and only 6.4 per cent answered that it was poor or needed improvement). Organizational arrangements were positively assessed by 64.5 per cent of the respondents, while 9.7 per cent considered that they were poor or needed improvement. Documentation and communication with participants were similarly rated but attracted lower scores.

The assessment of preparatory and organizational aspects of the Forum by government participants (table 9, next page) is in line with the responses provided by all participants. The balance of positive (excellent or very good) and negative (poor or needs improvement) answers is consistently higher among government respondents for all areas (chart 2), with the smaller difference regarding communication, the area that has received a lower net assessment by both governments and all participants.

**Table 9. Assessment of the preparatory and organizational aspects of the Forum, governments, percentages**

Aspect	Poor	Needs improvement	Adequate	Very good	Excellent	Total
Programme	0.0	0.0	12.5	50.0	37.5	100
Structure of the Forum (plenary and parallel round tables)	0.0	0.0	12.5	62.5	25.0	100
Documentation	0.0	12.5	25.0	37.5	25.0	100
Communication with participants prior to the event	0.0	25.0	12.5	50.0	12.5	100
Organizational arrangements for and during the event	0.0	12.5	0.0	62.5	25.0	100

**Chart 2. Difference between more and less positive assessments, percentages**



**Note:** Sum of answers “excellent” and “very good” minus the sum of answers “poor” and “in need of improvement”

The overall assessment of the event was very positive (table 10, next page), with 45.2 per cent of respondents considering that it was excellent and 38.7 per cent that it was good. Government responses were even better: all of them considered that the Forum was excellent or good.

**Table 10. Overall assessment of the Forum, percentages**

Assessment	All respondents	Governments
Not satisfactory	6.5	0.0
Adequate	9.7	0.0
Good	38.7	50.0
Excellent	45.2	50.0
Total	100	100

An overwhelming share of respondents (83.9 per cent) would recommend that other experts from their countries or organizations attend similar events in the future, while 12.9 per cent may consider such a possibility. Only one respondent in the sample declined making such a recommendation. Government responses showed an unanimously positive assessment: all the respondents would recommend future participation.

In their comments, respondents explained some of the reasons for their assessment. The Forum provided a platform to engage diverse participants from many disciplines. It offered a space for political commitment, open dialogue and knowledge exchange.

### **3. Suggestions for the future**

There were a number of suggestions for future editions of the Forum, which were raised by particular individuals. These included:

#### **a) Content**

- Bring more practitioners as speakers
- Provide the opportunity for more focussed discussions at expert level
- Dissemination of pre-event document to focus the discussions on planning and management decisions
- Consider sessions on SDG financing, private sector involvement and SDG evaluation

#### **b) Format**

- Work in smaller groups
- Ensure that there is space for sharing experiences and concrete discussion, reducing the time for generalities.
- Presentations were interesting but could be shorter, so there is more space for interaction
- Experiment with various format of content delivery
- Facilitate accessibility of all documentation for the blind



**c) Partnerships**

- Involve SDG Youth Platforms as partner organisations
- Share contact details of speakers and participants
- Use of non-formal post-Forum mechanisms for interaction (e.g. business speed dating)