

**UNECE**

# **Guidelines on evidence-based policies and decision-making for sustainable housing and urban development**



**UNITED NATIONS**

UNITED NATIONS ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR EUROPE

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Geneva, 2020

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This publication is issued in English and Russian.

United Nations publication issued by the Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE)

**ECE/HBP/203**

ISBN 978-92-1-117247-8

eISBN 978-92-1-005117-0

Sales No. E.20.II.E.33

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This Guidelines document is the result of a joint effort of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) and the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat).

The UNECE and UN-Habitat secretariats wish to acknowledge Agata Krause, UN-Habitat/UNECE consultant, for drafting the guidelines. The following staff of the UNECE and UN-Habitat secretariats contributed to the production of this publication: from UNECE - Gulnara Roll, Secretary to the Committee on Urban Development, Housing and Land Management, Ms. Paola Deda, Director of the Forests, Land and Housing Division and Cecilia Batac; and from UN-Habitat - Fernanda Lonardonì, Emile Rolland, Giulia Lavagna, Ryan Macauley, Mr. Robert Ndugwa and Christophe Lalande, Head of Housing Unit.

The UNECE and UN-Habitat secretariats would also like to acknowledge the experts and Matteo Tarantino, Lecturer and Senior Research Associate, from the University of Geneva for their contributions to the study and thank other experts for the peer-review, and valuable input and comments.

We would like to express our gratitude to representatives of the following European Union institutions for providing input to the guidelines: the Committee of the Regions, the Directorate General for Regional and Urban Policy, Eurostat, the Directorate General Joint Research Centre and the EU Parliament.

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Countries and cities in the UNECE region face diverse urban development challenges: uncontrolled urbanization, urban sprawl, informal development, homelessness, climate change and environmental pollution, and providing access to urban infrastructure and services, most notably to adequate and affordable housing for all. The situation becomes particularly challenging in light of emergency situations such as earthquakes, floods and most recently, the spread of the COVID-19 virus in countries and cities in the UNECE region. Despite considerable efforts made by governments of UNECE countries to develop policies, projects and programmes, and to build partnerships addressing these issues, multiple challenges remain.

There is a common understanding among policymakers, practitioners and scholars that the lack of reliable data and evidence and the insufficient capacity of governments to use this data constrain opportunities to develop adequate policy responses and are the key reasons why many policies fail to induce a tangible change and improve urban environments. The effect of this is that progress towards achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), especially SDG 11: "Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable", in the UNECE region remains limited and this is why establishing better standards for the production, management and use of data and evidence in policymaking is one of the priority tasks under the *2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development* (2030 Agenda) to ensure its timely implementation.

The guidelines in this document (Guidelines) aim to support the efforts of governments in the UNECE region to improve evidence-based policymaking on sustainable urban development and housing. They inform discussions that took place during the national workshops conducted within the United Nations Development Account (UNDA) tenth tranche project: "Evidence-based policies for sustainable housing and urban development in selected countries with economies in transition", which demonstrated that national, regional and local governments, in addition to other stakeholders in the UNECE region, (i) require further support to develop national and local sets of indicators for monitoring and implementing sustainable housing and urban development policies and the SDGs and (ii) need to improve production, management and use of evidence in the policy processes and decision-making for sustainable urban development.

With a view to improving the implementation and review of the *2030 Agenda* at all levels of governance and achieving the SDGs, especially SDG 11, as well as the implementation of the *Geneva UN Charter on Sustainable Housing* and other international agreements, the Guidelines:

- (a) Capture the diversity of ongoing activities of policymakers at national and local levels and other stakeholders in the UNECE region to develop evidence-based policies on sustainable urban development with a focus on housing;
- (b) Present the benefits of deploying evidence-based approach(es) to policymaking in relation to the production/ collection of data and the development of evidence and decision-making, in the context of national, regional and local development agendas;
- (c) Demonstrate the application of various policy approaches (frameworks, methodologies, and other tools) into practice, in order to improve the review and to reinforce the efforts in meeting SDG 11 and other urban related targets in the UNECE region.

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