

Meeting of the UNECE International PPP Centres of Excellence (ICoE)
Barcelona, Spain – Wednesday, 18 November 2015
IESE Business School

Introduction

The Meeting of the UNECE International PPP Centres of Excellence (ICoE) held its session in Barcelona on 18 November. Almost 40 experts, representing more than 20 countries, attended the meeting, of which 12 followed the discussions via video-conference.

Purpose of Meeting

The purpose of the meeting was the following:

- To discuss how to make the Centres fully operational
- To support the Project Teams responsible of developing standards
- To discuss ways of bringing together the Centres and Project Teams and BAB in support of the UN 2030 Agenda.
- The secretariat introduced the Progress Report on the UNECE International PPP Centre of Excellence and provided a status report on the development of PPP standards. The secretariat also invited the experts to identify the main challenges in the development of PPP standards, the role of Project Teams, the coordination with each other, and the responsibilities of Project Team Leaders. The clear aim was how to bring the different components together in order to accelerate the production of the standards, and improve the relation and communication between the Centres.

Key discussion points

The experts took also note of the adoption of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and how they have created a strong rationale for the ICoE and should be the main 'driver' in this need for PPP standards.

- The Centres briefly presented the activities carried out since the last meeting; new candidate as hosts of Centres also presented their plans.
- The Health Specialist Centre in Philippines presented a comprehensive overview on how to protect the integrity of Specialist Centres through promoting Transparency and Accountability.
- A promotional video was presented on the SDGs and PPP. A new website was developed in cooperation with ADEC. The portal will become the reference point that integrates the work of the centres, PPP standards, and the business community, providing the latest news of their activities.
- Speakers agreed that the different components of the ICoE should work together as 'one PPP ICoE'.
- Representative of the French Centre underlined the importance for high quality standards and confirmation of robust process for designing standards. Another speaker called for the need to recognise the investment that had been made by stakeholders into Centres and to have clear sectorial specializations in each and avoid overlaps that could diminish the effectiveness of a Centre.

During the discussion, questions were raised on the definition of a centre, its role and scope and coordination with each other, perhaps through a steering committee.

The secretariat explained that while there is a strong interest in becoming a centre, there are many practical difficulties in becoming operational. To date the centres have little linkage yet with teams and little creation of networks. Difficulties with developing standards urgently require the centres to support the standards making process. Ideally, each centre should take charge of a few standards.

Role of Centres in support of PPP standards for the SDGs

Accordingly, a better vision of the roles of Centres emerged from the discussions, namely that Centres should *inter alia*:

- **Identify** international best practices that can serve as the empirical basis for the standards;
- **Be 'responsible'** for a number of standards in their field. This entails working closely with the Project Team Leaders and actively support the standard setting work;
- **Create** a network of government contacts in countries across the world who can call them for advice or guidance on the implementation of their PPP programme in their specialist field;
- **Establish** a network of private sector specialists in their specialist field, willing to offer advice to governments who seek it;
- **Maintain** a website containing good examples of documentation, case studies, evidence and other published information that might be helpful to governments developing a PPP programme in their specialist field;
- **Act as a learned body**, clearly explaining to stakeholders in PPP programmes ranging from politicians and public bodies to members of the public what PPP is, how PPPs can help achieve the SDGs, why projects are structured and governed as they are and what the benefits and expected outcomes of PPP programmes will be; and
- **Promote the standards**, in cooperation with the UNECE PPP Business Advisory Board, to use of PPP in their specialist field through articles, seminars, conferences etc.

The way forward

The ICoE took note of the status report by the secretariat on the development of PPP standards and on the Specialists Centres, and agreed to:

1. **Accelerate the elaboration of standards:** Taking into consideration the need to better target outputs and make realistic timelines for delivery;
 - a. Hold regular, high level PPP forums (twice a year) to convene Project Teams to review their outputs; and
 - b. Establish a small technical team to advise on standards and ensure quality, consistency and linkage with the UN Goals, work to be undertaken under the auspices of the French based PPP Centre on Law Policy and Institutions.
2. **Give the Centres a greater role in standards and implementation:** In which each Centre would have responsibility at the Forums for organising their sector or thematic area.
3. **Provide the UNECE secretariat with a report of its activities** that will be consolidated with other Centres' reports into an "Annual UNECE report on PPPs and the SDGs" that will be widely disseminated.

4. **Promote the Centres as global leaders in the area of work:** Based on their development of high quality best practices.
5. **Improve Communication about the ICoE and the enhancement of its status:** Working with ADEC to maintain the new ICoE website; and to set up for the next meeting of the ICoE a small steering group consisting of key stakeholders from which eventually a President might be elected.
6. **Improve the approach to producing standards:** Clearly delineate the potential objectives, methodology, templates, and by-laws to be used to facilitate the formulation of best practices and standards, the same including ethical rules, reporting requirements and the resources to be found or allocated.
7. **Improve interconnectivity and direction of the Centres of Excellence:** ICoE agreed to encourage and support the Inter-connectivity of the Centres, including the creation of a steering group and the creation and coordination of an internal listserv/e-mail group where the Centres can correspond directly with one another.

The need to translate approved standards into other languages was requested. The Centres may help in this process.

Next PPP Forum

The bi-annually meeting, hereafter to be called the UNECE PPP Forum, will be held at the Palais des Nations in Geneva on 30-31 March and 1 April 2016.