

EVALUATION REPORT

Independent Review of the UNECE Project: 1617AN *Strengthening the National Capacities of Selected UNECE Countries for Evidence-Based Regulatory and Procedural Trade Policies to Achieve SDGs*

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List of Acronyms

CCI	Chamber of Commerce and Industry
CEFTA	Central European Free Trade Agreement
CEPA	Comprehensive and Enhanced Partnership Agreement
COVID-19	Coronavirus Disease 2019
EA	Expected Accomplishment
EAEU	Eurasian Economic Union
EU	European Union
HS	Harmonised System
ICC	International Chamber of Commerce
ICT	Information and Communication Technology
IEC	International Electrotechnical Commission
ISO	International Standards Organisation
MAST	Multi-Agency Support Team
MPTF	Multi-Partner Trust Fund
MSME	Micro-, Small-, and Medium-sized Enterprise
MTS	Multilateral Trading System
NPTS	National Paperless Trading System
NTMs	Non-Tariff Measures
OIML	International Organisation of Legal Metrology
PPE	Personal Protective Equipment
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
SCTCS	Steering Committee on Trade Capacity and Standards

SERPS	Socio-Economic Response Plans
SPECA	UN Special Programme for the Economies of Central Asia
SQAM	Standardization, Quality Assurance, Accreditation And Metrology
STFC	Serbian Trade Facilitation Committee
TNC	Trans-National Corporation
UN	United Nations
UN CT	United Nations Country Team
UNCTAD	UN Conference on Trade and Development
UNDA	UN Development Agency
UNDAF	UN Development Fund
UNECE	UN Economic Commission for Europe
UNESCAP	UN Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific
WTO	World Trade Organisation

I. Executive summary

The purpose of this evaluation was to review and assess the extent to which the Project “Strengthening the national capacities of selected UN Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) countries for evidence-based regulatory and procedural trade policies to achieve SDGs” achieved its objectives. The evaluation assessed the relevance, coherence, effectiveness, efficiency, and sustainability of the Project. The evaluation also looked at the activities repurposed to address the impact of the COVID-19 crisis, and assessed the UNECE’s COVID-19 early response through this project

The evaluation was conducted in accordance with the UNECE Evaluation Policy and on the basis of a desk review and online interviews with national coordinators, attendance of two online Project presentations, representatives of national governments, enterprise support institutions and other partners involved in the Project. The evaluation was also conducted in accordance with the Development Account Evaluation Framework¹ and Development Account Evaluation Guidelines². The evaluation methodology complied with the revised UNEG norms and standards and with the OIOS COVID-19 Response Evaluation Protocol³.

KEY FINDINGS:

1. All participating countries (Armenia, Georgia and Serbia) are confronted with challenges related to strengthening their capacities in the area of evidence-based regulatory and procedural trade policies, in the context of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).
2. The project was well aligned with the global and regional priorities, the programme of work of the UNECE and pertinent to achieving the SDGs
3. The Project complemented the achievement of the SDGs, the work of the UN system, the direct beneficiaries and the business community.
4. Project outputs were consistent with the expected outcomes and its overall objective.
5. Some stakeholders proposed that the key findings and recommendations should be translated to national languages and all the UN official languages to ensure broader dissemination. This would help raise awareness among international trade partners on the challenges facing the countries and the steps to address those challenges.
6. Most of the planned activities and planned outputs have been delivered.
7. The Project objectives have been achieved within the anticipated budget and allocation of resources. The human and financial resources have been used efficiently and are commensurate to its results.
8. Implementation of several activities have been delayed or cancelled due to force majeure circumstances.
9. The member States participating in the Project have a good level of ownership in the outcomes of the work.
10. The project activities have responded well to the COVID -19 pandemic and additional activities have been added at the request of member States,

¹ [http://www.un.org/development/desa/da/wp-content/uploads/sites/52/da-project-management-documents/2256_1571321768_UN%20DA%20Evaluation%20Framework%20\(Final\).pdf](http://www.un.org/development/desa/da/wp-content/uploads/sites/52/da-project-management-documents/2256_1571321768_UN%20DA%20Evaluation%20Framework%20(Final).pdf)

² [http://www.un.org/development/desa/da/wp-content/uploads/sites/52/da-project-management-documents/2253_1571321382_UN%20DA%20Evaluation%20Guidelines%20\(Final\).pdf](http://www.un.org/development/desa/da/wp-content/uploads/sites/52/da-project-management-documents/2253_1571321382_UN%20DA%20Evaluation%20Guidelines%20(Final).pdf)

³ https://oios.un.org/sites/oios.un.org/files/covid-19_response_evaluation_protocol_-_october_2020.pdf

11. The gender, rights-based and disability inclusion have represented a new focus of the project, especially in relation to gender.

KEY CONCLUSIONS:

1. The Project was very relevant⁴ because it fed into global, regional and national strategies of the three beneficiary countries for removing regulatory and procedural barriers to trade.
2. The UNECE value-added in terms of its COVID response was to provide member States with a trusted, objective overview of multi-agency and cross-departmental issues at a time when each department is operating in crisis mode. The value of the reports is to help individual ministries understand the factors impacting other government departments and help them understand how they can provide more consistent support to the trade sector.
3. The Project was very coherent because it complemented the achievement of the SDGs, the work of the UN system, the direct beneficiaries and the business community.
4. The Project was effective and achieved most of what it set out to accomplish in terms of activities, outcome and impact. All three countries have developed National Action Plans on simplifying, harmonizing and streamlining barriers to trade that will contribute to the achievement of the SDGs.
5. The Project has been very effective in introducing gender analysis to UNECE's work, by offering separate assessments on female entrepreneurs to member states as part of the studies on regulatory and procedural barriers to trade.
6. The Project was efficient and achieved its objectives under the anticipated budget and allocation of resources, but a year later than planned, due to external forces.
7. The Project was very sustainable because it was specifically designed to develop sustainable tools that would be used in the beneficiary countries after its completion.

KEY RECOMMENDATIONS:

Recommendation 1: The Project will remain relevant as the three beneficiary countries continue their process of regulatory harmonisation and expanding their network of global trade partners. UNECE could consider this model to be a pilot project that could be rolled out to other countries in future.

Recommendation 2: The gender-based work can be replicated in the UNECE region and in other regions. The national assessment surveys, female traders' questionnaires and COVID reports have a relevance which is universal.

Recommendation 3: Further disseminate the results of assessments by translating the recommendations into national languages of the beneficiary countries.

⁴ Relevance, Coherence, Effectiveness, Efficiency and Sustainability have each been evaluated against a three criteria scale, for example: Very Relevant, Relevant, Not Relevant etc.

Recommendation 4: Continue to provide high level analysis of national responses to the COVID pandemic.

Recommendation 5: UNECE has a role to play in providing governments with the voice the most vulnerable into the design of future projects.

II. Introduction

A. Background

1. The objective of the 2016-2019 UN Development Agency 10th Tranche was “*To strengthen the statistical capacity of developing countries to measure, monitor and report on the SDGs in an accurate, reliable and timely manner for evidence-based policy making.*” The principles that drove this objective included adapting to the needs of the countries and evolving agenda and coordination through building on existing initiatives and programmes.
2. The 2016 international conference ‘Laying the foundation in the UNECE region for economic integration and sustainable development towards 2030’ considered how the benefits of closer economic interaction among its members were underutilised and how trade remained below what could be expected despite the reduction of some formal trade barriers in the UNECE region. The conference debated how many companies in low- and middle-income countries find participation in global value chains a challenge.
3. One common factor explaining these difficulties was the comparatively high trade costs in those countries in comparison with more advanced economies. The benefits of trade facilitation and the adoption of internationally agreed standards include improved participation in global value chains and in international cross-border production. They also help to dispel uncertainty in economic relations and reduce the cost of trading across borders.
4. UNECE is the international focal point for trade facilitation recommendations and standards and works to develop instruments to reduce, harmonize and automate procedures and paperwork in international trade. UNECE promotes sustainable development and economic prosperity among its 56 member states through:
 - policy dialogue,
 - negotiation of international legal instruments,
 - development of regulations and norms,
 - exchange and application of best practices as well as economic and technical expertise,
 - technical cooperation for countries with economies in transition
5. An inter-governmental body of the UNECE, the Steering Committee on Trade Capacity and Standards oversees and guides the development of international norms and standards, procedures and best practices for reducing transaction costs associated with export and import processes and increasing the efficiency, predictability and transparency of trade regulations and procedures.
6. The “Strengthening the national capacities of selected UN Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) countries for evidence-based regulatory and procedural trade policies to achieve SDGs” (“the Project”) supported the expected accomplishment (d) “Enhanced national capacity of member States for trade policy development and implementation” of the Trade subprogramme of UNECE, as reflected in the Programme plan for 2016-2017;

2018-2019⁵ and 2020². This expected accomplishment derives from the core mandate of the subprogramme to “oversee and guide the development of international norms and standards, procedures and best practices that reduce the costs associated with export and import processes and increase the efficiency, predictability and transparency of trade regulations and procedures and the movement of goods and services”⁶.

7. The Project built on the UNECE studies on regulatory and procedural barriers to trade, which were launched in 2010 using the UNECE unique survey-based methodology. ⁷The methodology stands apart from existing methodologies in that it covers both behind and at the border regulatory and administrative procedures governing export and import activities. The studies provided a systemic analysis of regulatory and procedural trade barriers stemming from: (i) trade facilitation measures; (ii) quality control systems embodied in standardization policies, technical regulations, quality assurance, accreditation and metrology (SQAM); and (iii) trade-related infrastructure, including transport and logistical support.
8. In the concluding months of the Project, in 2020, the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) added an extra layer of complexity to barriers to trade. The challenges facing governments are complicated by supply chain disruptions that have left enterprises struggling to survive. Countries across the globe are suffering setbacks that are akin to complex humanitarian emergencies associated with disasters. The coping strategies of businesses and State agencies are being depleted by the unfolding economic crisis, so that vulnerabilities are aggravated and the impact on productive capacities, institutional dexterity and business confidence is severe.

B. Context

9. The national stakeholders of the Project are public and private sector institutions that are directly involved in supporting the implementation of trade reforms aimed at removing regulatory and procedural barriers to trade. The Project also targeted traders and owners/managers of manufacturing industries, especially MSMEs to ensure responsiveness and support increased public-private sector consultations on policies and reform initiatives for removing regulatory and procedural barriers.
10. The main organizations involved in project implementation are UNECE (lead agency) and UNCTAD (an implementing partner).

⁵ <https://undocs.org/a/71/6/Rev.1> Please refer to Programme 6.

⁶ ECE/EX/2015/L.6

⁷ The studies and evaluation methodology are available at: <http://www.unece.org/tradewelcome/studies-on-procedural-and-regulatory-barriers-to-trade.html>.

⁶In total, the extended evaluation methodology includes 7 questionnaires, including the core methodology (SQAM, trade facilitation and the traders) and the additional questionnaires (SMEs, female traders, small farmers and market support institutions), which together make up the extended methodology.

11. The Trade subprogramme reports to the Steering Committee on Trade Capacity and Standards (SCTCS), which is responsible for promoting and maintaining norms, standards, recommendations and best practice guidelines in the areas of trade facilitation.
12. The Project used the studies to develop a guideline document for translating into practice the 2030 Agenda concept of trade as a “means of implementation” as elaborated under SDG 17. The guideline contains a framework of indicators for measuring and monitoring the contribution of trade, particularly non-tariff measures (NTMs) to the 2030 SDGs. It was developed by the Secretariat and shared with the relevant agencies from the countries where the studies were undertaken for comments.
13. In March 2020, the Project was repurposed to involve additional assessments to ascertain the impact of the COVID 19 induced economic crisis on the MSMEs development prospects. The impact assessments were launched in May 2020 in the three selected countries and in Belarus and the Republic of Moldova. Another set of COVID 19 assessments were launched to ascertain the impact of the economic crisis on female owned enterprises in Armenia and the Republic of Moldova with funds from a UNDA SME surge project.

C. Purpose

14. The primary purpose of this evaluation is to assess the extent to which the objectives of the UNDA 10th tranche project “Strengthening the national capacities of selected UNECE countries for evidence-based regulatory and procedural trade policies to achieve SDGs” were achieved. The evaluation assesses the relevance, coherence, effectiveness, efficiency and sustainability of the project in supporting member States to strengthen their capacities in the area of evidence-based regulatory and procedural trade policies, in the context of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The evaluation also looks at the activities repurposed to address the impact of the COVID-19 crisis, and assess the ECE’s COVID-19 early response through this project
15. The overall goal of the Project was to strengthen the national capacities of selected countries (Armenia, Georgia and Serbia) in the UNECE region for evidence-based regulatory and procedural trade policies to support the achievement of 2030 Agenda, particularly SDGs 1, 9, 10 and 17. It was implemented in collaboration with UNCTAD, with UNECE assuming the role of the lead agency.

D. Scope

16. The evaluation covered the full period of the Project’s implementation from 1 January 2017 - 31 December 2020. The evaluation assessed the project’s implementation in the three selected countries (Armenia, Georgia and Serbia) plus the countries participating in the COVID-19 early response assessment (Belarus and Republic of Moldova). The evaluator reviewed the documents/reports produced in the framework of the Project during the period 2017-2020. Attention was paid to the factors/circumstances that influenced the results, whether intended or unintended, management and monitoring processes and the Project interaction with key stakeholders. The UNECE staff who participated in these activities, the national focal points of the recipient countries, ministries in the recipient countries, one

national business association and the consultancy in Switzerland responsible for developing the national databases were interviewed during the evaluation process.

17. While an important part of the focus of the project was on the impact of improved regulatory and procedural trade policies on MSMEs, including female-owned enterprises, the direct beneficiaries of the Project were named as the government agencies that dealt with the trade sector. As indirect end users, MSMEs were outside of the remit of this evaluation.
18. The values and principles of human rights and gender equality need were integrated at all stages of an evaluation, in compliance with the United Nations Evaluation Group’s revised gender-related norms and standards. Therefore, the evaluation assessed how the vulnerable groups and gender considerations were included in the process⁸. All available information, documents, brochures and the Project’s progress reports were reviewed and analysed by the evaluator.

E. Methodology

19. The evaluation was guided by the intervention logic, indicators and means of verification established in the logical framework of the Project document. The evaluation assessed the extent to which the Project strengthened capacities of the beneficiary countries to remove regulatory and procedural barriers to trade (see Annex 1).
20. The evaluation activities were guided by the basic principles of effective and sound evaluation including:
 - The OECD/DAC evaluation criteria as an essential background (*see Table 2*)
 - Special emphasis on distinguishing as rigorously as possible, at all stages of the evaluation process, between findings (facts), conclusions (interpretation of the facts, drawing on the judgement of the evaluator), and recommendations (reasoned advice based on the evaluation findings and conclusions).

Table 2. OECD/DAC evaluation criteria

Coherence	The compatibility of the intervention with other interventions in a country, sector or institution
Effectiveness	The extent to which the intervention achieved, or is expected to achieve its objectives, and its results including any differential results across groups.
Efficiency	The extent to which the intervention delivers or is likely to deliver results in an economic or timely way.
Relevance	The extent to which the intervention objectives and design respond to beneficiaries’ global, country and partner/institution needs, policies and priorities, and continue to do so if circumstances change.
Sustainability	The extent to which the net benefits of interventions continue or are likely to continue.

⁸ Paragraph 23 of resolution 70/1: ‘Transforming our World: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development’ lists the following groups as vulnerable: “persons with disabilities (of whom more than 80 per cent live in poverty), people living with HIV/AIDS, older persons, indigenous peoples, refugees and internally displaced persons and migrants”.

Impact

The extent to which the intervention has generated or is expected to generate significant positive or negative, intended or unintended, higher-level effects.

21. Five of the six DAC criteria were used for this evaluation. The impact of the programme was not evaluated because some elements of the Project will be completed outside of the Project's and the evaluation's timelines in 2021 and both Covid and the UN financial crisis have led to delays in the production of project outputs. This makes it too soon to establish the impact of the Project overall and in relation to specific outputs.
22. In line with the TOR the evaluation addressed the following issues, relevance, coherence, effectiveness, efficiency and sustainability, as follows:
 - Review of the relevance of the Project's design and activities in light of the specific needs of the beneficiary countries, the UNECE mandate as expressed in the UNECE Programme of Work, the Trade Subprogramme.
 - Assessment of the level of coherence in the collaboration with the UN system, other international organizations and consistency of the outputs with the overall objective and expected outcomes.
 - Assessment of the effectiveness of the Project's activities and outputs in achieving expected impact and challenges faced in the process.
 - Assessment of the efficiency with which these activities were implemented.
 - Review of the sustainability and ownership of the Project's outcomes in the recipient countries.
23. For each of the evaluation criteria a cluster of questions was established, including the assessment of three levels of accomplishment: high, partial, and little.
24. The evaluation was conducted in accordance with the UNECE Evaluation Policy⁹, the Development Account Evaluation Framework and Development Account Evaluation Guidelines. The evaluation methodology complied with the revised UNEG norms and standards and with the OIOS COVID-19 Response Evaluation Protocol¹⁰. The methodology of the evaluation included following data collection tools:
 - Desk review: Background documents were made available to the evaluator by UNECE to ensure an understanding of the design and context of the Project. This included the project document and information on project activities, workshop feedback forms (see Annex 6), the agenda and presentations made at the SCTCs, Regulatory and Procedural Barriers to Trade: Needs Assessments (draft and final versions), workshop agendas, The Impact of COVID-19 on Trade and Structural Transformation reports, the Report on Georgian Ports among others (see Annex 3). These documents were provided by the UNECE Market Access Section. All

⁹ https://www.unece.org/fileadmin/DAM/press/pr2014/UNECE_Evaluation_Policy_October_2014.pdf

¹⁰ See footnotes in the Executive Summary of this report

documents available on the UNECE website relating to the three countries were also studied.

- Online interviews with key direct internal and external stakeholders, namely: Government representatives in all three countries. This includes Ministries of Economy, Line Ministries: Transport/Environment/Agriculture/ Industry/Health, Standardization, Quality Assurance, Accreditation And Metrology (SQAM) Agencies/ Customs Authorities, UNECE, and the database developers. Please refer to Annex 5 for the full list of interviewees.
- The evaluator attended two online meetings on the impact of COVID-19 on Trade and structural transformation in Armenia and Georgia in 2020.

25. Indirect beneficiaries, especially Academics, Transport operators and MSMEs were not interviewed for this report, as the impact of the published data was too recent to be assessed by end users.
26. The relevance of the Project's activities with regards to gender equality, empowerment of women and incorporation of the perspective of the most vulnerable groups was reviewed. The approach was guided by the gender- responsive methodology, methods and tools in line with the United Nations Evaluation Group norms and standards Gender equality approach was addressed by continued efforts to ensure the participation of both women and men in the project key activities and its decision making and guidance providing arrangements. Evaluation disaggregated data collected by sex. A gender analysis was reflected in the evaluation findings, conclusions and recommendations.
27. The feedback received from the interviews and completed questionnaires was integrated into the evaluation report after a careful analysis and triangulation. The research methods applied were predominantly qualitative, with a quantitative element limited to descriptive statistics. The outcomes generated by desk reviews, interviews and evaluation questionnaires were synthesized and aggregated by DAC criteria. The data and information received were triangulated and cross-validated considering carefully the issues of convergence and divergence.
28. To facilitate the evaluation process and ensure its transparency the evaluation matrix was designed provides an overview of the evaluation criteria, key questions related to each criterion, data sources, data collection and analysis methods and indicators of success.

Table 1. Evaluation Matrix

Evaluation criteria	Data sources	Data collection and analysis method	Indicators of success
Relevance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Government economic strategies • SDGs • Meeting minutes on progress of membership to global (WTO) or regional (EU, EAEU, CEPA) trade associations • The Project’s logical framework, project progress monitoring, financial reports, • Workshop feedback. • Interviews with beneficiaries 	<p>Review/analysis of key documents related to the Project, individual interviews, attendance at government COVID reports presentations, analysis, synthesis, triangulation and cross-validation of views and information.</p>	<p>Extent to which achieved outcomes/outputs are consistent with national and regional priorities and the needs of beneficiary countries, the UNECE mandate and relevant SDGs. Overlap between the needs as perceived by the Project planners/implementers and what beneficiaries including gender and vulnerable groups consider is needed.</p>
Effectiveness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The project logical framework • Project monitoring documents • Project outputs (reports) • Financial reports, 	<p>Review/analysis of key documents related to the Project, individual interviews, attendance at government COVID reports presentations, analysis, synthesis, triangulation and cross-validation of views and information.</p>	<p>Extent to which the expected results of the Project’s activities/outputs have been achieved. Extent to which the challenges/obstacles to implementing of planned activities/outputs and achieving the expected outcomes/impact have been addressed effectively.</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Workshops feedback • Interviews with beneficiaries 		
Efficiency	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Project budget • Financial reports • Workshop feedback • Interviews with beneficiaries 	Review/analysis of key documents related to the Project, individual interviews, attendance at government COVID reports presentations, analysis, synthesis, triangulation and cross-validation of views and information.	Extent to which human and financial resources have been used wisely to achieve expected results. Extent to which activities have been implemented according to planned schedule and within the anticipated budget and allocation of resources. Degree of the implementation of planned activities within the planned timeframes.
Sustainability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The project logical framework • Feedback from interviews • National Action Plans • Databases 	Review/analysis of key documents related to the Project, individual interviews, attendance at government COVID reports presentations, analysis, synthesis, triangulation and cross-validation of views and information.	Level of likelihood that the beneficiary countries and stakeholders will own and apply the Project reports' recommendations. Extent to which the overall impact of the Project is still valid and can be replicated in the UNECE and other regions. Number of laws, regulations, policies related to the Project and of similar projects developed so far considering also gender and vulnerable groups aspects.
Coherence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SDGs • UNECE strategic documents • UNCTAD strategic documents • UNDA documents • National government strategies • Regional economic association strategic documents 	Review/analysis of key documents related to the Project, individual interviews, attendance at government COVID reports presentations, synthesis, triangulation and cross-validation of views and information.	Level coherence in the collaboration with other entities of the UN system and other international organizations (UNCTAD, UN CT). Extent to which the COVID-19 related activities added in 2020 were coherent with the initial Project's design.

29. The evaluation process was impacted by a series of limitation factors, as follows:

- A major constraint was the overall impact of the COVID-19 public health crisis, preventing travel to/from the beneficiary countries and led to the changes in the execution of the planned Project's activities and to the evaluation process.
- Several of the stakeholders interviewed were involved only in some areas of the Project activities and were not in a position to provide a "comprehensive picture" of the Project's successes and failures.
- Attendance at a training workshop planned for September 2020 in Geneva could not be conducted due to personal distancing measures imposed by the COVID-19.
- Stakeholders had difficulty in providing specific information on policies, regulations, strategies and plans that were developed due to the Project.
- The specific training workshops' planned outcomes or levels of progress were not set in terms of measurement nor consistently assessed and documented, making a fair assessment of their impact on the Project's outcomes and its overall objective difficult.
- Changing ministerial and civil service professional portfolios during the Project's lifespan and political events in Armenia in 2020 precluded the possibility to interview Armenian contributors on a one-to-one basis.

III. Findings

Relevance

30. The *Project* was **very relevant**¹¹ because it fed into global, regional and national strategies of the three beneficiary countries for removing regulatory and procedural barriers to trade.
31. The *Project* made a direct contribution to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) especially those mentioned in the *Project* objective: SDGs 1, 9, 10 and 17 (See Table 3).
32. In addition, the *Project* supported three further SDGs directly: Activity 1.3 the National Assessment Surveys supported SDG 13 and SDG 7 and Activity 1.6, the Monitoring and Tracking Indicators, supported SDG 8. Overall, the *Project* addressed SDG 5 indirectly.

Table 3. Project-relevant SDGs

Goal	Title	Relevant Targets
1	No Poverty Target	1a Ensure significant mobilization of resources from a variety of sources, including through enhanced development cooperation, in order to provide adequate and predictable means for developing countries, in particular least developed countries, to implement programmes and policies to end poverty in all its dimensions.
5	Gender equality and empowering all women and girls	5.1 End all forms of discrimination against all women and girls everywhere
7	Affordable and Clean Energy	7.1 Ensure universal access to affordable, reliable and modern energy services
8	Decent Work and Economic Growth	8.2 Achieve higher levels of economic productivity through diversification, technological upgrading and innovation, including through a focus on high-value added and labour intensive sectors. 8.3 Promote development-oriented policies that support productive activities, decent job creation, entrepreneurship, creativity and innovation, and encourage formalization and growth of MSMEs, including through access to financial services.
9	Industry, Innovation, Infrastructure	9.1 Develop quality, reliable, sustainable and resilient infrastructure, including regional and transborder infrastructure, to support economic development and human well-being, with a focus on affordable and equitable access for all. 9.2 Promote inclusive and sustainable industrialisation and by 2030, significantly raise industry’s share of employment and GDP, in line with national circumstances, and double its share in least developed countries 9.4 Upgrade infrastructure and retrofit industries to make them sustainable, with increased resource-use efficiency and greater adoption of clean and environmentally sound technologies and industrial processes,

¹¹ Relevance, Coherence, Effectiveness, Efficiency and Sustainability have each been evaluated against a three criteria scale, for example: Very Relevant, Relevant, Not Relevant etc.

- with all countries taking action in accordance with their respective capabilities
- 10 Reduced Inequality
 - 10.1 Progressively achieve and sustain income growth of the bottom 40 per cent of the population at a rate higher than the national average
 - 10.2 Empower and promote the social, economic and political inclusion of all, irrespective of age, sex, disability, race, ethnicity, origin, religion or economic or other status
 - 13 Taking Climate Action
 - 13.1 Strengthen resilience and adaptive capacity to climate-related hazards and natural disasters in all countries
 - 17 Partnerships to Achieve the Goal
 - 17.4 Enhance policy coherence for sustainable development.
 - 17.10 Promote a universal, rules-based, open, non-discriminatory and equitable multilateral trading system under the World Trade Organization, including through the conclusion of negotiations under its Doha Development Agenda
 - 17.11 Significantly increase the exports of developing countries, in particular with a view to doubling the least developed countries' share of global exports by 2020

- 33. The activities were consistent with global and regional priorities. Both Georgia and Serbia have signed accession treaties with the European Union (EU) and are aligning their economic and trade policies and practices with Europe. Armenia is aligning its economy with the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU), which it joined in 2016. Armenia has also signed the Comprehensive and Enhanced Partnership Agreement (CEPA), as a new framework for Armenia-EU relations. CEPA contains substantive commitments in several trade policy areas. In Serbia improved data collection is part of a six-nation joint strategy towards developing a regional centre for economic analysis for the West Balkans and collect data from national authorities.
- 34. The Project also related directly to the UNECE Strategic Framework for 2018-2019¹². The Project directly relates to one of the elements of the strategy of the Sub-programme 6-Trade: *“To support Governments in their national and regional adaptation and implementation of ECE trade-related standards and recommendations in trade facilitation strategies, trade policy and regulatory regimes”*.
- 35. UNECE’s work has added value by being able to provide objective, practical and country-specific information that encompasses multiple state agency stakeholders. It is viewed in Georgia as a useful and respected source in a small country that does not yet have the research capacity in this area. UNECE’s work brings prestige to the trade sector. United Nations (UN) reports can highlight the importance of sectors within government decision-making structures and provide triangulated and evidenced confirmation of national data.

¹² UNECE strategic framework for the period 2018-2019 Part two: biennial programme plan Programme 17 Economic development in Europe A/71/6/Rev.1 – Programme 17
http://www.unece.org/fileadmin/DAM/OPEN_UNECE/02_Programme_Planning_and_reporting/SF_2018-2019_-_reissued.pdf

36. The Project responded to the national priorities and needs of the beneficiary countries to develop evidence-based policies. In Armenia MSMEs accounted for 99 per cent of enterprises, accounted for 66 per cent of total employment, 62 per cent of total turnover and 60 per cent of total value added generated by the enterprise sector in 2017.¹³ Following its Association Agreement with the EU in 2016, Georgia is aligning its economy with EU standards. Metrology is a key part of that process and therefore the Project fed into those discussions, moreover, the National Study provided evidence to Georgian ministry officials that many Georgian companies were further advanced in developing their metrology standards than they had realised. Serbia's structural reform programme¹⁴ includes alignment of the standardisation, metrology and accreditation systems with EU legislation and practice.
37. The Project is relevant to national programmes in the participating countries. In 2019 the Armenian parliament adopted a five-year plan for the Armenian economy. The government programme includes goals to eliminate artificial economic monopolies, protect economic competition and ensure inclusive economic growth, job creation and poverty alleviation¹⁵. The main priorities of the "Georgia 2020" economic policy are built on the principles of rapid and effective economic growth based on a competitive private sector; and economic policy oriented at inclusive growth¹⁶. Enhancement of private sector competitiveness is the main priority for the government and special attention is paid to strengthening MSMEs. In Serbia the government's Economic Reform Programme for the Period 2018-2020 includes improving the conditions for product safety and removing barriers to trade by helping the business sector to market safe and high-quality exports. The medium-term objective of the reform from 2018 to 2020 was to improve product safety and removal of technical barriers to trade in construction products in seven sectors of the economy.
38. The focus on MSMEs in Georgia was very relevant because most producers are small businesses, and they are vulnerable because they have less access to information. Georgia has prioritised its support for MSMEs. The Georgian enterprise agency, Enterprise Georgia's budget has increased 10-fold accordingly and has awarded 9,000 microgrant loans in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Interviews with Serbian government officials confirmed that the National Survey reports were viewed as valuable because by giving the business community a voice the surveys added a new perspective to economic planning. The Serbian study emphasised the importance of the introduction of paperless trade to MSMEs.

¹³ The Impact of COVID-19 on Trade and Structural Transformation in Armenia Evidence From UNECE's Survey Of Micro, Small And Medium Enterprises Geneva, Switzerland | December 2020

¹⁴ Government of the Republic of Serbia, Economic Reform Programme for the Period 2018-2020

¹⁵ <https://eurasianet.org/armenia-adopts-plan-for-economic-revolution>

¹⁶ Georgia's Economic Strategy 2014-2020

39. The Project was considered to be appropriate and well-designed for large companies and for MSMEs. The initial project document template identified four problems (See Table 4) facing many countries in the UNECE region and tackled it in the following way.

Table 4. Project Challenges and Solutions

Challenge	Project's solution
A lack of skills to identify the impact of NTMs on trade	Train government agency staff in NTMs classification and the economic impact of NTMs
A lack of experience in designing integrated reforms for removing regulatory and procedural trade barriers	Engage government agency staff in the validation of national assessment studies and development of national action plans
A lack of cross border information sharing in relation to NTMs	Produce reports in English and Russian Make the information 100% open source on the UNECE website
Ad hoc engagement of the private sector in trade policy	Undertake questionnaires with MSMEs on barriers to trade Include the private sector in promoting the findings and outputs of the Project

40. The activities were implemented in the required sequence needed to ensure the greatest impact of the Project. Please refer to Annex 8 for all the details. There is a wider structural question about how the information and data of multi-lateral agency projects (including this one) can reach indirect beneficiaries and end users (female-owned entrepreneurs and MSMEs) in member States more effectively. The project design could be more effective with end users. This could include activities that ensure that training materials, key findings and recommendations from the assessments are published in national languages and all the languages of the UN. The findings and recommendations shed light on challenges facing the countries and the steps to overcome them and this is useful for trade partners. The Project had envisaged publishing the reports on the websites of national Governments, however, in practice Ministries tend not to publish reports by international organisations on their webpages. They publish reports under the auspices of CEFTA or EAEU as these reflect national commitments established under agreements. This means there is a gap in top-down information provision, and it may be worth exploring models for bridging that gap, while not overstepping the roles and capacity of the various stakeholders.

41. The Project planned additional activities as part of the extension in response to the COVID-19 surge programme, which involved producing 14 outputs:
- Policy paper for increasing the role of NTMs in leveraging supply chains
 - A 1-day regional workshop on regulatory measures in leveraging supply chains
 - Up to 10 x COVID-19 impact assessments on MSMEs

- A Framework of Indicators for the Operationalization of the 2030 Agenda

Eight of the 13 of the planned additional outputs had been completed by the end of the Project.

In addition, the Project involved 2 additional outputs that were not part of the Project design, which were launched as a follow up to the studies on regulatory and procedural barriers in response to the Governments' requests:

- The "Assessing Challenges and Opportunities in Georgia's Ports" policy paper
- A strategic policy paper on implementing the recommendations linked to the development of Armenia's national system of metrology

The second additional output was delayed several times due to the UN budget freeze, the pandemic and the outbreak of the war in Armenia late 2019 and will be delivered in 2021.

42. The additional activities in response to the COVID-19 pandemic were relevant to the participating countries. COVID-19 impacted Georgia's economy. Sales fell for 52% of farmers and 69% of MSMEs. 92% of Georgian companies that exported identified transport as their main challenge. There were also positive impacts connected to COVID-19. Georgia recorded an increase in cross-border trade, primarily due to the re-routing of goods from Central Asia away from traditional routes through China. In Serbia linking data on the impact of the pandemic with the SDGs was considered to be important because it enhances Serbia's annual reporting on progress towards achieving the SDGs. The Serbian Chamber of Commerce now plans to research and develop this methodology further with the national statistics office over the next three to five years in cooperation with the UNECE, using the UNECE questionnaires on regulatory and procedural barriers to trade and the COVID-19 impact assessment and the questionnaire on supply chains, according to UNECE officials.
43. The Georgian National Agency for Standards and Metrology commented that it was important that the Project provided information that included the views of producers because it helped government agencies understand how they had been affected by the pandemic.
44. The Georgian Ministry of Economy said the National Assessment Study and the COVID report were very much appreciated because although the government was aware of the challenges, they did not have a consolidated document that highlighted separate institutions' challenges all together, that could be disseminated to other agencies. Similarly, the Armenian Customs Service commented at the presentation of the COVID-19 report that the UNECE report's recommendations re-enforced the Service's own research. The Serbian Chamber of Commerce said the COVID Report was ground-breaking because it links the pandemic to cross-border trade as well as the SDGs produced new data and new thinking around national SDG annual data reporting commitments.
45. The Project was relevant to the target group's needs and priorities. Initially the governments approached UNECE and requested support. UNECE was responsive to additional requests for further research by Armenia and Georgia, and UNECE's swift response to the COVID-19 pandemic in five member states was appreciated. At the COVID-19 report webinar the Armenian Deputy Minister of Economy's statement said the government would consider the report's recommendations in future plans. Enterprise Georgia also said it would use the

survey's recommendations into consideration in future work. The Serbian Ministry of Economy said the COVID-19 report was a useful tool as it condensed scattered information across several ministerial department websites into one document.

46. One Georgian government stakeholder wondered why the Project was not directly focussed on state agencies, rather than MSMEs. They would have preferred the Project to provide more in-depth information from the National Surveys and get more data back about their agency's specific services, as feedback was considered to be important. Specifically, they were interested in which translations of regulations into Georgian needed to be prioritised. UNECE has already responded to this need as part of the ongoing classification of the NTMs according to UN/MAST classification system.
47. The Project focused on supporting the most vulnerable in the business community. The economies of Armenia and Georgia include a high percentage of micro-enterprises therefore the business sector comprises family or single-person entities. The COVID surveys showed directly how the pandemic was affecting individuals and making business owners more vulnerable. Their lack of income meant they were reducing their personal food and energy consumption and increasing loans.
48. The Project was relevant to both Georgia's and Serbia's current focus on the EU accession process. The UN standards are compliant with WTO ones, and WTO membership is a precondition to EU accession. Georgia became a WTO member in 2000 and Serbia started WTO accession in 2005. Once WTO negotiations are completed Serbia will fulfil one of the key conditions for Serbia's accession to the EU.
49. The Project design and intervention were relevant for meeting the objective of further supporting Armenia, Georgia and Serbia in removing regulatory and procedural barriers. The Georgian Ministry of Transport said the COVID-19 report was very useful because Georgia is a small country and interviewing 300 exporting enterprises is a good survey sample size. The Georgian government does not undertake many studies, as it has less research capacity. At the same time external analysis was welcomed by the Georgian Ministry of Transport because it was "good for objectivity, to get a view from another side. It was one of a kind this year". The Project provided tools in the form of databases that identified overlaps and gaps in regulation in a comprehensive way that was consistent with international norms. Serbia's Chamber of Commerce is keen to collaborate with UN and international agencies in improving data collection. It is involved in coordinating the establishment of the Chamber Investment Forum Western Balkans 6 regional centre for economic analysis. It has approached UNECE to support it in establishing a system for monitoring the contribution of trade to SDGs drawing on UNECE surveys on regulatory and procedural barriers to trade, the COVID-19 impact assessment and the questionnaire on supply chains (A1.6).
50. The Project began in 2017 and ended in 2020. It remains relevant and valid because the need to reduce barriers to trade continues and the COVID-19 pandemic has shown that countries like Georgia with simplified cross-border trade regulations can benefit from sudden changes in transport routes.

Coherence

51. The Project was **very coherent** because it complemented the achievement of the SDGs, the work of the UN system, the direct beneficiaries and the business community.
52. The Project was coherent with the SDGs and was predicated on following the general principles of the development goals (*see Table 3*).
53. The collaboration with other entities in the UN system and other international organisations was coherent. UNECE worked to its mandate to oversee and guide the development of international norms and standards, procedures and best practices and UNCTAD worked to its mandate of work on the macro level impact of non-tariff measures on the trade and development prospects of developing countries and strengthening its cooperation through participation in the Multi-Agency Support Team on the non-tariff measure database. In addition, UNECE is in the process of working closely with both the state agencies and the UN Country Team (UN CT) in each location in order to negotiate and integrate the recommendations emerging from the study into the national UN planning process. For example, the recommendations provided in the UNECE COVID-19 impact assessment, titled, “The impact of COVID-19 on trade and structural transformation in the Republic of Moldova: Evidence from UNECE survey of MSMEs”, has been integrated into the UN Country Common Analysis (CCA) 2021-2025. The recommendations are included in the list of priority areas that will form the basis for developing the United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UNDSCEF). UNECE is working with the remaining countries to integrate the recommendations emerging from the similar studies on Armenia, Belarus, Georgia and Serbia in the said countries’ CCAs, which are at different stages of development.
54. The Project is also an example of an effective collaboration between UNECE and UNCTAD, who have shared trainers and expertise. UNECE and the UN CTs will integrate the outcomes of the Project into each country’s UNDSCEF. However, a UNDA freeze on project expenditure due to a UN budget crisis in 2019 and then the outbreak of the pandemic meant a number of activities were postponed. Georgian participants said this did not impact on their activities, and they were able to complete their work according to their time schedule. But it did impact the regional training workshops and to a limited extent some work in Armenia and Serbia (*see Annex 2*).
55. The Project also collaborated with and worked to the strengths of other professional agency partners including the International Organisation of Legal Metrology (OIML), International Electrical Commission (IEC) and International Standards Organisation (ISO). These bodies provided coherent policy thinking and quality control to the Project’s outputs.
56. The outputs were consistent with the overall objective and expected results. Member states did not mention any other different product or training that they would have preferred.

Effectiveness

57. The Project **was effective** and achieved most of what it set out to accomplish in terms of activities, outcome and impact (see Annex 2).
58. The two expected results (indicators) of the Project were fully achieved. Armenia, Georgia and Serbia have developed and endorsed national action plans on simplifying, harmonizing and streamlining barriers to trade that will contribute to the achievement of the SDGs. All three countries have developed evidence-based monitoring systems (in the form of electronic databases) to monitor progress towards the removal of barriers to trade. The databases are hosted in national enterprise support institutions (Armenia, Georgia, Moldova) and in the Chambers of Commerce and Industry (Belarus and Serbia). These institutions were consulted on the questionnaires to ensure responsiveness to the national context, and implemented the surveys, and registered the results in the online databases. They were also accorded user rights to launch the survey in the future if they wish to do so. The questionnaires were launched in English and in national languages.
59. The activities were initially planned to be implemented over 24 months (January 2017-December 2019). Please refer to Annex 8 for all the details. The Project was extended by a further 9 months to September 2020 as the Project received USD 120,000 in additional funds, and then till December 2020 due to COVID-19.
60. There were other delays, caused by further issues. The survey of 30 female-owned enterprises in Armenia proceeded at a slow pace and was completed late 2018. Identifying female entrepreneurs and traders was difficult, since only a limited segment is actively engaged in cross-border trade.
61. The national assessment study in Armenia was delayed due to recurrent Government restructuring. The new Government assumed power in May 2018, and the period since then saw changes in middle management officials. Face-to-face interviews with these officials were therefore conducted in November-December 2018.
62. The Project activities were implemented according to the planned timeframe in Georgia. In Serbia there have been delays. One unintended benefit of UNECE's Project is that the survey highlighted issues raised by Serbian enterprises and logistic service providers that had not been covered in Serbia's preparations for the EU accession. This required the need to interview state agencies further. This additional work has led to delays. In Armenia the Velvet Revolution in March-May 2018 and subsequent change of government led to changes in civil service staff which caused a break in momentum and continuity of the Project.
63. There were three main challenges and obstacles that the Project faced. The Project management was able to find ways to address these challenges to ensure delivery. Activities that remain partially completed will be finalised in 2021 by the Secretariat. First, the UN financial crisis meant many Project activities were halted between October 2019 and February 2020.
64. Second, the outbreak of COVID-19 in spring 2020, led to the cancellation of several trips and events. Some of these activities have been replaced by online events.

65. Third, events in several countries have meant changes in government structures and civil service capacity and priorities. These risks were foreseen in the Project document template in 2016 and mitigated as originally planned by tackling each issue on a case-by-case basis and extending the implementation period.
66. MSMEs were identified by UNECE as the indirect beneficiaries of this Project and as such they are not part of this evaluation. Their selection is well-justified, as small companies with limited resources stand to benefit from access to free and open-source information on NTMs. In total the Project interviewed 1,995 MSMEs in five countries (Armenia, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova and Serbia) as part of the COVID-19 impact assessments and 217 MSMEs from Armenia, Georgia and Serbia as part of the studies on regulatory and procedural barriers to trade (see Annex 5).
67. The Project organised two regional training workshops. Each had a different purpose. The purpose of the March 2017 workshop was “to familiarize the participants with the UNECE evaluation methodology and the UN/MAST classification system” in order to develop national experts who could “**act as UNECE counterparts** throughout the Project implementation period and follow-up activities that will be undertaken beyond the international funding cycle to assist the countries implement the recommendations emerging from the studies”. The purpose of the April 2017 workshop was to enable state agencies **to be “familiar with the main approaches** to identifying NTMs, their prevalence and impact on trade flows, evaluating the accuracy of studies, which use econometric tools for quantifying the impact of NTMs on trade flows and factoring NTM considerations into national development strategies”.
68. The feedback forms for the March Workshop show all respondents were satisfied with its content and format, describing the workshop Good or Excellent (See Annex 6). One participant appreciated examples from other participants. The main comments focussed on how to roll out the information more widely. This included the suggestions that UNECE or UNCTAD produce the classification in local languages, that the UN supports national agencies with developing training modules for business, and that the UN does further training in-country with universities.
69. Project management is focussed on going beyond completing and achieving tasks and producing outputs to maximizing impact and embark on follow up support. The Project achieved this through the validation workshops, and by presenting the recommendations, which are provided in short messages in each study, to the SCTCS, which is attended by UN agencies and other international partners such as ISO, IEC, OIML, WTO, ITC, among others. The Secretariat also issues a press release to mark the discussions at the SCTCS.
70. The Project management ensured follow-up support as follows:
- Assisting the Government of Armenia to prepare a strategy in collaboration with OIML that is based on the recommendations of the study on regulatory and procedural barriers to trade. This remains a UNECE priority.
 - The Assessing Challenges and Opportunities in Georgia’s Ports report, which was prepared by UNECE and UNCTAD at the Government’s request, supports the implementation of recommendations from the study on regulatory and procedural

barriers to trade.

- Follow-up support for Georgia for classifying NTMs using UN/MAST methodology, which is being implemented in cooperation with UNCTAD under the UNDA SME surge project.
- Training modules for MSMEs on international standards implementation were developed under the UNDA SMEs surge Project and will be launched soon.
- Databases are housed in the enterprise support institutions for future use.
- Integrating the results from the assessments and the framework of indicators to support the implementation of WTO declarations and recommendations for assisting small businesses. (https://www.wto.org/english/news_e/news20_e/msmes_05nov20_e.htm)
- The recommendations from Moldova's COVID-19 impact assessment were integrated into the Government's COVID-19 Action Matrix in December 2020.
- A 'Moldovan MSMEs as an engine for growth: towards a whole of government approach', report was prepared by UNECE for the UN CT upon the request of the UN Resident Coordinator Moldova in February 2021.
- The secretariat worked with the UN CT to incorporate the recommendations emerging from the COVID-19 assessment into the Common Country Analysis (CCA) Moldova 2021 in January 2021.
- The recommendations emerging from the COVID-19 assessment in Armenia were incorporated into the EU Draft Multi-annual programme Document (MIP) 2021-2027.

71. The Activities contributed to the Project's Objective. Improving capacity to both assess and develop policies related to barriers to trade will help the countries involved to introduce policies that support the SDGs.
72. The additional COVID-19 related activities were effective in aligning with the initial project design and met both expected accomplishments of the Project's logframe. In Georgia it was important to understand the impact of COVID-19 on MSMEs and how the government could best respond because many producers had rapidly changed production in 2020. The government found itself having to adapt rapidly and to respond to unexpected requests such as providing Georgian-language production standards information to wine producers who had started making hand sanitisers, and the textile industry which had shifted its focus to making face masks and Personal Protective Equipment (PPE). Under such circumstances an outside, impartial overview of the response to the pandemic by the economic and trade sectors was welcomed.
73. UNECE planned to complete 10 COVID impact assessments, if governments formally requested them in time. By the end of the Project five countries had made the request and their online surveys had been completed (Armenia, Belarus, Georgia, Republic of Moldova, and Serbia), three reports have been finalised and two reports have been published. Analysis of the COVID-19 impact assessments was completed in Armenia and Georgia in 2020. The COVID reports had large survey sample sizes (373 MSMEs in Armenia, 726 MSMEs in Serbia, 235 MSMEs in Republic of Moldova etc) and therefore could be quantitative. Chambers of Commerce and national professional associations implemented the

questionnaires and were trained on the use of the online database, which they now house and could use for launching follow-up assessments. The questionnaire was pilot tested in Georgia, Serbia, Armenia and Moldova through interviews with 20 MSMEs in each country. The Serbian Chamber of Commerce and Industry distributed the questionnaire to over 2,200 enterprises and received 706 completed surveys back. The response rate of 20% is high and illustrates the engagement of business in the process. Similarly, there was a 26% response rate in Belarus. An unintended impact of the Project was that the prompts in some of the questions informed businesses about government support programmes that some were unaware of. In Serbia 17% of companies were made aware of government funding opportunities through the questionnaire. The databases were housed in enterprise support institutions, which participated in adapting the trader's questionnaire to the national context, trained on the use of the online database, carried out skype/phone interviews, and compiled the results of the interviews in the database. The three institutions have the capacity to launch the survey again in the future. In the case of Serbia and Belarus, the interviews were conducted by the Chambers of Commerce and Industry.

74. A three-hour online meeting was organised by UNECE on 30 September 2020 to present the findings of review of the Impact of COVID-19 on Trade and Structural Transformation in Georgia: Evidence from UNECE's survey of MSMEs. Up to 52 direct beneficiaries and UN staff attended the event. The chat facility had eight comments. At the event Natia Turnava Georgia's Minister of Economy and Sustainable Development said, "*The study very objectively reflects the success that the government has achieved in the fight against COVID.... [and] has given us important recommendations*".
75. A Georgian Department of Transport official said the COVID-19 report was effective because it provided a multi-agency overview of regulatory change caused by COVID and provided a concise view of its impact at a national level. The report was also very effective and timely as it was launched in July 2020 when Georgia lifted its lockdown restrictions. Since then, the country re-entered lockdown and the report remained useful as it allowed officials to look back and see what had worked and not and allowed the Department of Transport to make new regulations to curb the spread of virus and work more efficiently. In Serbia, the publication of the COVID report was delayed but remains effective because it links the pandemic to trade and SDG reporting systems.
76. Enterprise Georgia said they understood the COVID-19 assessment was implemented at speed, but as it coincided with the summer holidays, they were unable to keep up to speed with the email correspondence. Consequently, they were unable distribute the questionnaire in time. The Serbian Chamber of Commerce and Industry said they had also anticipated low responses, but despite the holiday season they received over 700 forms. The chamber said this result was because the online platform was simple to navigate, and the questionnaire was clear and easy to answer.
77. A three-hour online meeting was organised by UNECE on 17 December 2020 to present the report: "Impact of COVID-19 on Trade and Structural Transformation in Armenia: Evidence from UNECE's survey of MSMEs". The assessment was based a survey of 373 MSMEs. The review traced how non-tariff measures (NTMs) governing trade in goods influenced end-to-end supply chains and captured the lingering effects of the pandemic and their implications for achieving the SDGs. It also highlighted the importance of quality infrastructure in enabling trade development and setting the Armenian economy on a path

towards sustainable and inclusive recovery. Up to 45 direct beneficiaries and UN staff attended the event (32% female, 68% male). The chat facility had four comments. Ralf Peters, Chief of UNCTAD's Trade Information Section commented: *“We would like to congratulate our colleagues in UNECE and the officials from Armenia for their excellent work assessing the impact of COVID-19 on trade and structural transformation. The focus of the assessment, MSMEs, NTMs and supply chains is well chosen.”* In a read statement Varos Simonyan, Deputy Minister of Economy of Armenia, appreciated that the UNECE Project had avoided duplication of work with the UN resident coordinator’s office. In his comments, Gayane Mkrtychyan, Project Lead of the World Bank Group's Armenia Gender Project, which is implemented by the International Finance Corporation, commented that the report was inciteful, and would have liked to see more information on how MSMEs compete, more on the gender angle and more emphasis on the capacity of the sector to deliver on the recommendations. She added that she would also be interested to learn if this Project would now be expanded to help MSMEs or if the report would be updated with more diagnostics.

78. The Serbian Ministry of Economy said the COVID-19 report was a useful additional tool and evidence from the business community from an objective, external source that could be used to put pressure on different government agencies to speed up planned reform.

Cross-Cutting Issues

79. The Project has been **very effective** in introducing gender analysis to UNECE’s work. In late 2018 a mandatory gender field was added to all UNECE projects and the Project started before that date. The Project began earlier but anticipated the fact by including the gender perspective in both its planning and evaluation by offering separate assessment studies on female entrepreneurs to member states.. Armenia included a separate survey of female entrepreneurs to understand how NTMs impacted them. The work can be replicated in the UNECE region and in other regions. The national assessment surveys, female traders questionnaires and COVID-19 reports have a relevance which is universal. .
80. The Project was coherent with the strategic objectives for gender mainstreaming for the UNECE Economic Cooperation and Trade Division in line with the mandate of its subprogrammes. More specifically, the Project introduced gender analysis of the labour market, covered appropriately aspects related to women entrepreneurship, including gender-specific barriers, paid attention to the gender perspective, where relevant, in seminars and conferences, introduced a gender perspective in the agenda of the Committee on Trade and improved the women’s skills in relation to standardization policies and regulatory cooperation. Therefore, the Project contributed to the objectives of the UNECE Gender Policy¹⁷ of advancing women’s equal participation with men in all its areas of work, mainstreaming a gender perspective in the substantive work of the Sectoral Committees and contributing to reducing gender inequalities in its member States. This approach was welcomed generally by interviewees.

¹⁷ UNECE Policy for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women: Supporting the SDGs implementation in the UNECE region (2016-2020)

81. The Armenia National Assessment Study comprised interviews with 61 male-owned and 30 female-owned businesses. This is the first UNECE study that evaluates the interface between NTMs and female-owned enterprises' ability to participate in exports and their readiness to develop and increase their participation in export trade and is to be welcomed. These studies contributes to SDG 10.2: empower and promote the social, economic and political inclusion of all, irrespective of age, sex, disability, race, ethnicity, origin, religion or economic or other status. The study provides businesswomen a voice in a primarily male-dominated sector and further work of this nature should be encouraged in the future and adopted as a standard approach.
82. The Georgian Department of Transport said generally speaking in developing countries logistics is a male-dominated industry. In Georgia there had been efforts to open up the process and incentivise the logistics sector and provide more training and financial access, in a non-gender specific way. They said that this approach had started to bear fruit with an increase in female participation, especially in the maritime sector. The maritime academy in Batumi, for example, has noted more interest from women applying to study. The Women's Council of Georgia attended the Project's events, as they regularly engage in policy activities of the Ministry of the Economy.
83. However, there are differing views among government stakeholders on the value of gender inclusion in trade policy. Very few male- or female-owned MSMEs in ECE countries deal in exports, while at the decision-making level women are well represented in government in Eastern Europe. In one interview for this evaluation gender was not understood to be a central issue in terms of barriers to cross-border trade in Georgia. Gender was seen to be very popular by international donors but not viewed by donor recipient authorities as a "real challenge", because middle income countries face "bigger problems". The focus on Gender was considered by one interviewee to be an inefficient use of money. These comments were echoed in Serbia for the same reasons.
84. The two training workshops in Geneva trained a total of 15 people from Armenia, Georgia and Serbia, of which 75% men and 25% women. These two training workshops had eight trainers in total, of which 75% were men. The participants were nominated by Governments based on their areas of work. The two COVID report online presentations were attended by 97 people of whom 60% were men and 40% women.
85. A UN Women registered gender evaluation consultant was invited to attend the Georgia COVID-19 Report online presentation and commented that the report was an opportunity to make a contribution to SDG 5 and suggested that Enterprise Georgia and the STSC could "apply a gender lens to MSME data". The UNECE Secretariat noted that applying gender lens to a small sample of MSMEs would provide misleading data. The surveys target a sample of MSMEs engaged in trade and not the entire population of MSMEs. UNECE is addressing the gender perspective through a separate survey and stands ready to help national agencies in applying a gender lens to their national surveys that target a large sample that allows for reaching representative conclusions on for example the number of females hired by the MSMEs.
86. The Georgian Revenue Service pointed out that the national assessment survey's recommendations for greater digitisation of paperwork and the Service's goals to be 100% paper free were aligned in supporting vulnerable groups and the disabled, as it means they

can work from any location and this eliminates their need to physically go to Revenue Service offices.

Efficiency

87. The Project was **efficient** and achieved its objectives under the anticipated budget and allocation of resources, but a year later than planned, due to external forces. UNCTAD believed the Project had fulfilled its objectives efficiently.
88. The Project was completed under budget. An outstanding amount of \$30,554 exists primarily due to cancellation of in person workshops. The budget was amended twice. In April 2019 an additional \$120,000 was requested in April 2019 to cover activities A1.6 , A1.6 and A2.6. The Project was extended by the donor by 12 months to September 2020 after receiving additional USD 120,000 from UNDA residual funds and then again till December 2020 to take into account the challenges created by the pandemic. The budget was also revised once in June 2020 when \$75,969 was reallocated from existing budget lines in order to undertake a survey-based quick impact assessment of the immediate and long term consequences of the COVID-19 for MSMEs in Albania, Belarus, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo¹⁸, Montenegro and the Republic of North Macedonia in addition to work already undertaken by the Project in Armenia, Georgia, the Republic of Moldova and Serbia. The production of these reports is subject to a formal request from these governments. To date five out of the 10 countries have made this request in time to allow for undertaking the survey within the Project cycle. The reallocation of 15% of the original budget made possible due to travel restrictions imposed on the Project due to the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic. If any of the five remaining countries approaches UNECE with a formal request, work can proceed using the UNDA SME surge project “Global Initiative towards post-COVID-19 resurgence of the MSME sector”, which ends in December 2021.
89. The original budget was \$500,000. The budget focussed on the following activities: 26% National Assessment Studies, 16% Regional Workshop on NTMs Classification, 16% Regional Validation Workshop for Action Plans and Regional Study (percentage figures are rounded up). A full breakdown can be found in Annex 6. This breakdown reflects the priorities of the Project’s objectives. The budget was very flexible, allowing for funds to be moved between lines to accommodate expenditure changes to the agreed activities. Table 5 provides the initial budget breakdown by expenditure, the final budget and the magnitude of change.

¹⁸ Reference to Kosovo should be understood in full compliance with Resolution 1244 (1999).

Table 5. Budget Revisions in \$ US Dollars

Budget Line	Budget Allocation	Revised Budget	Size of change
BL 015 Other Staff	25,000	3,031	-21,969
BL 105 Consultants	156,000	211,968	+55,968
BL 115 Staff Travel	45,000	41,000	-4,000
BL120 Contractual Services	49,000	69,000	+20,000
BL 145 Workshops	225,000	175,000	-50,000

90. The COVID pandemic impacted on the ability for staff and participants to travel, this released the travel budget line, and these efficiencies meant the Project could act rapidly and respond to member states’ requests for analysis of the impact of COVID on their cross-border trade. In June 2020 a Request for Revisions was submitted. The request was for \$75,968 to be reallocated from staff costs, staff travel and one workshop to respond to the COVID pandemic.

91. For the total amount of \$620,000 the Project delivered the following 38 outputs and products:

- 3 x National Assessment Studies on regulatory and procedural barriers to trade (Armenia, Georgia and Serbia)
- 3 x National e-Databases on regulatory and procedural barriers to trade
- 1 x e-Database on Female-owned enterprises engaged in traders
- 3 x National Action Plans for removing identified regulatory and procedural barriers to trade
- 1 x guide : UNECE framework of indicators for measuring the contribution of NTMs to SDGs
- 1 x network of stakeholders and experts
- 5 x enterprise support institutions trained on implementing the UNECE traders and MSMEs questionnaire and use of the e-databases
- 1 x “Assessing Challenges and Opportunities in Georgia’s Ports” Strategic Policy Paper
- 5 x reports on the impact of COVID-19 on trade and structural transformation
- 5 x e-databases on the impact of COVID-19 on trade and structural transformation
- 5 x National Action Plans to address the impact of COVID-19
- Online training resources on NTMs Classification
- Online training resources on the economic implications of NTMs
- Policy paper on the economic implications of NTMs summarizing the discussions of the April 2017 training workshop
- COVID-19 Action Matrix, Government of Moldova, December 2020
- The ‘Moldovan MSMEs as an engine for growth: towards a whole of government approach’ report prepared by the UNECE for the UNCT upon the request of the Resident Coordinator Moldova, February 2021.

92. The Project was launched in January 2017. The first Annual Implementation Report written in December 2017 announced that 33% of the budget had been utilised. In December 2018 49% had been implemented. In December 2019 55% of the budget had been utilised by June 2020 69% had been utilised with 31% of the budget outstanding for the final six months of the Project. The Project faced delays due to the UN system wide financial crisis which caused a temporary freeze on regular budget expenditures in the UNECE, including UNDA expenditures. Therefore, the Secretariat had to postpone the regional workshop to discuss three national plans and validate the regional study paper which was scheduled to be held in November 2019.
93. The use of resources was changed by force majeure circumstances caused by the 2020 COVID-19 pandemic. Meetings went online and made efficient savings in relation to travel. The result was a series of well-managed and efficient meetings. A negative impact could be the lack of informal networking opportunities among participants during these events. UNECE is keen to develop a cadre of government officials who can share experience. If online meetings continue, then an option could be to explore the development of a password controlled online UNECE community of government agency officials.
94. The human resources required for the project were a combination of consultants and UNECE staff. The project was managed by the P-3 Economics Affairs Officer, funded from Section 20 regular budget resources. The average staff time devoted to this project was three months per year. Two UNCTAD staff also provided one working day each to the workshops. For the Project a total of 15 consultants were engaged. A number of these consultants came from either business support institutions or government agencies. The business support agency staff were trained as part of the Project and therefore their time was provided in kind. For the COVID reports an additional six consultants were engaged. The two workshops used a combination of UNECE, UNCTAD and independent consultants as trainers. The trainers received good approval rates in workshop feedback forms (see Annex 6). In April 2017, 23 workshop survey respondents rated the trainers an average score of 4.8 on a scale where a rating of 4 meant Good and 5 meant Excellent. At the March Workshop four respondents scored the trainers as Excellent for their Responsiveness, Clarity and Knowledge, Good to Excellent for their Presentation and Satisfactory to Good for their Facilitation. The National Assessment surveys were managed by an international consultant, who trained local experts to undertake questionnaires. This action means the expertise in running further surveys remains in the field, which is important when Georgian officials pointed out that there are few faculties with similar experience and when the Serbian Ministry of Economy pointed out that trade research institutes exist but collaboration with government departments is infrequent. The Ministry officials in all three countries recognised the quality of the reports and their timeliness. Delays caused by the COVID-19 pandemic and the UN budget freeze were considered to be understandable. The only constructive comment from government officials was that in Serbia and Georgia UN agencies should avoid setting deadlines or work activities during the summer holiday period.
95. The Project relied on the expertise and knowledge of staff within the Secretariat to deliver a number of outputs including the National Assessment Surveys, Covid reports and Georgian ports study, for example. Secretariat staff also defined the questions for the National Assessment Surveys with government focal points and local stakeholders prior to

handing them to the research consultants. This is a reasonable approach, because this collaborative approach is central to UNECE's work and helps build a longer-term level of engagement between government bodies and UNECE. Relationship building needs to be internally managed and not outsourced. Quality assurance and consistency in ensuring global standards is improved if kept in house, also.

Sustainability

96. The Project **was very sustainable** because it was specifically designed to develop sustainable tools that would be used in the beneficiary countries after its completion. Sustainability was integral to the Project design.
97. The results of the Project will inform UNECE inter-Governmental discussions on trade and regional integration under the Steering Committee on Trade Capacity and Standards.
98. The recommendations emerging from the study are being integrated by UNECE and the UN CTs into the national planning processes. At the COVID-19 online presentation in Armenia, Louise Skärvall, the SDG Liaison Officer from the UNDP office in Yerevan, said the report would feed into the UN office's framework with the Armenian government. In the case of Moldova, the recommendations have already been integrated into the UN Common Country Analysis.
99. The Project also contributes to further collaboration between UNECE and UNCTAD. The Chief of UNCTAD's Trade Information Section, Ralf Peters, said *"We stand ready to work with the government of Armenia and UNECE to update this mapping and establish a sustainable approach. We also offer trainings and capacity building on NTMs. This can be tailor made trainings that we can organize jointly with UNECE or accepting Armenian officials into our regular global trainings. I look forward to continue working with Armenia and once again congratulate ECE and Armenia for their excellent study."*
100. The national expertise to continue this work remains in the three countries to some extent. In Georgia and Armenia there has been a significant turnover in civil service posts. Not all of the people interviewed for this evaluation had attended the courses two or three years earlier. This has the potential to break continuity of interpersonal contacts, knowledge and policy priorities in the short term.
101. The participating member states have shown great ownership of the Project and its outputs on several levels through their adoption of Action Plans, cooperation in the research, engagement in feedback and validation processes, and generation of further collaboration in this field with UNCTAD and UNECE. Further the three participating states have implemented the recommendations of the National Assessment Studies. Interviews for this evaluation provided six examples where Georgia has acted upon the national assessment study recommendations (see Annex 7).
102. The level of ownership that national governments invested into the Project is an indicator of how relevant the Project was. UNECE consulted with national stakeholders on the

findings of the draft National Assessment Survey and collaborated with member States in refining these recommendations. A total of 53 improvements were made to the reports in the three countries indicating the level of engagement the governments had with the outcomes of the reports (see Table 6 below).

Table 6. Indicator of National Ownership

Number of additional (+), altered (Alter) and eliminated (-) recommendations in the final National Assessment Studies compared to first draft, following UNECE consultations with national partners*

Recommendation Headings	Armenia			Georgia			Serbia		
	-	Alter	+	-	Alter	+	-	Alter	+
Transparency			4					1	
Documentary Requirements	1							2	
Consolidating Single Window	6		2				2		1
Border Control	3	2	4						
Regional Cooperation	2		3						
Transport Infrastructure						2			
Technical regulations			1						
Standardization									
Conformity Assessment			1				4		2
Metrology	1		2		1				5
Enterprise Development					1				

*Please Note: The number of changes is not comparable. Not all countries had the same number of recommendation headings, and the number of changes may also reflect many factors such as a change in government personnel or policy priority mid-project.

103. The Georgian Ministry of Economy said the National Assessment Study generated internal discussions on important topics that engaged different agencies and other ministries. Therefore, the Project has helped the agency to reassess, monitor and plan how it communicates with MSMEs. In Armenia the recommendations of the national assessment study will be used for designing a metrology system with OIML. This work will include improving metrology centres through training with OIML, and the digitisation of the service in 2021, according to the Armenian Institute of Metrology.

104. Therefore, the participating government bodies are continuing to develop the work of the Project, by implementing recommendations and looking to further develop the Project's work and their relationship with the UN.

105. There is also potential to build a network of expertise with the experts who participated in the process. The Project strategy stated the aim of the workshops was *"to create expert networks that will continue beyond international funding-cycle"*. There is no evidence to suggest this happens independently of the Steering Committee meetings and training workshops.

106. The Project document template stated that the training materials and recommendations developed under the Project would be made available to all beneficiaries through UNECE

and UNCTAD websites, and on all partners' Internet sites. The documents are available on the UNECE and UNCTAD websites and were shared with the governments. The data is also being shared and discussed more widely with SPECA country government agency officials. UNECE could consider translating the training material into national languages.

107. Partners and beneficiaries “own” the outcome of the work. This is evidenced in the fact that all three participating countries have used the studies as the basis for a National Action Plan and then presented these plans at the UNECE Steering Committee.
108. The Project has helped to strengthen the application of gender mainstreaming principles. The survey recommendations have contributed to substantial and meaningful changes in the situation of the most vulnerable groups.
109. The Georgian Revenue service pointed out that communications is key. They felt that the substantial work done so far should continue with more direct communications between all stakeholders, such as roundtables, so all sides can discuss their comments and understand the content of the reports. While UNECE may see this as the role of the state partners, Georgian ministries also see benefit, validation and authority of collaborating with international organisations.
110. Further communications work could be done internationally by UNECE. International work is outside of the remit of national government budget commitments. The Georgian Revenue Service proposed that UNECE could share its findings with stakeholders (including MSMEs) in other partner trading countries. For example, the Revenue Service said that while Georgian businesspeople now submit documentation online, the Service still needs physical offices, because Iranian traders have limited online access and experience. Materials may need to be translated into local languages. The provision of Iranian-language materials may be an example of gaps in institutional provision. Iran is outside the UNECE's geographical remit. Iranian translation may not be a priority for a Georgian ministry budget. Such potential gaps should be considered and, if required, other relevant UN agencies included in Project follow-up actions.
111. Georgia has followed up on the recommendations from the UNECE study ‘The Impact of COVID-19 on trade and structural transformation in Georgia: Evidence from UNECE's survey of MSMEs’ in October 2020 by asking UNECE and UNCTAD support in classifying Georgia's NTM legislation according to the UN Multi-Agency Support Team (MAST) system and in publishing the entire set of Georgia's NTMs on UNCTAD's global NTM platform. Serbia intends to use their COVID report as the basis for improved annual reporting on the SDGs.
112. At the Armenian presentation of the COVID Report, the statement of Varos Simonyan, Deputy Minister of Economy of Armenia, said Armenia would *“take the [report's] recommendations into consideration in future plans”* adding that UNECE's *“efforts were highly appreciated”*.
113. In Serbia the final National Assessment Study had not been published before the end of the Project, therefore it was difficult to assess the impact of the Project. But progress has been made. The draft report had been approved by the Serbian government and will be a useful document for developing the two-year action plan (2022-2024) of the Serbian Trade

Facilitation Committee (STFC). The STFC is a relatively new cross-ministerial body established in 2017 to coordinate Serbian trade facilitation. Serbia also expressed an interest in sharing the findings with the Central European Free Trade Agreement members (EFTA) as a useful information tool.

114. In 2017 the Chambers of the Western Balkans Six (Albania, B&H, Kosovo, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Serbia) registered the WB6 Chamber Investment Forum (WB6 CIF) as a new legal entity. WB6 CIF represents around 350,000 companies from the Western Balkans and one of its three aims is to remove the obstacles to the development of regional economic cooperation. As part of this collaboration WB6 CIF has started a Project on establishing a Centre for Regional Economic Analysis. UNECE has responded with the offer of support through creating, pilot testing and institutionalising at least five further surveys: An enterprise profile survey, a survey for assessing the impact of negative shocks on enterprises, based on the COVID-19 survey, a survey to assess the impact of NTMs on enterprises, a survey to analyse supply chain dynamics by studying sub-contracting arrangements among national enterprises and international organizations. Surveys will also be developed to look into TNCs' perceptions of enterprises.
115. In January 2021, following the publication of the Moldova COVID-19 report, Moldova was chosen as one of the case studies of the Early Lessons and Evaluability of the UN COVID-19 Response and Recovery Multi-Partner Trust Fund (MPTF). The exercise's objective is to support the learning and accountability of the UN COVID-19 MPTF by drawing lessons that are significant in the context of the UN Resident Coordinator system. Moldova has benefited from the Fund with a total amount of \$1 million. The project implemented by IOM, UNW and UNICEF was catalytic in a moment where the pandemic was starting to unfold in the country. The exercise will also assess how the Socio-Economic Response Plans (SERPs) were developed and implemented.
116. One of the legacies of the Project is that UNECE and UNCTAD are jointly discussing the development of a joint training course for familiarising MSMEs on NTMs and their implication drawing on UNTAD experience in UN/MAST classification and NTM macro analysis and UNECE evaluation methodology. UNECE and UNCTAD are also discussing a joint analysis that will capture gaps in secondary NTM legislation.

VI. Conclusions and Recommendations

CONCLUSIONS:

1. The Project was very relevant¹⁹ because it fed into global, regional and national strategies of the three beneficiary countries for removing regulatory and procedural barriers to trade.
2. The Project was very coherent because it complemented the achievement of the SDGs, the work of the UN system, the direct beneficiaries and the business community.
3. The Project was effective and achieved most of what it set out to accomplish in terms of activities, outcome and impact.
4. The Project has been very effective in introducing gender analysis to UNECE's work.
5. The Project was efficient and achieved its objectives under the anticipated budget and allocation of resources, but a year later than planned, due to external forces.
6. The Project was very sustainable because it was specifically designed to develop sustainable tools that would be used in the beneficiary countries after its completion.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

Recommendation 1: The Project will remain relevant as the three beneficiary countries continue their process of regulatory harmonisation and expanding their network of global trade partners. UNECE could consider this model to be a pilot project that could be rolled out to other countries in future.

Despite some delays, the Project achieved most of what it set out to accomplish in terms of effectiveness. All three countries have developed National Action Plans on simplifying, harmonizing and streamlining barriers to trade that will contribute to the achievement of the SDGs. The project is a stage in participating countries further developing their own NTM databases, and the project is a useful milestone in this process. In addition the data and knowledge gathered by this project contributes to individual participating countries' WTO accession, EU accession and EAEU integration processes.

Recommendation 2: The gender-based work can be replicated in the UNECE region and in other regions. The national assessment surveys, female traders questionnaires and COVID reports have a relevance which is universal.

The Project has been very effective in introducing gender analysis to UNECE's work, by offering separate assessments on female entrepreneurs to member states as part of the studies on regulatory and procedural barriers to trade. It has piloted gender work within UNECE and raised questions on how gender can be meaningfully integrated into the context of international trade, and the region's long term approach to gender issues.

¹⁹ Relevance, Coherence, Effectiveness, Efficiency and Sustainability have each been evaluated against a three criteria scale, for example: Very Relevant, Relevant, Not Relevant etc.

Recommendation 3: Further disseminate the results of assessments by translating the recommendations into national languages of the beneficiary countries.

Some stakeholders proposed that the key findings and recommendations should be translated to national languages and all the UN official languages to ensure broader dissemination. This would help raise awareness among international trade partners on the challenges facing the countries and the steps to address those challenges. The production of UN reports is not the end of the dissemination process. In terms of project planning it is worth considering how to deliver report findings effectively to the indirect beneficiaries, who needs to undertake that work, how that will be funded and under what timeframe. This can be discussed with other UN agencies and participating countries.

Recommendation 4: Continue to provide high level analysis of national responses to the COVID pandemic.

The UNECE value-added in terms of its COVID response was to provide member States with a trusted, objective overview of multi-agency and cross-departmental issues at a time when each department is operating in crisis mode. The value of the reports is to help individual ministries understand the factors impacting other government departments and help them understand how they can provide more consistent support to the trade sector. One positive story missed by news agencies is that COVID has highlighted the advantages of reducing barriers to trade. Countries with single window systems, online NTM databases etc. can take benefit from rapidly changing trade routes created by sudden COVID-related transport lockdowns.

Recommendation 5: UNECE has a role to play in providing governments with the voice the most vulnerable into the design of future projects

MSMEs in the three countries form a large part of the economy and are often family-owned or single-person entities. Because small numbers of MSMEs are engaged in cross border trade, governments have few regular, formal mechanisms to survey MSMEs on a large scale. The participating countries do not have the research capacity to undertake this scale of survey, or do not engage research institutes to undertake this work on a regular basis. Therefore, the governments appreciate learning about MSMEs' circumstances and find such data invaluable for their planning and policy processes.

VII. Annexes

Annex 1. Terms of Reference

TERMS OF REFERENCE

1617AN: Strengthening the national capacities of selected UNECE countries for evidence-based regulatory and procedural trade policies to achieve SDGs

I. Purpose

The primary purpose of the evaluation is to assess the extent to which the objectives of the UNDA 10th tranche Project “Strengthening the national capacities of selected UNECE countries for evidence-based regulatory and procedural trade policies to achieve SDGs” were achieved. The evaluation will assess the relevance, coherence, effectiveness, efficiency and sustainability of the Project in supporting member States to strengthen their capacities in the area of evidence-based regulatory and procedural trade policies, in the context of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The evaluation will also look at the activities repurposed to address the impact of the COVID-19 crisis, and assess, to the extent possible, the ECE’s COVID-19 early response through this Project.

The results of the evaluation will allow improving capacity building services provided to member States through regular technical cooperation as well as the development and implementation of similar future Projects and activities by the Economic and Cooperation Trade Division (ECTD) of UNECE. It will finally help reinforce ECE’s response efforts to COVID-19 and its consequences.

II. Scope

The evaluation will include the full Project implementation during the period of 1 January 2017-31 December 2020 in three countries (Armenia, Georgia, and Serbia).

The universally recognized values and principles of human rights and gender equality need to be integrated at all stages of an evaluation, in compliance with the United Nations Evaluation Group’s revised gender-related norms and standards. Therefore, the evaluation will assess how gender considerations were included in the process and it will make recommendations on how gender can be included better in the process.

III. Background

The Project supports the expected accomplishment (d) “Enhanced national capacity of member States for trade policy development and implementation” of the Trade subprogramme of UNECE, as reflected in the Programme plan for 2016-2017; 2018-2019¹ and 2020². This

expected accomplishment derives from the core mandate of the subprogramme to “oversee and guide the development of international norms and standards, procedures and best practices that

¹ <https://undocs.org/a/71/6/Rev.1> Please refer to Programme 6. ² [https://undocs.org/a/74/6\(Sect.20\)](https://undocs.org/a/74/6(Sect.20))

reduce the costs associated with export and import processes and increase the efficiency, predictability and transparency of trade regulations and procedures and the movement of goods and services”³.

The Trade subprogramme reports to the Steering Committee on Trade Capacity and Standards (SCTCS), which is responsible for promoting and maintaining norms, standards, recommendations and best practice guidelines in the areas of trade facilitation; regulatory

The Project builds on the UNECE studies on regulatory and procedural barriers to trade, which were launched in 2010 using the UNECE unique survey-based methodology.⁵ The methodology stands apart from existing methodologies in that it covers both behind and at the border regulatory and administrative procedures governing export and import activities. By 2017, it was implemented in seven countries (Albania, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, the Republic of Moldova and Tajikistan). The studies provided a systemic analysis of regulatory and procedural trade barriers stemming from: (i) trade facilitation measures; (ii) quality control systems embodied in standardization policies, technical regulations, quality assurance, accreditation and metrology (SQAM); and (iii) trade-related infrastructure, including transport and logistical support.

The overall goal of the Project is to strengthen the national capacities of selected countries (Armenia, Georgia and Serbia) in the UNECE region for evidence-based regulatory and procedural trade policies to support the achievement of 2030 Agenda, particularly SDGs 1, 9, 10 and 17. It was implemented in collaboration with UNCTAD, with UNECE assuming the role of the lead agency.

The Project involved piloting an extended evaluation in the three selected countries. The extended methodology addresses, in addition to the above-mentioned areas, micro, small and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs) engaged in trade activities; exporters in partner countries.

In addition, building on experience gained from the studies, the Project involved developing a guideline document for translating into practice the 2030 Agenda concept of trade as a “means of implementation” as elaborated under SDG 17. The guideline contains a framework of indicators for measuring and monitoring the contribution of trade, particularly non-tariff measures (NTMs) to the 2030 SDGs. It was developed by the secretariat and shared with the relevant agencies from the countries where the studies were undertaken for comments.

³ ECE/EX/2015/L.6

⁴ ECE/EX/2015/L.6

⁵ The studies and evaluation methodology are available at: <http://www.unece.org/tradewelcome/studies-on-procedural-and-regulatory-barriers-to-trade.html>.

⁶ In total, the extended evaluation methodology includes 7 questionnaires, including the core methodology (SQAM, trade facilitation and the traders) and the additional questionnaires (SMEs, female traders, small farmers and market support institutions), which together make up the extended methodology.

In March 2020, the Project was repurposed to involve additional assessments to ascertain the impact of the COVID 19 induced economic crisis on the MSMEs development prospects. The impact assessments were launched in May 2020 in the three selected countries and in Belarus and the Republic of Moldova. Another set of COVID 19 assessments were launched to ascertain the impact of the economic crisis on female owned enterprises in Armenia and the Republic of Moldova with funds from a UNDA SME surge project.

The national stakeholders of the Project are public and private sector institutions that are directly involved in supporting the implementation of trade reforms aimed at removing regulatory and procedural barriers to trade. The Project also targets traders and owners/managers of manufacturing industries, especially MSMEs to ensure responsiveness and support increased public-private sector consultations on policies and reform initiatives for removing regulatory and procedural barriers.

The main organizations involved in project implementation are UNECE (lead agency) and UNCTAD (an implementing partner).

The budget of the Project is total US\$ 620'000 (including the additional funds of the amount of US\$ 120'000 added in 2019). The Project was managed by the Economic Affairs Officer from the Market Access Section, funded from the UN regular budget (Sect.20) resources.

IV . Issues

The evaluation will answer the following issues: Relevance; Coherence; Effectiveness; Efficiency and Sustainability.

Relevance:

1. To what extent did the Project respond to the priorities and needs of the beneficiary countries to develop evidence-based policies? Was the Project design appropriate?
2. To what extent were the activities consistent with global and regional priorities and the programme of work of the UNECE? What value has UNECE's efforts added in this area? How relevant were the Project activities in the way of achieving the SDGs?
3. How relevant were the activities added in response to the COVID-19 pandemic?
4. How relevant was the Project to the target groups' needs and priorities? Was there a focus on the most vulnerable?
5. Did the Project apply gender, rights-based and disability inclusion approaches in the design, implementation and results of the activities?

Coherence:

6. How coherent was the collaboration with other entities in the UN system and other international organizations?
7. Were the activities implemented according to the planned timeframe? How coherent with the initial project design are the COVID-19 related activities, added in April 2020?
8. Were the activities implemented in the required sequence needed to ensure the greatest impact of the Project?
9. To what extent are the outputs consistent with and relevant to the overall objective and expected accomplishments?

Effectiveness:

10. Did the Project achieve the results expected during the project design in terms of the planned activities, outcome, and impact?
11. To what extent were the expected accomplishments of the Project achieved?
12. What were the challenges/ obstacles to achieving the activities, objective and expected accomplishments?
13. What were the specific challenges to COVID-19 expected accomplishment and activities?

Efficiency:

14. Did the Project achieve its objectives within the anticipated budget and allocation of resources?
15. How could the use of resources be improved? Would you propose any alternatives to achieve the same results? If yes, which ones?
16. Were the human and financial resources allocated to the Project used efficiently and commensurate the Project results?

Sustainability:

17. How is the stakeholders' engagement likely to continue, be scaled up, replicated or institutionalized?
18. To what extent do the partners and beneficiaries 'own' the outcomes of the work?
19. To what extent are the objectives of the activity still valid? How can the activity be replicated in the UNECE region or in other regions?
20. What are the lessons learnt from the COVID-19 related activities? Could they be replicated?
21. What are the laws, regulations, policies or projects that have been developed so far based on the strengthening national capacities for the development of the evidence-based policies for sustainable housing and urban development?
22. Has the Project helped to strengthen the application of gender mainstreaming principles and contribute to substantial and meaningful changes in the situation of the most vulnerable groups?

Methodology

The evaluation will be conducted based on:

- A desk review of all relevant documents will be conducted in the first instance. The desk review will include: the Project document and information on Project activities; studies and reports (published studies, the Guideline on gearing trade to serve as a means of implementation and advisory reports); and the decisions from the SCTCS annual sessions. These documents will be provided by the Market Access Section.
- In-depth in person and skype interviews will be conducted with (i) national coordinators who acted as UNECE counterparts throughout the national assessments and follow up activities; (ii) representatives of government agencies responsible for the areas addressed in the studies; (iii) representatives of enterprise support institutions ; and (iv) with partners involved in the Project, UNECE responsible staff from the Market Access Section and UNCTAD. (list of contacts and details to be provided by the Project manager).

UNECE will provide all documentation, support and guidance to the evaluation consultant as needed throughout the timeline of the evaluation.

The evaluation will be conducted in accordance with the ECE Evaluation Policy. A gender-responsive methodology, methods and tools, and data techniques are selected. The evaluation findings, conclusions and recommendations reflect a gender analysis.

The evaluation report of maximum 15-20 pages will summarize findings, conclusions and recommendations of the evaluation. An executive summary (max. 2 pages) will summarize the methodology of the evaluation, key findings, conclusions and recommendations.

VI. Evaluation schedule

A. Preliminary research: by 1 October 2020; B. Data collection: by 15 November 2020; C. Data analysis: by 15 December 2020;

D. Draft report: 20 January 2021;

E: Final report: 1 February 2021

Final timetable to be agreed following engagement of the evaluator. The timing above is indicative.

VII. Resources

An independent consultant will be engaged for a period of 40 days to conduct the evaluation, within a budget of US\$ \$10'000 (inclusive of all costs).

Ms. Hana Daoudi, the Project Manager, will manage the evaluation in consultation with the Division Director Ms. Elizabeth Tuerk. The Project Manager will provide support by ensuring the provision of all necessary documentation needed for the desk review, guiding the evaluator on the recipients for the questionnaire and for follow-up interviews, as well as by ensuring communication with the evaluator during the evaluation period.

The Programme Management Unit (PMU) will provide guidance to the Project Manager and evaluator as needed on the evaluation design, methodology for the evaluation and quality assurance of the draft report.

VIII. Intended Use/Next Steps

Findings of this evaluation will be used when possible to:

- - improve direct Project's follow up actions, implementation of products by Project beneficiaries and dissemination of the knowledge created through the Project;
- - learn lessons from early response to the impact of COVID-19, to develop further related projects
- - assess the gaps and further needs of countries in the area of this Project;
- - formulate a tailored capacity building Projects for the development of evidence-based

policies for sustainable housing and urban;

- - induce new Project ideas, improving the planning and design of future capacity building

activities and projects on evidence-based regulatory and procedural trade policies in the UNECE region;

The results of the evaluation will be reported to the SCTCS.

Following the receipt of the final report, the Project manager will develop a management response and action plan for addressing the recommendations made by the evaluator. The final evaluation report, the management response and the progress on implementation of recommendations will be available on the UNECE website.

IX. Criteria for evaluators

Evaluators should have:

- An advanced university degree or equivalent background in relevant disciplines
- Specialized training in areas such as evaluation, project management, social statistics, advanced statistical research and analysis.
- Demonstrated relevant professional experience in design, management and conduct of evaluation processes with multiple stakeholders, survey design and implementation, and project planning, monitoring and management, gender analysis and human rights due diligence
- Demonstrated methodological knowledge of evaluations, including quantitative and qualitative data collection and analysis for end-of-cycle project evaluations.
- Fluent in written and spoken English and Russian.
Evaluators should declare any conflict of interest to UNECE before embarking on an evaluation project, and at any point where such conflict occurs.

Annex 2. Project Activity Progress Chart

No.	Activity	Date	Implementer	Direct Beneficiaries	Means of Verification (Documents)	Output	Intended Outcome	Level of Completion
1.1	Regional Workshop on NTMs Classification	22-23 March 2017	UNECE UNCTAD	Government agencies; private sector; consultants ; national polling institutions	https://www.unece.org/index.php?id=45726 Agenda and training materials	Training materials	To enable state agencies to identify all NTM measures using the MAST classification and UNCTAD's classification guidelines and consolidate these measures into a national database.	Completed
1.2	National Databases	Armenia: 2018 Georgia: 2018 Serbia: 2019	National Polling institutions & UNECE	Government agencies	National Databases	National Databases	To compile the results of the face-to-face interviews in three countries.	Completed
1.3	National Assessment Studies	Armenia: 2018 Georgia: 2018 Serbia: 2020	UNECE	Government agencies; private sector; research institutes	Armenia: https://www.unece.org/fileadmin/DAM/trade/Publications/ECE-TRADE-452E.pdf Georgia:	Armenia National Assessment Study	To capture the national context in each of the targeted beneficiary countries	Partially Completed

No.	Activity	Date	Implementer	Direct Beneficiaries	Means of Verification (Documents)	Output	Intended Outcome	Level of Completion
					http://www.unece.org/fileadmin/DAM/trade/Publications/ECE_TRADE_443E_Georgia.pdf . http://www.unece.org/index.php?id=49491&L=0	Georgian National Assessment Study		
					Serbia: Study completed, awaiting publication.	Serbian National Assessment Study		
1.4	National Workshops to Validate Studies	Armenia: May 2019 Georgia: April 2018 Serbia: 2020 (online discussion and feedback obtained via email)	UNECE in collaboration with UN CT & governments	State agencies	Presentations at STSC of National Action Plans	National Action Plans	To ensure due diligence in responding to national needs and support the establishment of consensus over the recommendations emerging from the studies.	Completed
1.5	An assessment of the role of regulatory and	Armenia: Not completed Georgia: 2020 Serbia:	UNECE and the International Chamber of Commerce	State agencies	The policy paper	A policy paper on the role of regulatory and procedural measures in	To highlight shortfalls and weaknesses in existing regulatory harmonization, trade facilitation measures	Partially completed (force majeure)

No.	Activity	Date	Implementer	Direct Beneficiaries	Means of Verification (Documents)	Output	Intended Outcome	Level of Completion
	procedural measures in leveraging supply chains for structural transformation (SDG8) and job creation (SDG9)	Delayed				leveraging supply chains	and enterprise support services; provide case studies of successful supply chain integration; and elaborate action-oriented recommendations. To seek to increase the role of regulatory and procedural measures in leveraging supply chains for structural transformation and be will used for developing the monitoring and tracking indicators.	
1.6	Monitoring and tracking indicators for increasing the role regulatory and procedural measures in leveraging	December 2020	UNECE with OIML supported by ISO, UNCTAD and International Electrical Commission (IEC)	State agencies	Draft framework of indicators revised and is being prepared for publication Annex 2 in the following document for SPECA countries https://www.unece.org/index.php?id=55553)	Framework of Indicators	A framework of indicators for monitoring and tracking indicators for increasing the role regulatory and procedural measures in leveraging supply chain	Partially completed

No.	Activity	Date	Implementer	Direct Beneficiaries	Means of Verification (Documents)	Output	Intended Outcome	Level of Completion
	supply chain integration for structural transformation (SDG 8) and job creation (SDG 9).							
2.1	Regional Workshop on the Economic Implications of NTMs	10-11 April 2017 Geneva	UNECE & UNCTAD	68 policy makers and research institutions from ministries of economy, health and agriculture	https://www.unece.org/index.php?id=4562 <u>2</u> Attendance list	Training materials	To familiarize UNECE member-States on the policy implications of NTMs with a special emphasis on the achievement of SDGs 1, 9, 10 and 17.	Completed
2.2	National Action Plans	Armenia: the second quarter of 2019 Georgia: April-May 2018 Serbia:	UNECE with national advisory committees / working groups, UNCTAD and UNCT	State Agencies, Business associations, Chambers of Commerce, Transport	Georgia: https://www.unece.org/fileadmin/DAM/trade/SCTCS_2018/EC_E_CTCS_2018_05E.pdf Armenia:	National Action plans published on UNECE website	To guide the simplification, harmonization and streamlining trade regulatory and procedural barriers following the recommendations	Partially completed

No.	Activity	Date	Implementer	Direct Beneficiaries	Means of Verification (Documents)	Output	Intended Outcome	Level of Completion
		Completed, awaiting publication.		operators, Academic and other technical institutions	https://www.unece.org/fileadmin/DAM/trade/SCTCS_2019/EC_E_CTCS_2019_04E.pdf Serbia: provided as part of the study (final chapter).		emerging from the studies.	
2.3	Regional Validation Workshop for Action Plans	Merged with Activity 2.4	UNECE, UNCTAD and UN CT	Ministries, State agencies, enterprise support institutions	N/A	N/A	To provide policymakers with a set of additional indicators to measure and monitor the contribution of NTM reforms to the 2030 SDGs	Cancelled (force majeure)
2.4	Concluding regional seminar	Planned for March 2020 and December 2020	UNECE, UNCTAD and UN CT	A broader audience of UNECE member States during the High-Level segment of the Steering Committee on Trade Capacity	https://www.unece.org/trade/meetings.html#/0/0/0/39818 Georgia: https://www.unece.org/fileadmin/DAM/trade/SCTCS_2019/EC_E_CTCS_2019_06E.pdf (read) Presentations: https://www.unece.org	Comments and feedback.	To present the results of the national studies and lessons learned on the development of evidence-based assessments and monitoring tools to a broader audience.	Cancelled (force majeure)

No.	Activity	Date	Implementer	Direct Beneficiaries	Means of Verification (Documents)	Output	Intended Outcome	Level of Completion
				and Standards annual session	g/index.php?id=50609 (read) <u>Regional MOI Framework in emails.</u>			
2.5	Advisory missions on carrying forward the action plans	Armenia: Georgia: An advisory mission was held as part of activity A2.2 in April 2018 Serbia: advisory mission cancelled due to COVID-19	OIML, UNECE & UNCTAD	State agencies	Armenia: Delayed due to COVID Georgia: Georgia timetable April 2018 Serbia: cancelled due to COVID-19.	Action plan progress	To assist countries to carry forward national action plans, develop evidence-based trade policies and further develop the databases for use by polling agencies and Government for monitoring purposes.	Partially completed (force majeure)
2.6	Regional workshop for ECE members from the Caucasus, South Eastern and	Planned November 2019. Postponed to March 2020. Postponed to September	UNECE	ECE members from the Caucasus, South Eastern and Eastern Europe and	Presentations Attendance lists Publication: 'Trade as a Means of Implementation Taking Advantage of Food Trade'	N/A	To present the results of the study and lessons learned on the development of evidence-based assessments and monitoring tools.	Completed

No.	Activity	Date	Implementer	Direct Beneficiaries	Means of Verification (Documents)	Output	Intended Outcome	Level of Completion
	Eastern Europe and Central Asia to present the study on developing evidence-based assessments and monitoring tools.	2020. Added to two regional online events in December 2020.		Central Asia				

Additional Project Activity Progress Chart

No.	Activity	Date	Implementer	Direct Beneficiaries	Means of Verification (Documents)	Output	Intended Outcome	Level of Completion
	Strategic policy paper “Assessing Challenges and	Submitted to the Government in September 2019.	UNECE, UNCTAD	Georgian state authorities	Internal report	Report	To capture the implications of implementing trade facilitation measures on port development, and thereof, the	Completed

No.	Activity	Date	Implementer	Direct Beneficiaries	Means of Verification (Documents)	Output	Intended Outcome	Level of Completion
	Opportunities in Georgia's Ports"						achievement of policy coherence (SDG 17.14)	
	Strategic policy paper for implementing the recommendations linked to the development of the national system of Metrology in Armenia.	N/A	UNECE	Armenian state agencies	N/A	Strategic Document	No information available	Not completed
	COVID 19 impact assessment reports	Armenia: December 2020 Georgia: November 2020 Serbia: 2021 (completed	UNECE	State agencies, professional associations, chambers of commerce	5 x COVID reports	5 x COVID reports	To assess the immediate and long term consequences of the COVID preventive measures for MSMEs	Partially completed

No.	Activity	Date	Implementer	Direct Beneficiaries	Means of Verification (Documents)	Output	Intended Outcome	Level of Completion
		but not published) Belarus: 2021 (completed and presented to the Government for feedback) Republic of Moldova: 2021 (completed but not published)						

Annex 3. List of Reviewed Documents

UN Documents

Guidelines to Collect Data on Official Non-Tariff Measures, UNCTAD, January 2016 Version

Guidelines to Collect Data on Official Non-Tariff Measures September 2014 Version

International Classification of Non-Tariff Measures, UNCTAD, 2012 Version

Assessing regulatory and procedural measures in trade: An Evaluation Methodology, UNECE

UNECE Policy for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women: Supporting the SDGs implementation in the UNECE region (2016-2020)

Global Solutions Catalogue for Socio-Economic COVID-19 Response, Developed by the COVID-19 Response and Recovery Fund Secretariat

Terms of Reference for the UN COVID-19 Response and Recovery Multi-Partner Trust Fund (<http://mptf.undp.org/factsheet/fund/COV00>) #RecoverBetterTogether

COVID 19 Response. Global Interim Report of the UN COVID-19 Response and Recovery Fund for the period May to September 2020

UN Socio-economic Response and Recovery Plan Pillar 3. Economic response and recovery. Socio-Economic Taskforce Meeting, Promotion of the UN Socio-Economic Response and Recovery Plan, Moldova, February 2021

UNECE Steering Committee Trade Capacity and Standards Documents

UNECE Steering Committee on Trade Capacity and Standards meeting documents of 2017 and 2018 <https://www.unece.org/info/events/meetings-and-events.html?id=924#/0/0/0/39818/>

Draft Decision, Decision on the Establishment and Terms of Reference of the ECE Steering Committee on Trade Capacity and Standards, Geneva 2015

Steering Committee on Trade Capacity and Standards Second session, 26-27 May 2016 Item 3(c) of the provisional agenda. Regulatory and procedural barriers to trade: A gender perspective ECE/CTCS/2016/5

Online Evaluation of the Steering Committee on Trade Capacity and Standards (Fourth Session) Geneva, 3-4 May 2018

List of Participants 4th session of the Steering Committee on Trade Capacity and Standards 3-4
May 2018

SPECA documents

Annex 2 –The Institutional And Legislative Framework Governing Trade In Goods In SPECA
Countries, UNECE, November 2020

Project Documents

Project Document Template 10th Tranche Of The Development Account for the Strengthening
The National Capacities Of Selected UNECE Countries For Evidence-Based Regulatory And
Procedural Trade Policies To Achieve SDGs Project

Agreed national action plans for implementing Project activities:

- Concept Note Summary Sheet: Armenia, 2017
- Concept Note Summary Sheet: Georgia, 2016
- Concept Note Summary Sheet: Serbia, 2018

UNECE Additional Funding Request for 10th Tranche Project, 5 April 2019

Request For Revisions (including extension) for Project 1617AN, 18 June 2020

Annual Progress Report December 2017

Annual Progress Report December 2018

Annual Progress Report December 2019

Papers, publications and workshops

Evaluation forms Regional Workshop on Capturing NTMs”; 22-24 March 2017 Geneva

Evaluation forms Economic Implications of NTMs Workshop; 10-11 April 2017 Geneva

Concept Note: Trade as a means of implementing the 2030 Agenda: evidence-based tools,
Regional Workshop, UNECE, November 2019

Trade as a means of implementation UNECE towards a reference framework, UNECE November 2019

Trade as a means of implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals: The UNECE
framework, December 2020

Regulatory and Procedural Barriers to Trade in Armenia: Needs Assessment, Zero draft

Regulatory and Procedural Barriers to Trade in Georgia: Needs Assessment, Zero draft

Regulatory and Procedural Barriers to Trade in Serbia: Needs Assessment, UNECE, zero draft

Regulatory and Procedural Barriers to Trade in Armenia: Needs Assessment, UN, Geneva, 2019

Regulatory and Procedural Barriers to Trade in Georgia: Needs Assessment, UNECE, Geneva, 2018

Regulatory and Procedural Barriers to Trade in Serbia: Needs Assessment, UNECE, Geneva, 2020 (final draft for publication)

The Impact of COVID-19 on Trade and Structural Transformation in Armenia. Evidence from UNECE's Survey of Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises. Geneva December 2020

The Impact of COVID-19 on Trade And Structural Transformation In Georgia, Evidence From UNECE's Survey Of Micro, Small And Medium, UNECE, December 2020

The Impact of COVID-19 on Trade And Structural Transformation In Republic of Belarus, Evidence From UNECE's Survey Of Micro, Small And Medium, UNECE, February 2021, Zero Draft

The Impact of COVID-19 on Trade And Structural Transformation In Republic of Moldova, Evidence From UNECE's Survey Of Micro, Small And Medium, UNECE, January 2021,

The Impact of COVID-19 on Trade And Structural Transformation In Serbia, Evidence From UNECE's Survey Of Micro, Small And Medium, UNECE, December 2020, Zero Draft

Trade as a Means of Implementation Taking Advantage of Food Trade, UNECE 2020

Assessing Regulatory And Procedural Barriers To Trade In Serbia. Trade Facilitation. Customs And Other Border Control Agencies. Actor oriented-questionnaires. UNECE, 2019

Assessing The Standardization, Quality Assessment And Metrology System. Serbia. Actor oriented-questionnaires, UNECE, 2019

Assessing regulatory and procedural barriers to trade in Armenia. Traders Questionnaire for pilot testing, UNECE, 2018

Follow-up Questions for Brokers and Forwarders Based on the Results of the Traders Survey, Armenia, Georgia and Serbia, UNECE

Common Country Analysis (CCA) Moldova, UN RC, Moldova, January 2021

COVID-19 Action Matrix, Government of Moldova, December 2020

Moldovan MSMEs as an engine for growth: towards a whole of government approach, prepared by the UNECE for the UN CT upon the request of the RC Moldova, February 2021

Attendance at the online meeting on the impact of COVID-19 on Trade and structural transformation in Armenia: Evidence from UNECE's survey of Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises, December 2020

Attendance at the online meeting on the impact of COVID-19 on Trade and structural transformation in Georgia: Evidence from UNECE's survey of Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises, October 2020

Armenia

<https://eurasianet.org/armenia-adopts-plan-for-economic-revolution>

Georgia

Georgia's Long-term Economic Development Concept, Bank of Georgia, 2013

Georgia's Economic Strategy 2014-2020

Serbia

Government of the Republic of Serbia, Economic Reform Programme for the Period 2018-2020

Let's Do Business Together, Serbian Chamber of Commerce and Industry

Serbia. Your Next Investment Destination, Serbian Chamber of Commerce and Industry, <https://api.pks.rs/storage/assets/05-10-2020-Serbia-your-next-investment-destination%20ENG.PDF>

Analysis and Research, Serbian Chamber of Commerce and Industry, <https://pks.rs/strana/analytics-and-research>

Macroeconomic Overview, Serbian Chamber of Commerce and Industry, <https://pks.rs/strana/macroeconomic-overview>

Sectoral Analysis, Serbian Chamber of Commerce and Industry, <https://pks.rs/strana/ccis-sectoral-analyses>

Business Activity, Serbian Chamber of Commerce and Industry, <https://pks.rs/strana/business-activity-of-companies>

COVID 19, Chamber Investment Forum Western Balkans 6 <https://www.wb6cif.eu/COVID-19/>

News, Chamber Investment Forum Western Balkans 6 <https://www.wb6cif.eu/news/>

UNCTAD

TRAINS: <https://trains.unctad.org/>

World Bank

WITS database: <https://wits.worldbank.org/>

Annex 4. Review Questions

The key internal and external stakeholders were identified as:

1. Ministries of Economy and regional integration/ Prime Minister's offices
2. Transport/ Environment/Agriculture/ Industry/ health ministries
3. SQAM agencies including standardisation bodies, CABs and those responsible for metrology
4. Customs Authorities

Relevance

1. To what extent did the Project respond to the priorities and needs of the beneficiary countries to develop evidence-based policies?
2. How relevant were the Project activities in the way of achieving the SDGs?
3. Was the Project design appropriate?
4. To what extent were the activities consistent with global and regional priorities and the programme of work of the UNECE?
5. What value has UNECE's efforts added in this area?
6. How relevant were the activities added in response to the COVID-19 pandemic?
7. How relevant was the Project to the target groups' needs and priorities? Was there a focus on the most vulnerable?
8. Did the Project apply gender, rights-based and disability inclusion approaches in the design, implementation and results of the activities?
9. To what extent were the desired outcomes achieved for stakeholders?

Coherence

13. How coherent was the collaboration with other entities in the UN system and other international organizations?
14. How coherent were the activities with achieving the SDGs?
15. How coherent with the initial Project design are the COVID-19 related activities, added in April 2020?
16. Were the activities implemented in the required sequence needed to ensure the greatest impact of the Project?
17. To what extent are the outputs consistent with and relevant to the overall objective and expected accomplishments?

Effectiveness

20. 10. Did the Project achieve the results expected during the Project design in terms of the planned activities, outcome, and impact?
21. 11. Were the activities implemented according to the planned timeframe?
22. To what extent were the expected accomplishments of the Project achieved?
 12. What were the challenges/ obstacles to achieving the activities, objective and expected accomplishments?
 23. 13. What were the specific challenges to COVID-19 expected accomplishment and activities?
24. 12. How effective was the Project in terms of supporting gender, rights-based and disability inclusion?

Efficiency

26. 14. Did the Project achieve its objectives within the anticipated budget and allocation of resources?
27. How could the use of resources be improved?
28. Were any alternative activities that could have achieved the same results? If yes, which ones?
29. Were the human and financial resources allocated to the Project used efficiently and commensurate the Project results?

Sustainability

30. 17. How is the stakeholders' engagement likely to continue, be scaled up, replicated or institutionalized?
31. To what extent are the objectives of the activity still valid? How can the Project be replicated in the UNECE region or in other regions?
32. What are the lessons learnt from the COVID-19 related activities? Could they be replicated?
33. What laws, regulations, policies or projects have been developed so far based on the strengthening national capacities?
34. Has the Project helped to strengthen the application of gender mainstreaming principles?

Annex 5. List of interviewees

GEORGIA

Name	Organization	Position
Avtandil Gogoberidze Nika Pertakhia	Enterprise Georgia	Program Manager of Entrepreneurship Department
Giorgi Chitadze Samson Uridia	Accreditation Center Revenue Service	Deputy Director General Head, Department for International Relations
Rati Devadze	Ministry of Economy and Sustainable Development	Deputy Head, Transport and Logistics Development Policy Department
Nino Mikanadze	Georgian National Agency for Standards and Metrology	Director of Metrology Institute
Mariam Gabunia	Ministry of Economy and Sustainable Development	Head of Department for Foreign Trade Policy

SERBIA

Marco Mandić	Chamber of Commerce and Industry Serbia	Head of Centre
Jelena Vasić	Chamber of Commerce and Industry Serbia	Head of the Centre for Strategic Analyses, Analytics, Planning and Publications
Vera Pavlović-Marjanović	Department for Foreign Trade Policy and Multilateral and Regional Economic and Trade Cooperation Ministry of Trade, Tourism and Telecommunications	EU and EFTA Unit

Tatjana Dinkic

Department for Multilateral and
Regional Trade and Economic
Cooperation
Ministry of Trade, Tourism and
Telecommunications

Head of the EU and
EFTA Unit

NON-REGION

Hana Daoudi

Economic Affairs Officer
UNECE, Market Access
Section

Project Manager

Matthias Brunner

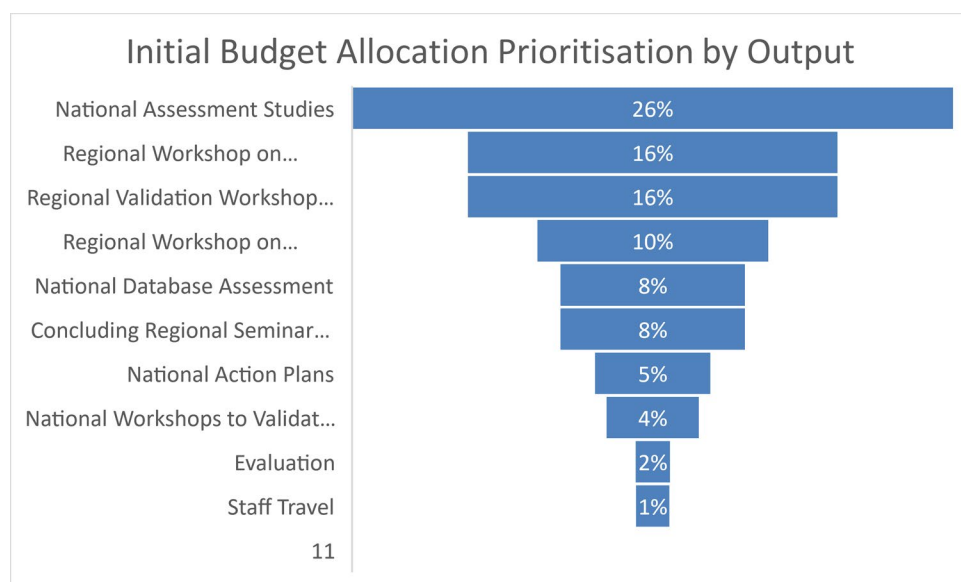
Statiscan Polling Institute

Director

Annex 6. Research Findings

Financial Planning

Budget prioritisation



Source: Results-based workplan and budget details (percentages rounded up)

Number and Distribution of participating MSMEs

:

COVID-19 assessments

Country	No. of MSMEs interviewed
Armenia	373
Georgia	330
Republic of Belarus	325
Republic of Moldova	235
Serbia	726
Total	1,995

National Assessment, Regulatory and Procedural barriers to Trade

Country	No. of MSMEs interviewed
Armenia	91

Georgia
Serbia
Total

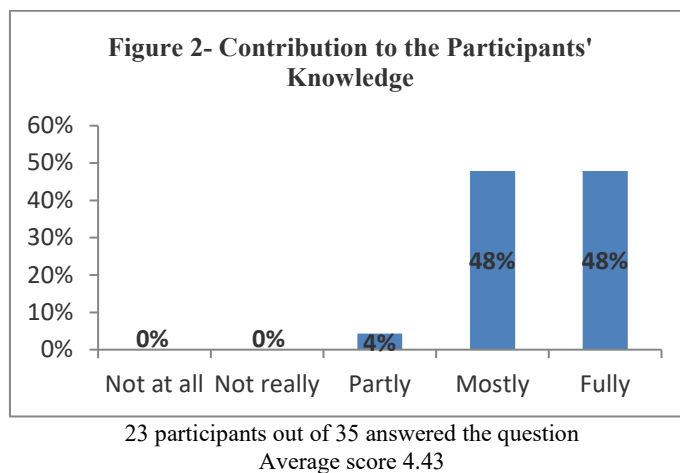
65
61
217

Workshop Comments

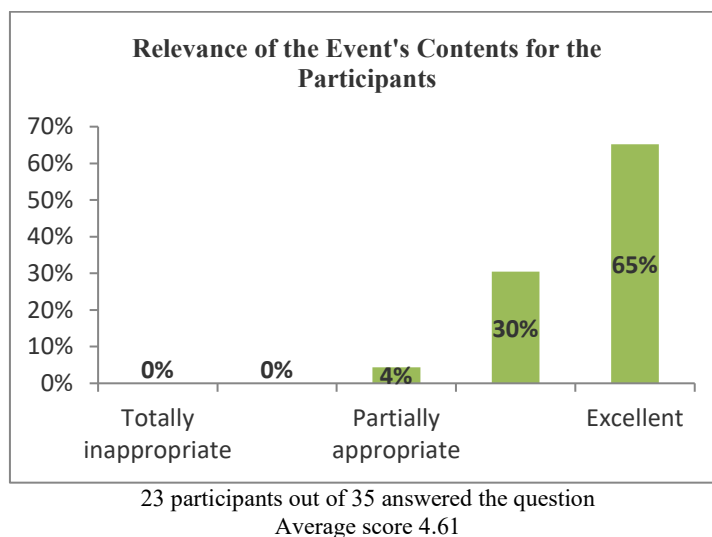
1. April 2017 Workshop: Regional Training Workshop on the Economic Implications of NTMs

Sample size: 35 people. Source: Workshop feedback forms

Question 1. Has the workshop contributed to your knowledge?

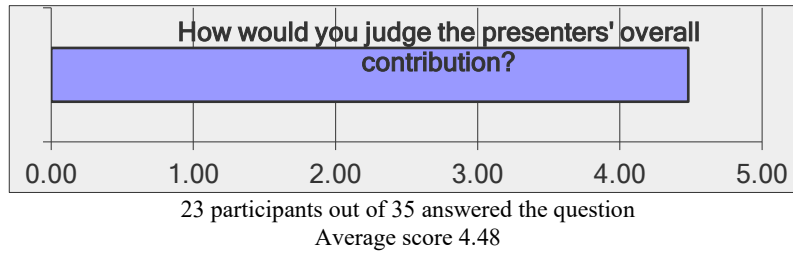


Question 2. How relevant was the workshop?



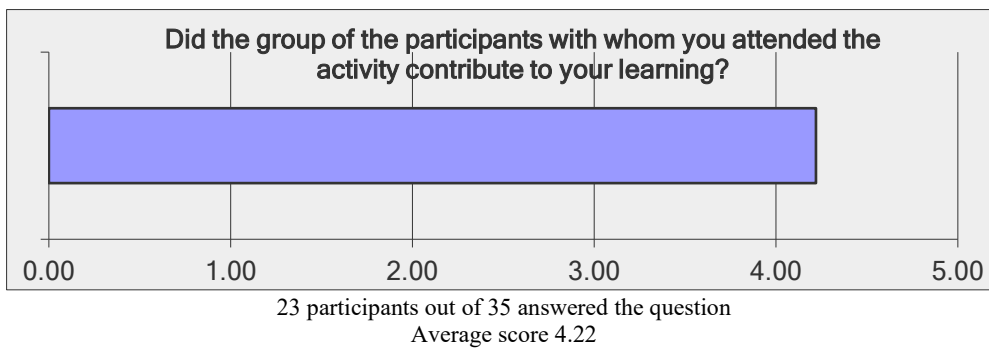
Question 3. How would you evaluate the presenters?

Use a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 is Disappointing, 2 is Unsatisfactory, 3 is Satisfactory, 4 is Good and 5 is Excellent.

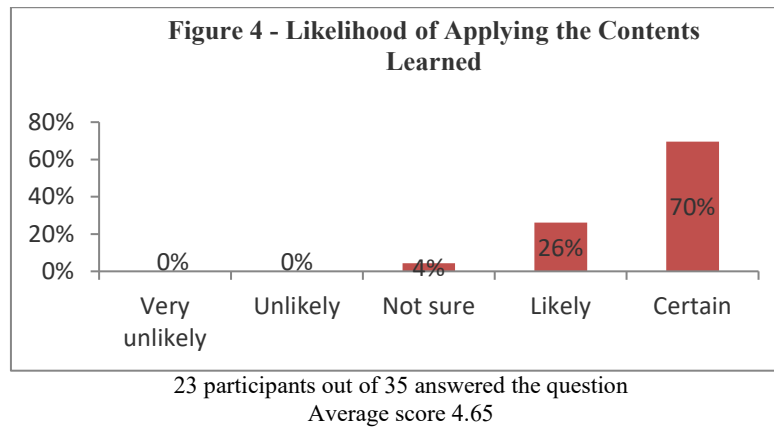


Question 4. How far did the workshop participants contribute to your learning?

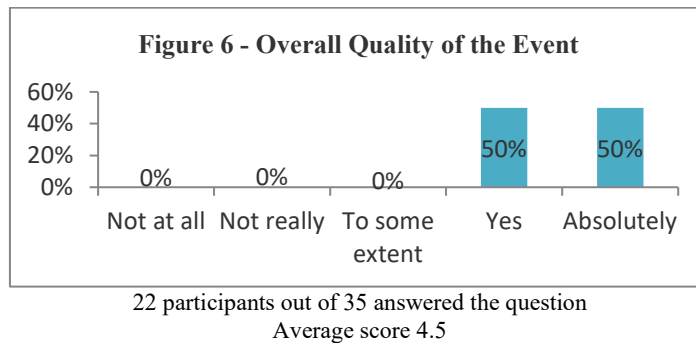
Use a scale of 1 to 5 where: 1 is Not at All, 2 is Not Much, 3 is To some extent, 4 is Yes, and 5 is Very much.



Question 5. Will you apply what you have learned at the workshop?



Question 6. Were you satisfied with the quality of the workshop?



Question 7. How can the workshop be improved?

3 out of 35 responded:

- Everything was well thought out
- Excellent workshop. There are no suggestions for improving it.
- Maybe the workshop could be longer than two days.

Question 8. Do you have any other observations or suggestions?

1 concrete suggestion:

- The participants' networking could be better motivated with activities after the workshop hours like sightseeing, traditional dinner etc.

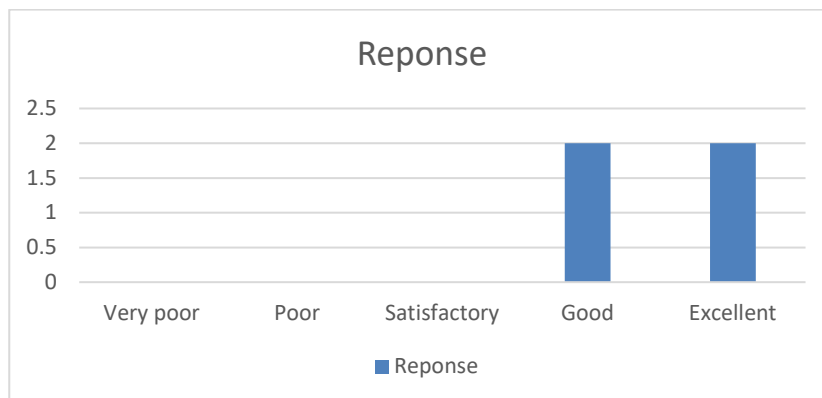
2. March 2017 Regional Workshop on Non-Tariff Measures (NTMs) Classification and Data Collection

Sample size: 5 participants from Armenia, Georgia and Serbia.

Source: Workshop feedback forms

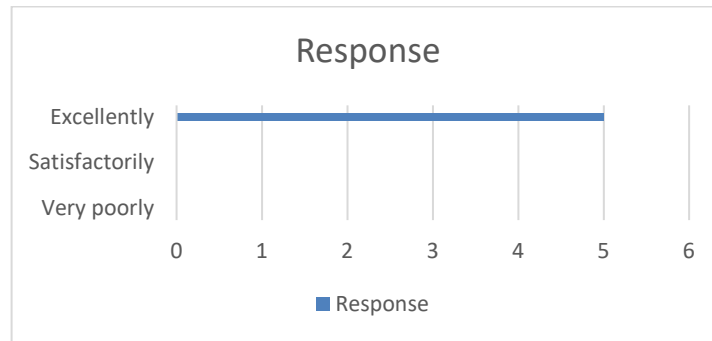
Question 1. What was your overall assessment of the workshop?

On a scale of 1-5 where: 1 is Very Poor, 2 is Poor, 3 is Satisfactory, 4 is Good, 5 is Excellent.



Question 2. How well was the workshop organised?

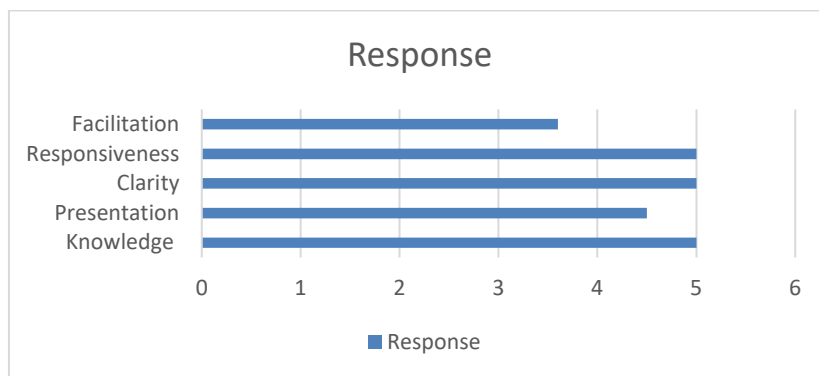
On a scale of 1-5 where: 1 is Very Poorly, 2 is Poorly, 3 is Satisfactorily, 4 is Well, 5 is Excellently.



4 participants out of 5 answered the question

Question 3. How would you evaluate the trainers?

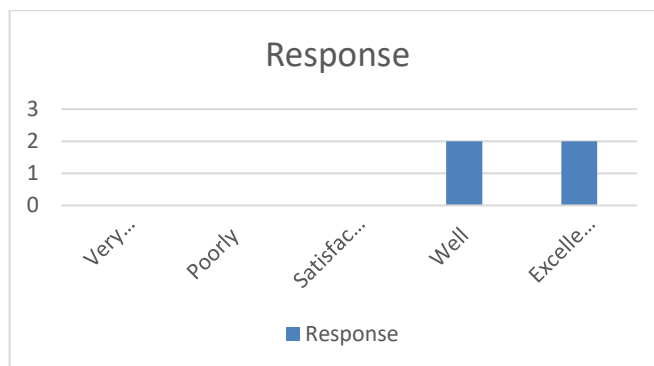
On a scale of 1-5 where: 1 is Very Poor, 2 is Poor, 3 is Satisfactory, 4 is Good, 5 is Excellent.



4 participants out of 5 answered the question

Question 4. To what extent has the seminars helped you to better understand the NTMs and their classification?

On a scale of 1-5 where: 1 is Very Poorly, 2 is Poorly, 3 is Satisfactorily, 4 is Well, 5 is Excellently.



4 participants out of 5 answered the question

Comments:

- Chapters A and O are difficult. Chapter O is difficult also because of the harmonisation with the EU.
- This is the first time I have learned about NTMs. I now know a lot and can read and learn more on my own.

Question 5. To what extent do you think that transparency of NTMs is useful and will help your country to implement the policy?

On a scale of 1-5 where: 1 is Not at all useful, 2 is A little useful, 3 is Somewhat useful, 4 is More useful, 5 is Extremely useful

- All four respondents answered: Extremely Useful

Question 6. How could this workshop be improved?

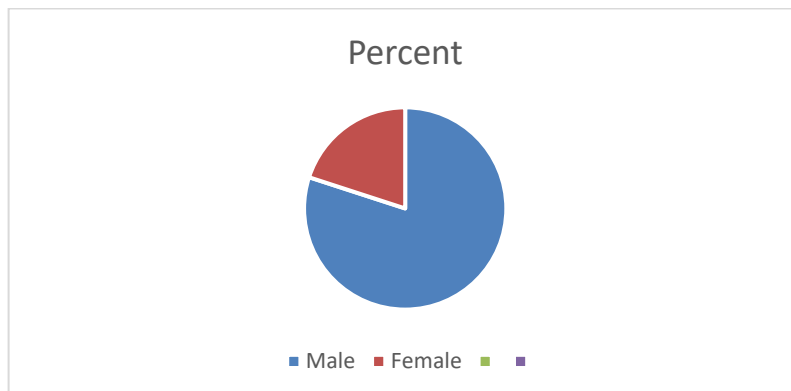
- It should be possible to offer the UNCTAD NTM classification manual in Serbian. These are technical terms and only UNCTAD and UNECE can provide the good translation.
- More coffee breaks

Question 7. Any other Comments or suggestions

- Help [us to] prepare training on NTMs for enterprises.
- It was good to have research, [and] customs from different countries. I found the comments from Belarusian expert interesting and learnt about Kyrgyzstan and also from my Government.
- Have training in countries in collaboration with universities.

Gender

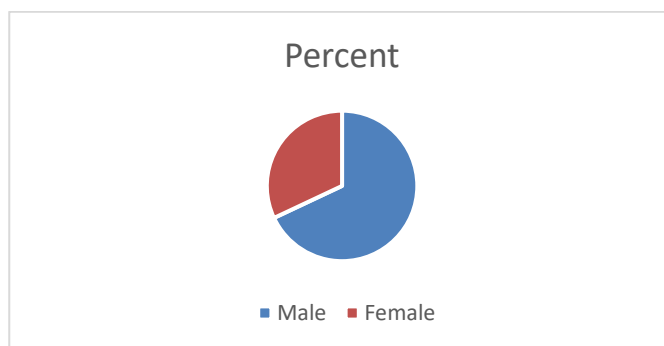
Regional training workshop on economic implications of NTMs



Sample size 12 Armenian, Georgian and Serbian participants out of 68 trainees (18%). Source: Attendance sheets.

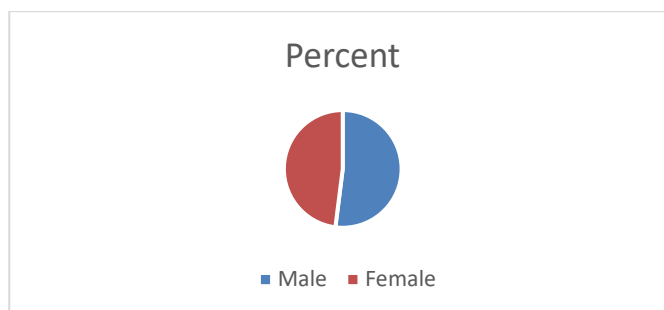
COVID Presentations (Georgia and Armenia)

Armenia



Sample size 45 people (100%). Source: Webex Attendance list

Georgia



Sample size 52 people (100%). Source Webex attendance list

Annex 7: Examples of Georgian Application of National Survey Recommendations

UNECE Recommendation	Action
Provide more equipment to standard-holding laboratories	Georgia is in the process of attaining non-contact thermometers in collaboration with PTB in Germany and the delivery of the equipment was expected at end of 2020. Also humidity and temperature measuring equipment was gradually being upgraded thanks to a government programme in the agricultural sector and an increased demand for calibration by the sector.
Create a specialised body to help SMEs and shippers	The Georgian Ministry of Transport said they want to study further a recommendation from the study to create a specialised body to help SMEs and shippers. As a result of the study they now plan to research how useful such bodies are in other countries, to understand how it can be adapted to the Georgia context.
Enterprise Georgia should expand its outreach to a wider range of enterprises	The Georgian Ministry of Transport started discussions in November with Enterprise Georgia on how to increase the competitiveness of the supply chain, such as offering incentives to organisations that are more technologically advanced.
Train supply management	The Georgian Ministry of Transport have decided to focus on this with Enterprise Georgia. They plan to train the many small logistics companies in digitalisation and systematising in order to help them understand how IT can improve their bottom line.
Provide advanced training courses on RIA to Ministry staff	The Georgian Ministry of Economy has provided advanced training courses on RIA to its staff.
Establish collaborative mechanisms with private research centres and universities abroad	The policies to align with EU Directives also align with the recommendation. Most Georgian state agencies have EU supported programmes including the UK technical supervision agency, which is supporting Georgia to develop a market surveillance agency, an EU Twinning project related to the Georgian food safety agency, the

standards and metrological institute and the public procurement agency.

Establish collaborative arrangements with national universities and key research institutions

An advisory group at the Ministry of Economy has been identifying challenges facing MSMEs and has commissioned Georgian consulting firm to prepare a study on wine exports to Turkey.

Make the Revenue Service's website more user friendly and accessible

The Georgian Revenue Service used the survey's recommendations to not just publish legal acts but also try to explain them and make them understandable to business users and foreign exporters. The English language content on this site has increased ten-fold.

Annex 8 Effectiveness of Individual Project Activities

(Activity 1.1) The March 2017 **Regional Workshop on NTMs Classification** in Geneva was attended by 13 people, of which five came from Armenia, Georgia and Serbia (4 male, 1 female). The Project also supported eight further participants from Albania, Republic of Moldova, the Russian Federation and Tajikistan (5 male, 3 female) in order to achieve economies of scope and scale through creating synergies between different ongoing UNECE Projects. The workshop ran for three days. The workshop was effective in targeting experts in state agencies that implement NTMs. Its aim was ensure participants would be able to classify national trade-related legislation by measure and the product(s), based on the Harmonized Coding System (HS code) at the most detailed level. The 13 sessions varied in length, with one running for two hours. All sessions involved two speaker presenters and the same format of Powerpoint presentations. The trainees included participants from a parallel UNECE Project concerning NTMs for Belarus, Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan. This provided synergies between the two projects. The Central Asian participants followed up the workshop with a harmonization exercise to comply with the World Trade Organisation (WTO) administered multilateral trading system (MTS). The purpose of involving additional participants from Armenia, Georgia and Serbia was first, to inform them about NTM classification, in advance of them potentially developing similar systems, and second to network with colleagues from other nations.

(Activity 1.2) The **National e-Databases** were completed in Armenia in 2018, in Georgia in 2018 and in Serbia in 2019. 217 MSMS trader participants were interviewed including 30 female small traders in Armenia. The database acknowledges that the sample size is too small to allow for extrapolation of the data to a national scale. This is because the intention of the databases is to provide qualitative rather than quantitative data that can help governments to understand trends and issues and aid their policy development. The Georgian Revenue Service appreciated the transparent collaboration in the process of selecting the most relevant stakeholders to interview. The Revenue Service was impressed with the way the survey tested if the stakeholders were right ones and listened to and discussed the selection process with the government sector. The databases were housed in enterprises support institutions, which participated in adapting the trader's questionnaire to the national context, trained on the use of the online database, carried out the face to face interviews, and compiled the results of the interviews in the database. The three institutions have the capacity to launch the survey again in the future.

SMEs and government agencies were appreciative that the UN was undertaking a survey. The UN involvement gave them prestige and recognition. This led to interviewees buying into the purpose of the Project and opened up and talked of their difficulties in exporting and importing goods to Georgia.

(Activity 1.3) The **National Assessment Studies** were completed in Armenia and Georgia and are published on the UNECE website. The Serbian study final draft was completed in 2020 and will be published in due course.

(Activity 1.4) The **National Workshops To Validate Studies** occurred in Yerevan in May 2019 and Tbilisi in April 2018. Due to COVID-19, the event in Serbia was replaced by online discussions between UNECE and government agencies. This gave the Serbian agencies the opportunities to make comments and amendments to UNECE.

(Activity 1.5) The Assessment Of The Role Of Regulatory And Procedural Measures In Leveraging Supply Chains A questionnaire was developed by the secretariat to shed light on subcontracting arrangements between regional and international partners and the three beneficiary countries in order ascertain whether reforms are leaving some regulatory and procedural barriers unaddressed. The Secretariat was preparing to launch the questionnaire during the first quarter of 2019 in collaboration with the International Chamber of Commerce (ICC). The results were to be analysed and integrated into the study published under A1.6. However, this exercise was put on hold due to the outbreak of the pandemic. UNECE will again reach out to the ICC once normality is restored. In the meantime, UNECE will launch the survey in Serbia in cooperation with the Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Serbia and in Western Balkans in cooperation with the Chamber Investment Forum Western Balkans 6. This will be done as part of the Chamber Investment Forum Western Balkans 6 efforts to establish a regional research centre.

(Activity 1.6) The Monitoring And Tracking Indicators For Increasing The Role Regulatory And Procedural Measures In Leveraging Supply Chain Integration For Structural Transformation faced delays due to the UN financial crisis. Further a workshop on a framework for indicators in March 2020 was cancelled due to COVID-19. The indicators were instead presented to a much larger forum, the UNECE - UN Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UNESCAP) 15th session of the UN Special Programme for the Economies of Central Asia (SPECA) Working Group on Trade on 16 November 2020. One of the papers prepared for the SPECA event included an Annex with all the main additional indicators. “Annex 2 –The institutional and legislative framework governing trade in goods in SPECA countries” tested the indicators by discussing the work programme and presenting the paper for discussion. Member states were asked to provide comments and information. The framework will be published in 2021. In addition, as part of the UNDA SME surge project, UNECE will be preparing an online training course for facilitating the use of the framework by policy makers.

(Activity 2.1) The April 2017 Regional Training Workshop on the Economic Implications of Non-Tariff Measures organised by UNCTAD was financed by the United Nations Development Account 10th tranche. It was attended by 69 people of which 10 (four female, six male) were from the three beneficiary countries (Armenia, Georgia and Serbia). They shared the workshop with other participants from Eastern Europe, the Balkans and Caucasus and Central Asia. The feedback is not disaggregated by participant and therefore it is not possible to evaluate the responses from this Project’s participants, but overall the satisfaction scores were high, and included only a few general comments. This workshop included a number of case studies.

(Activity 2.2) The National Action Plans were based on the recommendations of the Assessment Studies. Armenia’s National Action Plan was developed in 2019, Georgia’s Action Plan was developed in 2018 and Serbia’s Action plan was developed in 2020 and will be published in due course. Georgia’s action plan presented to the SCTC in May 2018 and Armenia’s action plan was presented in 2019. Each recommendation was mapped to the SDGs. The road maps were presented by the Governments and this is evidence that the countries owned the results of the study. Serbia will present the results and road map in 2021.

(Activity 2.3) Regional validation workshop to discuss 3 national plans and validate regional study paper. Activities A2.3 and A2.4 were merged in 2019. It was planned to

hold a two-day concluding event in March 2020, which was postponed then cancelled due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

(Activity 2.4) Concluding regional seminar to present studies and monitoring tools.

Activities A2.3 and A2.4 were merged in 2019, then cancelled due to COVID-19. The secretariat held two online meetings in 2020 to present and disseminate the results of the COVID-19 assessments in Armenia and Georgia.

(Activity 2.5) Advisory missions on carrying forward the action plans. Four advisory missions were held: in Georgia in April 2018 and February 2019 and in Armenia in May 2019 as part of activity A2.2. The February 2019 mission to Georgia met with 21 Georgian officials. An advisory mission to Armenia was planned in November 2020 but was cancelled due to the UN budget freeze and then in March 2020 but was cancelled due to COVID-19. An Advisory mission planned in Serbia in May 2020 was cancelled however, the work continued and was moved online working in close cooperation with the Serbian UN Focal Point.

Additional Activities Feeding into Objective 1

An additional strategic policy paper “**Assessing Challenges and Opportunities in Georgia’s Ports**” was submitted to the Georgian government in September 2019. The report was relevant because Georgia wants to become a logistics hub, so it was considered important to have an external view on the regulatory framework of ports. The report looked at the supply chain and showed how important it was to digitise the system for Georgian ports. The report validated Georgia’s goal to have a digital system and single maritime window. This report highlighted current shortcomings, identified the next steps, and helped the Department of Transport check that it was on the right track. The report also was a useful reference to ensure the Ministry was not thinking in silos, as the document had an international and multi-agency perspective.

An additional **Strategic policy paper for implementing the recommendations linked to the development of the national system of Metrology in Armenia** was planned to be submitted to the Government in September 2019. Preparations were made to field OIML high level experts to Armenia in November 2019 to hold in-depth discussions with the relevant agencies. However, the mission was postponed due to UN budget freeze. The mission was then scheduled for March 2020 but then was postponed again due to the outbreak of the pandemic and then by the lack of political stability. UNECE is in contact with the focal point and will arrange for online consultations when the conditions allow.

Additional Activities Feeding into Objective 2

The Secretariat developed an additional **Framework Of Indicators** for the operationalization of the 2030 Agenda notion of trade as a “means of implementation”, based on the experience gained from the national assessment studies. The framework was also meant to serve as a tool for monitoring and tracking indicators for increasing the role regulatory and procedural measures play in leveraging supply chain integration for structural transformation (SDG 8) and job creation (SDG 9). The aim was to provide a framework to reflect the contribution of NTMs reform to the 2030 Agenda in national development strategies. The proposed framework was to be launched for discussions and validation

during a regional workshop in November 2019. However, the workshop was postponed due to the budget freeze. Preparations were made to hold the workshop in March 2020 and the draft framework was sent to workshop participants in English and Russian for comments, however, the workshop was cancelled due to the outbreak of the pandemic. Thereafter, the secretariat solicited feedback from the participants via email, and modified the framework. It then shared the main indicators with SPECA meeting for feedback and comments (see Activity 1.6). The framework was then re-written and modified based on the feedback will be launched in 2021.

Regional workshop to present results of the study on monitoring tools. The event was postponed four times due to the UN financial crisis and COVID pandemic. Instead, the results were presented in a paper prepared for a working group meeting of SPECA countries in November 2020. The Central Asian member states were presented with an Annex that included the main indicators in order to test them albeit using another platform (the SPECA working Group). The paper was be presented for discussion and the member states were asked to provide comments and information.