

TERMS OF REFERENCE

Review of the Innovation for Sustainable Development Reviews & sub-regional Innovation Policy Outlook

I. Purpose

The purpose of this evaluation is to review the relevance, coherence, effectiveness and efficiency of the methodology and selection process of, and follow up to, UNECE's program of national Innovation for Sustainable Development Reviews from 2014-2020 and the synergies between the program of national Reviews and the sub-regional Innovation Policy Outlook.

The results of the evaluation are expected to contribute to a longer-term vision for supporting national innovation policy reforms, assessing options for streamlining the review process, and to further strengthening synergies between sub-regional Innovation Policy Outlooks and national Innovation for Sustainable Development Reviews.

The outcomes of the evaluation can be used to enhance the outreach to policymakers and other major stakeholders to strengthen their engagement in intergovernmental processes and to improve the methods and processes of intergovernmental cooperation and collaboration that support innovation and competitiveness policies.

II. Scope of activities for evaluation

The evaluation will cover the methodology and process of carrying out national Innovation for Sustainable Development Reviews (previously called Innovation Performance Reviews), as well as follow-up support for the efforts of countries to put review recommendations into practice.

The evaluation will explore the innovation reviews prepared by the Innovative Policies Development section during the period from January 2014 to September 2020. The activities cover the following publications:

- Innovation Performance Review of Armenia (2014)
- Innovation Performance Review of Tajikistan (2015)
- Innovation for Sustainable Development Review of Belarus (2017)
- Innovation for Sustainable Development Review of Kyrgyzstan (2019)
- Innovation for Sustainable Development Review of Georgia (2020)

The universally recognized values and principles of human rights and gender equality need to be integrated into all stages of the 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 would make recommendations on how gender can be better included in the process.

III. Background

ECE's Committee on Innovation, Competitiveness and Public-Private Partnerships is mandated inter alia to promoting the knowledge-based economy and innovation in the ECE region by:

- providing a platform for policy dialogue, the exchange of experience and good practices;
- developing guidelines and policy recommendations for Governments on the basis of the above; and
- providing a basis for demand-driven policy advisory services.

As part of this mandate, UNECE has been conducting a programme of national innovation reviews starting in 2010. The purpose of these reviews has been to analyse national innovation performance, systems, policies, and institutions of member States against international good practice as developed under the Committee, and to make targeted recommendations on how innovation policies and institutions can be improved to enhance innovation performance.

Before 2015, the scope of the reviews was restricted to the contribution of innovation to economic development, and the reviews were called Innovation Performance Reviews. Since 2015, the scope has been broadened to also analyse how innovation can contribute to national sustainable development objectives more broadly, reflecting the central role science, technology and innovation play as means of implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Starting with the second review of Belarus (published in 2017), the reviews were re-named Innovation for Sustainable Development Reviews to reflect this modification of scope.

Reviews are carried out on request of Governments and in close cooperation with national authorities. The findings and recommendations are presented to the Committee on Innovation, Competitiveness and Public-Private Partnerships for endorsement before being published. The analysis going into the reviews is supported by extra-budgetary funding. UNECE offers follow-on policy advice and capacity building to support the implementation of policy recommendations on request.

In 2017, exploratory work was started on a possible sub-regional Innovation Policy Index. In 2018, extra-budgetary funding was secured for this new project. For both technical and political reasons, it was decided not to attempt to construct a quantitative index that would rank participating countries, but to rather identify and analyse strengths and weaknesses at a qualitative level. The project was therefore re-named Innovation Policy Outlook. Starting in 2019, the new sub-regional Innovation Policy Outlook has been piloted in Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine. The purpose of this Outlook is to provide a comparative perspective on innovation performance and policies across a set of countries at broadly similar levels of institutional and economic development, to identify common trends and lessons and to facilitate mutual policy learning.

IV. Issues

The evaluation will answer the following questions:

Relevance

1. To what extent were the reviews' major achievements consistent with ECE mandates, including relevant SDGs, and more specifically with the mandate of the Economic Cooperation and Integration subprogramme?

2. To what extent were the topics covered in the reviews aligned with national priorities of recipient countries?
3. To what extent did the reviews serve the needs of the main beneficiaries, i.e. innovation policy makers and other innovation stakeholders in the countries reviewed?
4. How relevant are the activities with regards to gender equality and empowerment of women?
5. Do the reviews incorporate the perspective of vulnerable groups? Is disability inclusion mainstreamed?

Coherence

6. To what extent were the methodology and the policy recommendations of the reviews consistent with international good practice? To what extent were findings and recommendations validated by international experts? To what extent do/can the cross-country perspective of a sub-regional outlook and the in-depth analysis of a national review complement each other? Are the facts collected, the topics covered and recommendations coherent?
7. How coherent is the collaboration with other entities (United Nations, other international organizations, civil society, academia, etc.) in delivering on expected accomplishments? Could this engagement with partners and various stakeholder groups be improved?
8. How could the methodologies and/or delivery processes of national reviews and sub-regional policy outlooks be aligned better?

Effectiveness

9. To what extent did the reviews achieve their objectives? To what extent were the program outputs relevant to improving innovation policies in recipient countries? To what extent did they support the promotion of sustainable development?
10. To what extent did the reviews engage with all relevant innovation policy stakeholders? To what extent were they able to contribute their insights to the analysis?
11. What were recurrent challenges to achieving the objectives and expected accomplishments of national reviews? How could these challenges be met more effectively?
12. How effective were the reviews with regards to gender mainstreaming, and addressing the needs of the most vulnerable including through disability inclusion?

Efficiency

13. Were the resources allocated to the individual reviews appropriate to the scale of the projects?
14. Were the human and financial resources allocated to individual reviews used efficiently and commensurate to the project results?
15. Were individual reviews implemented in an efficient manner?
16. To what extent can efficiency be improved by carrying out national reviews and sub-regional policy outlooks in parallel or in close succession?

Sustainability

17. To what extent did the reviews contribute to the dissemination and application of UNECE good practices and policy recommendations among national policy makers and practitioners?
18. Did the reviews contribute to enhancement of gender equality and empowerment of women?
19. Did the activities contribute to substantial and meaningful changes in the situation of the most vulnerable groups?

V. Methodology

The evaluation will be conducted by an independent evaluation consultant, who will be responsible for the design of the evaluation methodology, on the basis of:

1. A desk review of all relevant documents over the period including:
 - All reviews issued during the period
 - Documents related to the program of national reviews and the pilot Innovation Policy Outlook
 - All relevant documents including materials developed in support of the activities (background documents, final reports and publications)
 - Reports of the Committee on Innovation, Competitiveness and Public-Private Partnerships and its Bureau; Reports of the Team of specialists on Innovation and Competitiveness
 - Proposed programme budgets covering the evaluation period
 - Relevant UN and ECE resolutions on the matter.
2. An electronic questionnaire will be developed by the evaluator in consultation with ECE to assess the views of stakeholders: international experts involved in the reviews and the pilot Innovation Policy Outlook as authors or peer reviewers; members of the Committee on Innovation, Competitiveness and Public-Private Partnerships; members of the Team of specialists on Innovation and Competitiveness; staff from ECE involved in the project; relevant counterparts in the United Nations System and other international organizations.
3. The questionnaire will be followed by interviews of selected stakeholders (methodology to be determined by the evaluator in consultation with ECE). These will be carried out via phone or other electronic means of communication. Results of the survey will be disaggregated by gender.

The report will summarize the findings, conclusions and recommendations of the evaluation. An executive summary (max. 2 pages) will sum up the methodology of the evaluation, key findings, conclusions and recommendations.

All material needed for the evaluation, will be provided to the consultant. In addition to the documents mentioned above in 1), the Project Manager will provide the list of persons to be interviewed by telephone. ECE will provide support and further explanation to the evaluator as needed.

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.

VI. Evaluation schedule¹

- A. Evaluator selected 1 May 2020
- B. Delivery of inception report including survey design: 29 June 2020
- C. Feedback on inception report by the programme manager: 6 July 2020
- D. Launch of the questionnaire survey: 24 July 2020
- E. Phone interviews: 10-24 July

¹ Final timetable to be agreed following engagement of the evaluator

F. Data Analysis:	July/August 2020
GE. Draft Report:	22 September 2020
F. Comments on Draft report:	6 October 2020
G. Final Report:	By 1 November 2020

VII. Resources

Mr. Ralph Heinrich will manage the evaluation with the support of the Innovative Policies Development section staff. The Programme Management Unit (PMU) will provide guidance to the Project Manager and evaluator as needed on the evaluation design, methodology and quality assurance of the final draft report.

VIII. Intended use / Next steps

The evaluation will be consistent with the UNECE Evaluation Policy. The results of the evaluation will be used to further improve the methodology and process of delivering future reviews. It will also be used to further strengthen synergies between the program of national reviews and future sub-regional innovation policy outlooks.

A management response to the evaluation will be prepared by ECE, and relevant recommendations implemented as scheduled in the management response. Progress on implementation of recommendations will be available on the ECE public website.

IX. Criteria for evaluation

The evaluator should have:

- An advanced university degree or equivalent background in relevant disciplines, with specialized training in areas such as evaluation, project management, social and demographic statistics.
- Knowledge of and experience in working with social policy and its monitoring.
- Relevant professional experience in design and management of evaluation processes with multiple stakeholders, survey design and implementation, project planning, monitoring and management, gender mainstreaming and human-rights due diligence.
- Demonstrated methodological knowledge of evaluations, including quantitative and qualitative data collection and analysis for end-of-cycle project evaluations.
- Fluency in written and spoken English and Russian.
- Experience in the Eastern Europe, the Balkans, Caucasus and Central Asian sub-regions

Evaluators should declare any conflict of interest to ECE before embarking on an evaluation project, and at any point where such conflict occurs.