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## Challenges and opportunities for supporting innovative, high-growth enterprises in the SPECA countries<sup>1</sup>

Webinar: register [here](#)

Thursday, 23 December 2021

Bishkek/Nursultan  
14:00-16:00

Tashkent/Dushanbe  
13:00-15:00

Geneva  
09:00-11:00

Baku  
12:00- 14:00

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### Rationale

Innovation, or in other words, trying out things to see what works and what does not, will be central to ensuring a sustainable post-COVID recovery and building back better, as opposed to a simple return to “business as usual”. It implies broad and systematic experimentation by people, and in particular by firms, which are the backbone of any economy. A small sub-group of enterprises called innovative high-growth enterprises (IHGEs) play an outsized role in job and value creation and have the capacity to create new economic sectors with positive social and environmental spillovers.

In the SPECA sub-region, where economic and sustainable development challenges have been exacerbated and the fiscal space to address them further constrained by the slump induced by restrictions to contain the COVID-19 pandemic, IHGEs could be instrumental as agents trying out and scaling up ideas to accelerate the green and circular post-COVID recovery and progress towards reaching the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Unlike the rest of the small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), IHGEs require different and well-targeted support measures for the countries to fully reap the considerable economic and social benefits they carry. While some governments across the ECE region have already put in place policies to effectively support the growth of innovative firms with high potential (e.g., Great Britain, Estonia), the SPECA sub-region has not put in place any similar mechanisms and could learn a lot from peer practices and experiences.

### Objective

The webinar is organized in the framework of the UNECE project “Enhancing the capacity of the SPECA countries to design, implement and monitor effective policies to support innovative high-growth enterprises to drive post-COVID 19 recovery and progress towards the circular economy”. It aims to help officials from the SPECA countries to develop a better understanding of the nature of and policies and tools that enable and promote innovative, high-growth entrepreneurship to accelerate the Covid-19 recovery and progress towards sustainable development. The webinar will also serve an opportunity to discuss initial findings of the forthcoming UNECE Handbook on Supporting IHGEs in SPECA subregion and topics for the forthcoming trainings.

### Participants

The workshop targets government officials and experts from the SPECA countries responsible for designing, implementing, and evaluating innovation, entrepreneurship, and SME policies, as well as managers of business incubators and accelerators in the sub-region, and civil society engaged in supporting innovation and entrepreneurship.

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<sup>1</sup> This includes the seven countries of the United Nations Special Programme for the Economies of Central Asia (SPECA), namely Afghanistan, Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan.

## Draft Agenda

*Please, note that the below timing is based on UTC+6 time zone, Bishkek/Nursultan time.*

[Click here to join](#)

**Moderator: Christopher Athey**, Economic Affairs Officer, Innovative Policies Development Section, UNECE

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|---------------|--|
| 13:30-14:00   | <p><b>Access to the session</b></p> <p><i>Participants are recommended to join the meeting at least 15 minutes prior to its start to check their connectivity.</i></p>   |
| 14:00-14:10   | <p><b>Opening remarks</b></p> <p><i>Anders Jönsson, Chief, Innovative Policies Development Section, UNECE</i></p>  |
| 14:10- 14:30  | <p><b>Tour de table</b></p> <p><i>Participants are invited to briefly introduce themselves</i></p>   |
| 14:30-15:00   | <p><b>Discussing challenges and opportunities for support of IHGEs in the SPECA countries</b></p> <p><b><i>Framing presentation by Alasdair Reid, UNECE Consultant</i></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Building on the past work by UNECE on Innovative High-growth Enterprises (IHGEs) and initial scoping interviews under this project, the presentation will provide an overview of the main concepts and policy toolkit for IHGEs and summarize initial conclusions on the challenges and opportunities for IHGEs development in the SPECA countries.</li> </ul>   |
| 15:00 – 15:30 | <p><b><i>Sharing experiences from the SPECA countries by the participants from the sub-region</i></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Representatives of the SPECA countries are invited to react to the framing presentation, bringing in their experience and knowledge, and pointing to the most important areas which require support (e.g., building of the entrepreneurship skills, using IT for traditional industries, role of corporate ventures and acceleration programmes, building legislative framework for support to IHGEs).</li> </ul> <p><i>Participants would also be invited to provide their opinion on the topics of the forthcoming training (Jan-Feb 2022) that would be most relevant to their work.</i></p> |
| 15:30-15:50   | <p><b><i>Sharing experiences from Georgia by Annie Vashkamadze, Georgia's Innovation and Technology Agency (GITA)</i></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The presentation will showcase how Georgia is supporting innovative enterprises with high growth potential at each stage of the growth process, but in particular at the level of scaling up.</li> </ul> <p><i>Q&amp;A with the participants</i></p>  |
| 15:50-16:00   | <p><b>Closing</b></p> <p><i>Anders Jönsson, Chief, Innovative Policies Development Section, UNECE</i></p>  |